US009278275B1

(12) **United States Patent**
Braithwaite

(10) **Patent No.: US 9,278,275 B1**
(45) **Date of Patent: Mar. 8, 2016**

(54) **ATHLETIC MOUTHGUARD HOLDER**

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(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

(21) Appl. No.: **14/560,241**

(22) Filed: **Dec. 4, 2014**

(51) **Int. Cl.**

A63B 71/10	(2006.01)
A63B 71/08	(2006.01)
A42B 3/04	(2006.01)
A42B 1/24	(2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC ***A63B 71/085*** (2013.01); ***A42B 3/0406*** (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
CPC A63B 71/085; A63B 2071/088; A63B 2209/08; A63B 2071/086; A63B 2208/12; A63B 2243/0045; A63B 2243/0066; A63B 71/0036; A63B 2243/0025; A63B 2243/005; A63B 71/10; A61C 7/08; A61C 19/02; A61C 5/14; A42B 3/0406; A42B 3/205; Y10T 24/13
See application file for complete search history.

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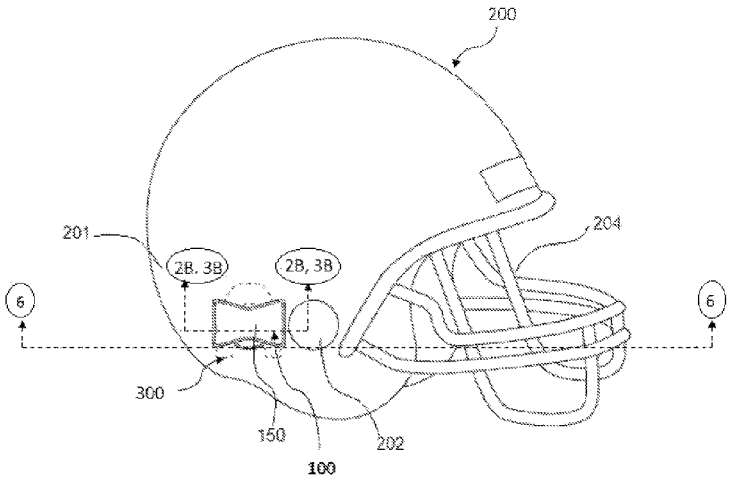
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A mouthguard holder for temporarily securing an athletic mouthguard to an exterior side of a helmet is provided. The mouthguard holder generally comprising: a support post base adapted to contact the exterior surface of the helmet, a support post with a first end and second end, a retaining member coupled to the support post at the support post second end the retaining member radially extending out away from the support post forming a mouthguard receiving pocket between the support post base and the retaining member where the receiving pocket is adapted to removably secure a mouthguard to the exterior side of the helmet.

15 Claims, 5 Drawing Sheets



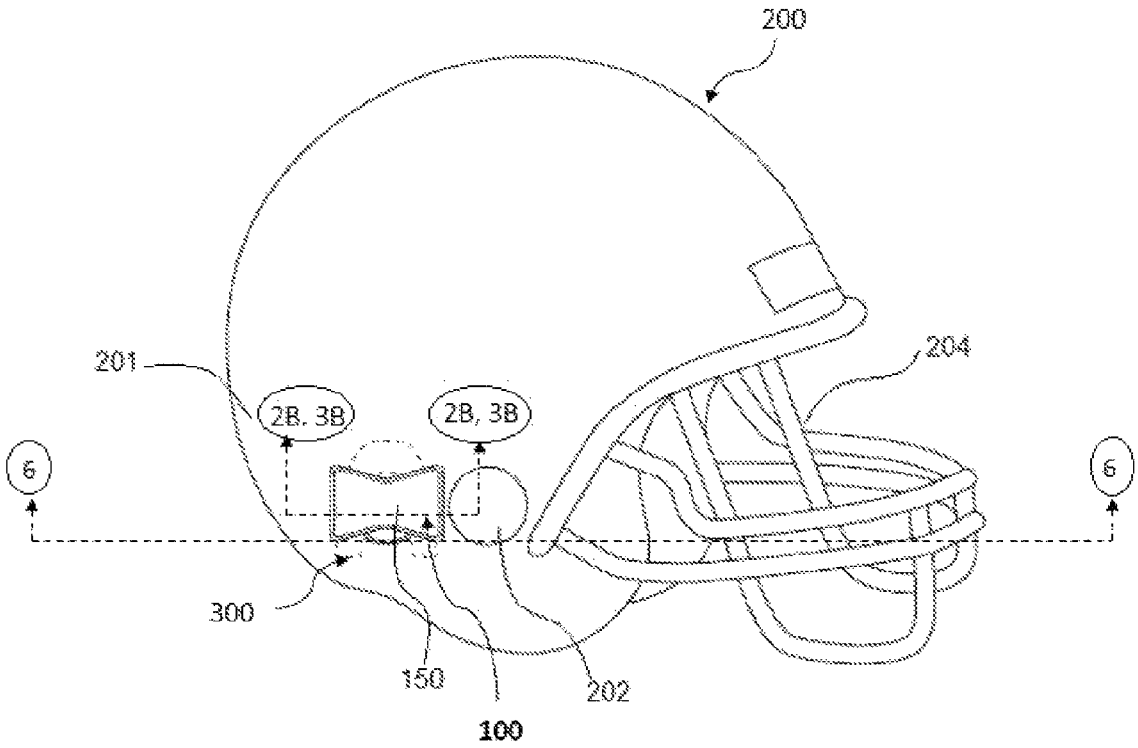


FIG. 1

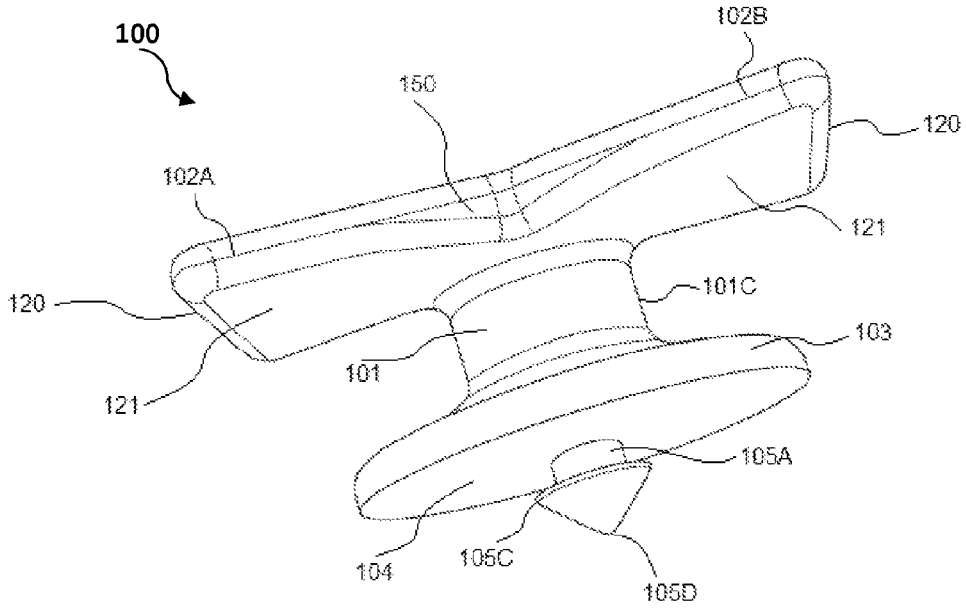

100
102B
150
120
102A
121
101C
120
103
101
121
105A
104
105C
105D

FIG. 2A

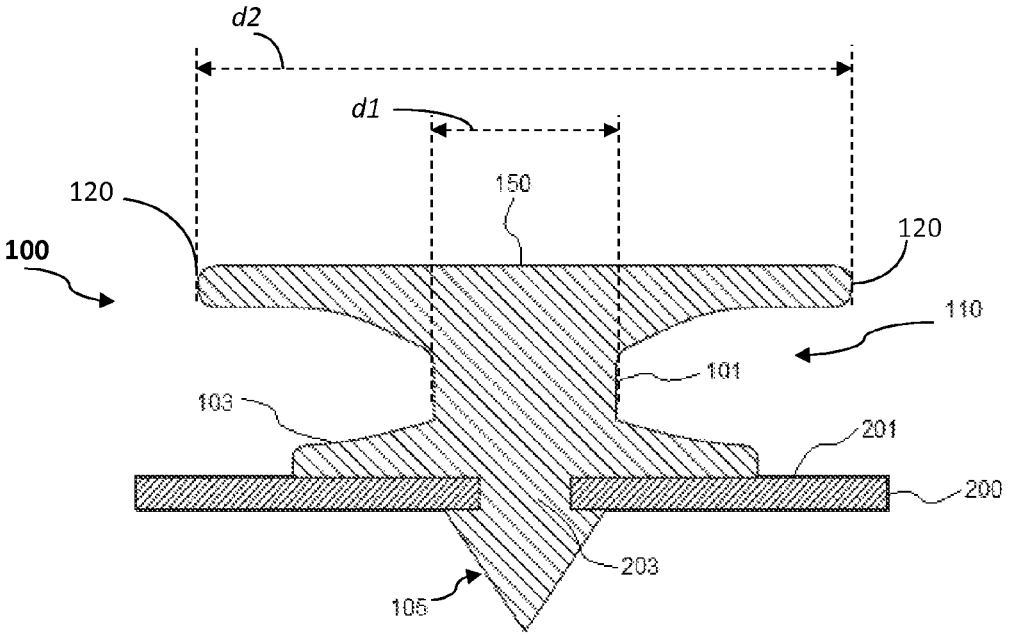

d2
d1
150
120
120
100
110
101
103
201
200
203
105

FIG. 2B

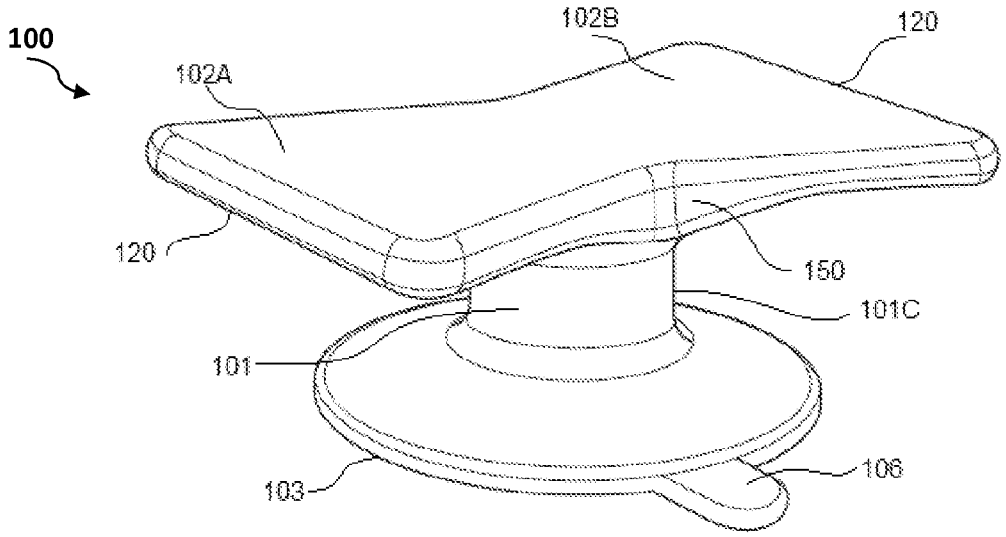

100
102B
120
102A
120
150
101C
101
106
103

FIG. 3A

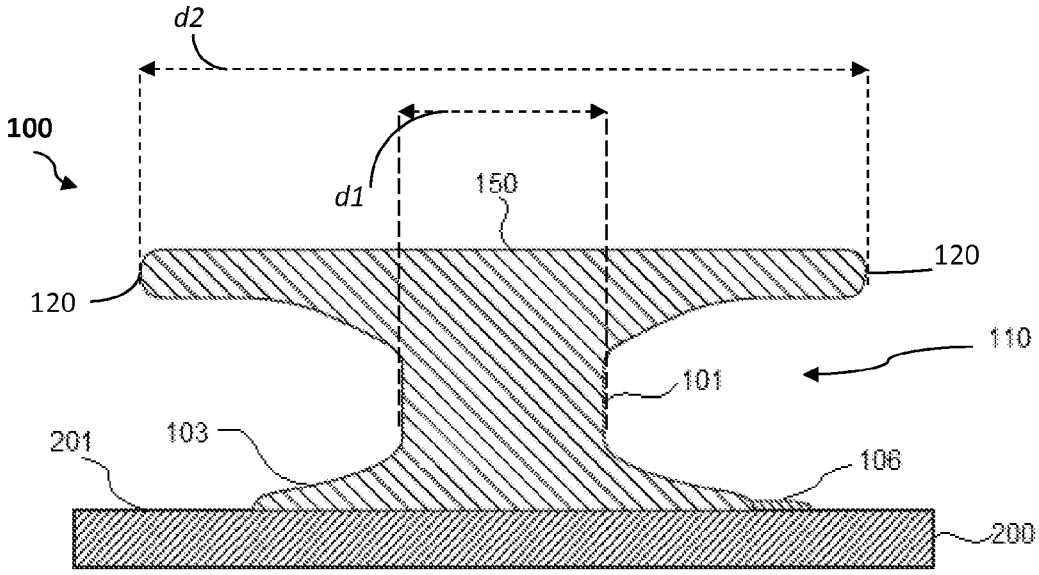

d2
100
d1
150
120
120
110
101
201
103
106
200

FIG. 3B

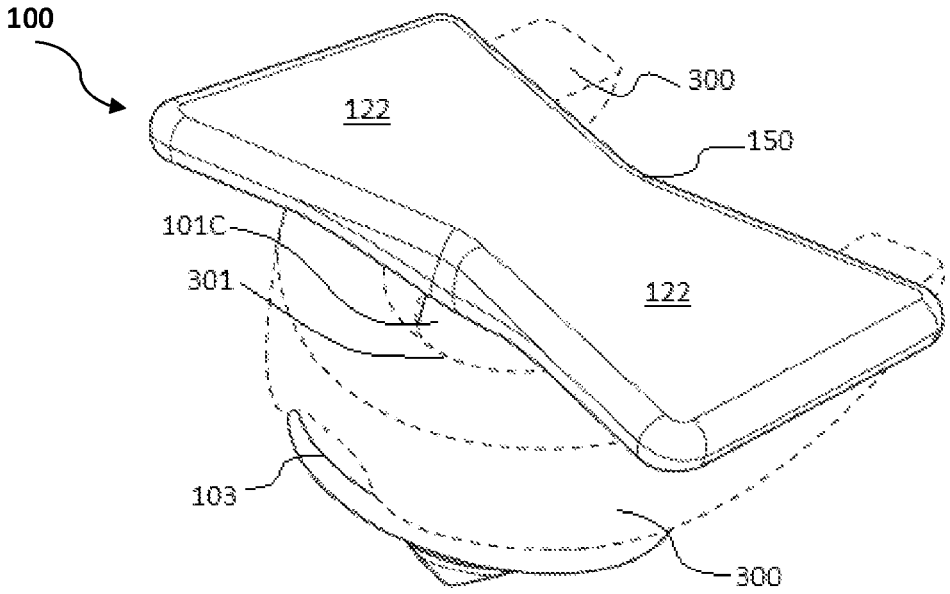

100
300
122
150
101C
301
122
103
300

FIG. 4A

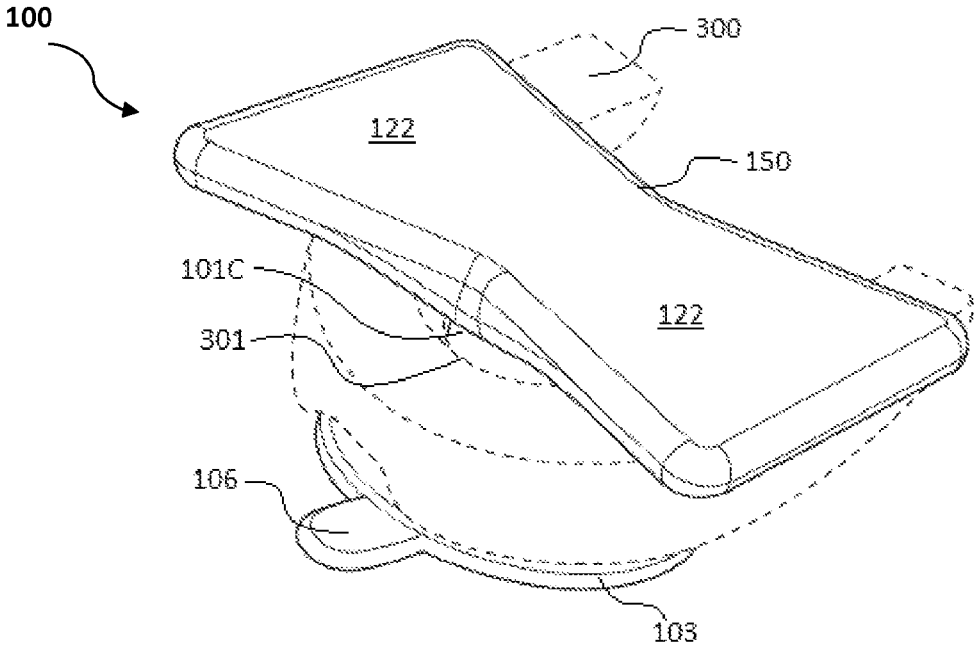

100
300
122
150
101C
122
301
106
103

FIG. 4B

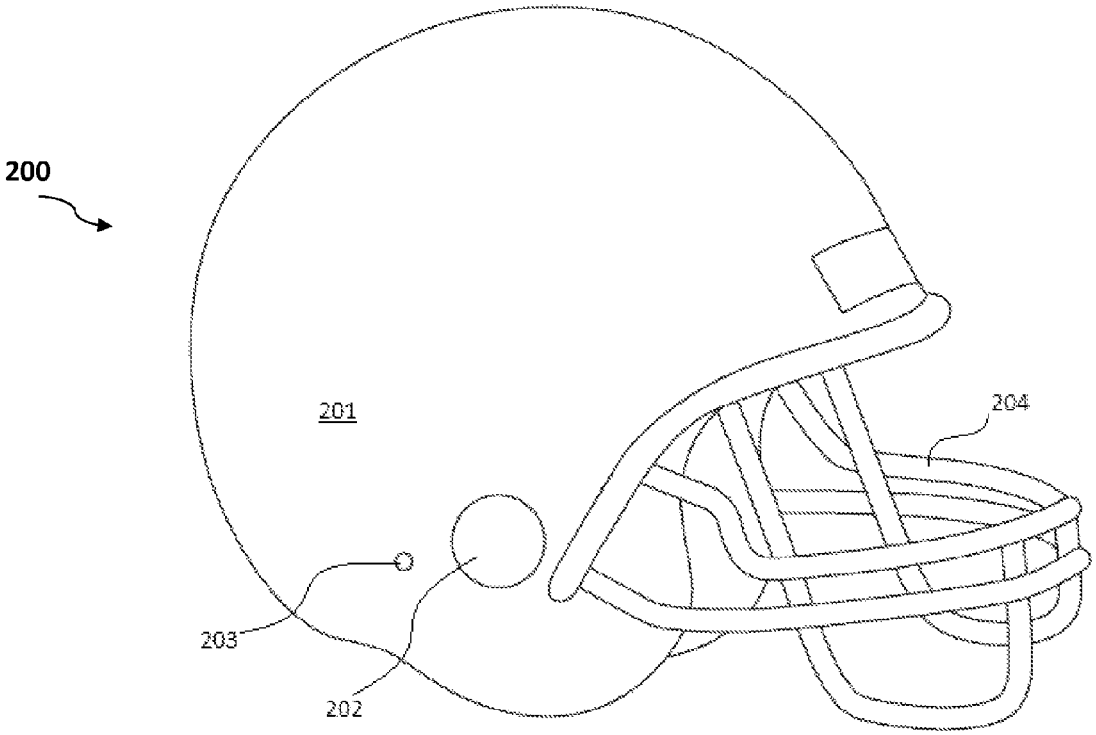


FIG. 5

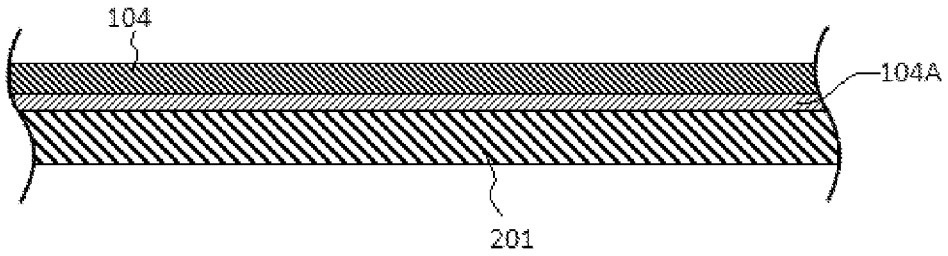


FIG. 6

ATHLETIC MOUTHGUARD HOLDER

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present patent specification relates to the field of athletic equipment. More specifically, the specification relates to novel holders for mouthguards which are commonly used in contact sporting events such as football, hockey, lacrosse, and the like.

BACKGROUND

Mouthguards provide a vital role in ensuring the safety of athletes and the use of mouthguards has become highly recommended for any athlete who plays a sport involving physical contact such as American football. The known risk of oral injury to teeth, mouth, gums and jaw associated with contact sports has driven the market for mouthguards among athletes who play contact sports. Recent research has shown that the use of a mouthguard can also reduce the risk of brain trauma, better known as concussion. Often the use of a mouthguard is mandated by an athletic association, league or team to qualify to compete in a particular sport.

Over the years, the mouthguard has seen some design changes to enhance the oral safety and protection of an athlete. But one thing has not changed over the years. Since the invention of the mouthguard, there are still only two basic types of mouthguards on the market. One that is designed to be tethered to a helmet with a strap connecting it to the faceguard or facemask, and one that is non-tethered that has no designed means of securing it to a helmet.

Consequently, based on today's athletic mouthguard market, an athlete has only one choice if they want a mouthguard that can be secured to a helmet during participation in a sporting event when it is not in their mouth. Unfortunately, if an athlete chooses a non-tethered mouthguard with no designed means of securing it to a helmet they are left to improvise a means to secure the mouthguard when not in use.

Because the majority of athletes today choose to use a non-tethered type of mouthguard, there is a great need for new means to secure these types of mouthguards when not in use during a game or at practice. Using a non-tethered mouthguard leaves athletes with only several undesirable options to secure it when it is out of their mouth, for example; the athlete either wedges the mouthguard between the helmet surface and a bar of the facemask, wedges it between two bars of the facemask, stuffs it inside their belt or sock, puts it behind their ear, leaves it in their mouth and chews on it, or they simply hold it in their hand. Unfortunately, all the options an athlete has to secure a non-tethered mouthguard are driven by necessity—not by design. Therefore, what is needed in field is a mouthguard holder which is able to secure an un-tethered mouthguard to the surface of a helmet thereby providing a safe and effective means for athletes to temporarily store their mouthguards when not in use.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A mouthguard holder for temporarily securing an athletic mouthguard to an exterior side of a helmet is provided. The mouthguard holder generally comprising: a support post base adapted to contact the exterior surface of the helmet, a support post with a first end and second end, a retaining member coupled to the support post at the support post second end the retaining member radially extending out away from the support post forming a mouthguard receiving pocket between the support post base and the retaining member where the receiving pocket is adapted to removably secure a mouthguard to the exterior side of the helmet.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Some embodiments of the present invention are illustrated as an example and are not limited by the figures of the accompanying drawings, in which like references may indicate similar elements and in which:

FIG. **1** depicts an side perspective view of an example of a mouthguard holder mounted to a side of a helmet according to various embodiments of the present invention.

FIG. **2**A illustrates a side perspective view of a mouthguard holder having a locking pin according to various embodiments of the present invention.

FIG. **2**B illustrates a side cross sectional view through line **2**B (FIG. **1**) of a mouthguard holder having a locking pin according to various embodiments of the present invention.

FIG. **3**A illustrates a side perspective view of a mouthguard holder having an attachment surface with pull tab according to various embodiments of the present invention.

FIG. **3**B illustrates a side cross sectional view through line **3**B (FIG. **1**) of a mouthguard holder having an attachment surface with pull tab according to various embodiments of the present invention.

FIG. **4**A shows a perspective view of a mouthguard removably secured to a mouthguard holder according to various embodiments described herein.

FIG. **4**B shows a perspective view of a mouthguard removably secured to a mouthguard holder having a pull tab according to various embodiments described herein.

FIG. **5** illustrates a side perspective view of an exemplary helmet in accordance with various embodiments described herein.

FIG. **6** is a sectional view through line **6** (FIG. **1**) showing an example of a mouthguard holder base attachment surface coupled to the surface of a helmet using an adhesive.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The terminology used herein is for the purpose of describing particular embodiments only and is not intended to be limiting of the invention. As used herein, the term "and/or" includes any and all combinations of one or more of the associated listed items. As used herein, the singular forms "a," "an," and "the" are intended to include the plural forms as well as the singular forms, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise. It will be further understood that the terms "comprises" and/or "comprising," when used in this specification, specify the presence of stated features, steps, operations, elements, and/or components, but do not preclude the presence or addition of one or more other features, steps, operations, elements, components, and/or groups thereof.

Unless otherwise defined, all terms (including technical and scientific terms) used herein have the same meaning as commonly understood by one having ordinary skill in the art to which this invention belongs. It will be further understood that terms, such as those defined in commonly used dictionaries, should be interpreted as having a meaning that is consistent with their meaning in the context of the relevant art and the present disclosure and will not be interpreted in an idealized or overly formal sense unless expressly so defined herein.

In describing the invention, it will be understood that a number of techniques and steps are disclosed. Each of these has individual benefit and each can also be used in conjunction with one or more, or in some cases all, of the other

disclosed techniques. Accordingly, for the sake of clarity, this description will refrain from repeating every possible combination of the individual steps in an unnecessary fashion. Nevertheless, the specification and claims should be read with the understanding that such combinations are entirely within the scope of the invention and the claims.

New devices and apparatuses referred to as "mouthguard holders" or "the mouthguard holder" or sometimes "holder" or "the holder" are discussed herein. In the following description, for purposes of explanation, numerous specific details are set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of the present invention. It will be evident, however, to one skilled in the art that the present invention may be practiced without these specific details.

The present disclosure is to be considered as an exemplification of the invention, and is not intended to limit the invention to the specific embodiments illustrated by the figures or description below.

The present invention will now be described by referencing the appended figures representing preferred embodiments. FIG. **1** shows a side perspective view of a helmet **200** with a mouthguard holder **100** mounted onto the helmets surface **201**. A representation of a mouthguard **300** is shown in broken lines. Although an American style football helmet **200** is shown by the figures, other types of helmets **200** such as hockey helmets, lacrosse helmets, cycling helmets, driving helmets, etc. and the like are contemplated herein and the invention should not be unintentionally limited to only one type of helmet. The helmet surface **201** is preferably a smooth and rigid or semi rigid material such as hard plastic configured to provide protection against impact forces to the head of an athlete. In preferred embodiments, the mouthguard holder **100** is removably coupled to the helmet surface **201** at a location proximate to the ear hole **202**. In some alternative embodiments, the mouthguard holder **201** may be permanently coupled or affixed to the helmet surface **201**.

As perhaps best shown by FIG. **1**, the mouthguard holder **100** is coupled to the helmet surface **201** at one side of a helmet **200**. An athlete wearing a mouthguard **300** may simply remove the mouthguard **300** from their mouth and removably couple it to the mouthguard holder **100** by pressing it into a receiving pocket **110** (FIG. **2** and FIG. **3**) where it is held in place by frictional forces by the mouthguard retaining member **150** portion of the mouthguard holder **100**. The mouthguard **300** is held in place by frictional forces until the athlete is ready to use it at which point the athlete will slightly pull on the mouthguard **300** releasing it from the receiving pocket **110** and placing it into their mouth before a starting their contact activity.

Referring now to FIG. **2**A and FIG. **2**B, in FIG. **2**A a side perspective view showing one embodiment of a mouthguard holder **100** is provided. In this embodiments, the mouthguard holder **100** comprises a retaining member **150** (FIG. **1**) made up of two retaining wings **102**A and **102**B, a support post **101** coupled to the two retaining wings **102**A and **102**B, a post base **103** coupled to the support post **101**, and a locking pin **105** coupled to and protruding below the post base **103**. In this example, the mouthguard retaining member **150** (FIG. **1**) comprises a first retaining wing **102**A radially extending out from the support post **101** at its first end (top end furthest from the post base **103**), the first retaining wing **102**A having a wing distal end **120**, a wing bottom surface **121**, and a wing top surface **122** and also in this example the mouthguard retaining member **150** further comprises a second retaining wing **102**B radially extending out from the support post **101** at its first end (top end) and opposite to the first retaining wing **102**A, the second retaining wing having a wing distal end **120**, a wing bottom surface **121**, and a wing top surface **122**. In this and in preferred embodiments, the support post **101** has a maximum width of a first distance (d**1**) and the retaining member has a minimum width a second distance (d**2**) measured from the distal end **120** of the first retaining wing **102**A to the distal tip **120** of the second retaining wing **102**B and wherein the first distance (d**1**) is less than the second distance (d**2**) thereby creating a top retaining surface for a mouthguard receiving pocket **110**. In some embodiments, the second distance (d**2**) is at least twice as great as the first distance (d**1**). Although the retaining member **150** with two retaining wings **102**A and **102**B are shown with a butterfly type design, other designs are contemplated herein. For example, the retaining member **150** may be square shaped, rectangular shaped, circular shaped, oval shaped, or other geometric or non-geometric shapes but preferably has at least one dimension (width or length) greater than the maximum width of the support post **101**. In preferred embodiments, the retaining member **150** comprises one, two, three, four, five, six, or more retaining wings **102** which each retaining wing **102** extending latterly out at a substantially perpendicular orientation to the support post **101** thereby forming a retaining surface for a mouthguard **300** when placed into the receiving pocket **110**. Each retaining wing **102** may be shaped in a wing shape, or may be square shaped, rectangular shaped, circular shaped, oval shaped, or other geometric or non-geometric shapes. Each retaining wing **102** generally extends radially out from the first end (top end) of the support post **101** in a manner substantially parallel with the post base **102** thereby forming a mouthguard receiving pocket **110** with said receiving pocket **110** bordered on one side by the wing bottom surfaces **121** and bordered on an opposite side by the post base **103** or optionally in some embodiments the helmet surface **201**. The support post **101** as shown by the figures is preferably round or cylindrical but other shaped support posts **101** are contemplated herein. In preferred embodiments, the support post **101** has a curved lateral surface **101**C on at least one side adapted to be complementary to and receive the round interior end **301** (FIGS. **4**A and **4**B) of a mouthguard **300** and is of sustainably the same curvature and diameter as the round interior end **301** a mouthguard **300** thereby providing a mounting location for the mouthguard **300** when placed into the receiving pocket **110** of the mouthguard holder **100** and preventing the mouthguard **300** from falling or disengaging from the holder **100**. The support post **101** is preferably coupled to a post base **103** at its second end (lower end furthest from the retaining member **150**). In some preferred embodiments, the post base **103** has a top surface and a bottom attachment surface **104** with said attachment surface **104** configured to contact the helmet surface **201**. In this embodiment, post base **103** is preferably round and the attachment surface **104** is preferably smooth to facilitate mating with a smooth helmet surface **201**. To the extent a helmet surface **201** may be curved or contoured, the attachment surface **104** may have complementary curves or contours to facilitate a flush mounting between the two elements. The post base **103** and in particular the post base attachment surface **104** may be made from a elastomeric plastic or rubber with a degree of flexibility to facilitate a flush mounting against a helmet surface **201** which is often curved at various locations.

Referring now also to FIG. **2**B, a side cross sectional view of a mouthguard holder **100**, a helmet **200**, and helmet surface **201** is provided. In this embodiment, the mouthguard holder **100** is removably coupled to the helmet by inserting a locking pin **105** into a helmet aperture **203** through the helmet surface **201**. The locking pin **105** in this example is coupled to the post base **103** at its top end then extends vertically below the post

base attachment surface **104**. The locking pin **105** may comprise a pin shaft **105**A (FIG. **2**A), a pin base **105**C (FIG. **2**A) and terminate with a pointed tip **105**D. In preferred embodiments, the locking pin **105** is constructed from of a resilient material such as elastomer plastics, rubbers, foams, and the like allowing the locking pin to transition from a first compressed position to a second uncompressed position. Furthermore, locking pin base **105**C preferably has a width in the second uncompressed position greater than the diameter of the helmet aperture **203** thereby preventing the locking pin **105** from inadvertently disengaging from the helmet **200**.

Referring now to FIG. **3**A and FIG. **3**B, in FIG. **3**A a side perspective view showing one embodiment of a mouthguard holder **100** is provided. In this embodiments, the mouthguard holder **100** comprises a retaining member **150** (FIG. **1**) made up of two retaining wings **102**A and **102**B, a support post **101** coupled to the two retaining wings **102**A and **102**B, a post base **103** coupled to the support post **101**, and a pull tab **106** coupled to and protruding from the distal end of the post base **103**. In this example, the mouthguard retaining member **150** (FIG. **1**) comprises a first retaining wing **102**A radially extending out from the support post **101** at its first end (top end furthest from the post base **103**), the first retaining wing **102**A having a wing distal end **120**, a wing bottom surface **121**, and a wing top surface **122** and also in this example the mouthguard retaining member **150** further comprises a second retaining wing **102**B radially extending out from the support post **101** at its first end (top end) and opposite to the first retaining wing **102**A, the second retaining wing having a wing distal end **120**, a wing bottom surface **121**, and a wing top surface **122**. In this and in preferred embodiments, the support post **101** has a maximum width of a first distance (d**1**) and the retaining member has a minimum width a second distance (d**2**) measured from the distal end **120** of the first retaining wing **102**A to the distal tip **120** of the second retaining wing **102**B and wherein the first distance (d**1**) is less than the second distance (d**2**) thereby creating a top retaining surface for a mouthguard receiving pocket **110**. In some embodiments, the second distance (d**2**) is at least twice as great as the first distance (d**1**). Although the retaining member **150** with two retaining wings **102**A and **102**B are shown with a butterfly type design, other designs are contemplated herein. For example, the retaining member **150** may be square shaped, rectangular shaped, circular shaped, oval shaped, or other geometric or non-geometric shapes but preferably has at least one dimension (width or length) greater than the maximum width of the support post **101**. In preferred embodiments, the retaining member **150** comprises one, two, three, four, five, six, or more retaining wings **102** which each retaining wing **102** extending latterly out at a substantially perpendicular orientation to the support post **101** thereby forming a retaining surface for a mouthguard **300** when placed into the receiving pocket **110**. Each retaining wing **102** may be shaped in a wing shape, or may be square shaped, rectangular shaped, circular shaped, oval shaped, or other geometric or non-geometric shapes. Each retaining wing **102** generally extends radially out from the first end (top end) of the support post **101** in a manner substantially parallel with the post base **102** thereby forming a mouthguard receiving pocket **110** with said receiving pocket **110** bordered on one side by the wing bottom surfaces **121** and bordered on an opposite side by the post base **103** or optionally in some embodiments the helmet surface **201**. The support post **101** as shown by the figures is preferably round or cylindrical but other shaped support posts **101** are contemplated herein. In preferred embodiments, the support post **101** has a curved lateral surface **101**C on at least one side adapted to be complementary to and receive the round interior end **301** (FIGS. **4**A and **4**B) of a mouthguard **300** and is of sustainably the same curvature and diameter as the round interior end **301** a mouthguard **300** thereby providing a mounting location for the mouthguard **300** when placed into the receiving pocket **110** of the mouthguard holder **100** and preventing the mouthguard **300** from falling or disengaging from the holder **100**. The support post **101** is preferably coupled to a post base **103** at its second end (lower end furthest from the retaining member **150**). In some preferred embodiments, the post base **103** has a top surface and a bottom attachment surface **104** with said attachment surface **104** configured to contact the helmet surface **201**. In this embodiment, post base **103** is preferably round and the attachment surface **104** is preferably smooth to facilitate mating with a smooth helmet surface **201**. To the extent a helmet surface **201** may be curved or contoured, the attachment surface **104** may have complementary curves or contours to facilitate a flush mounting between the two elements. The post base **103** and in particular the post base attachment surface **104** may be made from a elastomeric plastic or rubber with a degree of flexibility to facilitate a flush mounting against a helmet surface **201** which is often curved at various locations. In this regard, vacuum or suctional forces may be employed to temporally couple the mouthguard holder **100** to the helmet surface **201**. Also in this embodiment, the post base bottom attachment surface **104** may comprise an adhesive such as **104**A (FIG. **6**) to further facilitate the coupling of the holder **100** to the helmet surface **201**. A pull tab **106** may be positioned on an outside distal end of the post base **103** providing a convenient means for an athlete, coach, or other user to remove the mouthguard holder **100** from the helmet surface **201**. The pull tab **106** is preferably integrally formed with and permanently coupled to the post base **103** and attachment surface **104** and may be of any suitable size or shape to provide a means for a user to pull the pull tab **106** and attachment surface **104** out and away from the helmet surface **201** thereby disengaging the mouthguard holder **100** from the helmet **200**.

Referring now to FIG. **4**A and FIG. **4**B, a perspective view is provided showing an example of a mouthguard **300** (broken lines) engaged with a mouthguard holder **100**. In this embodiment, the mouthguard retaining member comprises two retaining wings **102**A and **102**B with each wing having a wing top surface **122**. A support post **101** with a curved lateral surface **101**C is shown engaging with the curved interior side of the mouthguard **300** thereby preventing the mouthguard from moving about and inadvertently disengaging from the holder **100**. Also shown by this example the retaining wings **102**A and **102**B serve as a barrier for the mouthguard **300** and prevent the mouthguard **300** from inadvertently disengaging from the holder **100**. In the embodiment shown by FIG. **4**A, the mouthguard holder **100** may be secured to the helmet surface **201** though a locking pin **105** inserted through a helmet aperture **203** (FIG. **2**B) while in the embodiment shown by FIG. **4**B, the mouthguard holder **100** may be secured to the helmet surface **201** by the post base bottom attachment surface **104** (FIG. **3**) which may optionally contain an adhesive.

Referring to FIG. **5**, a side view of an American style football helmet **200** is shown. The helmet **200** in this example comprises a helmet surface **201**, a helmet ear hole **202**, a helmet aperture **203**, and a facemask **204**. Although an American style football helmet **200** is shown by the figures, other types and styles of athletic helmets may be employed by the mouthguard holder **100** of the present invention.

FIG. **6** is a sectional view through line **6** (FIG. **1**) showing an example of a mouthguard holder base attachment surface

104 coupled to a helmet surface 201 using an adhesive 104A. Adhesives used to assist in the coupling between the mouthguard holder 100 and the helmet surface 201 may include but are not limited to; doubled sided tape, differential adhesive tapes, natural adhesives including natural resins and bioadhesives or synthetic adhesives such as epoxy, polyurethane, cyanoacrylate and acrylic polymer based adhesives. While the term adhesive is used it should be understood that this term may at times be substituted for glues, cements, mucilages, or pastes.

While some preferred materials for elements have been described, the device is not limited by these materials. The elements that comprise the mouthguard holder including the retaining member 150, wings 102, support post 101, and post base 103 are preferably integrally formed (i.e. by a molding process) and may be constructed from flexible or durable materials such as polymeric materials, elastomers including rubbers, silcones, and soft plastics or in alternative embodiments hard plastics, metal alloys, wood, hard rubbers, carbon fiber, fiber glass, resins, polymers or any other suitable materials including combinations of materials may be used.

Although the present invention has been illustrated and described herein with reference to preferred embodiments and specific examples thereof, it will be readily apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art that other embodiments and examples may perform similar functions and/or achieve like results. All such equivalent embodiments and examples are within the spirit and scope of the present invention, are contemplated thereby, and are intended to be covered by the following claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A mouthguard holder for removably securing a mouthguard to an exterior side of a helmet, the mouthguard holder comprising:

a. a support post base adapted to contact the exterior surface of the helmet;

b. a support post with a first end and second end, said first end coupled to the support post base;

c. a retaining member coupled to the support post at the support post second end and the retaining member radially extending out away from the support post, the retaining member comprising,

(i) a first retaining wing extending out from the support post second end, the first retaining wing having a wing distal end, a wing bottom surface, and a wing top surface; and

(ii) a second retaining wing radially extending out from the support post second end to the first retaining wing, the second retaining wing having a wing distal end, wing bottom surface, and a wing top surface; and

wherein a receiving pocket is formed between the support post base and the retaining member, said receiving pocket adapted to removably secure the mouthguard to the exterior side of the helmet.

2. The mouthguard holder of claim 1, wherein the support post has a maximum width of a first distance (d1) and the retaining member has a minimum width a second distance (d2) measured from the distal end of the first retaining wing to the distal tip of the second retaining wing and wherein the first distance (d1) is less than the second distance (d2).

3. The mouthguard holder of claim 2, wherein the second distance (d2) is at least twice as great as the first distance (d1).

4. The mouthguard holder of claim 1, wherein the support post has a curved lateral surface adapted to receive the round interior surface of a mouthguard.

5. The mouthguard holder of claim 4, wherein the support post is cylindrical.

6. The mouthguard holder of claim 1, wherein the support post has a curved lateral surface adapted to receive the round interior surface of a mouthguard.

7. The mouthguard holder of claim 1, wherein the support post base is round with a top surface and a bottom attachment surface, the bottom attachment surface comprising an elastomeric material adapted to contour to the shape of the exterior surface of the helmet.

8. The mouthguard holder of claim 7, wherein the support post base bottom attachment surface contains an adhesive to secure the mouthguard holder to the helmet surface.

9. The mouthguard holder of claim 1, wherein the support post base is round with a center portion of a first thickness and a distal portion of a second thickness and wherein said first thickness is greater than said second thickness.

10. The mouthguard holder of claim 9, wherein the support post base contains a pull tab protruding out from the distal portion of said base.

11. The mouthguard holder of claim 1, wherein the support post base comprises a locking pin protruding below the support post base opposite to the support post and said locking pin configured enter a helmet aperture.

12. The mouthguard holder of claim 11, wherein the locking pin contains a pointed tip at one end and a pin base at a second end.

13. The mouthguard holder of claim 12, wherein the locking pin is configured as an inverted cone.

14. The mouthguard holder of claim 13, wherein the pin base is constructed with a resilient material configured to transition from a first compressed position to a second uncompressed position.

15. The mouthguard holder of claim 14, wherein the pin base has a width in the second uncompressed position greater than the diameter of the helmet aperture thereby preventing the locking pin from inadvertently disengaging from the helmet.

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