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(54) **TEAM SHOE SET WITH DIFFERING SOLES**

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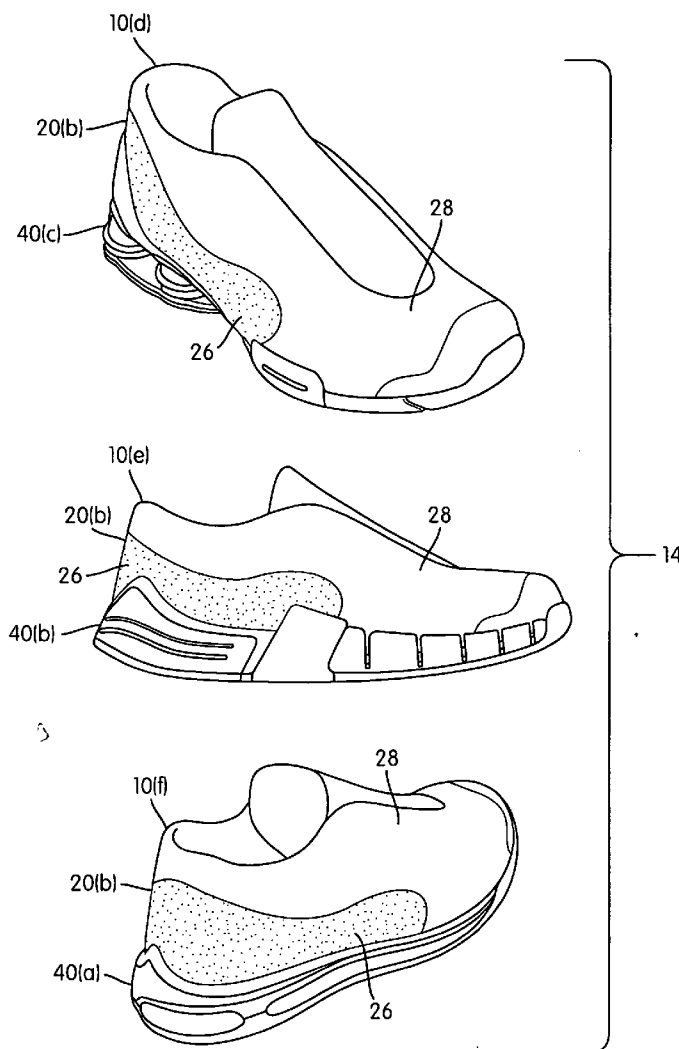
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A set of shoes for use by members of a team. The shoes allow for a uniform appearance in a team environment while providing an individualized sole unit. The shoes of the set have matched uppers and differing sole designs. The sole designs may differ based on cushioning type used in the midsole or may differ based on the outsole of the shoe. The matched upper, which may be color matched, provides a uniform appearance for the team. The individualized sole of each shoe takes into account comfort, performance and/or safety preferences for each player.

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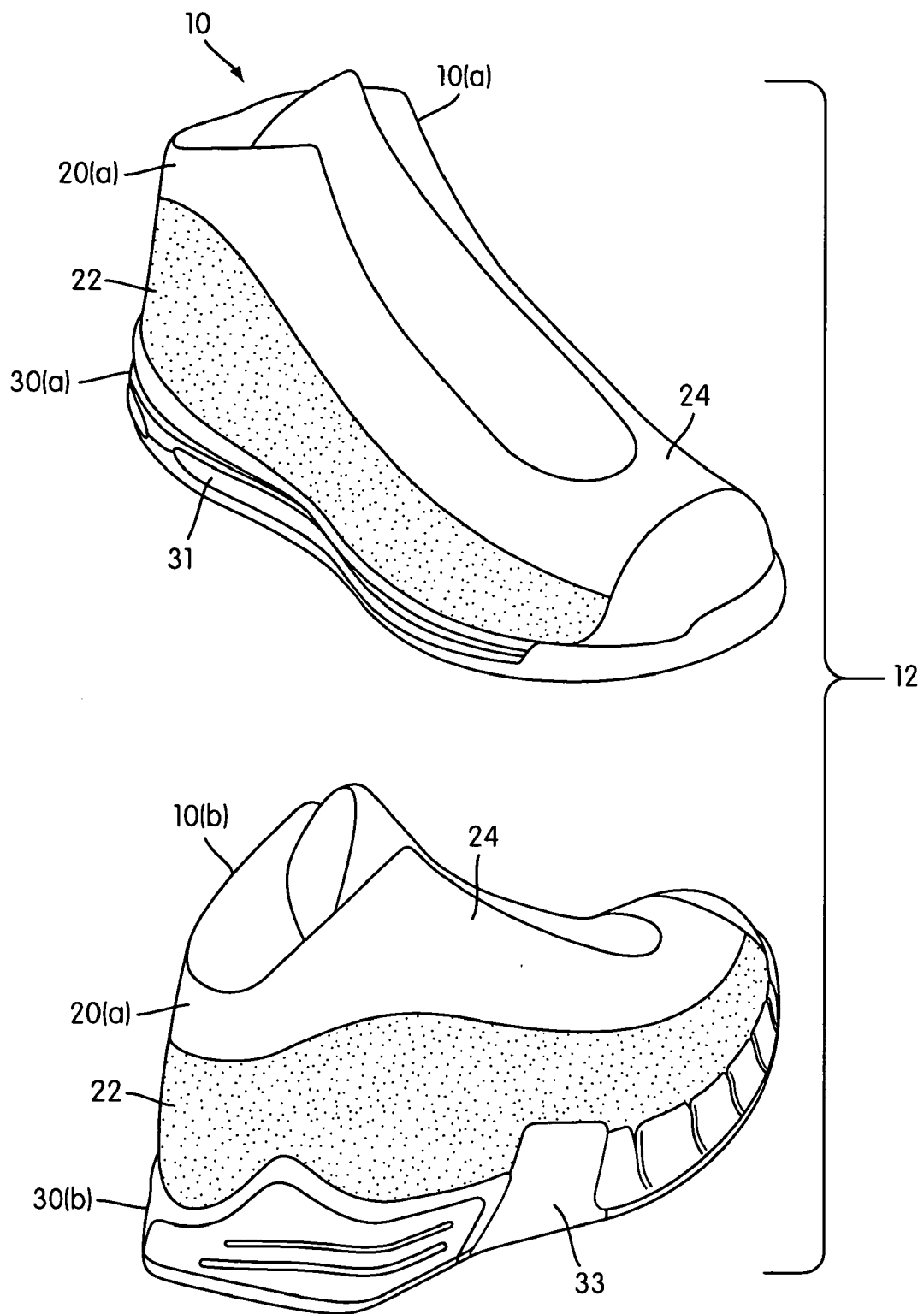


FIG. 1A

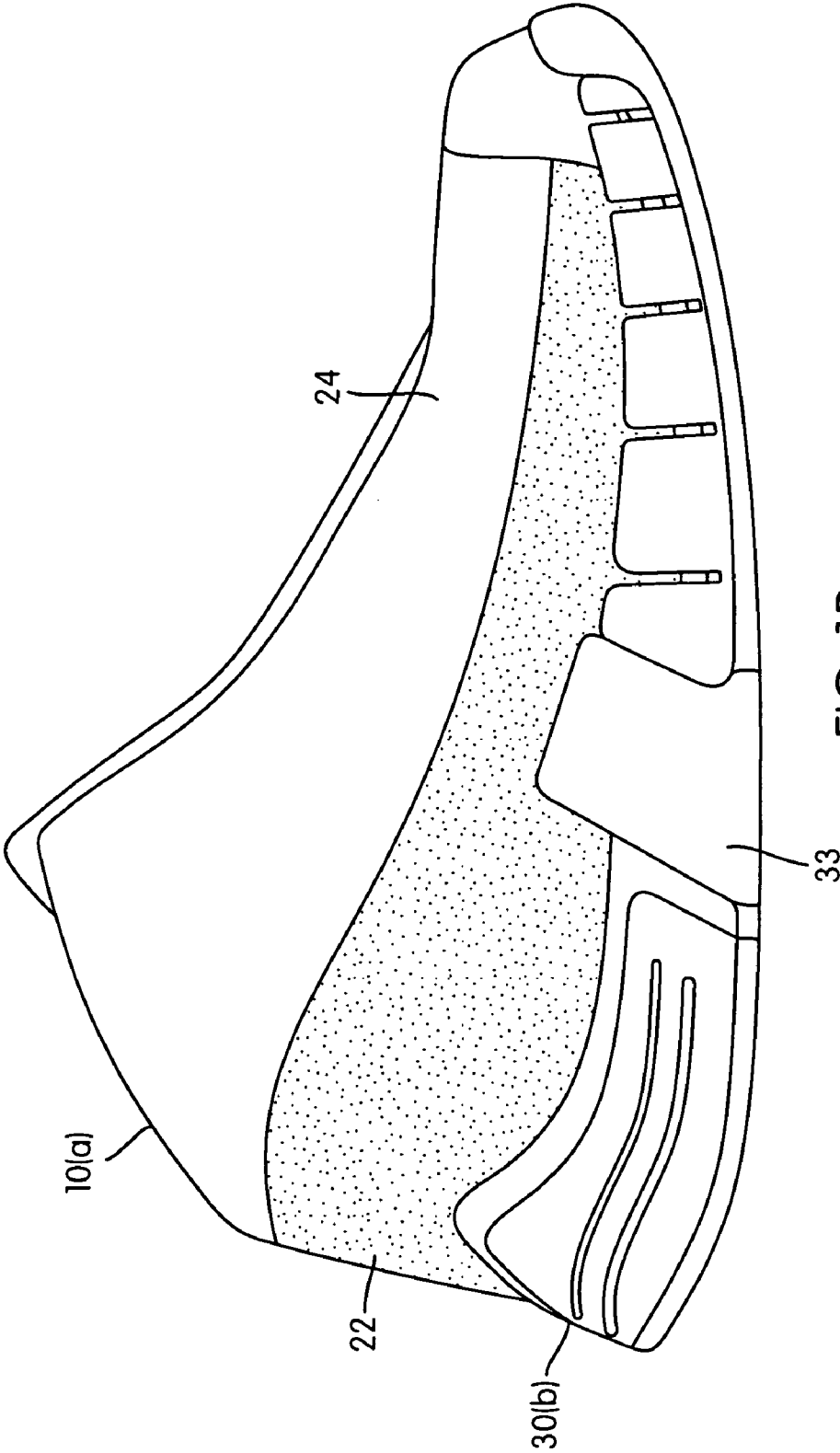


FIG. 1B

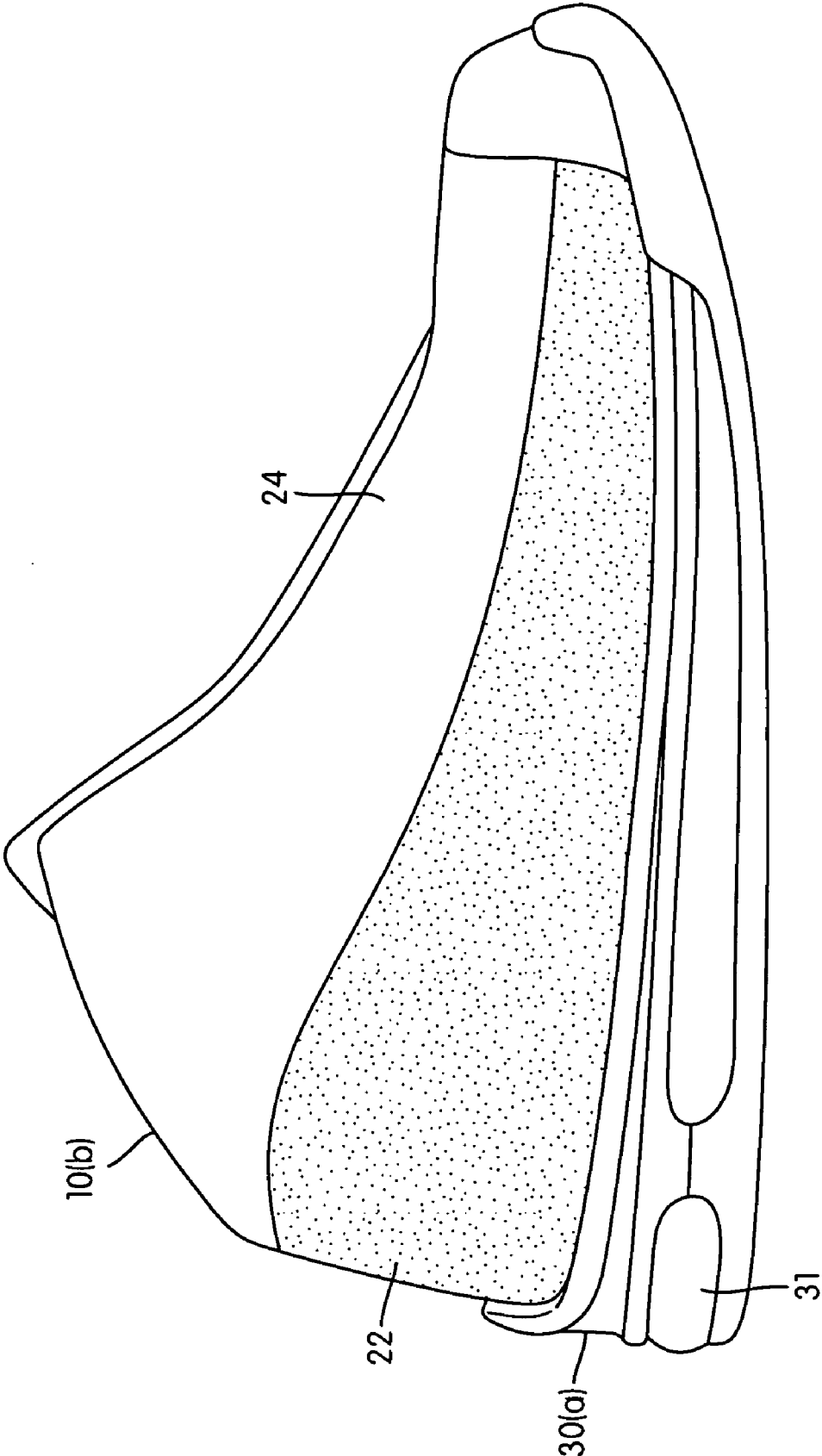


FIG. 1C

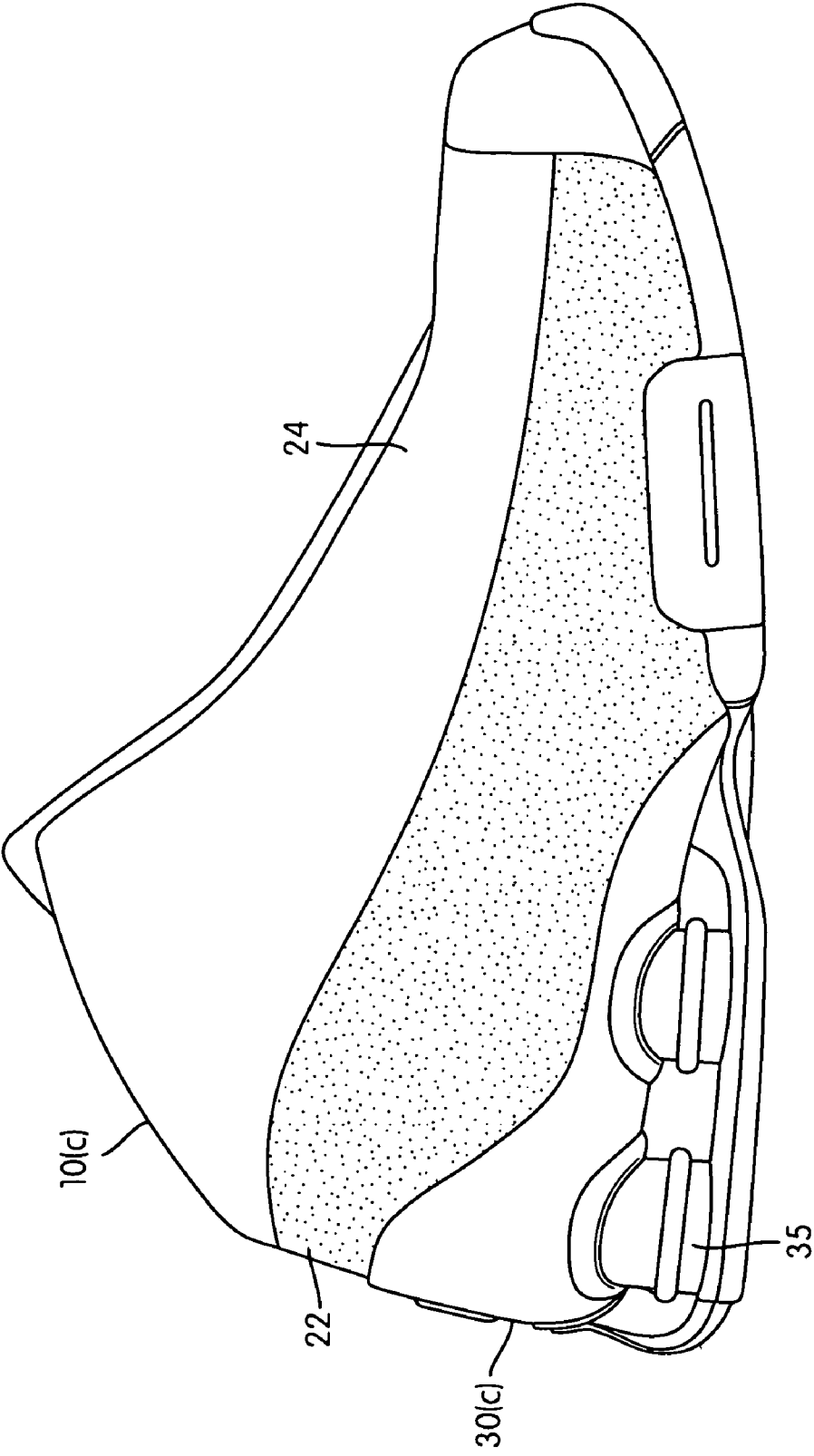


FIG. 1D

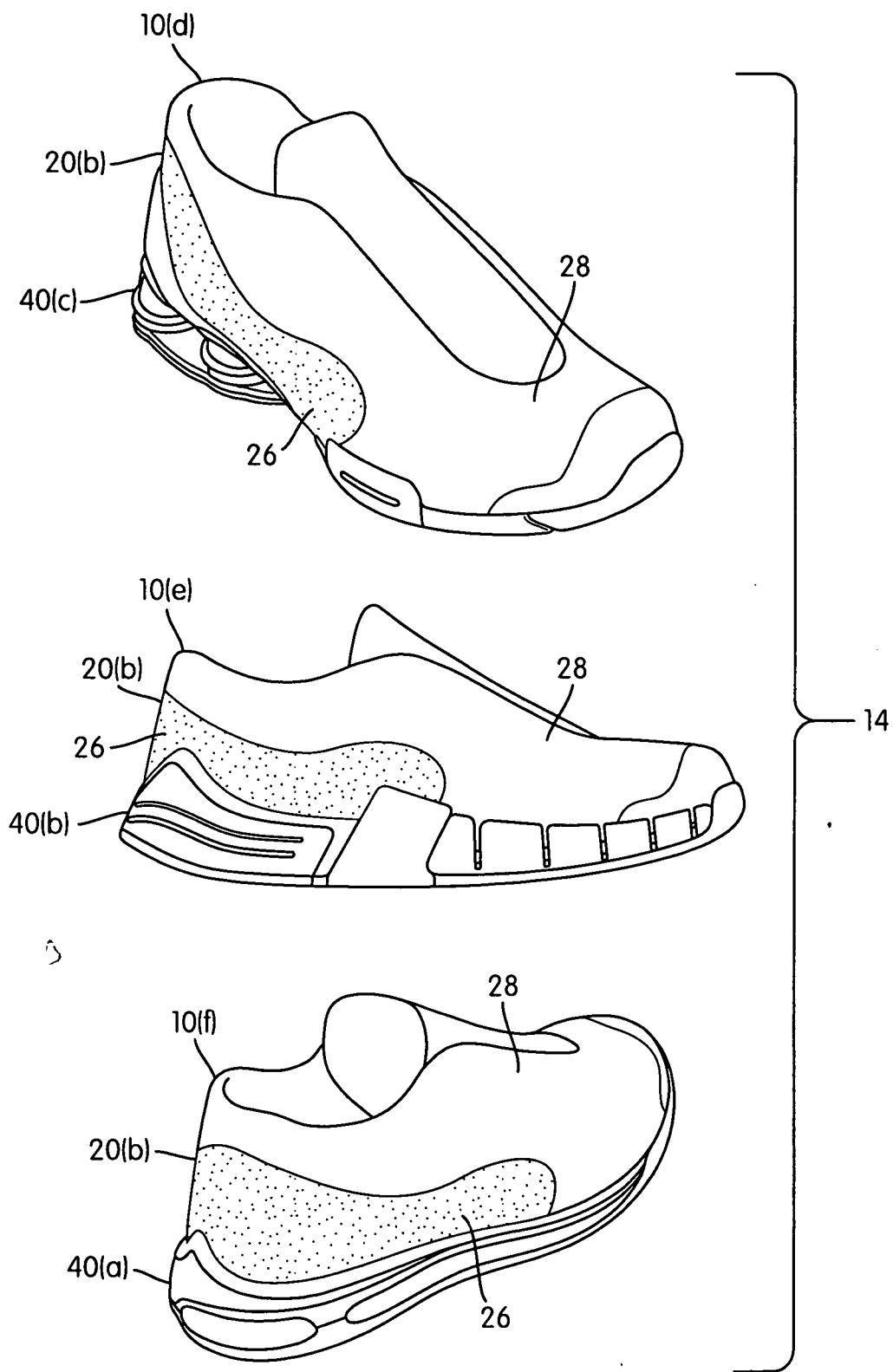


FIG. 2

TEAM SHOE SET WITH DIFFERING SOLES

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] This invention relates to the field of footwear. More specifically, the invention relates to sets of athletic shoes for use by team and squads.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Athletic shoes can be thought of as having two major components, an upper and a sole. The upper is secured to the sole and provides a cavity for receiving a foot. The upper is generally formed from multiple elements stitched or adhesively bonded together to form a structure for comfortably receiving a foot.

[0003] The sole is the interface between the foot and ground and is intended to provide traction, support and cushioning for the wearer. Many soles have a multi-part construction including an outsole and a midsole. The outsole is generally designed for durability and traction. The midsole is commonly designed to absorb the force created as the shoe contacts the ground. There are a number of different cushioning systems that have been used in midsole designs. Some examples of these cushioning systems that are known in the art include: column type supports (including such that have been marketed by NIKE, INC. under the trademark NIKE SHOX®), a foam puck type support (including such that have been marketed by NIKE, INC. under the trademark IMPAX™), foam units, bladders with or without internal tensile elements, as well as several others.

[0004] Most team sports require players to wear a uniform. The purpose of the uniform is to identify each player as a member of the team, as well as to provide a sense of unity among the team and a symbol that an outsider can easily associate with the team.

[0005] Uniformed shoes have been used as part of the uniform. A uniform shoe gives each player a shoe identical in appearance and function. Thus, for some teams, each player wears the same shoe design with each model differing only for size. While a team shoe satisfies the need for a uniform appearance, each individual player may have differing needs for comfort, cushioning and/or safety. Other teams have allowed players to select their own shoes if they share a common color scheme with all other players' shoes. Such an approach also exhibits drawbacks.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] The following is a simplified summary of the invention to provide a better understanding of some aspects of the invention. It is not intended to be an extensive overview of the invention or aspects thereof. Nor is it intended to identify or define critical elements of the invention. This summary merely describes some aspects of the invention in a simplified manner as a prelude to the detailed description hereinafter.

[0007] To maximize a player's performance, the individual needs of each player must be considered. One aspect of the present invention provides a team set of articles of footwear that present a uniform appearance by way of a matched upper, while providing the comfort, cushioning and safety that each player requires by way of a personalized sole.

[0008] In another aspect of the invention, a team set of articles of footwear provides customized performance for each member of a team.

[0009] Additional objects of the invention will be evident from the figures and detailed description below.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0010] FIG. 1A is a perspective view of a set of articles of footwear according to an aspect of the present invention.

[0011] FIG. 1B is a lateral side view of one shoe of from the set of articles of footwear shown in FIG. 1A.

[0012] FIG. 1C is a lateral side view of a second shoe from the set of articles of footwear shown in FIG. 1A.

[0013] FIG. 1D is a lateral side view of a third shoe from the set of articles of footwear that could be included as part of the set of articles of footwear shown in FIG. 1A.

[0014] FIG. 2 are perspective and side views of articles of footwear according to an aspect of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0015] In the following description of the various embodiments, reference is made to the accompanying drawings that depict illustrative arrangements in which the invention may be practiced. It is understood that other embodiments may be utilized and modifications may be made without departing from the scope of the present invention. Additionally, various terms used herein are defined below.

[0016] The term "team" is herein defined as an association of participants in a sport or variety of events within a sport or sporting event, who represent a common entity.

[0017] As used herein, the term "team set of shoes" is defined as at least two pairs of articles of footwear used by participants in a sport on a common team.

[0018] As used herein, the term "differing soles" is defined as two pairs of soles within the set of shoes that have either different midsoles or different outsoles. The differing midsoles may include several cushioning types that are well known in the art, e.g., foam only, fluid containing bladder with the fluid being gas, liquid or gel, column type support (including such that have been marketed by NIKE, INC. under the trademark NIKE SHOX®), bladder/foam mix, foam puck type support (including such that have been marketed by NIKE, INC. under the trademark IMPAX™) or bladder with tensile elements.

[0019] As used herein, the term "matched upper" is herein defined as shoe uppers of different pairs having a generally similar or identical external appearance formed by overlay shapes, stitch designs and/or perforations regardless of size and/or proportion.

[0020] The term "color matched upper" is herein defined as a "matched upper" having a substantially similar color scheme.

[0021] A set of articles of footwear, e.g., a set of shoes, is shown in FIGS. 1-2 and is designated generally by reference numeral 10. As will be evident from the description below, the shoe is part of a set of shoes intended to provide a uniform appearance while allowing each wearer to have the sole structure that best suits each individual player's per-

formance needs or preferences. The ability to individualize each shoe within the set provides each player with the opportunity to have the under foot support, such as a cushioning type, necessary to maximize comfort, performance and/or safety.

[0022] FIG. 1A shows a first embodiment of the present invention. FIG. 1A depicts a set 12 of shoes made up of two different shoes 10(a), 10(b). Each shoe 10(a) and 10(b) is one half of a separate pair. The shoes 10(a) and 10(b) in the set have matched uppers 20(a).

[0023] The varying perspective views of shoes 10(a) and 10(b) illustrate the matched upper 20(a) of the shoes. The matched uppers results from the uppers having a similar or identical appearance based on the overlay shapes, stitch designs and/or perforations used, regardless of size and/or proportion. In addition, the tongue portions may be identical to the other shoes in the set and any additional support elements used, e.g., a strap, additional material overlapping the base material, may be generally identical. These additional support elements may be arranged to provide additional support to the player's foot where needed, while also contributing to the general appearance of the shoe. Any ornamental design or team logos may also be generally identical in order to maintain the matched appearance of the uppers. The figure depicts the upper in the most generic of designs to indicate that the uppers are substantially similar, regardless of the design pattern employed.

[0024] FIG. 1A further illustrates pairs of the team set of shoes as having differing sole units 30(a) and 30(b). The sole 30(a) of shoe 10(a) differs from the sole 30(b) of shoe 10(b), as depicted. Sole 30(a) uses one cushioning type while sole 30(b) uses an alternative cushioning system. The differing sole units 30(a), 30(b) are intended to provide the cushioning system or type specific to each player's needs that assists to maximize that player's performance, comfort and safety.

[0025] As shown in FIG. 1A, sole 30(a) employs a bladder type cushioning system in the midsole, while sole 30(b) employs a foam type cushioning system in the midsole. While those are two commonly used types of cushioning systems, as discussed above, they are not the only types available for use with this invention. Any combination of cushioning systems in different shoes in the set, including all of the cushioning systems recited in this specification, are contemplated as being in part of the set of shoes.

[0026] FIGS. 1B-1D depict a detailed view of the individual shoes of the present invention. FIG. 1B shows an enlarged side view of shoe 10(a) from FIG. 1. FIG. 1C shows an enlarged side view of shoe 10(b) from FIG. 1. FIG. 1D is a side view of a third shoe 10(c) that could be included as part of the set of articles of footwear shown in FIG. 1A. Each shoe depicted, 10(a), 10(b) and 10(c), is seen from the lateral side. This lateral view provides a clear illustration of the features of the present invention. Each shoe, 10(a), 10(b) and 10(c) is seen to have a matched upper 20(a), 20(b), and 20(c). In this example, the uppers 20(a)-20(c) have matched uppers formed by similar shaped lower and upper side panels 22 and 24, respectively.

[0027] The matched uppers 20(a)-20(c) may also bear colors having similar colors in similar locations making them "color matched uppers". For example, the lower side panel 22 of the uppers 20(a)-20(c) may be a first color. The

upper lower side panel 24 of the uppers 20(a)-20(c) may be a second color, different than the first color.

[0028] This color matched upper may represent the colors of a given team. The appearance of the upper of shoes 10(a), 10(b) and 10(c) may also be virtually identical.

[0029] FIGS. 1A-1D illustrate other aspects of the set of shoes. FIG. 1B shows shoe 10(a) having the matched upper 20(a) with a sole unit 50(a) that employs a foam type cushioning system in the midsole. A portion of the outsole 33 may also wrap up onto the side of the upper to provide additional support. FIG. 1C shows shoe 10(b) having an upper 20(c) and a sole unit 50(b) that uses a bladder type cushioning system in the midsole. In this illustrative arrangement, the bladder element 31 is externally visible. FIG. 1D shows shoe 10(c) having an upper 20(c) and a sole unit 50(c) that uses a column type cushioning system in the midsole with multiple column elements 35. Although these three particular cushioning types are depicted in the figures, the present invention is not limited to only these types of cushioning systems.

[0030] Accordingly, the shoes of FIGS. 1A, 1B, and 1C are examples of shoes 10(a), 10(b) and 10(c) having matched uppers but have differing sole units. In the depicted embodiment, the sole units each also have different cushioning types. In an embodiment not shown, the sole units may have different outsoles. The matched uppers provide the uniform appearance desired by members of a team, while the differing sole units allow for a shoe that meets each individual player's needs in order to maximize comfort, performance and safety.

[0031] FIG. 2 shows a second embodiment of the current invention. The team set of shoes 14 of FIG. 2 illustrates three shoes 10(d), 10(e) and 10(f) that are exemplary of three pairs of shoes contained in this team set of shoes. The team set of shoes 14 have matched uppers 20(b), but the upper design 20(b) is different from the upper design 20(a) depicted in FIGS. 1A-1D. Each shoe 10(d), 10(e), 10(f) of this figure utilizes a different sole unit design. In this embodiment, the sole units 40(a), 40(b), 40(c) also have a different cushioning type.

[0032] Accordingly, the shoes of FIG. 2 are also examples of shoes 10(d), 10(e) and 10(f) having matched uppers but have differing sole units. In the depicted embodiment, the sole units each also have different cushioning types. In an embodiment not shown, the sole units may have different outsoles. The matched uppers provide the uniform appearance desired by members of a team, while the differing midsoles allow for each team member to individualize his or her shoe to provide a user-preferred cushioning system. Such a selection may be based on what the user prefers and may take into account the requirements of the team member or player, such as medical needs, performance needs, personal preference, and the like.

[0033] For example, team member 1 may require additional spring in the midsole for enhanced performance and may choose a column type cushioning system. Team member 2 may have medical needs requiring more stability in the midsole to prevent ankle injuries and may choose a foam type cushioning system to provide that additional stability. Team member 3 may desire a lightweight shoe and may choose a bladder type cushioning system. Team member for

may prefer the look of the foam puck type support and may choose that cushioning type. Although each team member may choose the midsole that accommodates his or her needs, each shoe has a matched upper.

[0034] In addition, the set of shoes depicted in FIG. 2 depict a set of shoes with each shoe having a matched upper and a different midsole. However, the invention is not limited to an arrangement wherein each member of a team has a shoe with a midsole different from all others on the team. For instance, on a team of five players, team members 1, 2 and 3 may each choose one of the midsole cushioning types depicted in the set of shoes in FIG. 2. The remaining two players, team members 4 and 5, may choose a shoe with a matched upper having a different midsole from those depicted in FIG. 2 or may choose a shoe having the same midsole as one of players 1, 2 or 3.

[0035] It is understood that the upper designs shown in the figures are merely illustrative and that any desired set of matching uppers could be used. Additionally, the two distinct sections of the upper shown are merely illustrative of how color may be used in the upper. The present invention is not limited to the use of color in only two sections.

[0036] The present invention is well suited for sports teams with multiple players. For instance, a basketball team may require a shoe with a uniform appearance. However, one player may require greater stability in his sole, while another may require increased cushioning. Some teams have required each member of the team to wear identical shoes, thereby sacrificing the ability to meet the needs of each individual player. Other teams have allowed each player to choose a shoe that meets his performance needs while maintaining a common color scheme for the upper. Rather than requiring each player to wear a shoe that may not meet his needs, or allowing each player to wear different shoes and sacrifice the appearance of a team shoe, the present invention provides the uniform appearance desired, as well as satisfies the performance requirements of each individual player.

[0037] In another example, the members of a running team may require different sole arrangements to accommodate each member's running style, e.g., whether the runner is a rearfoot, forefoot or midfoot runner, or over or under pronates. The present invention can satisfy the performance needs of each runner while allowing them to maintain their team appearance.

[0038] In addition, the present invention is not restricted to use by teams on which each player participates in the same sport. For instance, members of a track and field team participating in different events have different needs in their article of footwear. A long-jumper could not perform to the best of his abilities in the same shoe as a distance runner. Although each participant is involved in a different activity, they are all part of a team. The present invention would provide the appearance of a team shoe by way of the uniform upper. However, it would allow each participant to have the appropriate sole for his or her activity and performance needs, coupled to the uniform upper.

[0039] The present invention is not restricted to use by players on a team. The uniform appearance of these shoes would allow coaches, trainers and others in positions of support to appear as part of the team while having the

comfort of the cushioning type that best suits their needs. For instance, a basketball team trainer may spend most of his time standing or crouching. His shoe could have the same matched upper as that of the players on the team. However, his sole could be of a cushioning type that would provide better support for standing and more flexibility to accommodate the bend of the foot when the trainer is crouching to attend to a player on the floor.

[0040] Further, the present invention may be provided as part of a kit. Such a kit may include a plurality of pairs of shoes, each pair with an upper matched to the other pairs, but having differing soles. The differing soles may be due to different cushioning types used in the midsole or different outsoles. The multiple pairs of shoes could be shipped in one container via a common carrier to a single destination.

[0041] While the various features of the team set of shoes work together to achieve the advantages previously described, it is recognized that individual features and sub-combinations of these features can be used to obtain some of the aforementioned advantages without the necessity to adopt all of these features. The present invention is disclosed above and in the accompanying drawings with reference to a variety of embodiments. The purpose served by disclosure of the embodiments, however, is to provide an example of the various aspects embodied in the invention, not to limit the scope of the invention. One skilled in the art will recognize that numerous variations and modifications may be made to the embodiments without departing from the scope of the present invention, as defined by the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A team set of shoes comprising:

a first pair of shoes and a second pair of shoes;

the first pair of shoes having an upper and sole;

the second pair of shoes having an upper and a sole;

wherein the first and second pairs of shoes have matched uppers and the sole of the first pair is different from the sole of the second pair;

wherein the sole of the first pair includes a first cushioning type and the sole of the second pair includes a second cushioning type, different from the first cushioning type.

2. The team set of shoes of claim 1 further comprising a third pair of shoes, the third pair of shoes having an upper and a sole, wherein the upper of the third pair of shoes is matched to the upper of the first and second pairs of shoes.

3. The team set of shoes of claim 2 wherein the sole of the third pair of shoes includes a third cushioning type, wherein the third cushioning type is different from the first and second cushioning types.

4. The team set of shoes of claim 3, wherein the first pair of shoes includes a first outsole and the second pair of shoes includes a second outsole and wherein the first and second outsole are different.

5. The team set of shoes of claim 1, wherein the upper of the first pair of shoes and the upper of the second pair of shoes are color matched.

6. The team set of shoes of claim 5, wherein the upper of the first pair of shoes and the upper of the second pair of shoes are of identical designs.

7. The team set of shoes of claim 1, wherein the first and second pairs of shoes are contained in a kit.

8. The team set of shoes of claim 1 further comprising at least five pairs of shoes, each of the five pairs having an upper and a sole unit, wherein the upper of each of the five pairs is matched and wherein the soles of the five pairs comprise at least two different cushioning types.

9. The team set of shoes of claim 8 wherein the soles of three of the five pairs include different cushioning types, and wherein the uppers of all five of the pairs are color matched.

10. The team set of shoes of claim 8 wherein one of the cushioning types is a column type.

11. A method of providing a set of shoes to multiple players on a team, the method comprising:

identifying a midsole cushioning type for multiple players on the team;

providing a set of shoes having matched uppers and differing sole designs based on the identified midsole cushioning types.

12. The method of claim 11 wherein the providing step further includes providing at least three pairs of shoes having matched uppers and differing sole designs based on the identified midsole cushioning types.

13. The method of claim 12, further comprising the step of identifying the matched design for an upper based on properties relating to the team,

14. The method of claim 12, wherein the providing step further includes providing at the least three pairs of shoes with different outsole designs.

15. The method of claim 11 wherein the providing step further includes providing at least five pairs of shoes having matched uppers and including soles having at least two different cushioning types.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein one of the cushioning types is a column type cushioning system and a second one of the cushioning types is a bladder type cushioning system.

17. The method of claim 11, wherein the providing step further includes providing at least five pairs of shoes having matched uppers and including soles having at least three different cushioning types.

18. The method of claim 11, wherein the providing step includes providing the set of shoes together in a common carrier.

19. A team set of shoes comprising: at least three pairs of shoes, each pair of shoes having an upper and a sole, the pairs having a color matched upper with similar panel designs, and the sole of each pair having a different cushioning type from the sole unit of the other two pairs.

20. The team set of shoes of claim 19, wherein each of the pairs of shoes further includes an outsole configured for use in the sport of basketball.

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