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(57) **ABSTRACT**

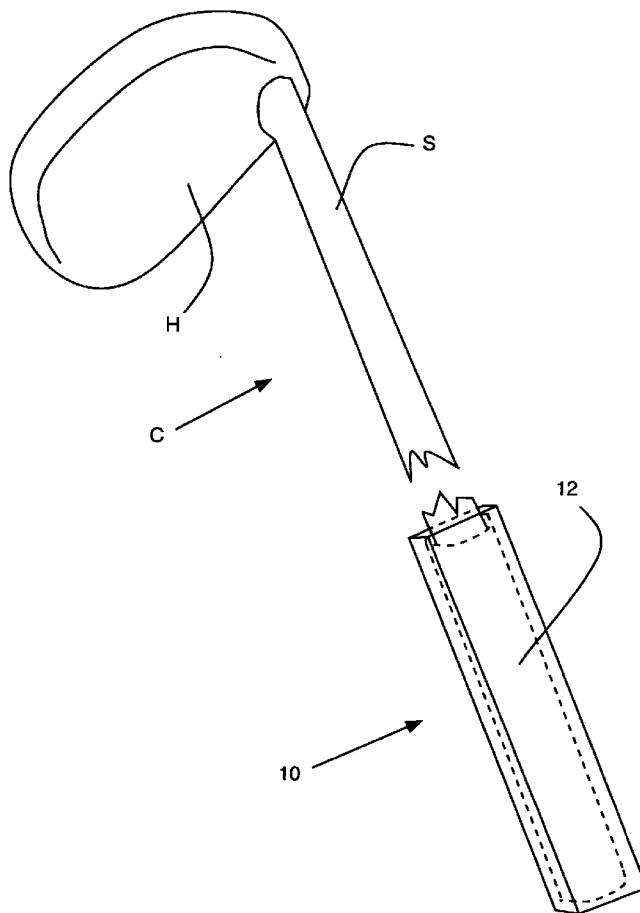
A protection device for the golf club grips includes a compartment adapted to slideably receive the grip and protect the grip from moisture, precipitation and debris. In one embodiment, multiple compartments are combined to create a useful club tote having a strap for carrying and a clip for attaching to a golf-bag. The device advantageously enables the golfer to carry a partial set of clubs on the fairway or green, or during practice at a driving range, protecting the clubs from moisture, precipitation and debris when the unused clubs rest on the ground or lean against an object when not being used.

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(22) Filed: **Apr. 28, 2006**

Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation-in-part of application No. 11/249,001, filed on Oct. 12, 2005.



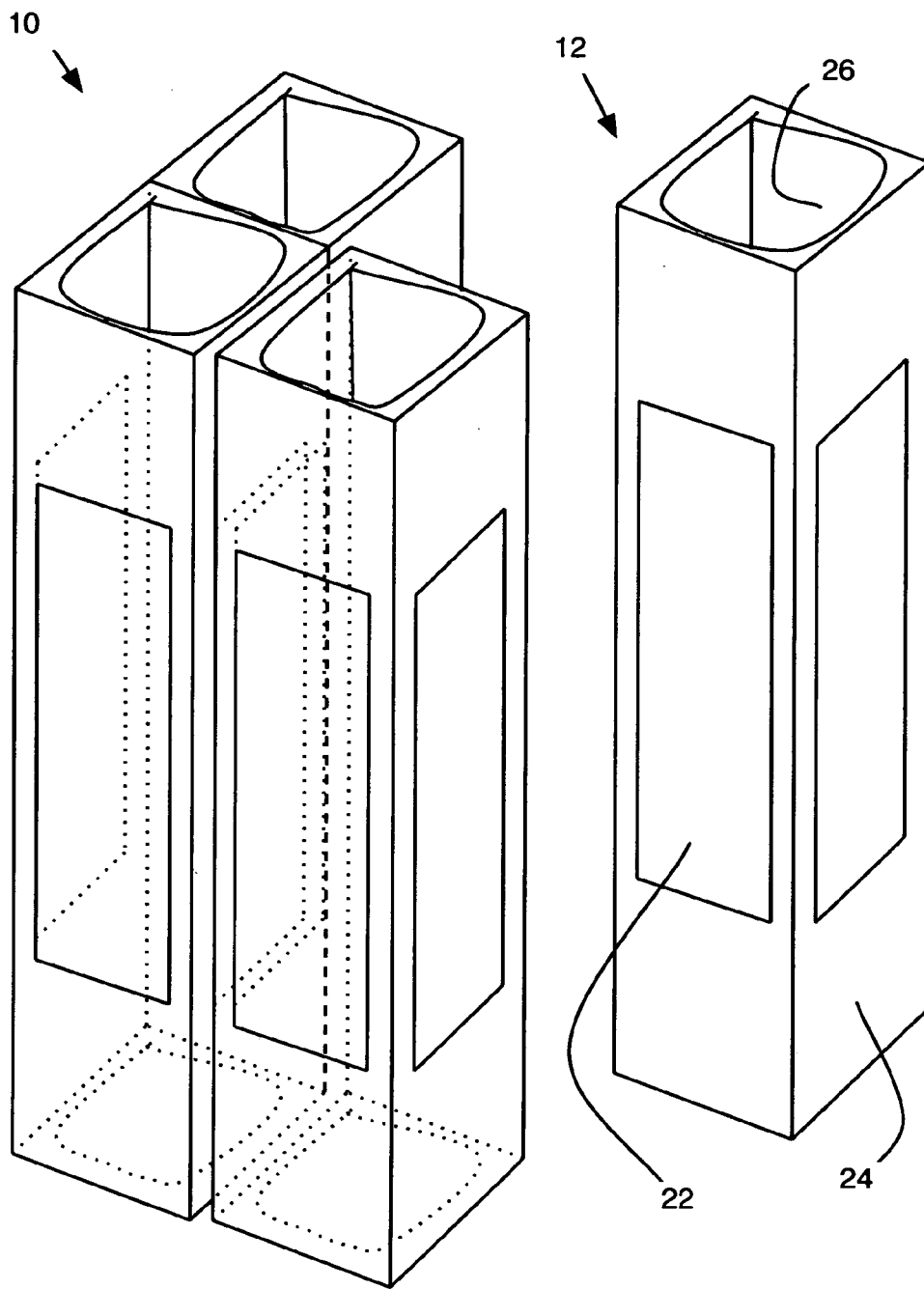


FIG. 1

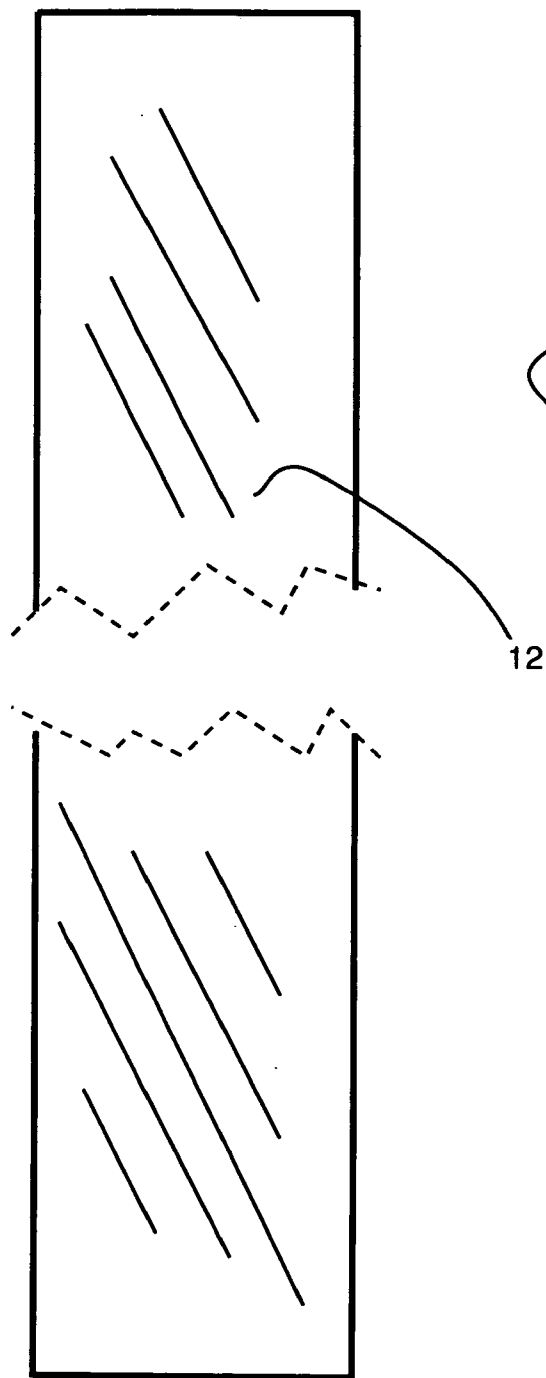


FIG. 2

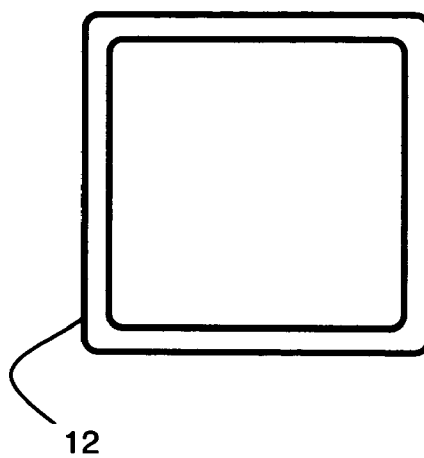


FIG. 3

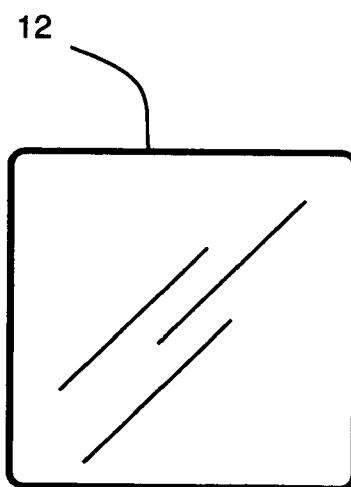


FIG. 4

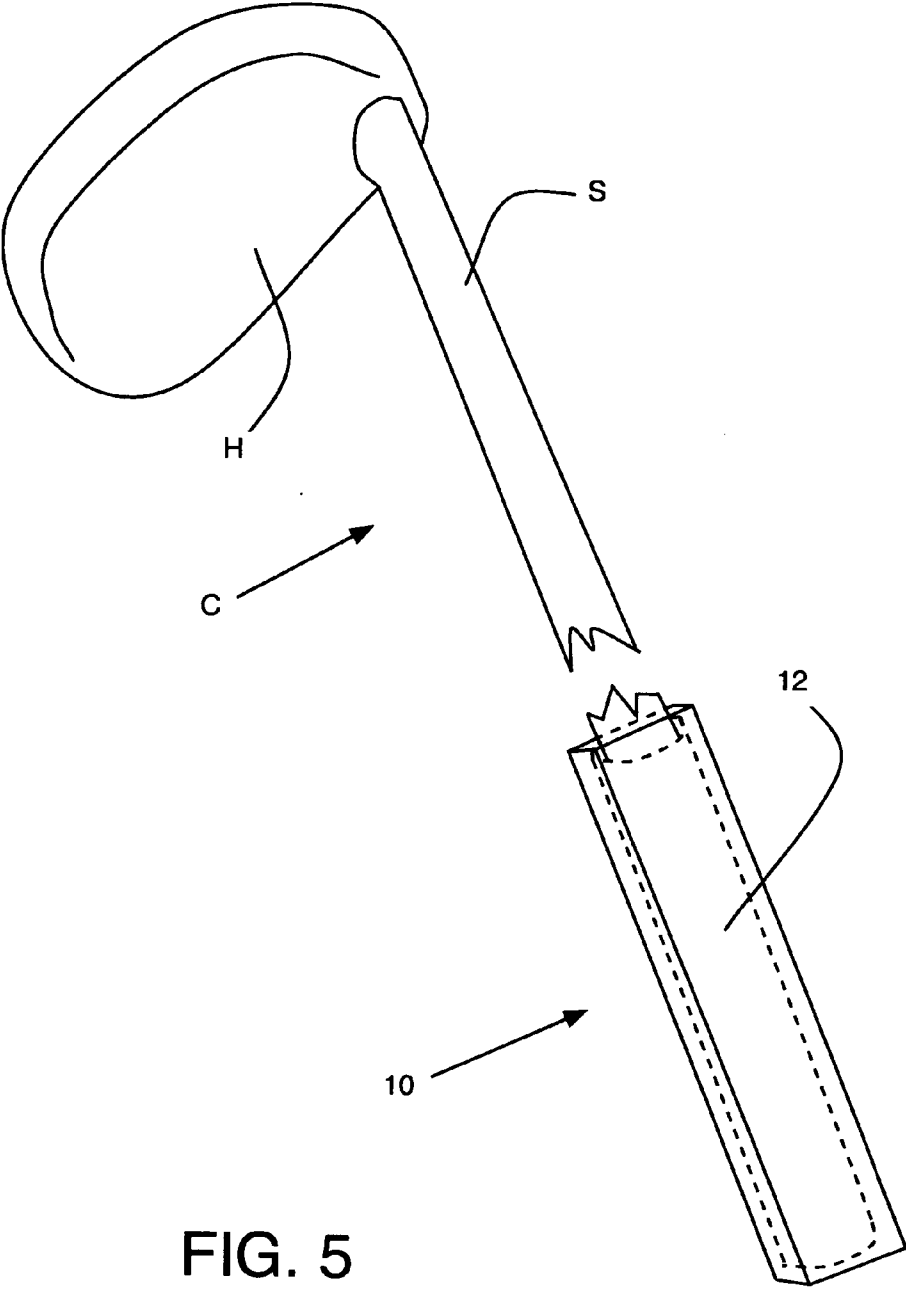


FIG. 5

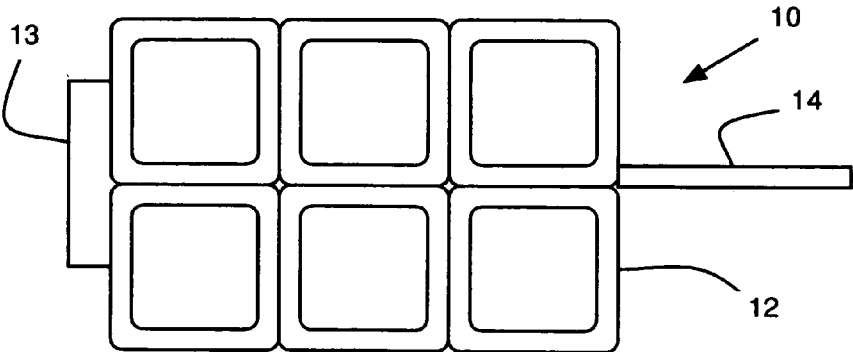


FIG. 6

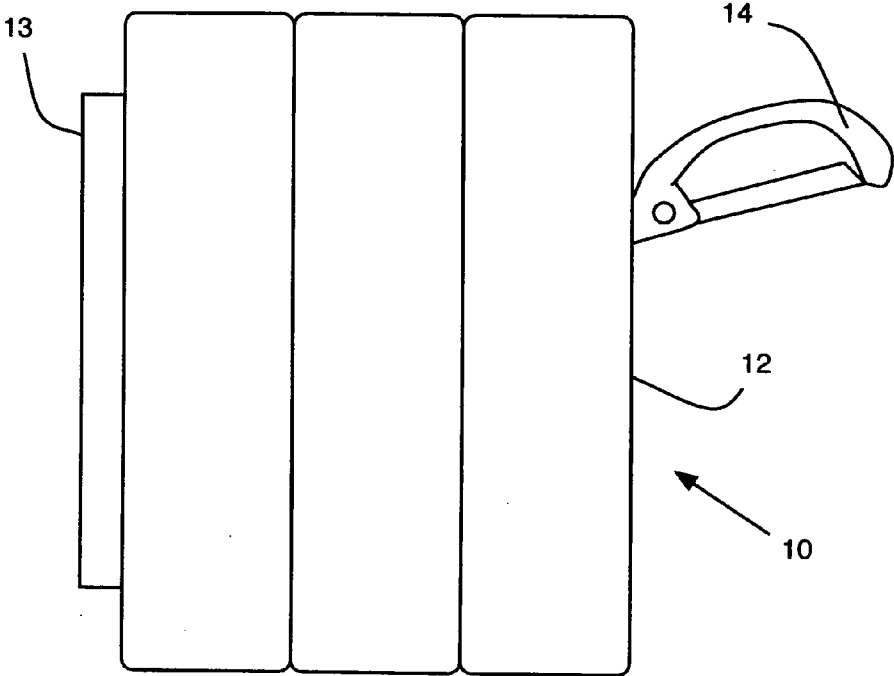


FIG. 7

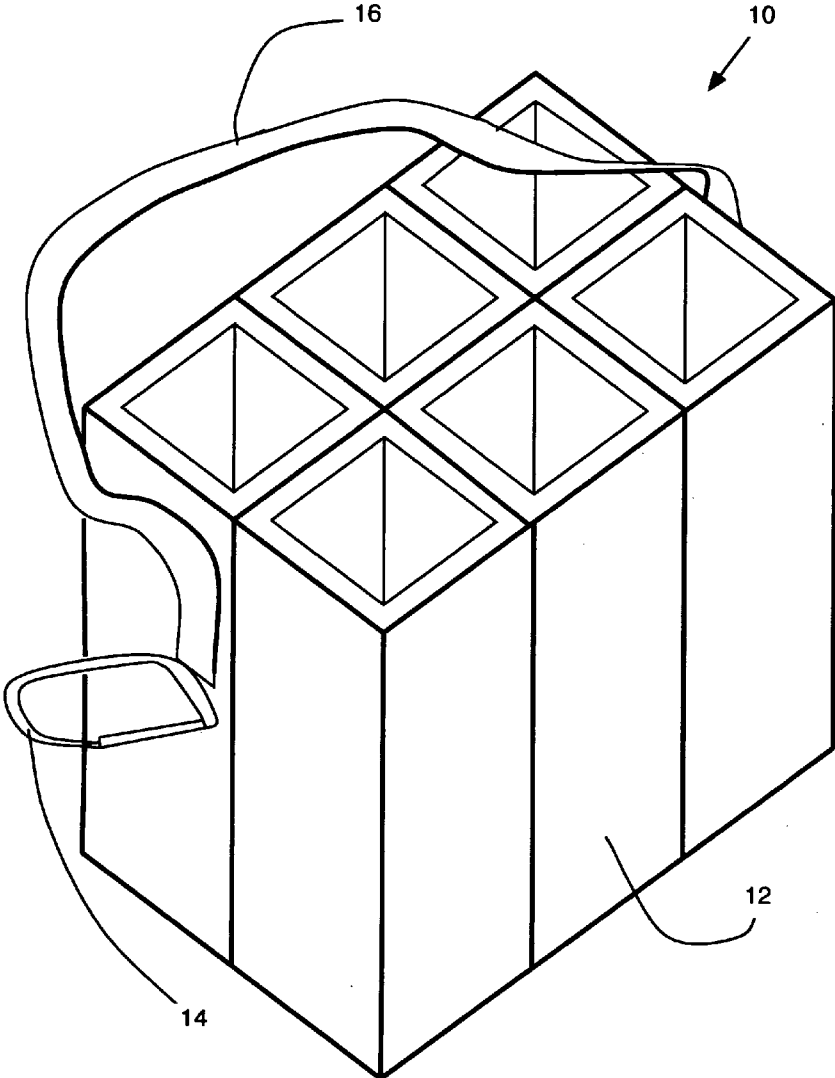


FIG. 8

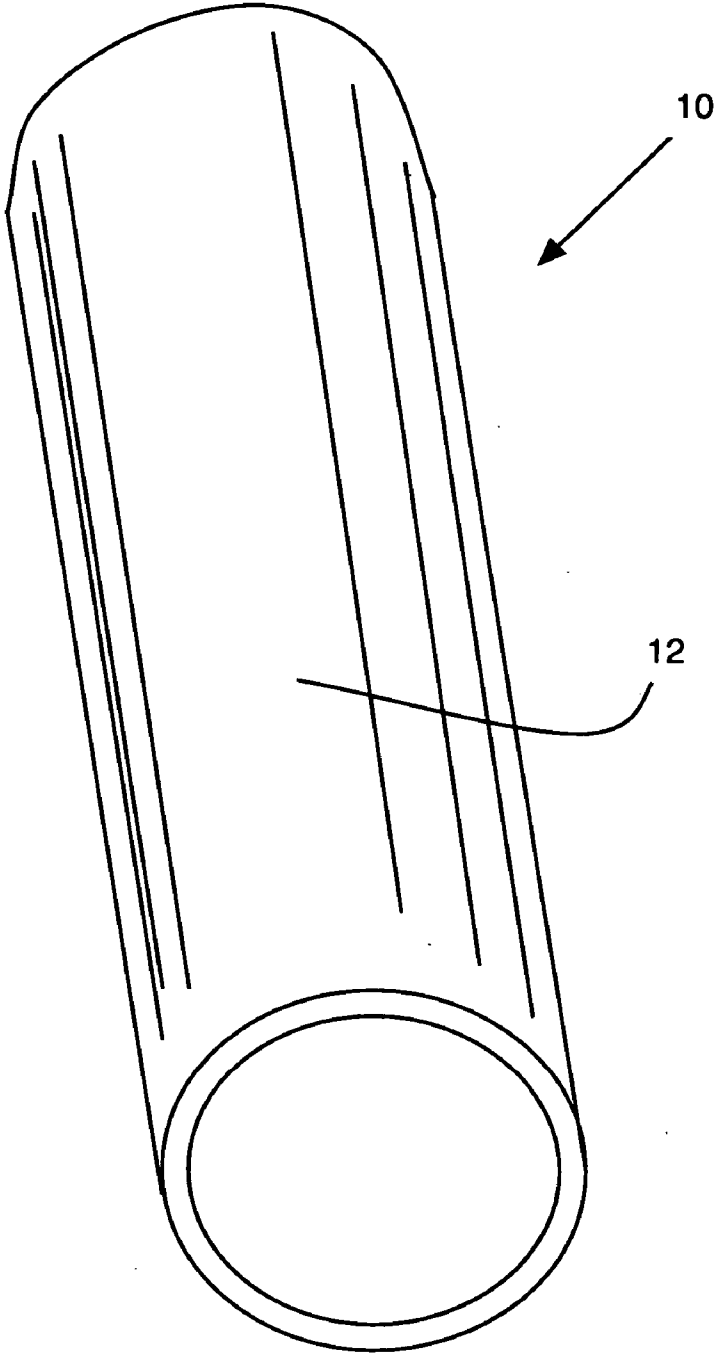


FIG. 9

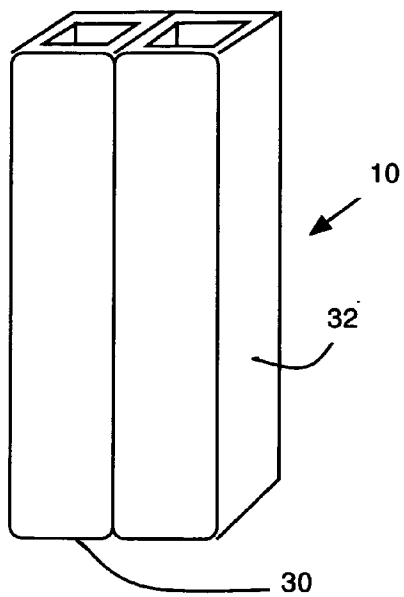


FIG. 10

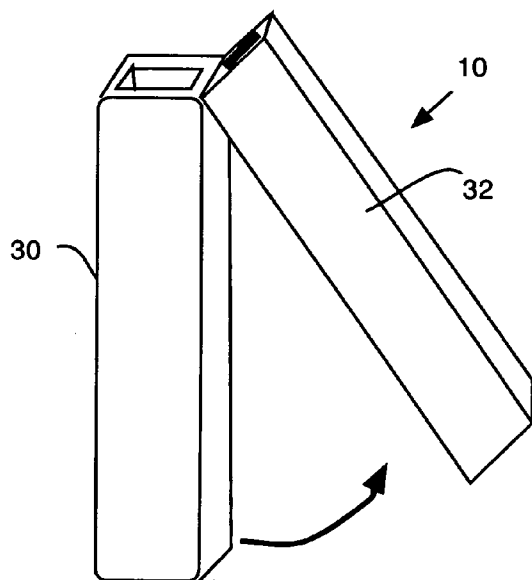


FIG. 11

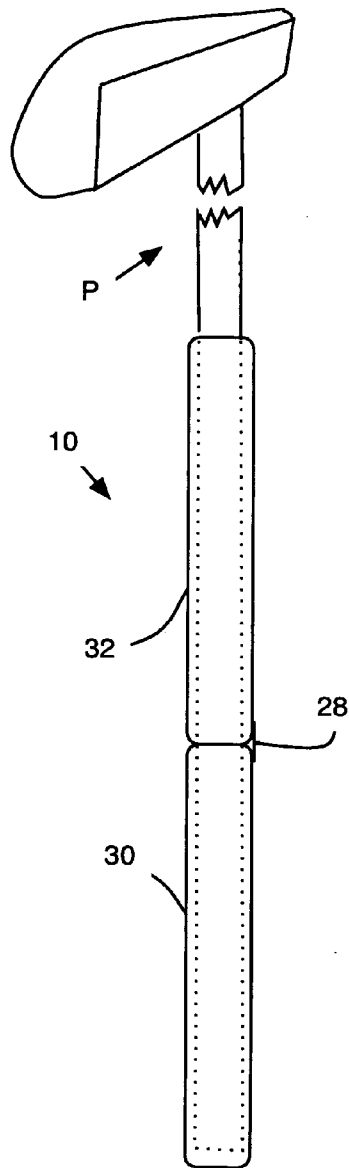


FIG. 12

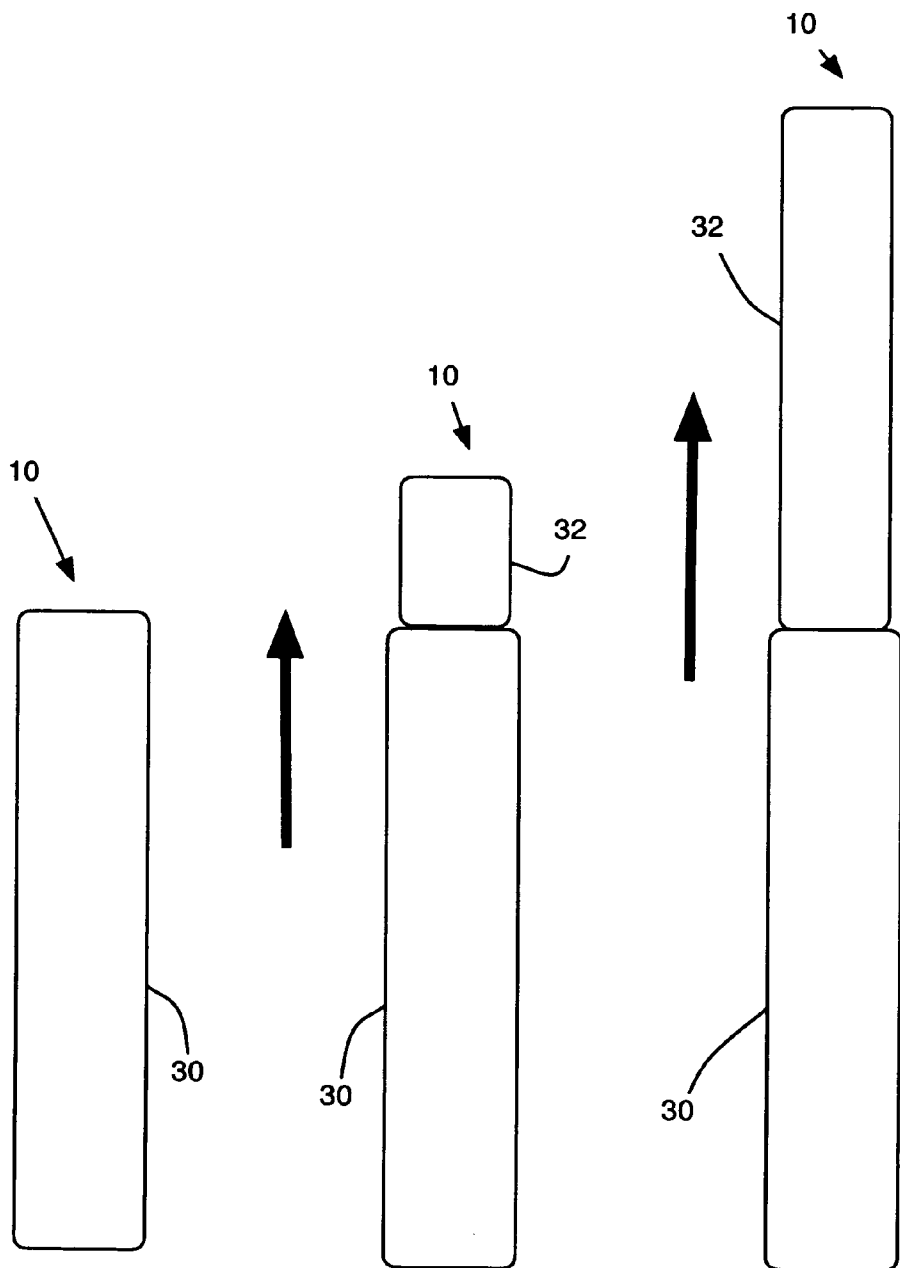


FIG. 13

FIG. 14

FIG. 15

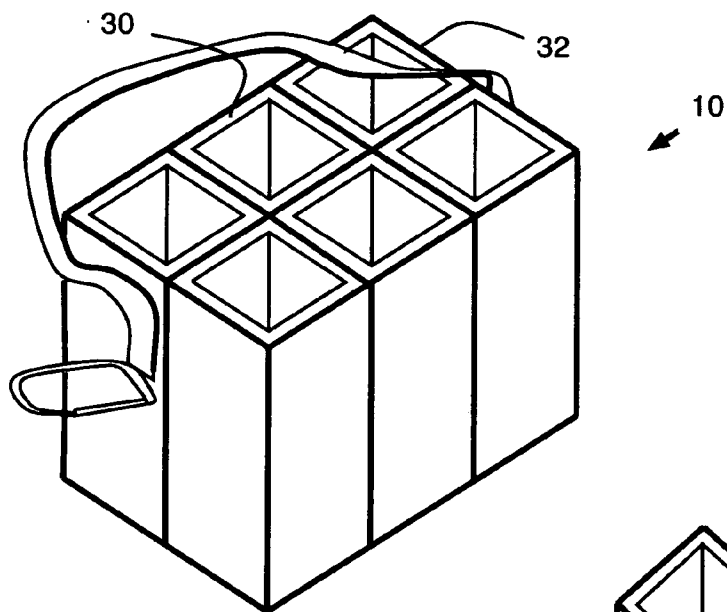


FIG. 16

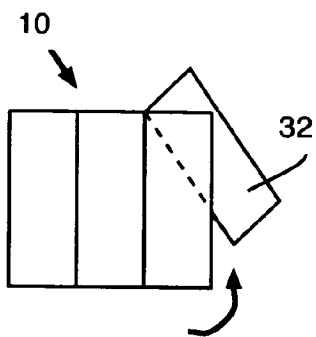


FIG. 17

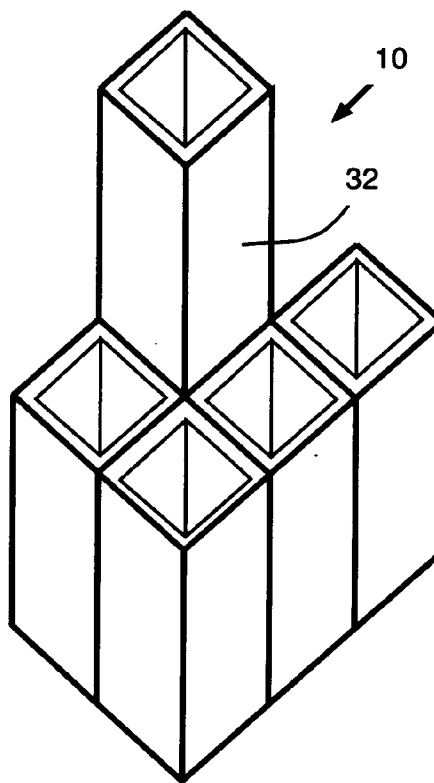


FIG. 18

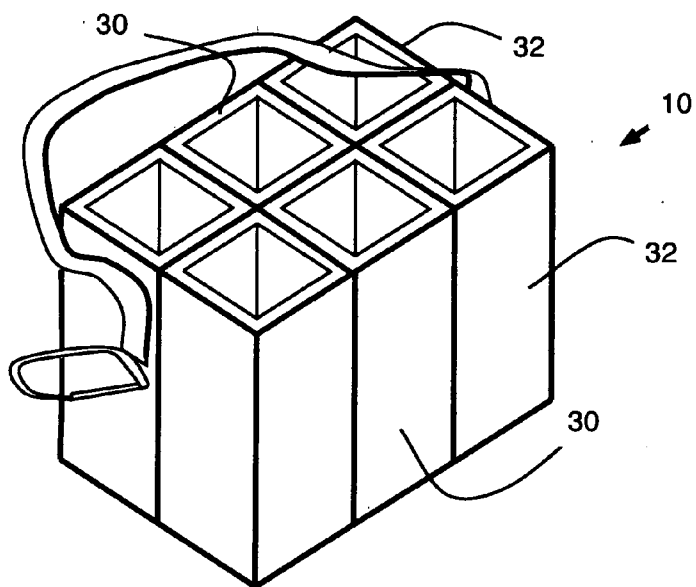


FIG. 19

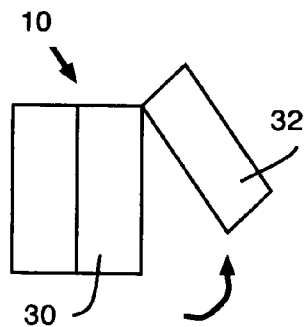


FIG. 20

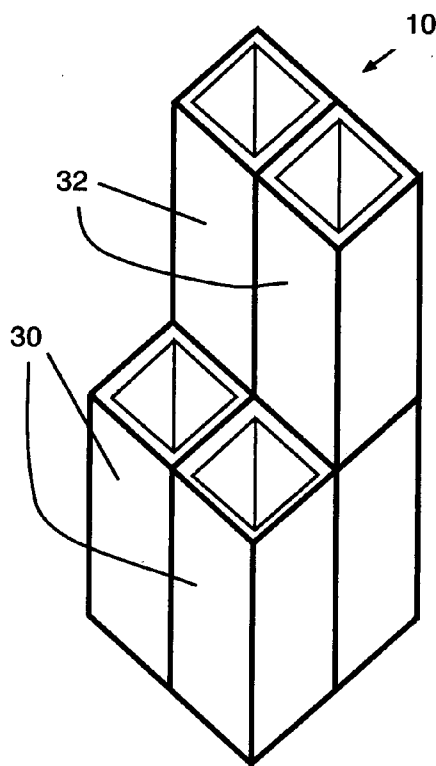
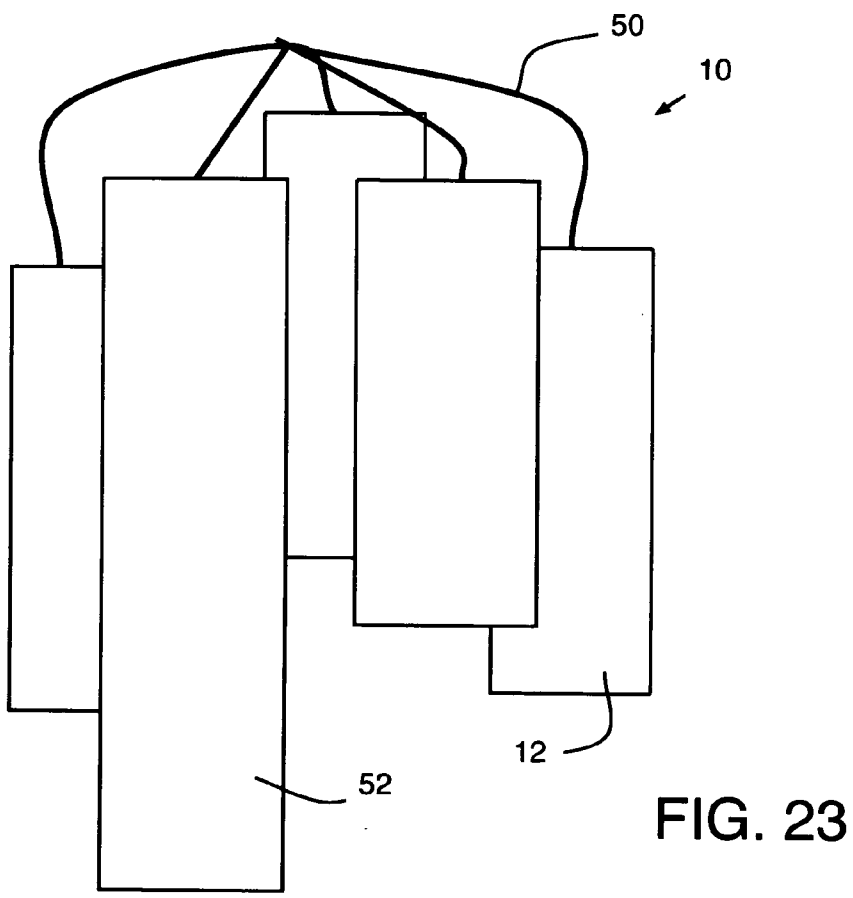
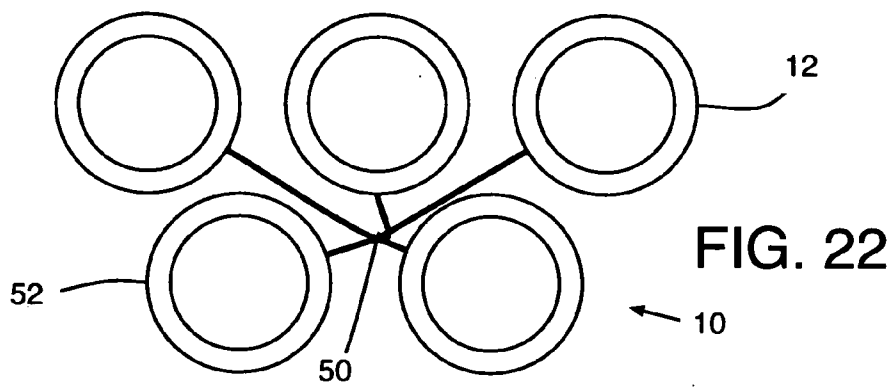
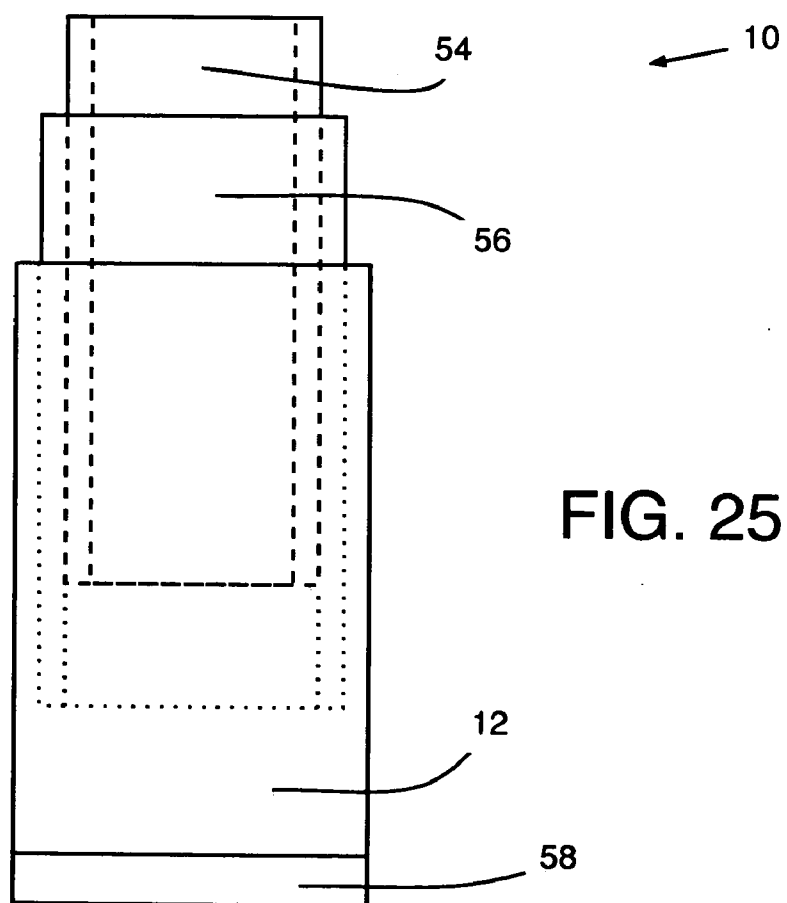
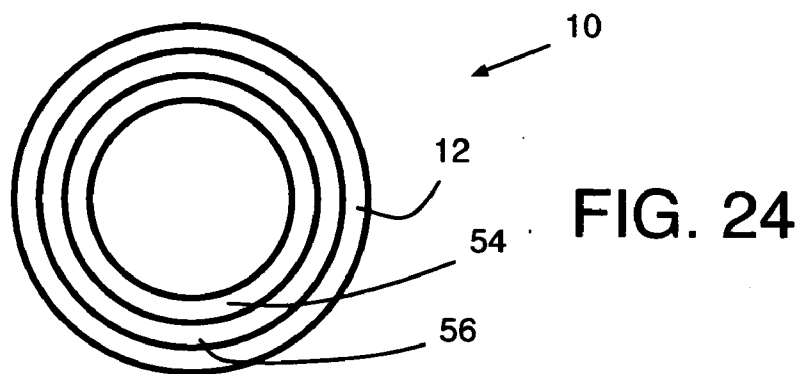


FIG. 21





GRIP PROTECTOR

[0001] This application is a continuation-in-part of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 11/249,001 filed on Oct. 12, 2005 titled "Grip Protector" by the same, common inventor.

BACKGROUND

[0002] This invention relates generally to a protective device for shafts and more specifically to a protective sleeve for golf-club grips.

[0003] There are an estimated 26-million golfers in the United States and an estimated 55-million golfers worldwide. And, golf, as both a recreational pastime and professional sport, enjoys increasing popularity.

[0004] With this increasing popularity there is a growing demand for improved courses, apparel, equipment, and accessories. For example, the current market supports many products designed to enhance play. Certain products are designed to enhance play during inclement weather and, thus, the market is replete with a variety of umbrellas, wind shirts, rain jackets, and other paraphernalia designed to extend the golfer's ability to play in rainy, cold, and windy conditions.

[0005] Often, inclement weather causes the golf-club grips to become wet. Golf clubs, like most sports equipment, perform best when they are dry and clean. And, the grips on golf clubs perform best when they are dry and clean because, to maintain good contact with the club, especially during a swing, the golfer relies on a grip that offers tacky and dry interface between the club and the golfer's hands. Wet grips also degrade the impact-absorbing feature of golf club grips. The combined affect of inclement weather and wet grips may result in a poor shot, or in extreme cases, damage to the club or injury to the golfer, other golfers in the group, or spectators as the club unexpectedly and suddenly launches from the hands of the swinging golfer.

[0006] The prior art unsuccessfully addresses wet grips. To date, the solution to this bothersome problem includes wiping the grip with a towel. However, this solution is not without problems. For example, during inclement weather maintaining a dry towel in itself is a challenging task. Also, repeated use during inclement weather diminishes the ability of the towel to absorb water.

[0007] Moreover, this towel solution is inadequate even when the weather conditions are ideal. For example, many golfers use the towel to clean the club head after a shot. This practice, while quite common, may inadvertently introduce dirt and debris on the grip.

[0008] Some golfers frequently use a towel to protect their grips from precipitation, moisture, and debris in numerous situations while golfing. For example, many players golf during rainy or otherwise wet weather. When a golfer takes one club out of the bag for the next shot, the golfer attempts to keep the grip dry before and after the shot. Frequently, the golfer takes two or more clubs from the bag and carries the clubs to the ball in play because the golfer is not sure which club will be optimal. Club selection depends on the lie of the ball, wind, obstacles, and the distance desired. And, several common situations that necessitate the extraction of two or more clubs from the bag include an elevated tee box that is not accessible for a motorized cart and not easily accessible

for a pull cart, a shot on a fairway between the tee box and green area when motorized carts—by course rules—are prohibited from leaving the cart path, or an approach shot near the green when the golfer also carries the putter in anticipation of the final stroke. In each of these situations a golfer often uses a towel to cover the grips while they are walking, standing, and—while hitting his shot—the golfer covers the grips of the other clubs as they lay on the ground or against a tree or other object.

[0009] Another situation arises when there is no precipitation, but the ground is wet from previous precipitation or watering. In these conditions when a golfer takes more than one club to the ball, a towel covers the grips of the other clubs that they lay on the ground.

[0010] Also, golfers use a towel to protect their grips in practice situations where they take two or more clubs to a practice area instead of taking their bag of clubs. While they are hitting practice shots with one club, they typically lean the other clubs against a club stand or lay them on the ground. If there is precipitation or if the ground is wet, they face the same challenges of keeping the grips dry as when they are golfing.

[0011] The current method of using a towel to maintain dry grips is problematic because the task of maintaining a dry towel itself is an onerous task, for example. Also, the towel cannot adequately be utilized as a transport device for a small set of clubs. And, placing the towel on the ground enables moisture to penetrate the towel and reach the grips. Further, the towel does not adequately protect the grips from inadvertent contact from foreign objects.

[0012] Today's golfer, therefore, needs a solution that eliminates, or at least greatly reduces the exposure of grips to moisture, dirt, and debris. Such a solution should allow the golfer to transport a small quantity of clubs, one or more clubs, for example, from the golf-bag or cart to the location of their ball in play. Such a solution must allow the golfer to place one or more clubs directly on the course surface without causing dirt, moisture, or other debris to adhere to the grip. Such a solution, further, should allow the golfer to handle a small quantity of clubs with the grips protected from rain or other precipitation as the golfer walks about.

[0013] Existing protection devices for golf clubs do not offer this needed protection and may be classified as head protection devices, combined head and shaft protection devices, or entire club protection devices.

[0014] For example, certain head-protection devices for golf clubs are known including U.S. Pat. No. 6,065,516 ('516) to Chang, U.S. Pat. No. 6,085,814 ('814) to Choe, and U.S. Pat. No. 6,398,025 ('025) also to Choe. However, each of the devices of the aforementioned patents do not adequately protect the grip from the problems mentioned above. Specifically, Choe '814 discloses a head cover designed for use in the bag and arranged to protect the head regardless of head-size of the club comprising a head-sock with elastic member and an elongated guide sleeve extending from the head-sock. Similarly, Choe '025 discloses a universal head cover connected to a shaft protection part. And, Chang '516 discloses an integrally molded head sheath and neck sleeve. Each of the foregoing does not include or contemplate a protection device for the grip end of the club.

[0015] Other devices protect the both the head and shaft-portion of a golf club. For example, U.S. Pat. No. 6,119,742

(⁷⁴²) to Maeng, and U.S. Pat. No. 6,192,950 (⁹⁵⁰) also to Maeng disclose a hingeably coupled cover for the head and shaft of a golf club. And, U.S. Pat. Nos. 6,193,063 and 6,431,233 to Malkoff describe a golf club protective cover with a semi-rigid upper enclosure to protect the club head and a sock-like lower enclosure for protection of the club shaft. U.S. Pat. No. 5,050,884 to Flory discloses a golf club combined with shaft protector comprising a hollow, foamed, spongy elastomeric tube with a generally central space for receiving a golf club shaft. Again, each of these aforementioned references does not address or contemplate protection of the grip.

[0016] Still other references present devices to protect the entire club. For example, U.S. Pat. No. 5,209,280 to Gevas discloses a two-piece golf bag hood for attaching to the top of a conventional or customized golf bag. And, U.S. Pat. No. 6,343,692 to Park discloses a protection device having a flanged tubular insert for placement into the top neck of a golf club protection tube and a y-shaped armature for capturing the head of the club. Both these disclosures utilize existing golf bags as part of the protection system.

[0017] U.S. Pat. No. 6,298,987 to Clark presents a golf club protection system including a plurality of tubes for insertion into a golf bag. Each generally hollow tube has an open free end (at the grip end) and a closed head end, and intermediate to the two ends the system includes a partition so the ends can be removed to facilitate insertion and extraction of the club.

[0018] Moreover, the marketplace, such as sporting-good stores, golf pro-shops, and big-box retailer, plus an observed lack of suitable devices on many golf courses demonstrates a long-felt need that is not being addressed. Today's golfers do not have any devices adapted to protect the golf-club grip other than the inadequate, but traditional, towel.

[0019] Thus, there remains a need for a golf club protection device that solves the problems unique to the grip-end of the club. Moreover, such a protection device ideally suited to the rigors of use would be readily storable, resist moisture penetration, be of light-weight construction, be durable, resist tearing and punctures, provide a surface suitable for featuring a brand name, logo, or other indicia of origin or serve as advertisement for promotional purposes, be readily cleanable, be easy to use, convenient to carry, inexpensive to produce, ergonomic, and easy to store when not in use, for example.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0020] To overcome the shortcomings of the prior art and to solve heretofore-unidentified problems and address a gap left by existing technology and create a new market segment, the present invention comprises a golf-club grip protection device that is ideally suited to the rigors of use. The present invention is readily storable, resists moisture penetration, is of light-weight construction, is durable, resists tearing and punctures, provides a surface suitable for featuring a brand name, logo, or other indicia of origin or serve as advertisement for promotional purposes, is readily cleanable, is easy to use, is convenient to carry, is inexpensive to produce, is ergonomically designed, and is easy to store when not in use, for example.

[0021] In one exemplary embodiment, the present invention comprises a protective device for a golf-club grip, the

device comprising: a substantially tubular sleeve body comprising at least one sidewall adapted to form a compartment, the body having an opening at one end, and the body being adapted to slideably receive the golf-club grip. Optionally, the device includes a generally rectilinear cross section or a generally elliptical cross section. And, the device has at least one sidewall comprising an exterior surface having a fastening means for connecting the device to a complimentary fastening means on a second device. The device optionally has a clip-type fastening means for enabling the device to attach to a golf bag. The device further comprises a strap means for enabling a golfer to easily carry the device. And, the device further comprises a spacer means adjacent to and coupled to the at least one sidewall.

[0022] In another exemplary embodiment, the present invention includes a protective device for a golf-club grip. The device comprises: a first substantially tubular sleeve body comprising at least one side-wall adapted to form a compartment, the body having an opening at one end, and the body being adapted to slideably receive the golf-club grip; and a second sleeve body adapted to form a second compartment having a first opening and an oppositely spaced second opening, the second sleeve body arranged to engage the first sleeve body by an engaging means. In addition, the protective device includes engaging means comprising a pivot element positioned adjacent to the open end of the first sleeve and intermediate to the first opening of the second sleeve to enable pivotable rotation through at least about 180 degrees. Optionally, the device includes engaging means comprising a telescoping member element positioned adjacent to the open end of the first sleeve and intermediate to the first opening of the second sleeve to enable slideable movement between the first and second sleeve. Alternatively, the device includes engaging means comprising a first fastening element arranged about a first exterior perimeter of the first sleeve body, the first fastening element adapted to selectively receive a mating binding element; and a second fastening element arranged about a second exterior perimeter of the second sleeve body and adapted to selectively receive the mating binding element. In another form, the device further comprises a plurality of sleeve bodies wherein at least one sleeve body includes an engaging means. And, the protective device includes engaging means comprising a pivot element positioned adjacent to the open end of the first sleeve and intermediate to the first opening of the second sleeve to enable pivotable rotation through at least about 180 degrees. Or, the protective device has engaging means comprising a telescoping member element positioned adjacent to the open end of the first sleeve and intermediate to the first opening of the second sleeve to enable slideable movement between the first and second sleeve.

[0023] In another embodiment, the present invention includes a protective device for a plurality of golf-club grips, the device comprising: a plurality of substantially tubular sleeve compartments wherein at least one compartment is adapted to slideably receive at least one of the plurality of golf-club grips; and wherein the at least one compartment comprises a first coupling means; and wherein a second compartment comprises a second coupling means adapted to releasably couple to the first compartment. Additionally, the protective device includes a first coupling means comprising: a first strip of a hook and loop fastener arranged about a first exterior perimeter of the first tubular sleeve compart-

ment at a first end; a second strip of a hook and loop fastener arranged about a second exterior perimeter of the second tubular sleeve compartment at a second end; and a third strip of a hook and loop fastener adapted to releasably couple to the first and second strips whereby selectively placing the first end adjacent to the second end and selectively placing the third strip over the first and second strips forms a double-length compartment. Further, the protective device includes at least one sleeve compartment comprising a material adapted to protect the golf-club grip from moisture. And, the material comprises neoprene. Additionally, the protective device further comprises a symmetric arrangement of compartments consisting of a first row of three compartments and a second row of an additional three compartments, each compartment adapted to couple to an adjacent compartments; a spacer adapted to couple adjacent to the first row of three compartments; and a clip adapted to couple adjacent to the second row. And, at least one compartment comprises a neoprene material.

DRAWING

- [0024] FIG. 1 is a perspective frontal view of one embodiment of the present invention.
- [0025] FIG. 2 is a front view of a second embodiment of the present invention.
- [0026] FIG. 3 is a top view of the embodiment of FIG. 2.
- [0027] FIG. 4 is a bottom view of the embodiment of FIG. 2.
- [0028] FIG. 5 is a perspective view showing a possible use of one embodiment of the present invention.
- [0029] FIG. 6 is a top view of another possible embodiment of the present invention.
- [0030] FIG. 7 is a front view of the embodiment of FIG. 6.
- [0031] FIG. 8 is perspective frontal view of another possible embodiment of the present invention.
- [0032] FIG. 9 is perspective frontal view of an alternative embodiment of the present invention.
- [0033] FIG. 10 is a perspective frontal view of yet another embodiment of the present invention.
- [0034] FIG. 11 is an illustration of relative movement between components of the device of FIG. 10.
- [0035] FIG. 12 is a front view showing the device of FIG. 10 in one possible application.
- [0036] FIG. 13 is a first front view of another embodiment of the present invention.
- [0037] FIG. 14 is a second front view of the device of FIG. 13 and illustrates relative motion between two components.
- [0038] FIG. 15 is a third front view of the device of FIG. 13 and illustrates the device in an extended position.
- [0039] FIG. 16 is a perspective view of another embodiment of the present invention in a first position.
- [0040] FIG. 17 is a side view of the embodiment of FIG. 16 and illustrates relative movement between components.

- [0041] FIG. 18 is a perspective view of the embodiment of FIG. 16 and illustrates the invention in a second position.
- [0042] FIG. 19 is a perspective view of another embodiment of the present invention in a first position.
- [0043] FIG. 20 is a side view of the embodiment of FIG. 19 and illustrates relative movement between components.
- [0044] FIG. 21 is a perspective view of the embodiment of FIG. 19 and illustrates the invention in a second position.
- [0045] FIG. 22 is a top view of an alternative embodiment according to the present invention.
- [0046] FIG. 23 is a front view of the embodiment of FIG. 22.
- [0047] FIG. 24 is a top view of yet another embodiment according to the present invention.
- [0048] FIG. 25 is a front view of the embodiment of FIG. 24.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0049] The present invention, described herein and illustrated in the accompanying figures of the drawing, is portrayed through the use of exemplary embodiments that represent its spirit and scope. Further, in the various figures, certain components may be omitted to more clearly illustrate a particular aspect of the invention. And, those skilled in the art will appreciate that various combinations of elements, substitutions of elements, omissions and deletions of elements will not deviate from the spirit and intent of the present invention. The scope of the invention shall be limited only by the appropriate construction of the claims that follow.

[0050] In a first embodiment, the present invention comprises a golf-club grip protection device enabled to protect six golf-club grips simultaneously and is illustrated in FIGS. 6-8, for example. Accordingly, two rows consisting of three adjacent grip sleeve-body protection compartments 12 are combined. The configuration and construction of each individual compartment 12 is essentially the same, so for clarity and simplification a one sleeve-body compartment 12 will be discussed most of the time. The generally rectilinear sleeve-body compartment 12 consists of an outer material 24, such as cloth, fabric, molded rubber, neoprene, hard-plastic, nylon, Kevlar, aluminum, stainless-steel, or some similar material, which provides both resistance to moisture and debris, but also resists punctures, tearing, ripping, and other damage typical from handling and use.

[0051] In an optional embodiment, coupled to the outer material in any manner known and understood in the art, the inner lining material 26 provides impact resistance and generally cushions the grip from jarring or other incidental contact as would typically be encountered during handling or use.

[0052] As stated, each compartment is arranged to form a 3x2 arrangement, providing for simultaneous protection of six golf clubs. A strap means, such as a convenient holding strap member 16, attaches to opposing sides of the device 10 and facilitates both carrying the device when vacant of clubs and can assist the golfer when inserting or extracting clubs into and from each individual compartment 12. A clip-type

fastening means, such as a clip element **14**, attaches to the device **10** to enable the device to be clipped to a golf bag, for example.

[0053] Possible embodiments of the present invention, as illustrated, for example, in the drawings, show a substantially tubular sleeve body **12** with a generally hollow center portion open at one end or at two, oppositely spaced ends. The substantially tubular sleeve body is also referred to as compartment **12** and the terms will be used interchangeably. The sleeve body **12** may be of a generally rectilinear cross section, as shown in FIGS. **1-8**, for example, or, alternatively, a more elliptical cross section as illustrated in FIG. **9**, for example. Other cross sections would work equally well and may consist of round, oval, hexagonal, rectangular, square, triangular, octagonal, or other polygons, for example.

[0054] One suitable material for the device **10** of the present invention includes neoprene of about 2-mm to about 4-mm thick with a nylon layer on both sides. This material is commonly referred to as Nylon 2 Neoprene and is commercially available. This material is durable, water resistant, and has friction characteristics that enable sliding a golf-club grip during insertion and extraction from a compartment.

[0055] In other possible embodiments of the present invention (illustrated in FIGS. **6-8**, **10-11**, **16-18**, and **19-21**, for example), a golf-club grip protection device **10** comprises a plurality of grip-sleeve compartments **12** arranged in a generally symmetrical pattern of about three compartments wide by about two compartments wide providing protection for a set of six golf clubs. Each compartment **12** is joined to an adjacent compartment by suitable fastening means such as a temporary hook and loop fastener, snaps, buttons, zippers and the like or, alternatively, a more permanent fastening means such as an adhesive, stitching, riveting, bonding, melding, or forming the multiple compartments as a single unit.

[0056] One feature of the present invention, shown in FIGS. **6-7**, for example, includes a spacer means, such as, a spacer **13**, placed on a face of the device **10** opposite the optional clip **14**. The spacer serves as a rest for the device **10** when placed on a surface, such as the ground. The spacer **13** helps lift the golf-club shafts from the ground and, therefore, keeps the shafts free of moisture, dirt, and debris. Additionally, the spacer **13** facilitates easy pick up of the clubs in the device.

[0057] Other arrangements of compartments are contemplated. For example, FIG. **1** shows an arrangement of four individual compartments that can be connected by fastening means, such as a Velcro-type hook and loop fastener **22**. Accordingly, one sidewall comprises an exterior surface having a fastening means for connecting the device to a complimentary fastening means on a second device. As illustrated in FIG. **1**, the compartments **12** are arranged in a 2x2 configuration; however a 1x4 arrangement would work equally advantageously. Further, additional configurations are readily grasped by those skilled in the art and could include a 2x4 arrangement for eight clubs or, as illustrated in FIGS. **2-5** and **9**, for example, an arrangement of a single compartment for use alone. FIGS. **10-12** show an arrangement consisting of 2 compartments that convert into one compartment. And, FIGS. **13-15** illustrate a nesting pair of compartments.

[0058] FIGS. **2-5** and **9** illustrate embodiments of the invention consisting of a single compartment **10** for use by itself or in combination with other single compartments.

[0059] In another possible embodiment, the protection device **10** includes at least one compartment **12** consisting of a rigid, generally rectilinear tube-like structure with a length of about 12-inches and an outer diameter of about 3-inches.

[0060] In another embodiment, a multi-compartmented device **10** may be arranged in a 3x2 pattern and have an overall width of about 3-inches and a depth of about 3-inches to about 5-inches and an overall length of about 12-inches, for example.

[0061] One suitable material includes molded plastic, providing a rigid structure for supporting the grips of golf clubs while also protecting the grips from moisture and debris.

[0062] In a particular embodiment, a protective device for a long putter includes a compartment **12** having a body length of about 24-inches. Alternatively, the protector device **10** for a putter comprises two compartments of about 12-inches each with a hinging mechanism or bendable material. For example, FIGS. **10-12** illustrate a possible configuration of this type of device **10** according to one embodiment of the present invention. FIG. **10** shows two adjacent compartments (**30** and **32**). The compartments bendably pivot, as shown by FIG. **11**, resulting in one, long compartment consisting of cooperating lower compartment **30** and upper compartment **32**. This enables a club, such as a putter, to insert grip-end first into the extended-length device **10**. The upper compartment **32** includes a through-hole and passage for the grip of the club **P** and the lower compartment **32** receives the grip at one end and has an opposite end that may have a through-hole or may be capped or otherwise closed. As shown, the invention **10**, a protective device for golf-club grips, includes this engaging means consisting of a pivot element **28** positioned adjacent to the open end of the first sleeve and intermediate to the first opening of the second sleeve to enable pivotable rotation through at least about 180 degrees. In another embodiment of the present invention, a double-length sleeve is formed by releasably coupling two single-length sections, end on end. This is accomplished by providing two similar strips of a hook and loop fastener, one strip each placed on an exterior perimeter of the respective sleeve body, and a separate strip of a mating fastener material. In this example, the engaging means comprises a first fastening element arranged about a first exterior perimeter of the first sleeve body, the first fastening element adapted to selectively receive a mating binding element and a second fastening element arranged about a second exterior perimeter of the second sleeve body and adapted to selectively receive the mating binding element.

[0063] For example, a one-half inch strip of a hook and loop fastener material locates at each, opposite end of each single-length compartment. A separate and mating one-inch wide strip of hook and loop fastener material selectively engages the complimentary section of material on one of the single-length compartments. By placing the two, single-length compartments adjacent to each other, oriented end-on-end, the separate, one-inch section of material can be placed over and wrap around the circumference of the adjoined two compartments. This allows the golfer to selectively create a double-length grip protector and convert it back to two single-length grip protectors, as desired.

[0064] Other releasable coupling means can be readily used to form a double-length sleeve from two single-length sleeves. For example, a nesting feature whereby one sleeve end is adapted to receive a second end. Or, a separate coupling fixture can be used whereby each end of the respective sleeve slideably fits in the coupling fixture. Similarly, other fastening means besides a hook and loop fastener may be employed. For example, a zipper, snaps, or buttons may be used.

[0065] FIGS. 13-15 illustrate yet another rendition of an extended length grip protection device 10. In this illustrated embodiment, the long-putter-grip protective device 10 includes a lower compartment 30, which is adapted to slideably receive a telescoping and nesting upper compartment 32. As would be appreciated by those skilled in the art, this version of the present invention allows for adjustable length of the protection device to better suit the grip length of any golf club. Thus, as shown, the invention 10, a protective device for golf-club grips, includes an engaging means comprising a telescoping member element positioned adjacent to the open end of the first sleeve and intermediate to the first opening of the second sleeve to enable slideable movement between the first and second sleeve.

[0066] In another configuration, a multi-compartmented device 10 consisting of a grouping of generally hollow tubes in a 3x2 arrangement sit next to each other inside a cover which goes across the open ends and down the outside of the array of tubes. The open ends, but not necessarily the sides of the tubes, are coupled to the cover by an adhesive. Optionally, and not necessarily, adjacent tubes may be coupled together. It is sufficient that the cover retain the array of tubes without using adhesives between individual and adjacent tubes.

[0067] Other configurations are possible—round, one material instead of two, with/without handle, individual use, different pairings 3x3, 4x2, 2x2, etc. . . . , both ends open, with elastic-type closure at one or both ends, loose fit, snug fit, crushable, and compact. In many of the figures the same reference numeral is used to demonstrate the same or similar component in different embodiments of the invention. Some figures omit features to more clearly demonstrate certain aspects of the present invention.

[0068] FIG. 22 shows a top view of an alternative embodiment according to the present invention. This embodiment includes a protective device 10 comprising a plurality of individual protective sleeve elements commonly joined by a connecting element 50. Each individual sleeve element is configured to receive a golf-club grip. Accordingly, one or more sleeve elements may be relatively long in length to accommodate, for example, a putter (shown as element 52 in the drawing). While one or more other sleeve elements are relatively shorter for other clubs, such as a wedge. Each sleeve element dangles individually from the common strap element 50. For storage and otherwise to enhance convenience this device may have an optional retaining-band element (for example, a rubber band) to collectively secure the plurality of sleeve elements for more compact storage and ease of handling, for example.

[0069] FIG. 23 is a front view of the embodiment of FIG. 22 and more clearly illustrates the protective device 10 for a golf-club grip. The device 10 includes a first substantially tubular sleeve body 12, having a generally elliptical cross

section, and comprising at least one sidewall adapted to form a compartment, the body having an opening at one end, and the body being adapted to slideably receive the golf-club grip. A first strap element 50 coupled to the first sleeve body and a second sleeve body 52 adapted to receive a second golf-club grip, the second sleeve body coupled to a second strap element 52. The strap element can be a single continuous rope-like member, or may be optionally configured from several individual straps—each dedicated to a specific sleeve body—and commonly connected by fastening means well understood in the art.

[0070] The protective device consists of a plurality of sleeve bodies, for example five sleeve bodies (however, it being understood that any number of sleeve bodies may be combined according to the specific needs of the individual golfer and such embodiments are contemplated and included in the present invention). Each sleeve body couples to a corresponding strap element at a strap-element first end and a strap-element second end couples to an adjacent sleeve body corresponding strap element second end whereby each sleeve body is connected to the plurality of sleeve bodies by means of the corresponding strap element.

[0071] The protective device 10 includes at least one substantially tubular sleeve body 52 comprising a long-side-wall element adapted for use by a long golf-club grip and the second substantially tubular sleeve body 12 comprises a comparatively shorter sidewall adapted for use by a comparatively shorter golf-club grip.

[0072] FIGS. 24 and 25 show a nesting design for a protective device 10 according to the present invention. The protective device 10 for at least one golf-club grip includes a first substantially tubular sleeve body 12, having a generally elliptical cross section, and comprising at least one sidewall adapted to form a compartment, the body having an opening at one end, and the body being adapted to slideably receive the golf-club grip; and a second substantially tubular sleeve body 54, having a generally elliptical cross section, and comprising at least one sidewall adapted to form a compartment, the body having an opening at one end, and the body being adapted to slideably receive the golf-club grip, the second sleeve body further being adapted to nest inside the first sleeve body.

[0073] As shown, the device 10 includes three cooperating and nesting sleeve bodies. However, it is readily appreciated that any number of nesting sleeve bodies may be combined, and the drawing should, therefore, not be construed as limiting the scope and spirit of the invention.

[0074] The protective device 10 includes a third substantially tubular sleeve body 56, having a generally elliptical cross section, and comprising at least one sidewall adapted to form a compartment, the body having an opening at one end, and the body being adapted to slideably receive the golf-club grip, the third sleeve body further being adapted to nest inside the second sleeve body.

[0075] The protective device 10 further includes a cap element 58 adapted to releasably couple to a bottom-portion of the first substantially tubular sleeve body 12, the bottom portion being arranged opposite the open end. This sleeve body 12 includes a long-side-wall element adapted for use by a long golf-club grip and the second substantially tubular sleeve body 52 comprises a comparatively shorter sidewall adapted for use by a comparatively shorter golf-club grip.

[0076] The foregoing embodiments of the present invention are intended as representational examples and should not be construed as limiting.

I claim:

1. A protective device for a golf-club grip, the device comprising:

a first substantially tubular sleeve body having a generally elliptical cross section and comprising at least one sidewall adapted to form a compartment, the body having an opening at one end, and the body being adapted to slideably receive the golf-club grip;

a first strap element coupled to the first sleeve body; and

a second sleeve body adapted to receive a second golf-club grip, the second sleeve body coupled to a second strap element.

2. The protective device of claim 1 wherein the first strap element couples to the second strap element.

3. The protective device of claim 1 further comprising a plurality of sleeve bodies and a plurality of strap elements, each sleeve body coupled to a corresponding strap element at a strap-element first end, and wherein a strap-element second end couples to an adjacent sleeve body corresponding strap element second end whereby each sleeve body is connected to the plurality of sleeve bodies by means of the corresponding strap element.

4. The protective device of claim 1 wherein the first substantially tubular sleeve body comprises a long-sidewall element adapted for use by a long golf-club grip and the second substantially tubular sleeve body comprises a comparatively shorter sidewall adapted for use by a comparatively shorter golf-club grip.

5. The protective device of claim 1 further comprising a retaining band element adapted to selectively engage one or

more substantially tubular sleeve bodies to provide a compact storing means for the protective device.

6. A protective device for at least one golf-club grip, the device comprising:

a first substantially tubular sleeve body, having a generally elliptical cross section, and comprising at least one sidewall adapted to form a compartment, the body having an opening at one end, and the body being adapted to slideably receive the golf-club grip; and

a second substantially tubular sleeve body, having a generally elliptical cross section, and comprising at least one sidewall adapted to form a compartment, the body having an opening at one end, and the body being adapted to slideably receive the golf-club grip, the second sleeve body further being adapted to nest inside the first sleeve body.

7. The protective device of claim 6 further comprising a third substantially tubular sleeve body, having a generally elliptical cross section, and comprising at least one sidewall adapted to form a compartment, the body having an opening at one end, and the body being adapted to slideably receive the golf-club grip, the third sleeve body further being adapted to nest inside the second sleeve body.

8. The protective device of claim 6 further comprising a cap element adapted to releasably couple to a bottom-portion of the first substantially tubular sleeve body, the bottom portion being arranged opposite the open end.

9. The protective device of claim 6 wherein the first substantially tubular sleeve body comprises a long-sidewall element adapted for use by a long golf-club grip and the second substantially tubular sleeve body comprises a comparatively shorter sidewall adapted for use by a comparatively shorter golf-club grip.

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