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(54) **STIRRUP**

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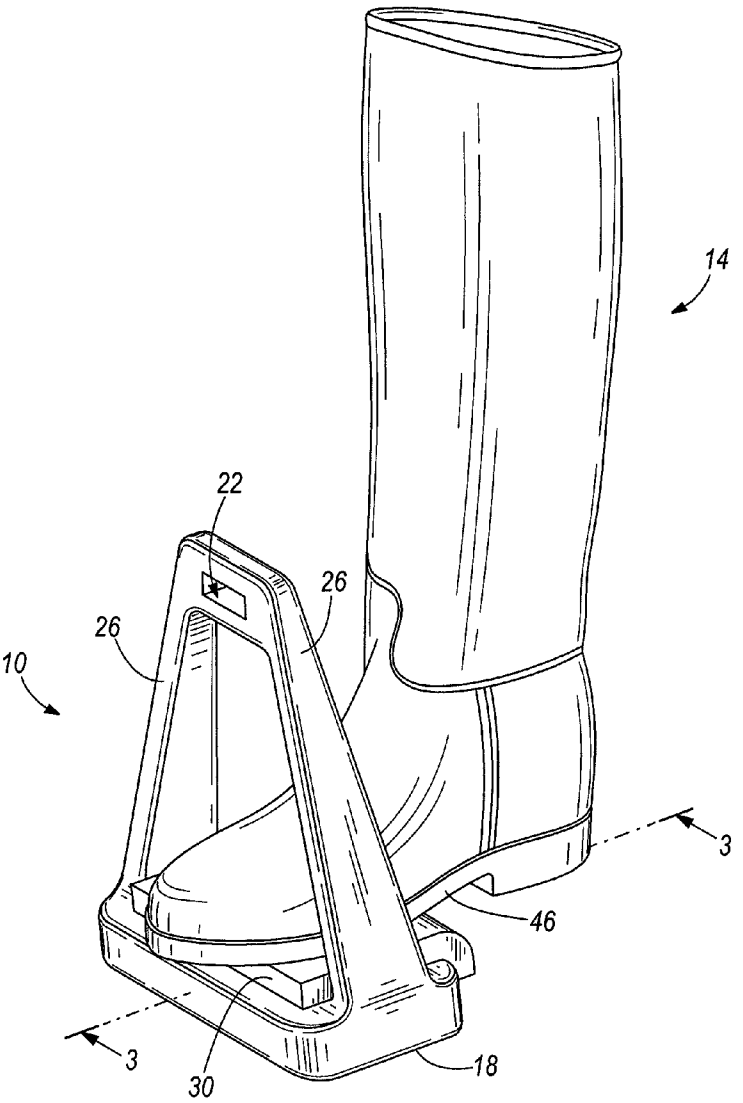
(52) **U.S. Cl.** ..... **36/131**; 54/47; 36/132; 36/30 R; 12/146 B

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A riding boot for use with a stirrup, the riding boot including a sole for engaging the stirrup, the sole coupled to the riding boot and a magnetic member coupled to the sole. The magnetic member is a polymer including a magnetic metal.



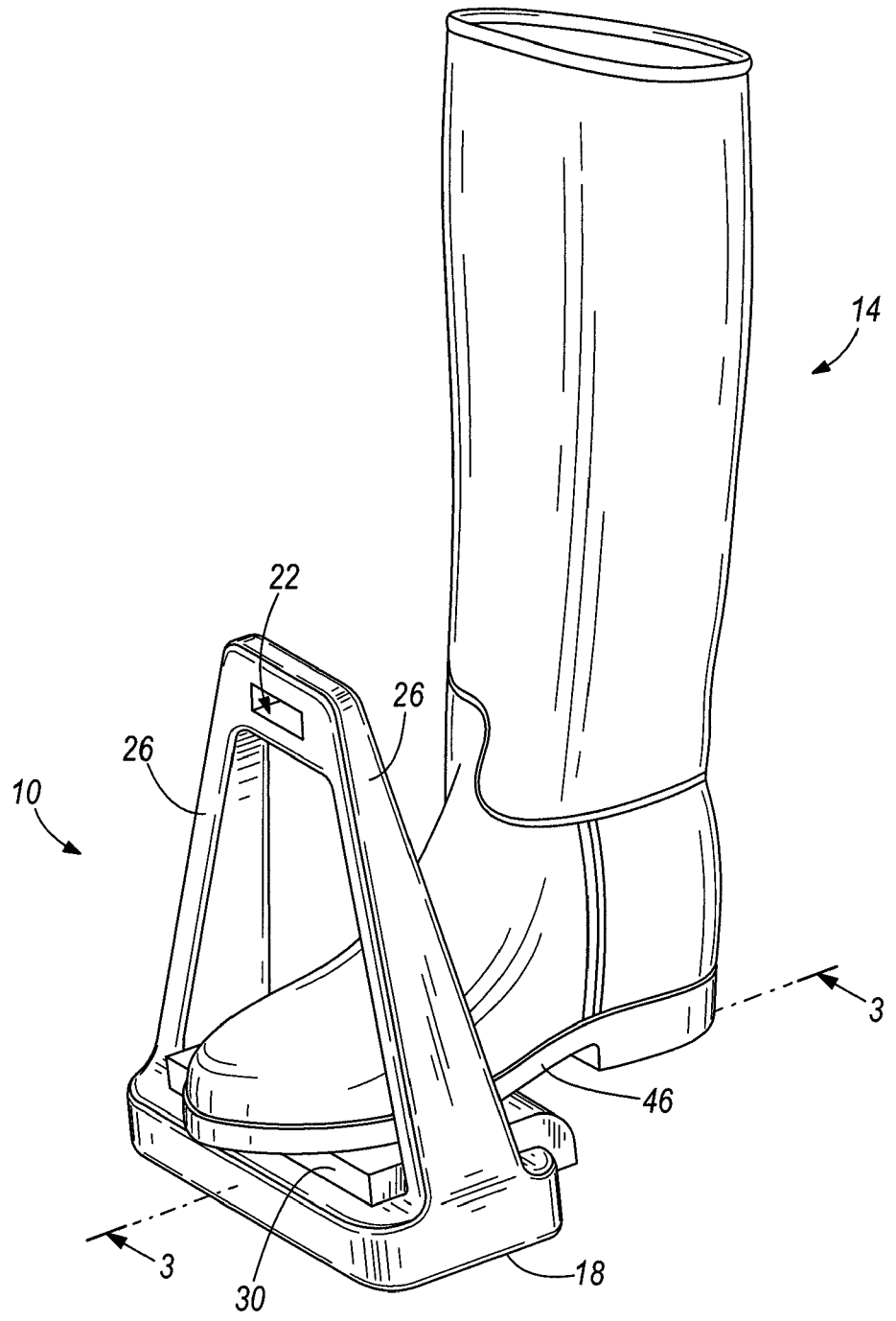


FIG. 1

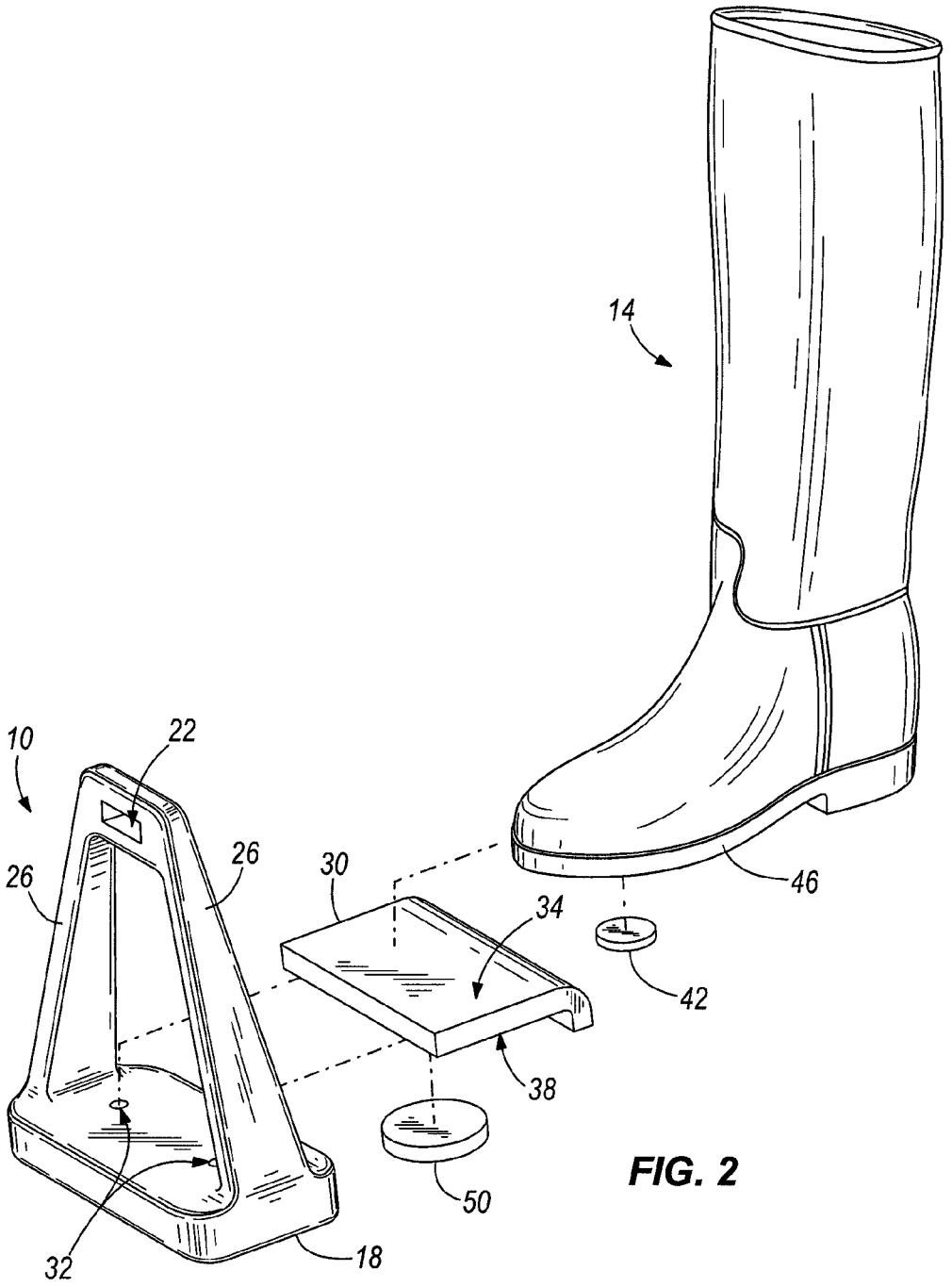


FIG. 2

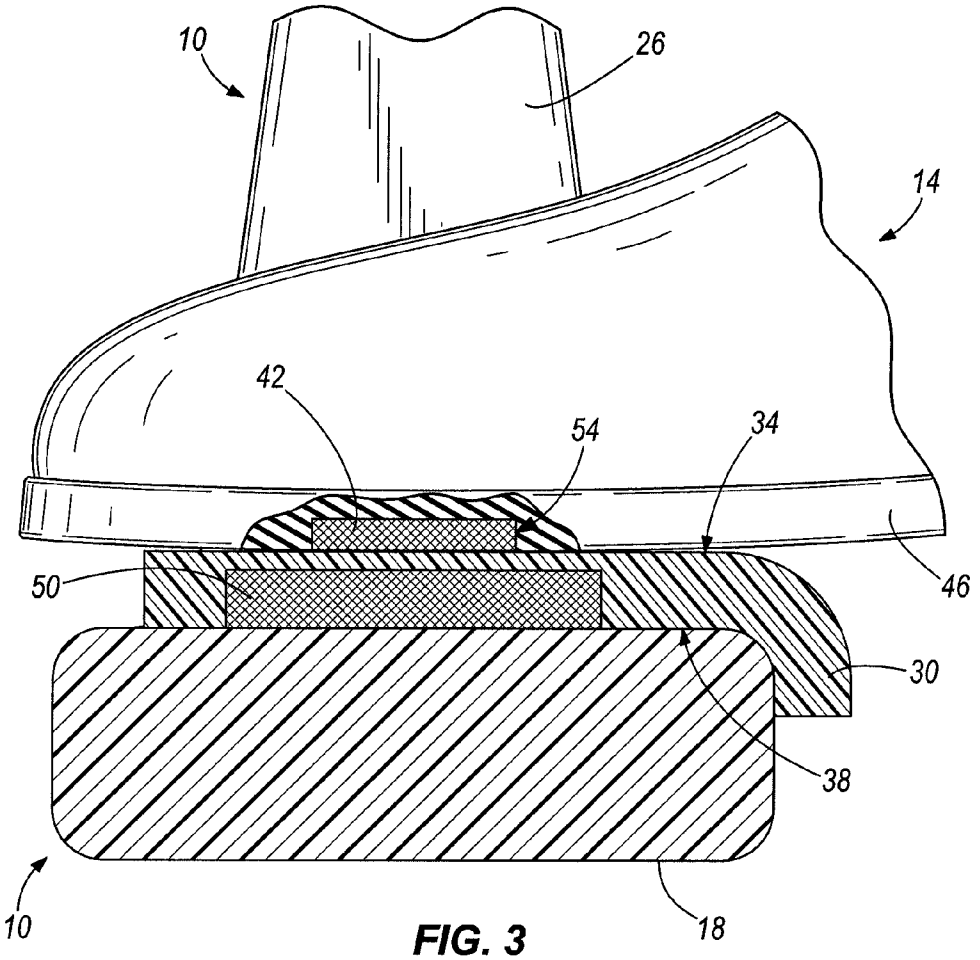


FIG. 3

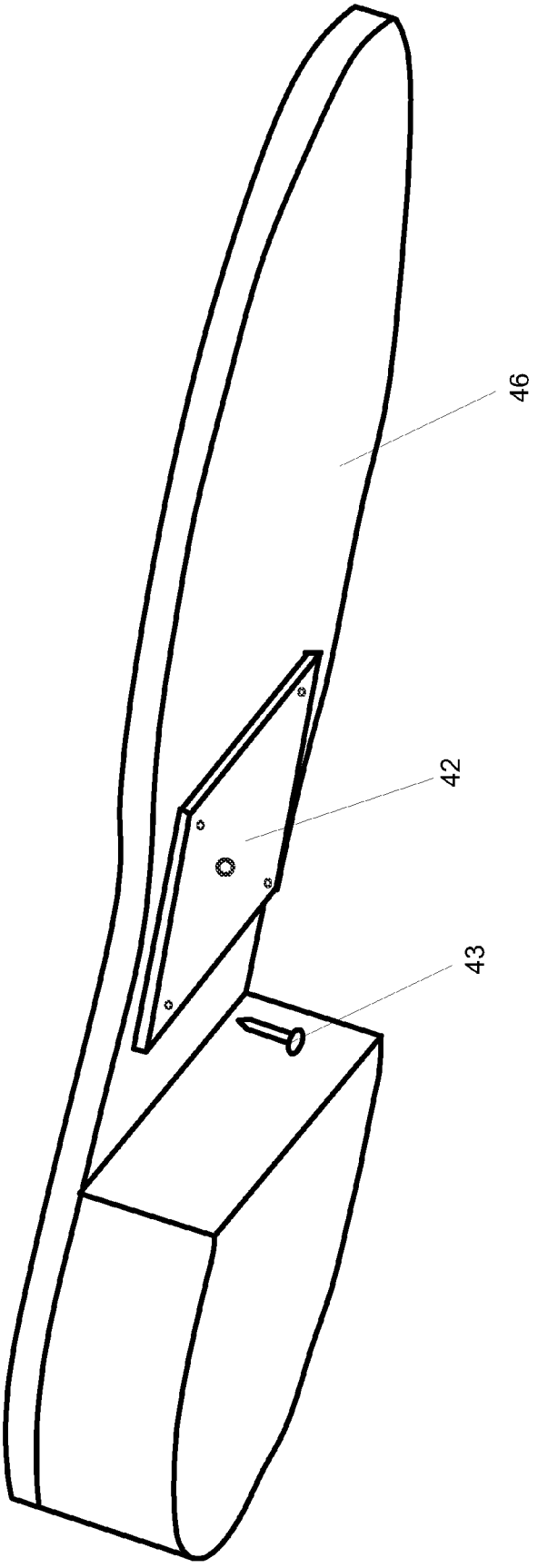


Fig. 3A

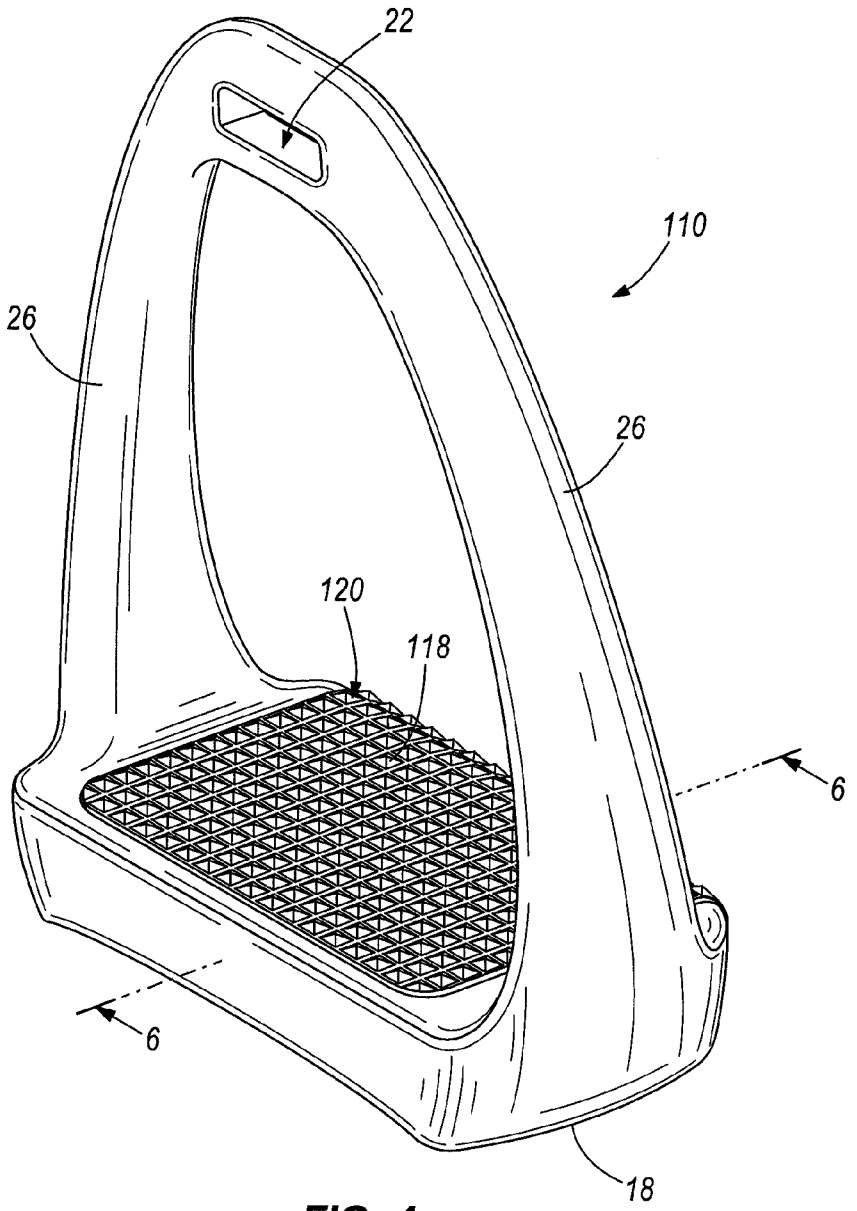


FIG. 4

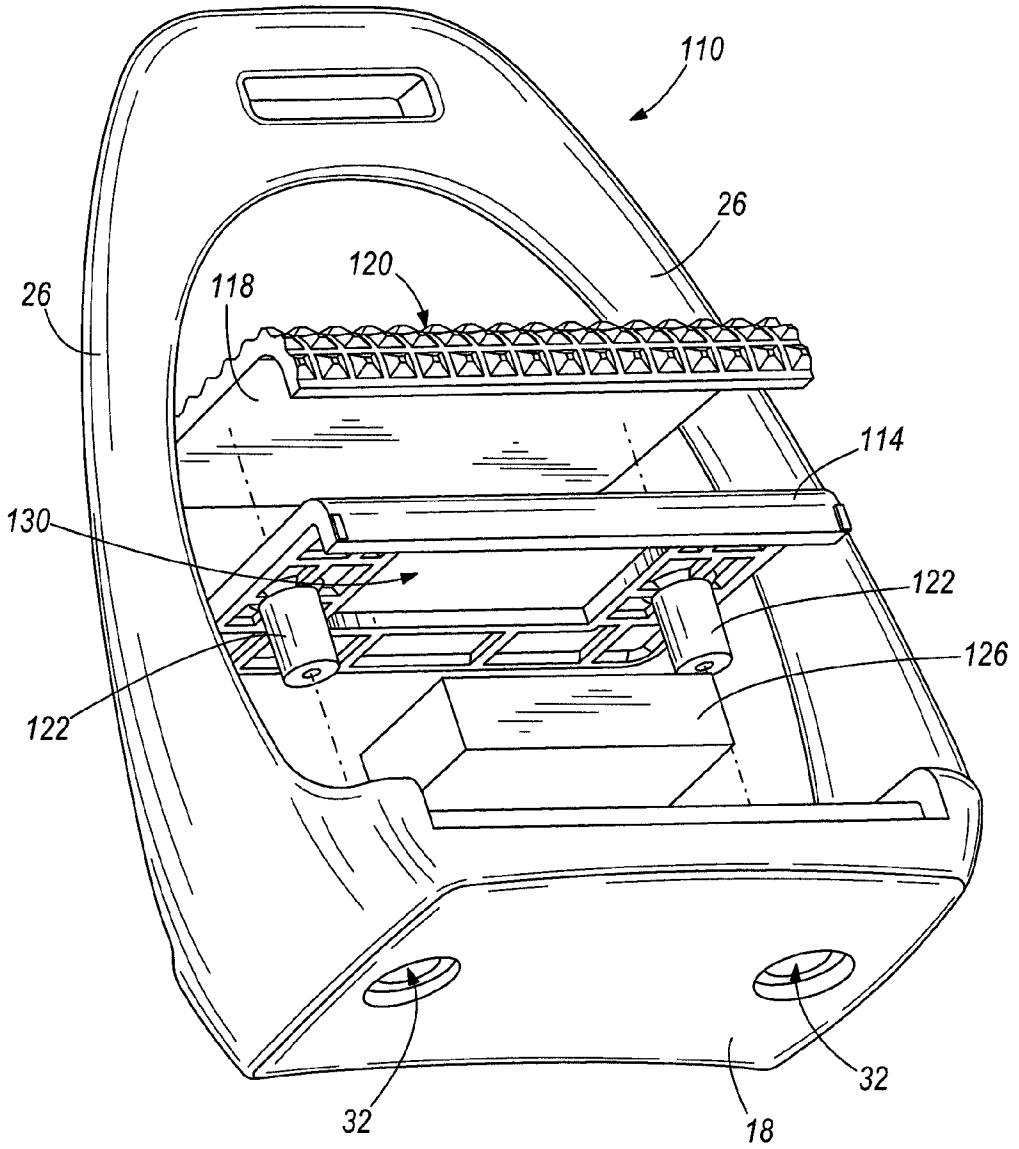


FIG. 5

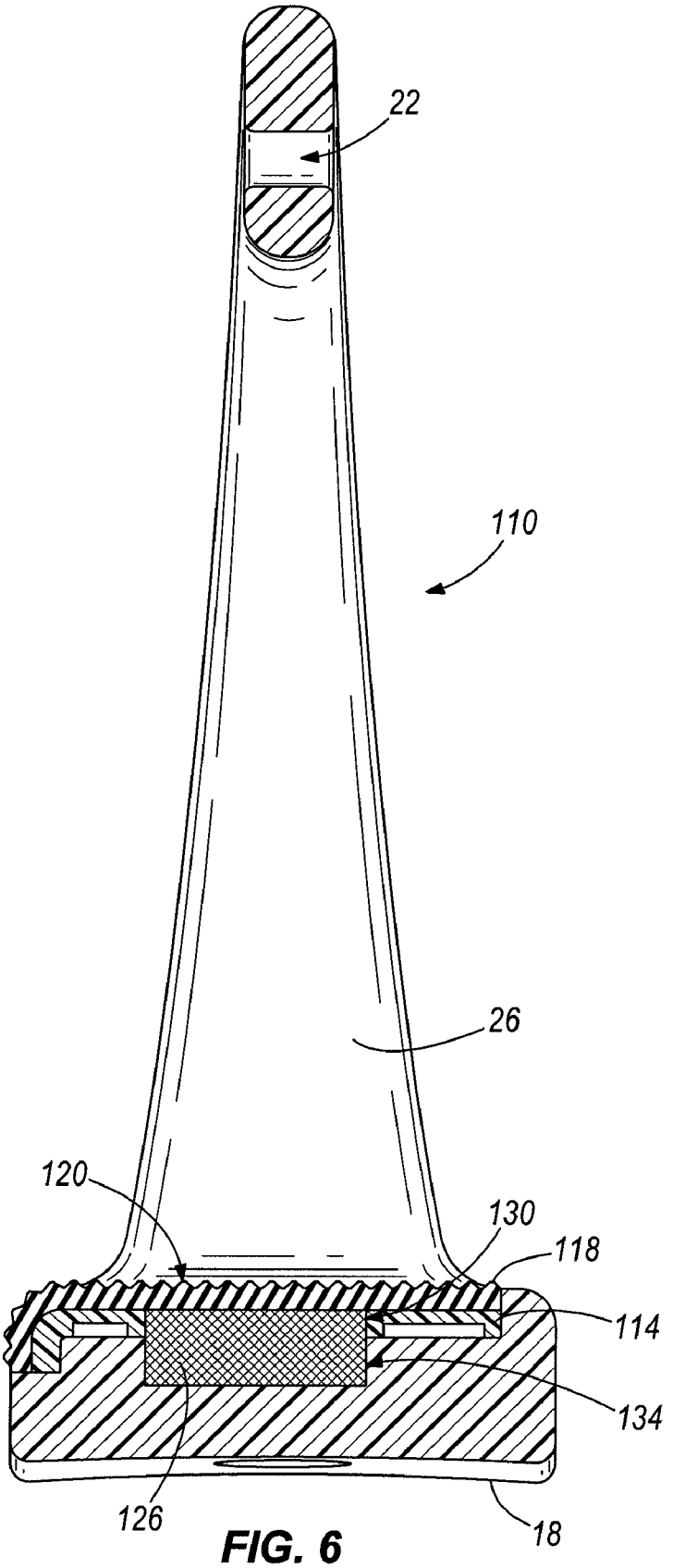


FIG. 6

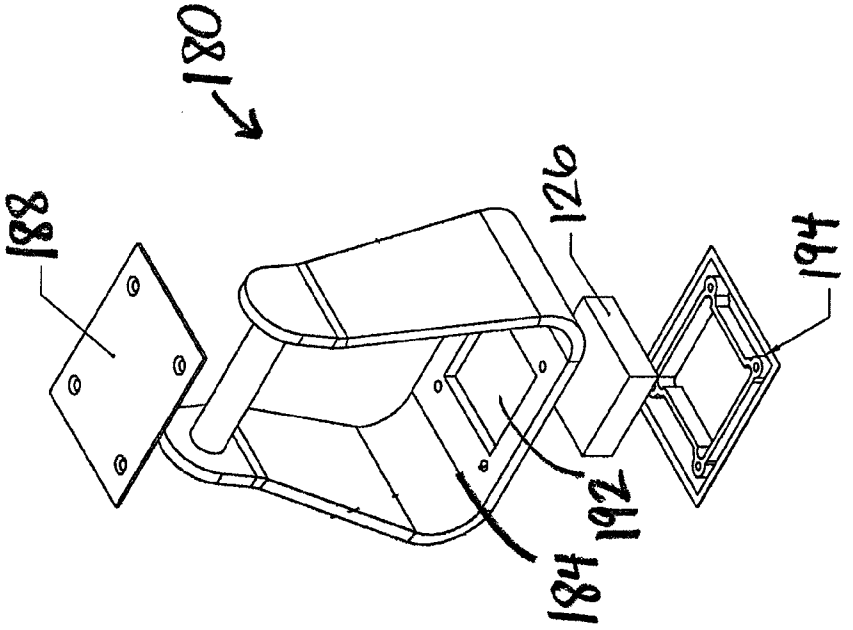


Fig. 6A

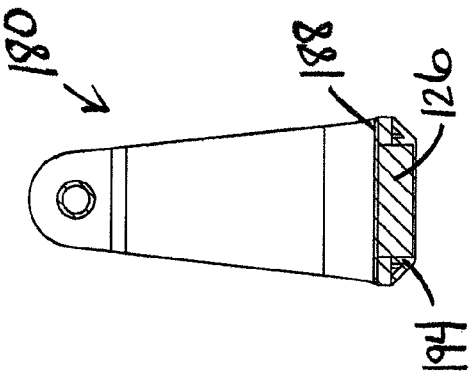


Fig. 6C

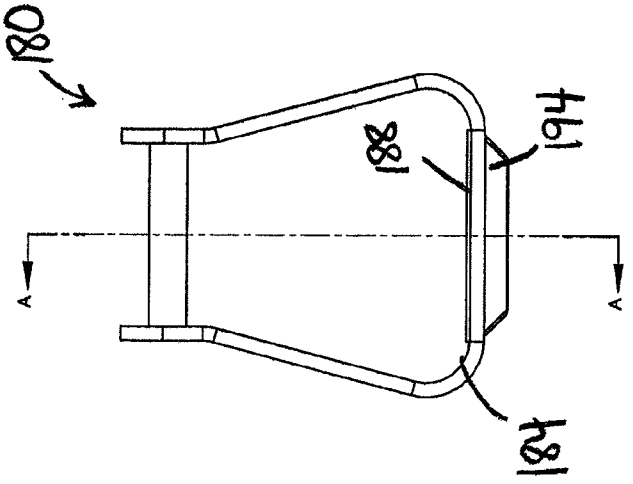


Fig. 6B

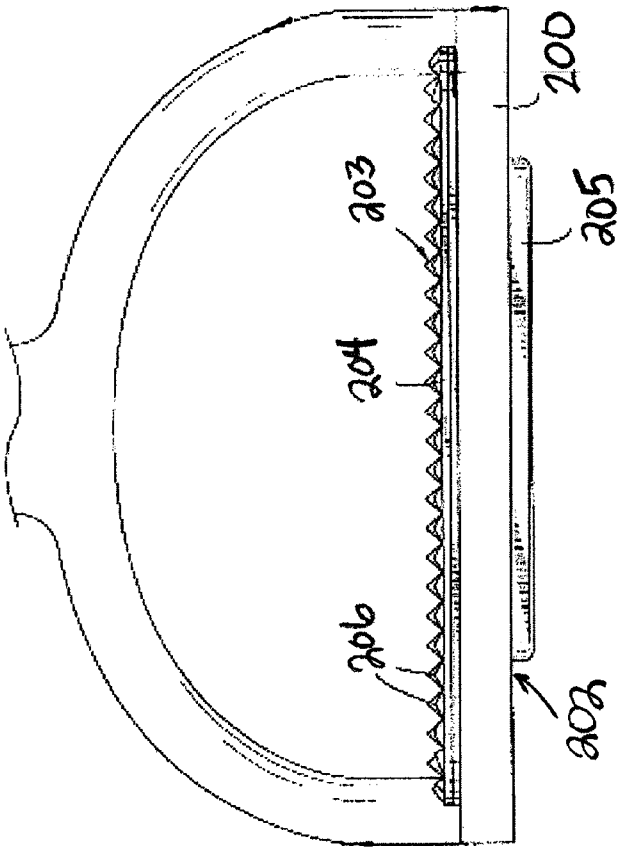


Fig. 6D

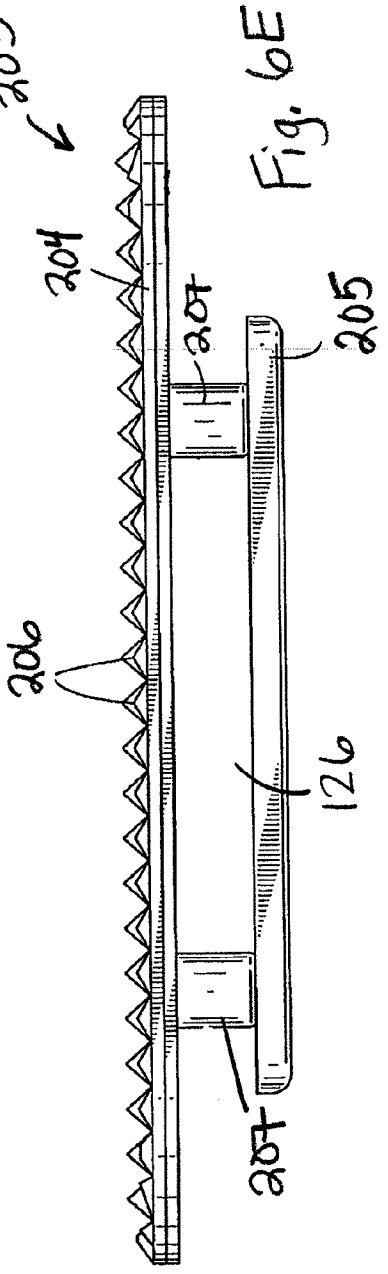


Fig. 6E

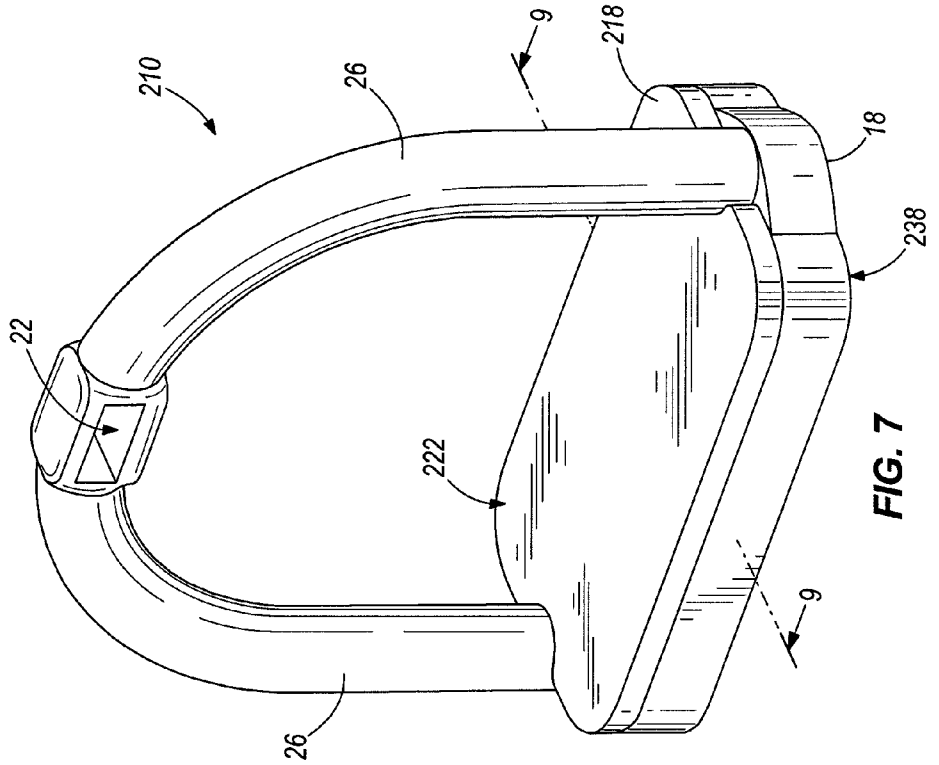

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FIG. 7

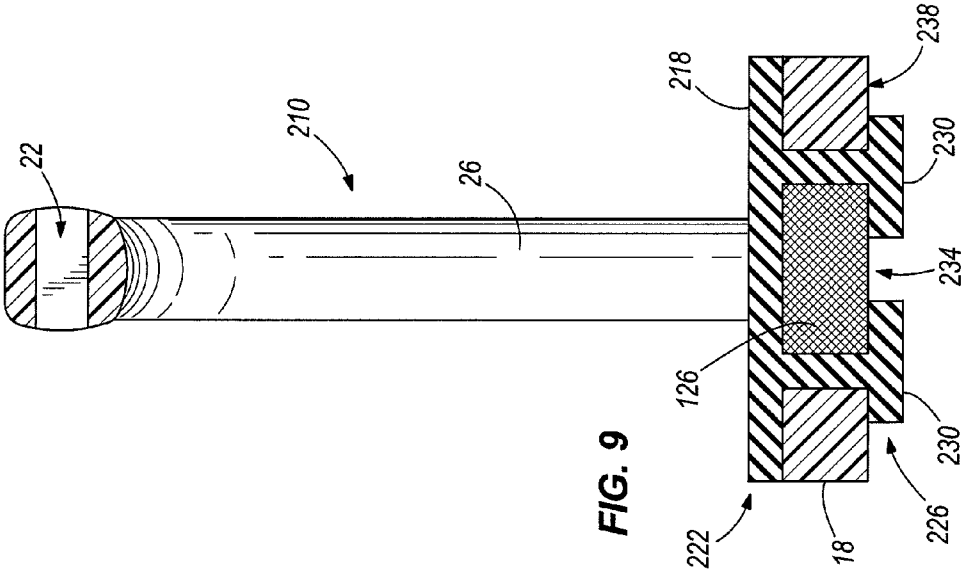
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FIG. 9

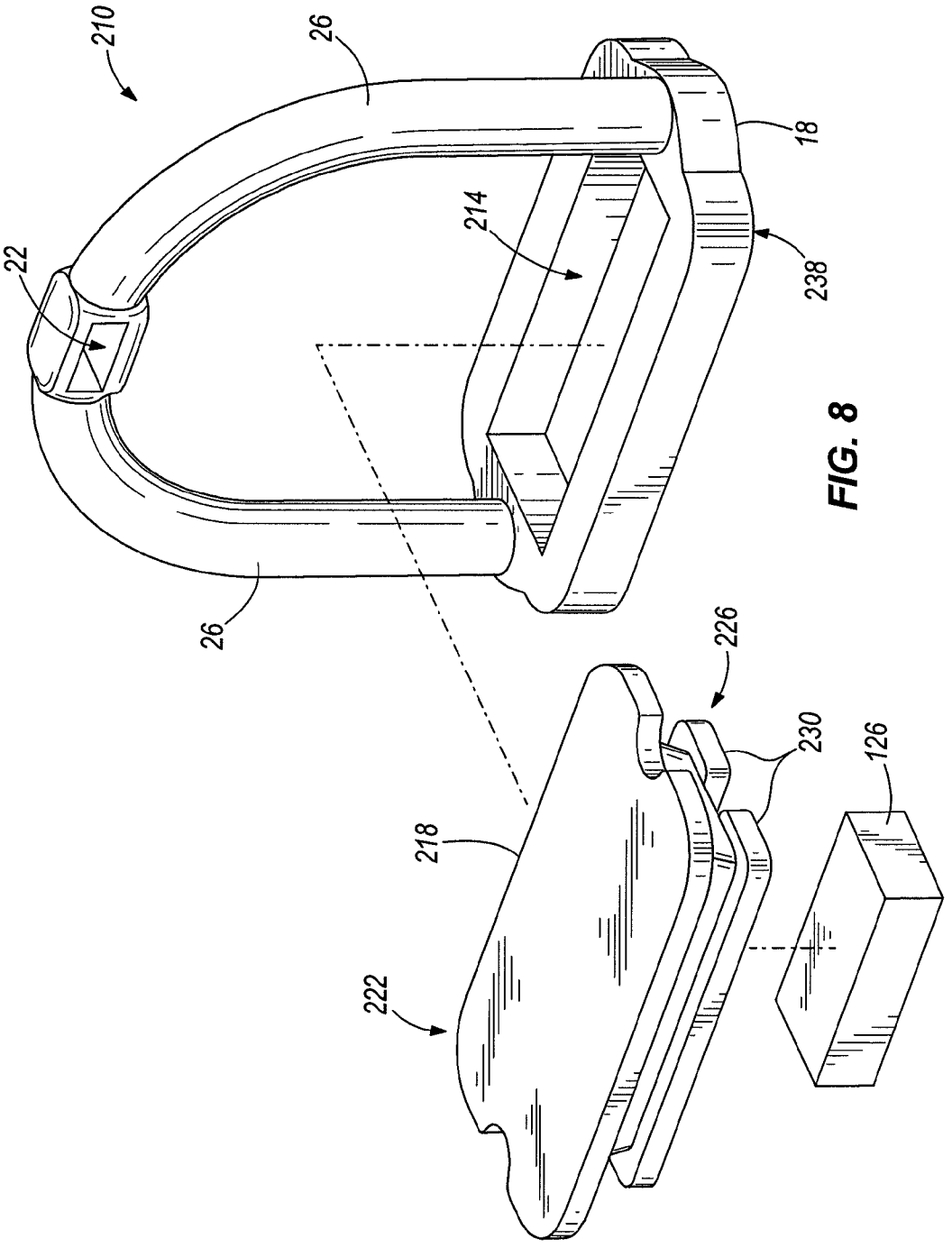

FIG. 8

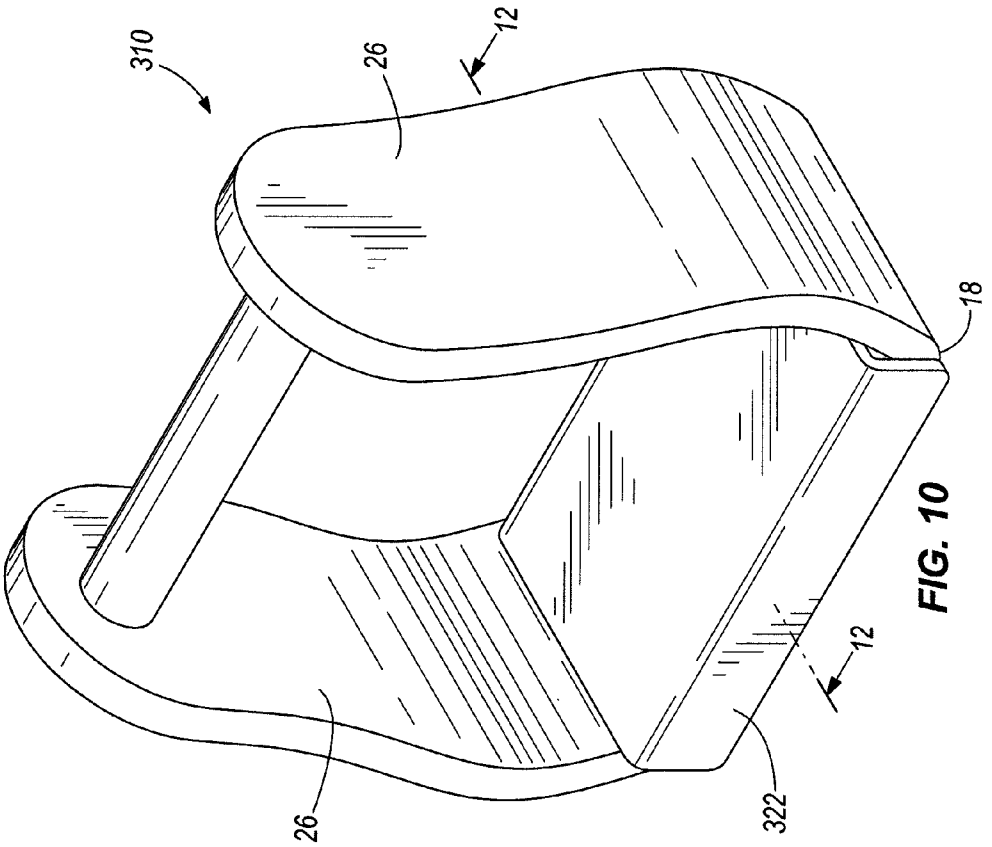

FIG. 10

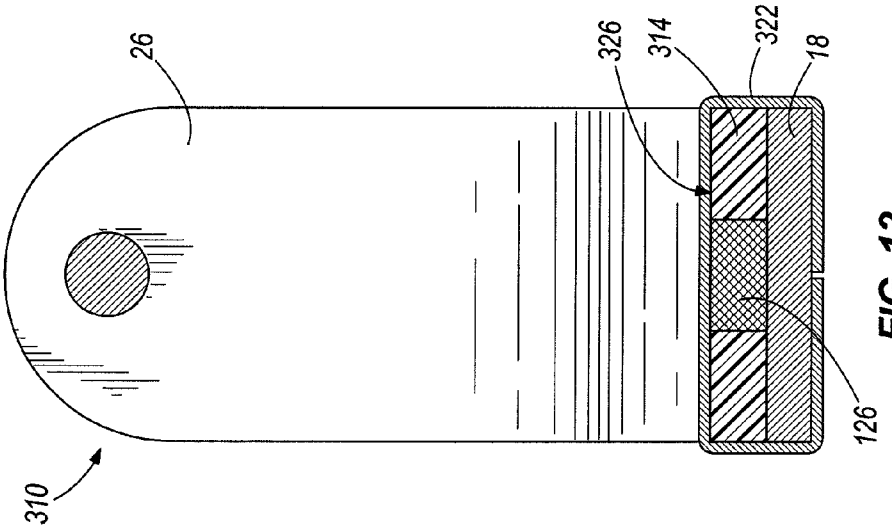

FIG. 12

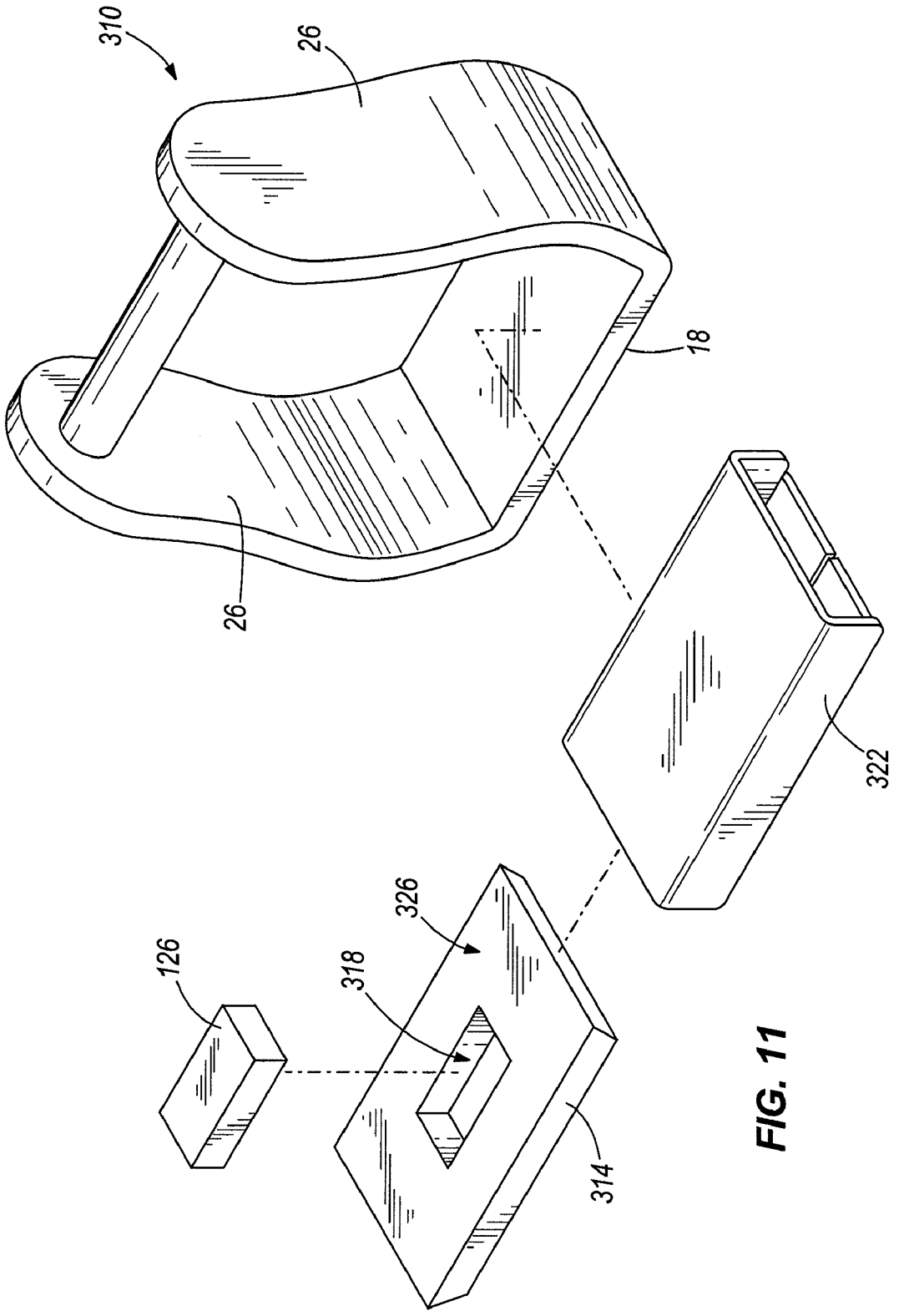

FIG. 11

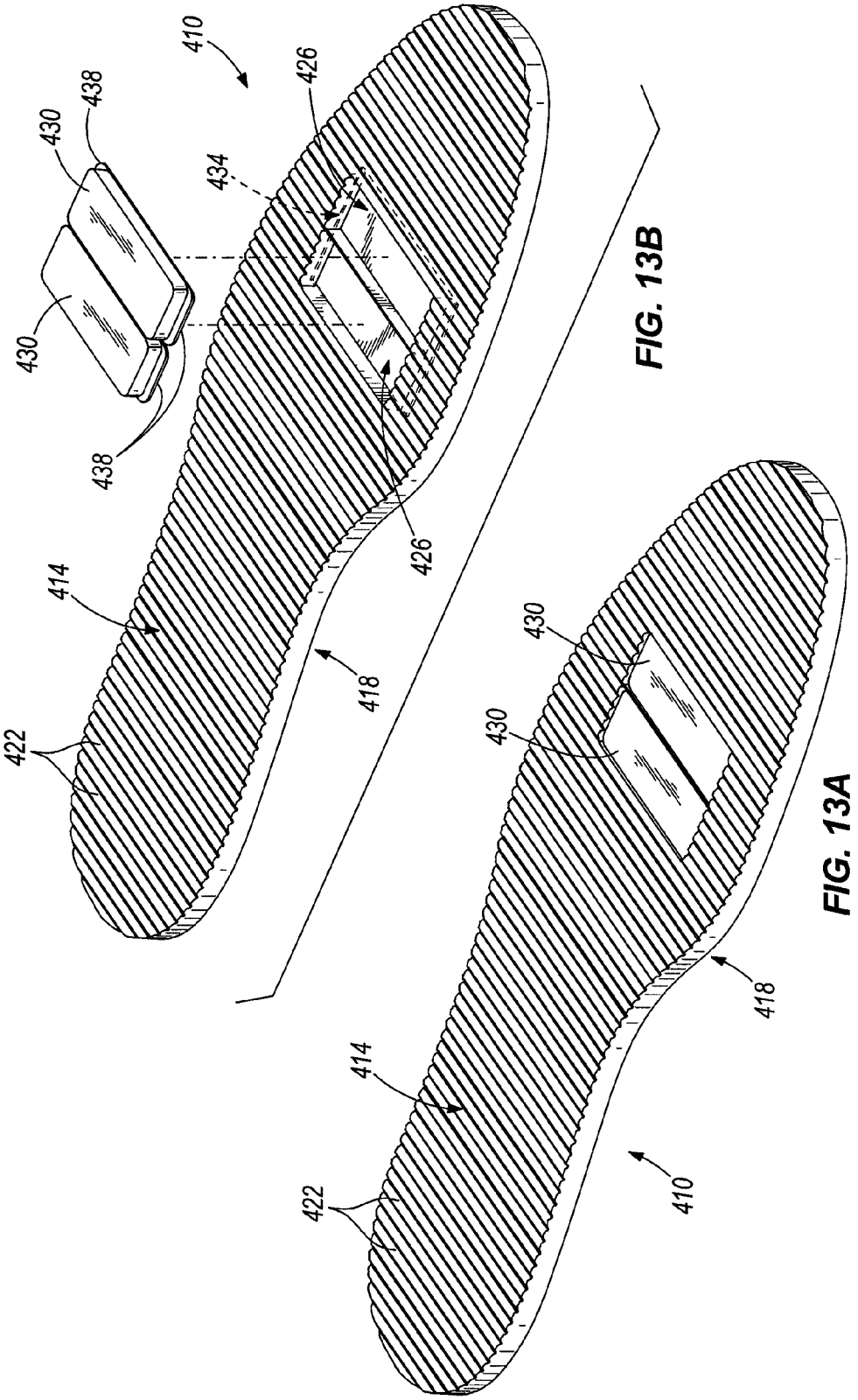
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FIG. 13B
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FIG. 13A

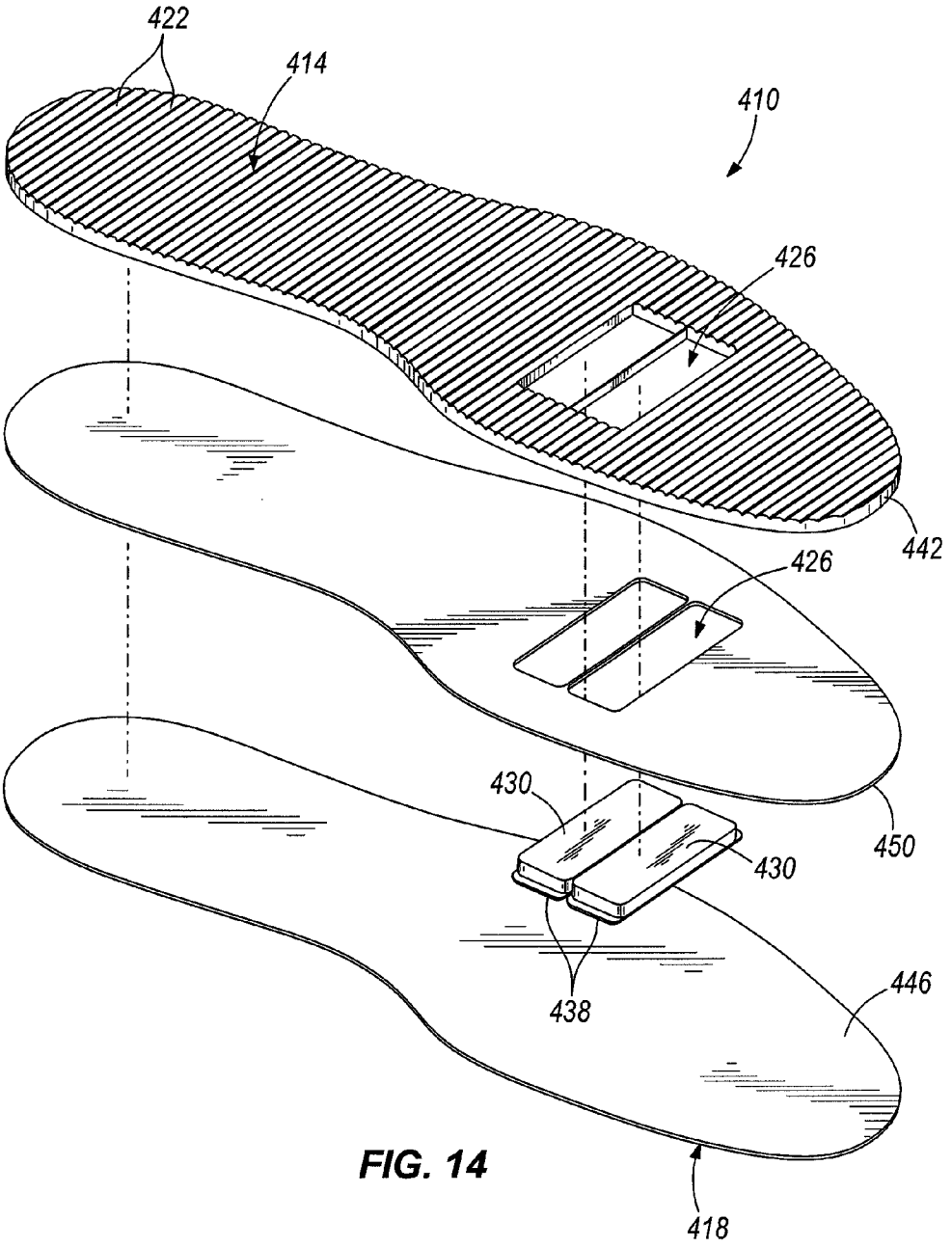

FIG. 14

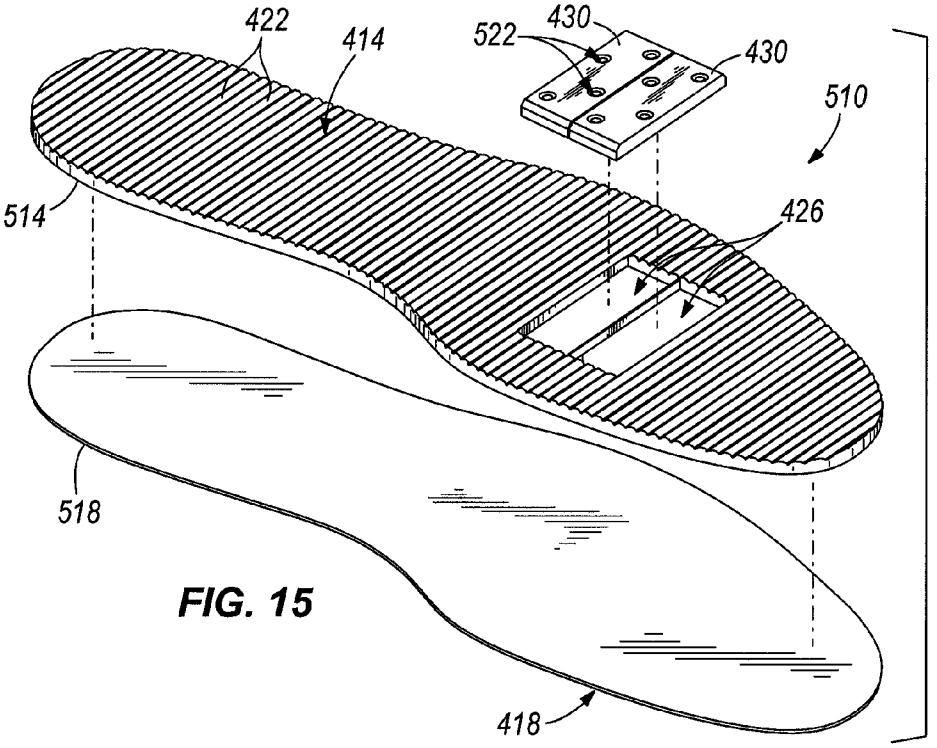
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FIG. 15

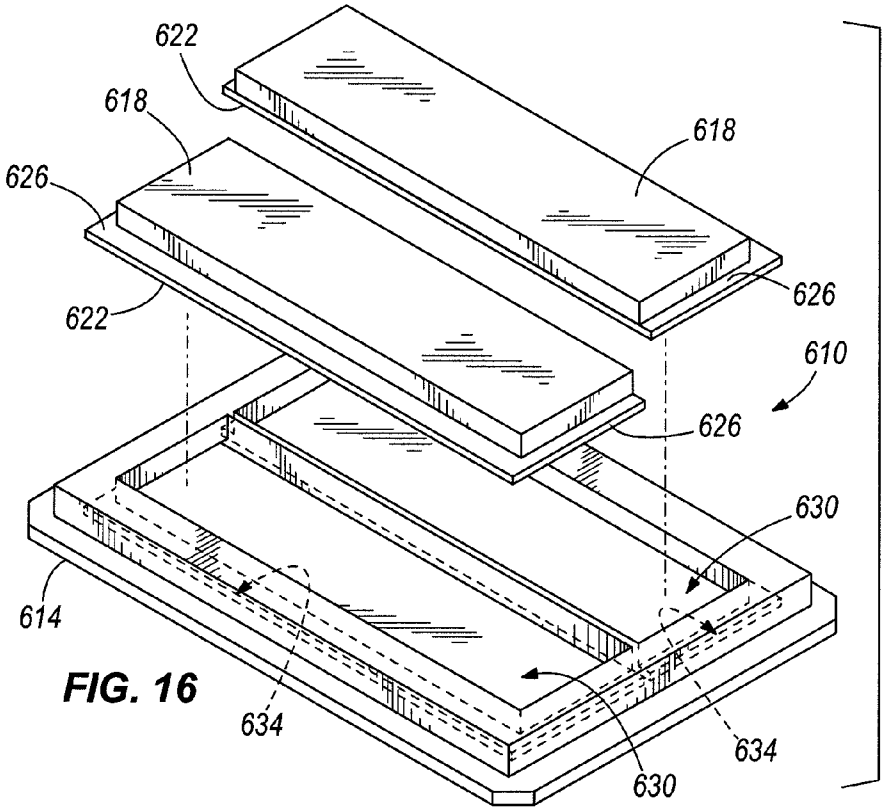
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FIG. 16

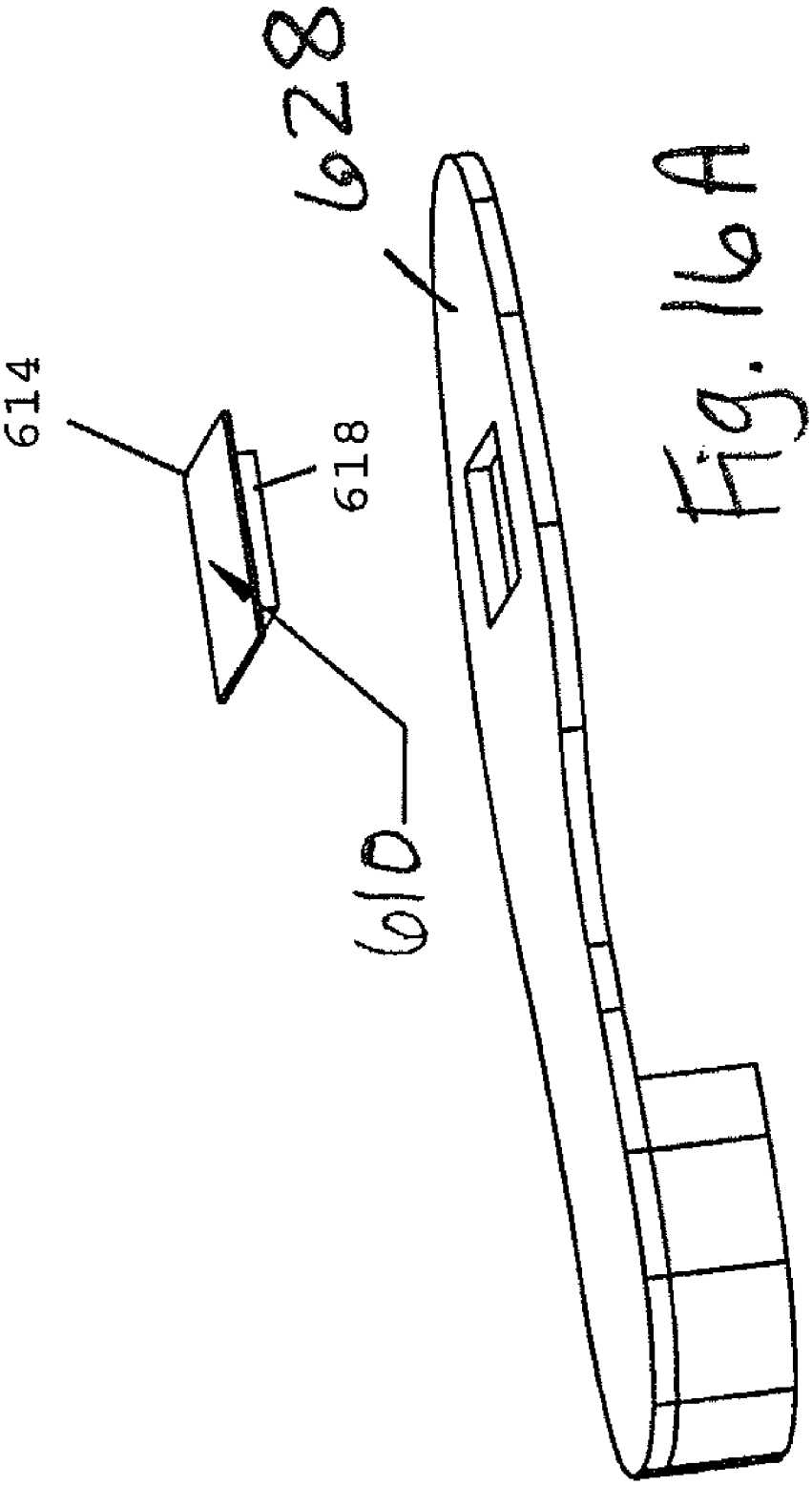

Fig. 16A

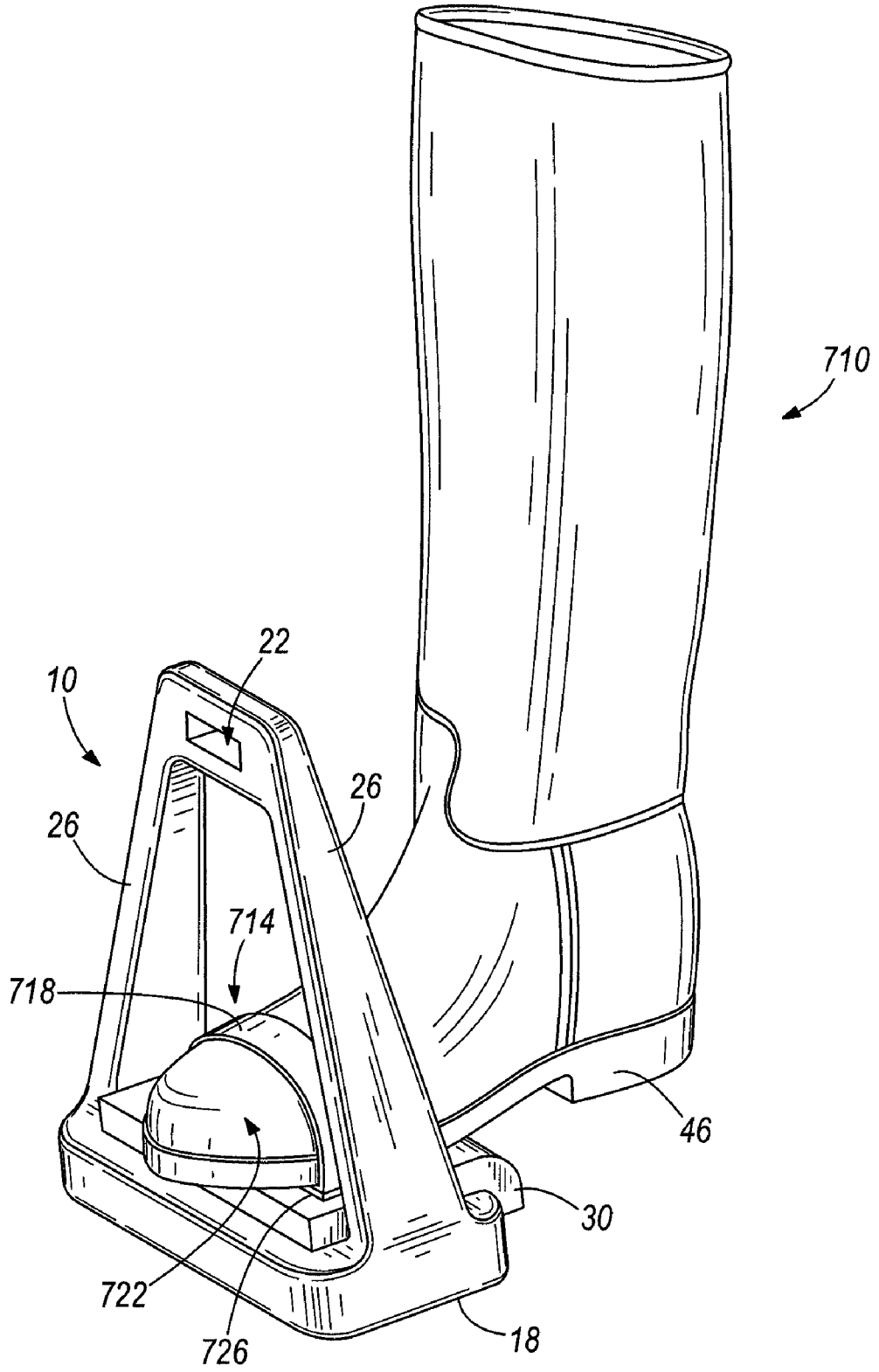

FIG. 17

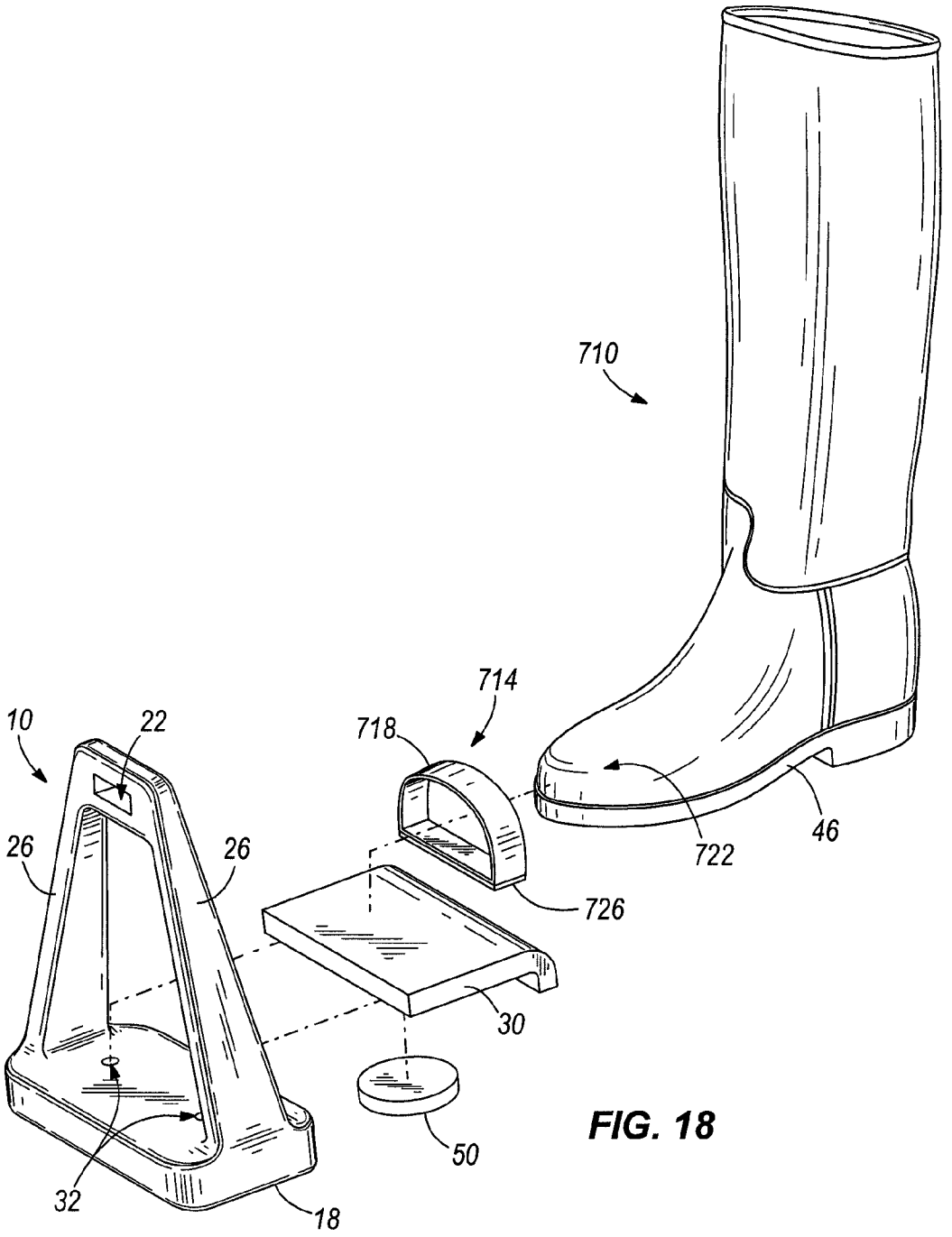

FIG. 18

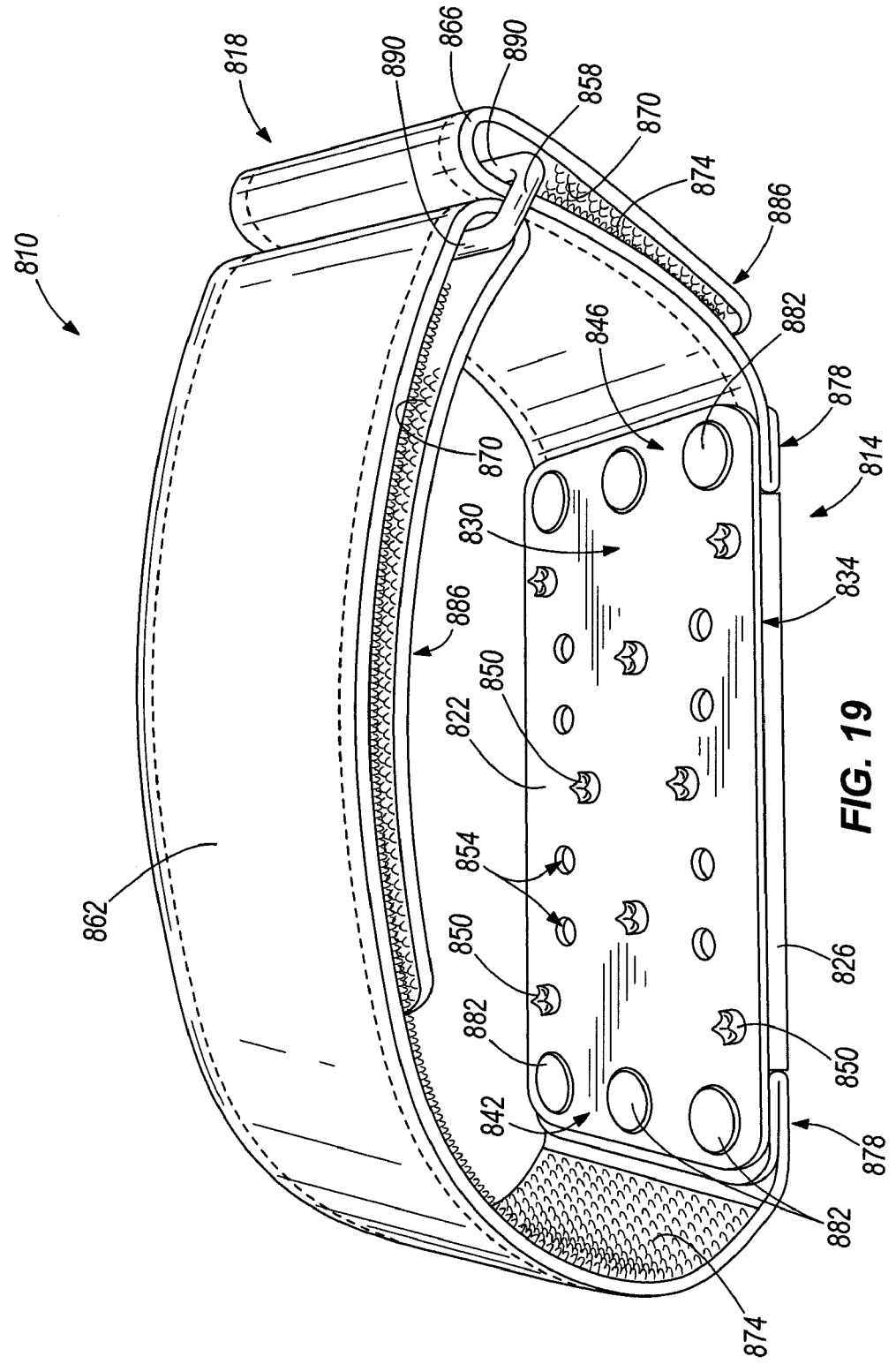
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FIG. 19

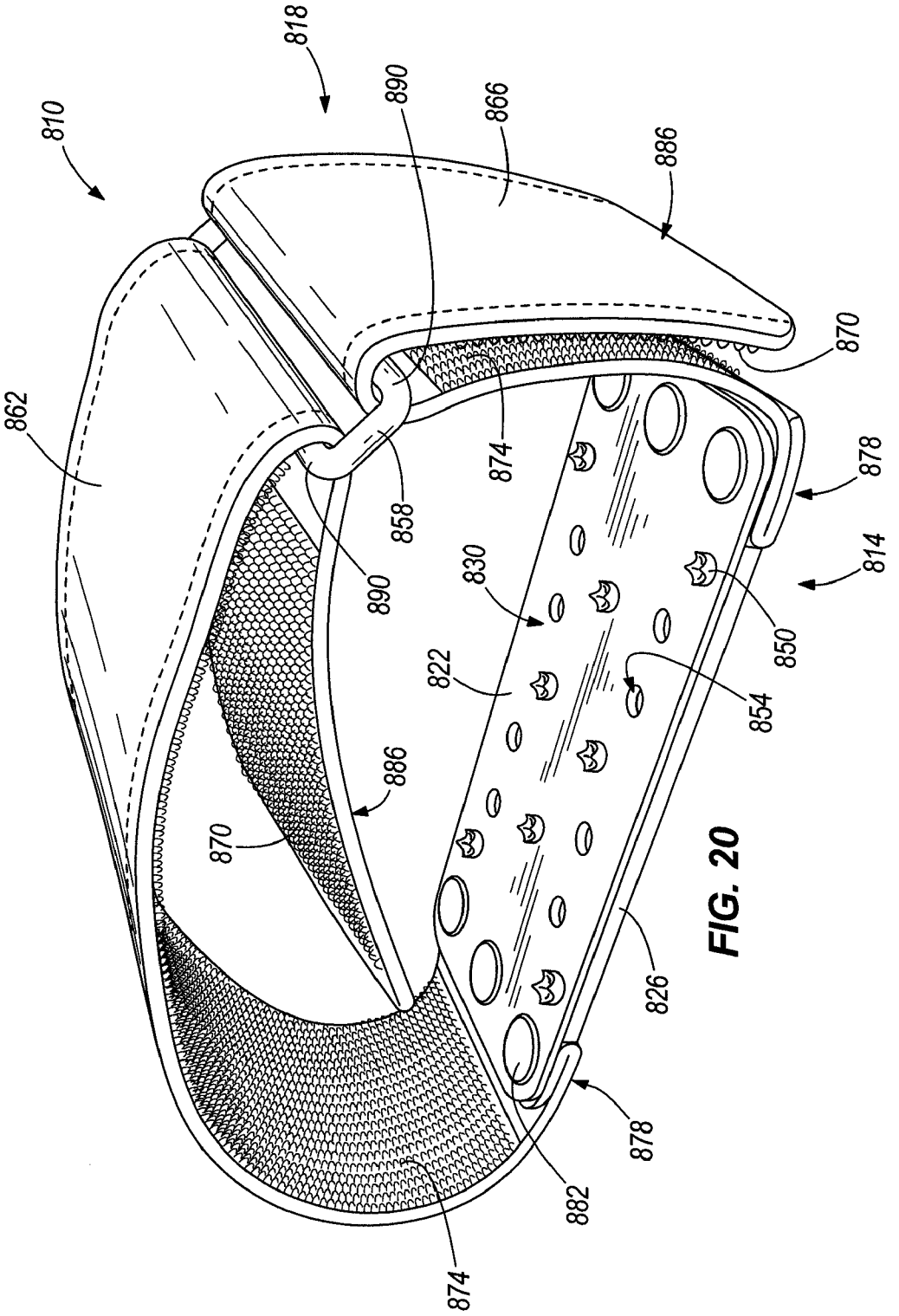
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FIG. 20

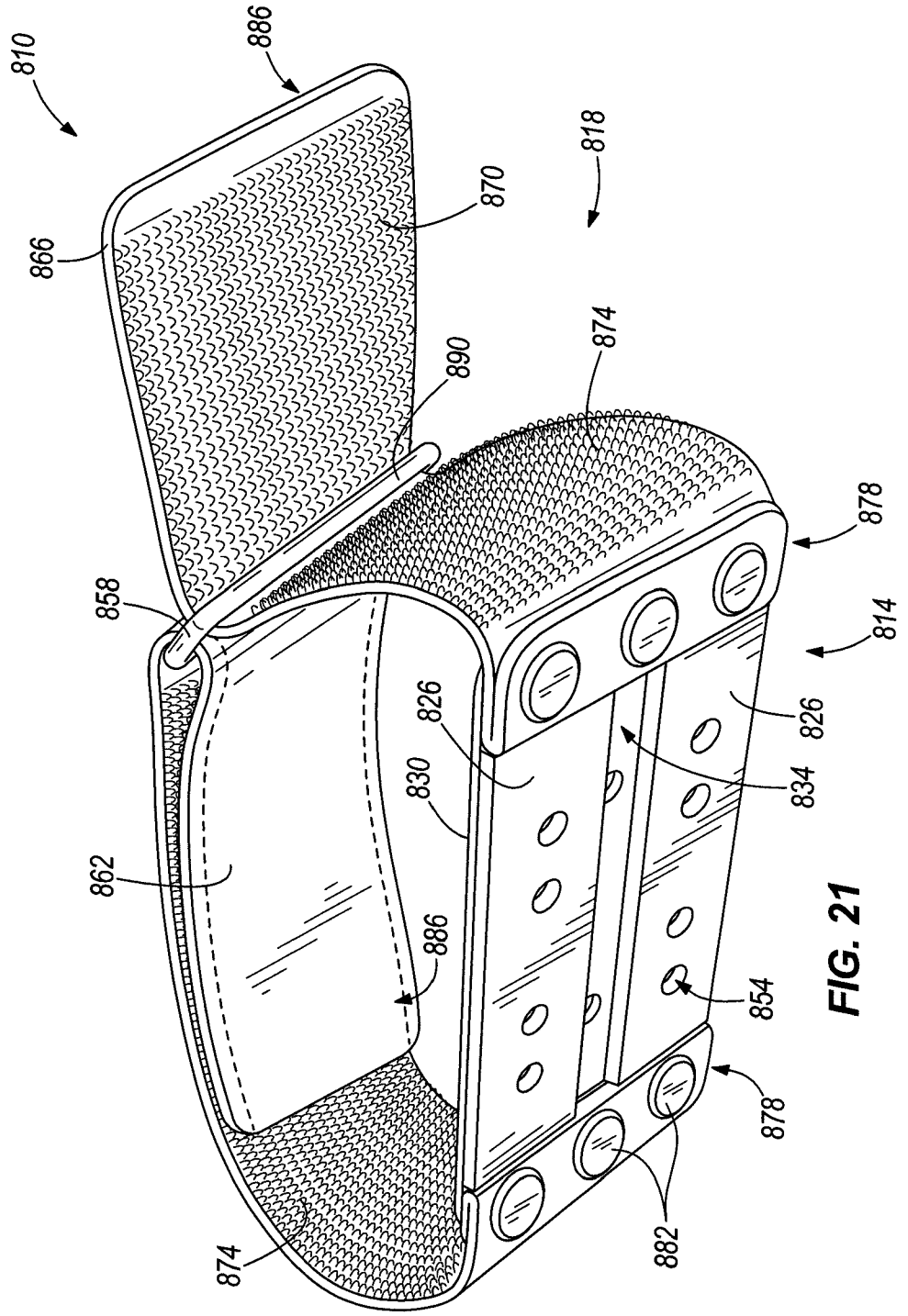
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FIG. 21

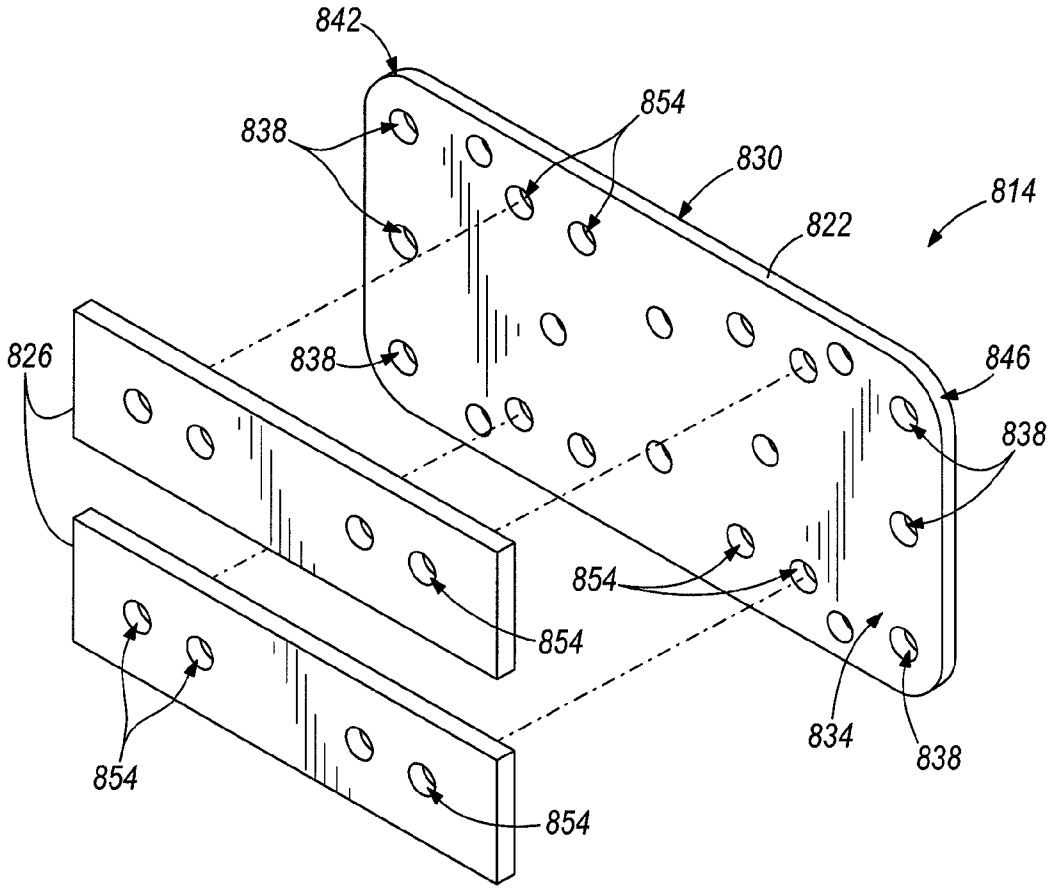

FIG. 22

STIRRUP

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims priority to U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 61/036,819, entitled "STIRRUP", filed Mar. 14, 2008 by Scott H. Yanke, Patricia A. Van Housen and Paul H. Yanke, and to U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 61/052,773, entitled "STIRRUP", filed May 13, 2008 by Scott H. Yanke, Patricia A. Van Housen and Paul H. Yanke, the entire contents of which are hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND

[0002] The present invention relates to a stirrup for an equine riding saddle that retains a riding boot in position within the stirrup, and more particularly, to a stirrup that magnetically attracts a riding boot.

[0003] Typically, stirrups attach to a saddle by straps. In equestrian events and activities, a rider's feet are placed into the stirrups, thereby allowing the rider to maintain their balance on an equine (e.g., a horse). It is common for a rider's foot to fall out of the stirrup, often called "losing their stirrup" or "blowing their stirrup." If order to prevent this action, a rider's foot is held in the stirrup by a variety of make-shift restraints, such as rubber bands, strings, leather, or fabric ties. Such restraints usually require assistance to put on, are unsightly in competitive arenas, and are outlawed by the governing bodies of various equestrian sports.

[0004] Another tool for holding a foot in a stirrup utilizes a binding, similar to a ski or bicycle binding. Bindings are dangerous because when a rider falls, the bindings do not automatically release. Therefore, an assistant is required to lock and unlock the bindings with respect to the rider's feet. Bindings are also outlawed in various equestrian sports.

SUMMARY

[0005] In one embodiment, the invention provides a riding boot for use with a stirrup. The riding boot includes a sole for engaging the stirrup, the sole coupled to the riding boot and a magnetic member coupled to the sole. The magnetic member is a polymer including a magnetic metal.

[0006] In a further embodiment, the invention provides a strap system for use with a riding boot and stirrup. The strap system includes a strap body defining an adjustable portion, wherein the strap body is adjustable to releasably couple the strap system to the riding boot, and a magnetic member.

[0007] In another embodiment, the invention provides a stirrup. The stirrup includes a base for supporting a riding boot and a magnetic member supported by the base. The magnetic member is configured to magnetically attract the riding boot to the base so as to releasably secure the riding boot to the stirrup. The stirrup further includes a pad coupled to the base wherein the magnetic material is positioned between the pad and the base.

[0008] In still another embodiment, the invention provides a method of manufacturing a sole for a riding boot. The method includes forming a pocket in the sole, the sole configured for coupling to the riding boot and inserting a magnetic member in the pocket. The magnetic member is substantially surrounded by a polymeric material.

[0009] In another embodiment, the invention provides a sole kit for a riding boot. The sole kit includes a sole including a pocket and a magnetic member positioned in the pocket. At least one of the sole and the magnetic member are configured for coupling to the riding boot.

[0010] Other aspects of the invention will become apparent by consideration of the detailed description and accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0011] FIG. **1** is a perspective view of a magnetic stirrup and a riding boot according to an embodiment of the invention.

[0012] FIG. **2** is an exploded view of the magnetic stirrup and the riding boot shown in FIG. **1**.

[0013] FIG. **3** is a cross-section view of the magnetic stirrup and the riding boot taken along line **3-3** in FIG. **1**.

[0014] FIG. **3**A is a perspective view of a sole of a riding boot according to another embodiment of the invention.

[0015] FIG. **4** is a perspective view of a magnetic stirrup according to another embodiment of the invention.

[0016] FIG. **5** is an exploded view of the magnetic stirrup shown in FIG. **4**.

[0017] FIG. **6** is a cross-section view of the magnetic stirrup taken along line **6-6** in FIG. **4**.

[0018] FIG. **6**A is an exploded view of a magnetic stirrup according to another embodiment of the invention.

[0019] FIG. **6**B is a front view of the magnetic stirrup shown in FIG. **6**A.

[0020] FIG. **6**C is a cross-section view of the magnetic stirrup taken along line A-A in FIG. **6**A.

[0021] FIG. **6**D is a side view of a magnetic stirrup according to another embodiment of the invention.

[0022] FIG. **6**E is a side view of a magnetic holder of the magnetic stirrup of FIG. **6**D.

[0023] FIG. **7** is a perspective view of a magnetic stirrup according to another embodiment of the invention.

[0024] FIG. **8** is an exploded view of the magnetic stirrup shown in FIG. **7**.

[0025] FIG. **9** is a cross-section view of the magnetic stirrup taken along line **9-9** in FIG. **7**.

[0026] FIG. **10** is a perspective view of a magnetic stirrup according to another embodiment of the invention.

[0027] FIG. **11** is an exploded view of the magnetic stirrup shown in FIG. **10**.

[0028] FIG. **12** is a cross-section view of the magnetic stirrup taken along line **12-12** in FIG. **10**.

[0029] FIG. **13**A is a perspective view of a magnetic member for a sole of the riding boot according to another embodiment of the invention.

[0030] FIG. **13**B is an exploded view of the magnetic member and the sole shown in FIG. **13**A.

[0031] FIG. **14** is an exploded view of a magnetic member for a sole of the riding boot according to another embodiment of the invention.

[0032] FIG. **15** is an exploded view of a magnetic member for a sole of the riding boot according to another embodiment of the invention.

[0033] FIG. **16** is an exploded view of a magnetic member for a sole of the riding boot according to another embodiment of the invention.

[0034] FIG. **16**A is an exploded view of the magnetic member of FIG. **16** for positioning in the sole of a riding boot.

[0035] FIG. **17** is a perspective view of a magnetic stirrup and a riding boot according to another embodiment of the invention.

[0036] FIG. **18** is an exploded view of the magnetic stirrup and the riding boot shown in FIG. **17**.

[0037] FIG. **19** is a perspective view of a strap system for the riding boot according to another embodiment of the invention.

[0038] FIG. **20** is another perspective view of the strap system shown in FIG. **19** and illustrating a method of adjusting the strap.

[0039] FIG. **21** is yet another perspective view of the strap system shown in FIG. **19** and illustrating another method of adjusting the strap.

[0040] FIG. **22** is an exploded view of a plate system according to another embodiment of the invention.

[0041] Before any embodiments of the invention are explained in detail, it is to be understood that the invention is not limited in its application to the details of construction and the arrangement of components set forth in the following description or illustrated in the following drawings. The invention is capable of other embodiments and of being practiced or of being carried out in various ways. Also, it is to be understood that the phraseology and terminology used herein is for the purpose of description and should not be regarded as limiting.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0042] FIGS. **1-3** illustrate a magnetic stirrup **10** and a riding boot **14** according to one embodiment of the invention. The stirrup **10** and the riding boot **14** form a riding system for use with various riding animals. As shown in FIGS. **1** and **2**, the stirrup **10** includes a base **18**, an eye **22** for a strap to connect the stirrup to a saddle, such as a leather strap, and two branches **26** extending between the base **18** and the eye **22**. The stirrup **10** may be formed of various materials, such as steel, stainless steel, iron, plated nickel, plastic, aluminum, wood, leather, and composites. Furthermore, the stirrup **10** may be formed of any metal as is known in the art. The magnetic stirrup **10** may be either English-style, as shown, or Western-style.

[0043] In the illustrated embodiment, a tread or foot pad **30** is removably coupled to the base **18** using fasteners (e.g., screws) inserted through apertures **32** in the base **18**. The foot pad **30** includes a first surface **34** for interfacing with the riding boot **14**, and a second surface **38** opposite the first surface **34**. In a further embodiment, the foot pad **30** may be permanently attached to the base **18**. The foot pad **30** may include ribs or another textured surface to provide friction between the foot pad **30** and riding boot **14**. The foot pad **30** may be formed of various materials, such as metal (e.g., steel), plastic, rubber, urethane, silicon or leather. In some embodiments, the foot pad is molded using injection molding (i.e., high or low pressure injection molding), gravity molding, vacuum molding or any molding process.

[0044] Referring to FIGS. **2** and **3**, a first attractant or first magnetic member **42**, which exhibits magnetic behavior, is coupled to or imbedded in a sole **46** of the riding boot **14**. A second attractant or second magnetic member **50**, which also exhibits magnetic behavior, is coupled to or imbedded in the foot pad **30**. In the illustrated embodiment, the second magnetic member **50** is recessed from the second surface **38**. In other embodiments, the second magnetic member **50** may be coupled to or imbedded in the base **18** of the stirrup **10**. The sole **46** is generally formed of rubber or other polymeric material.

[0045] In some embodiments, the style or discipline of equine riding determines the riding boot placement in the stirrup and therein the first magnetic member and the second magnetic member placement in the riding boot and foot pad, respectively.

[0046] In one embodiment, the foot pad **30** is molded using one of the above-identified processes and then the second magnetic member **50** is assembled into the foot pad **30** either as a pre-formed structure or an injected material to be shaped as the second magnetic member **50**. In another embodiment, the foot pad **30** is injected around the second magnetic member **50**. In yet another embodiment, the foot pad **30** is made of multiple pieces and the second magnetic member **50** is inserted into at least one of the pieces prior to assembling the foot pad **30**. In other embodiments, the foot pad **30** is formed such that the second magnetic member **50** is inserted into the foot pad **30** without deforming the foot pad **30** or using adhesive to hold the second magnetic member **50** in the foot pad **30**. In still other embodiments, the foot pad **30** is adhered, mechanically or welded onto the stirrup **10** using a two piece foot pad **30**.

[0047] The boot sole **46** includes a pocket **54** for inserting the first magnetic member **42**. The pocket **54** may be molded (i.e., premolded) within the sole **46**, or machined into the sole **46**. The first magnetic member **42** may be removable from the pocket **54**. In some embodiments, the first magnetic member **42** is inserted into the sole **46** during the molding of the sole **46** and therein defines the pocket **54**.

[0048] In the illustrated embodiment, the first magnetic member **42** is positioned within a recess of the sole **46** so as to be flush with the first surface **34** of the foot pad **30**. The position within the sole **46** prevents the first magnetic member **42** from generating sound against the ground or stirrup **10**, as well as limiting slipperiness between the riding boot **14** and the ground. In some embodiments, the distance of the first magnetic member **42** from the second magnetic member **50** impacts the effectiveness of the magnetic attraction. In other embodiments, the first magnetic member **42** is coupled to the sole **46** so as to be recessed into the sole **46** away from the first surface **34** of the foot pad **30**.

[0049] In the illustrated embodiment, the first magnetic member **42** is recessed into the boot sole **46** and is exposed to the foot pad **30**. In other embodiments, the first magnetic member **42** is imbedded in the sole **46** so as to be hidden or not exposed. The material forming the sole **46** has substantially minimal impact on the effectiveness of the first and second magnetic members **42**, **50**.

[0050] The first and second magnetic members **42**, **50** may be formed of various conventional magnetic materials. For example, in some embodiments, the first and second magnetic members **42**, **50** are formed of ferromagnetic materials, such as steel, carbon steel or iron, which produce magnetic fields that attract one another. In another embodiment, the magnetic members **42**, **50** are composites loaded with metal. In other embodiments, either of the first or second magnetic members **42**, **50** is formed of a ferromagnetic material whereas the other attractant is formed of a paramagnetic material, which does not produce a magnetic field, but is attracted to the magnetic field of the ferromagnetic material. In still other embodiments, the first magnetic member **42** and/or the second magnetic member **50** may be formed of a plastic or polymer that includes magnetic material imbedded or impregnated therein.

[0051] In some embodiments, the first magnetic member **42** is formed of a metal that does not produce a magnetic field; however, the first magnetic member **42** is attracted to a magnetic field. The second magnetic member **50** is a permanent magnet, such as a neodymium magnet. In other embodiments, the second magnetic member **50** may be formed of various materials such as samarium cobalt, alnico, ceramic or ferrite. The type, size and shape of the second magnetic member **50** utilized in the stirrup **10** determines the effectiveness or amount of magnetic attraction between the first and second magnetic members **42**, **50**. In some embodiments, the thickness and size of the first magnetic member **42** may be varied to correspond to the type, size and shape of the second magnetic member **50** in order to provide a desired amount of attraction between the first and second magnetic members **42**, **50**.

[0052] As illustrated, the first and second magnetic members **42**, **50** are disk-like magnets of opposing poles and are therefore magnetically attracted to one another. The first magnetic member **42** is formed of a magnetic material that has a magnetic field. The magnetic field couples the stirrup **10** (i.e., the second magnetic member **50**) to the sole **46** of the riding boot **14** and thereby prevents a rider's foot from slipping through, or falling out of, the stirrup **10**. If a rider does fall off the equine (e.g., horse, mule, etc.), the attraction of the first and second magnetic members **42**, **50** is broken by the force of the rider's fall; therefore, allowing the rider's foot to fall out of the stirrup **10** rather than remaining entangled with the stirrup **10**. In further embodiments, the attractants **42**, **50** may have other shapes (e.g., block or plate), or that the second magnetic member **50** is formed of a magnetic material with a magnetic field to attract the boot **14**.

[0053] In some embodiments, either or both of the first and second magnetic members **42**, **50** are electromagnets that include magnetic fields produced by flow of an electric current supplied by, for example, a small and/or portable battery.

[0054] In some embodiments, the first magnetic member **42** includes a plate imbedded in or coupled to the sole **46** of the riding boot **14**. The plate may be a single piece or multiple pieces of varying thicknesses, whereby a multiple piece attractant allows the boot sole to bend. The plates may be stacked or positioned side to side. In some embodiments, the plate may be formed of powdered or rolled metal (e.g., steel or iron).

[0055] In some embodiments, a backer plate (not shown) formed of, for example, steel is used to increase the magnetic effectiveness between the first and second magnetic members **42**, **50**. The backer plate is coupled to or positioned adjacent to the first magnetic member **42** opposite of the second magnetic member **50**. In other embodiments, the backer plate is coupled to or positioned adjacent the second magnetic member **50** opposite of the first magnetic member **42**. In still other embodiments, backer plates are associated with each of the magnetic members **42**, **50**.

[0056] In other embodiments, the first and second magnetic members **42**, **50** may be arranged in various positions to increase and decrease the magnetic effectiveness. In some embodiments, either or both of the magnetic members **42**, **50** may be assembled to form a Halbach array.

[0057] In other embodiments, the first magnetic member **42** may be coupled to the riding boot **14** by sliding the first magnetic member **42** between the sole **46** and the bottom of the riding boot **14**.

[0058] In other embodiments, the first magnetic member **42** is held to the exterior surface or the sole **46** of the riding boot **14** by an adhesive or a mechanical means.

[0059] In other embodiments and as shown in FIG. **3**A, the riding boot may be a conventional riding boot that is modified to include the first magnetic member **42**. In the illustrated embodiment, the first magnetic member **42** is coupled to the sole **46** of a riding boot with nails **43**. However, in other embodiments, the first magnetic member **42** is coupled to the sole **46** of a riding boot with tacks, screws, adhesive, Velcro, or other mechanical fasteners.

[0060] FIGS. **4-6** illustrate a magnetic stirrup **110** according to another embodiment of the invention. The magnetic stirrup **110** is similar to the magnetic stirrup **10** shown in FIGS. **1-3**; therefore, like structure is identified by the same reference numerals. The magnetic stirrup **110** includes a base pad **114** and a foot pad **118** coupled to the base pad **114**. The foot pad **118** provides a textured surface **120** for a user's riding boot (e.g., riding boot **14** shown in FIGS. **1-3**) to engage. In the illustrated embodiment, the foot pad **118** is rubber molded over the base pad **114** such that the base and foot pads **114**, **118** form a single pad, although for the purpose of illustration, the foot pad **118** is shown as a separate piece. In some embodiments, the base and foot pads **114**, **118** are formed as individual parts and are coupled together post-manufacturing. The base pad **114** includes cylindrical projections **122**, which are inserted through apertures **32** in the base **18**. The projections **122** are releasably coupled to the base **18** of the stirrup **110** via fasteners (e.g., screws). A block-like magnetic member **126** is positioned between the base pad **114** and the base **18**, and magnetically attracts a first magnetic member (e.g., the first magnetic member **42** described above and shown in FIGS. **1-3**) in a riding boot. In further embodiments, the magnetic member **126** may be formed as other shapes such as a disk, a plate or granules. The magnetic member **126** is held in a recessed area **130** of the base pad **114** (FIG. **5**) and a recessed area **134** of the base **18** (FIG. **6**). Fasteners attach the pads **114**, **118** to the base **18** and hold the magnetic member **126** in the recessed areas **130**, **134**.

[0061] In some embodiments, a thin steel plate is positioned between the magnetic member **126** and the base **18** to increase the effectiveness of the magnetic member **126**, similar to the backer plate discussed above with respect to FIGS. **1-3**.

[0062] In other embodiments, the base pad **114** is coupled to the base **18** by press-fitting the projections **122** through apertures **32** of the base **18**. In some embodiments, the magnetic member **126** is positioned in the base **18** and is spaced apart from the base and foot pad **114**, **118** such that no recessed area **130** is formed in the base pad **114**. In still other embodiments, an existing stirrup including a foot pad is modified to include magnetic member **114**. For example, the foot pad (and base pad) of the existing stirrup is removed from the stirrup to expose a bottom surface of the pad and then the recessed area **130** is formed in the pad. Furthermore, the recessed area **134** is formed in the existing base such that the magnetic member **130** can be positioned in the recessed areas **130**, **134** between the modified pad and base.

[0063] In other embodiments, the material that forms the foot pad **30** may be a magnetic material, thereby forming the second magnetic member **50**. The material that forms the foot pad **30**, such as the steel, is a magnetic material that magnetically attracts the first magnetic member **42** and therein couples the stirrup **10** to the riding boot **14**.

[0064] FIGS. **6**A-**6**C illustrate a magnetic stirrup **180** according to another embodiment of the invention. The magnetic stirrup **180** is similar to the magnetic stirrup **110** shown in FIGS. **1-3**; therefore, like structure is identified by the same reference numerals. The magnetic stirrup **180** includes a base **184** and a foot pad **188** coupled to the base **184**. The foot pad **188** provides a textured surface for a user's riding boot (e.g., riding boot **14** shown in FIGS. **1-3**) to engage. The magnetic member **126** is positioned in the stirrup **180** through an opening **192** formed in the stirrup base **184**. A magnetic holder **194** is configured to receive the magnetic member **126** and is coupled to the stirrup base **184** with fasteners or other coupling means. The foot pad **188** is positioned on an opposite side of the magnetic member **126** as the magnetic holder **194**. The foot pad **188** is coupled to the stirrup base **184** with fasteners or other coupling means.

[0065] FIGS. **6**D-**6**E illustrate a magnetic stirrup **198** according to another embodiment of the invention. The magnetic stirrup **198** is similar to the magnetic stirrup **110** shown in FIGS. **1-3**; therefore, like structure is identified by the same reference numerals. The magnetic stirrup **198** includes a base **200** and an opening **202** configured to receive a magnetic holder **203**. The magnetic holder **203** includes a foot pad **204** coupled to a holder base **205** with fasteners **207** or other spacers. As illustrated, the fasteners **207** extend from the holder base **205** through opening **202** and into foot pad **204**, such that tightening of the fasteners **207** retains the magnetic holder **203** in rigid assembly with the base **200**. In some embodiments, the fasteners **207** extend from the holder base **205** through base **200** and into foot pad **204**. The foot pad **204** provides a textured surface **206** for a user's riding boot (e.g., riding boot **14** shown in FIGS. **1-3**) to engage. The foot pad **204** may be formed of aluminum, steel, rubber, plastic, or other suitable material. The magnetic member **126** is positioned in the magnetic holder **203** between the foot pad **204** and the holder base **205**. In some embodiments, the magnetic member **126** is retained between the holder base **205** and the foot pad **204** by tightening of the fasteners **207**. In some embodiments, the fasteners **207** extend through the magnetic member **126** to couple the magnetic member **126** to the magnetic holder **203**. In other embodiments, the magnetic member **126** is coupled to the magnetic holder **203** or otherwise retained within the magnetic holder **203** with adhesive or other coupling means.

[0066] FIGS. **7-9** illustrate a magnetic stirrup **210** according to another embodiment of the invention. The magnetic stirrup **210** is similar to the magnetic stirrup **10** shown in FIGS. **1-3**; therefore like structure is identified by the same reference numerals. The magnetic stirrup **210** includes an opening **214** and a foot pad **218** coupled to the base **18** of the stirrup **210** by press fitting the foot pad **218** through the opening **214**. The foot pad **218** includes an upper portion **222**, which engages a riding boot, and a lower portion **226**, which is inserted through the opening **214**. In one embodiment, the upper portion **222** includes ribs to frictionally engage the riding boot. The lower portion **226** has a pair of flanges **230** and a pocket **234** therebetween in which a block-like magnetic member **126** is positioned. The magnetic member **126** may be molded into the pocket **234** of the foot pad **218** or assembled into the pocket **234**. In the illustrated embodiment, the flanges **230** are temporarily deformed, are inserted through the opening **214**, and then engage a bottom surface **238** of the base **18** to releasably secure the foot pad **218** to the base **18**.

[0067] FIGS. **10-12** illustrate a magnetic stirrup **310** according to another embodiment of the invention. The magnetic stirrup **310** is similar to the magnetic stirrup **10** shown in FIGS. **1-3**; therefore like structure is identified by the same reference numerals. The magnetic stirrup **310** includes a spacer **314**, a block-like magnetic member **126** positioned in an opening **318** of the spacer **314**, and a cover **322** that surrounds the spacer **314**, the magnetic member **126** and the base **18** of the stirrup **310**. The spacer **314** maintains position of the magnetic member **126** and is positioned on the base **18** between the branches **26** of the stirrup **310**. The magnetic member **126** is held in the opening **318** either substantially flush with a surface **326** opposite of the base **18** or recessed into the spacer **314**. The cover **322** is placed around the spacer **314** and the base **18** and is held in place by adhesive or fasteners. In some embodiments, the cover **322** is temporarily deformed to fit around the spacer **314** and the base **18**. The cover **322** may be formed of plastic, steel, leather, or another type of material. In some embodiments, a thin steel plate is positioned between the magnetic member **126** and the base **18** to increase the effectiveness of the magnetic member **126**, similar to the backer plate discussed above with respect to FIGS. **1-3**.

[0068] In some embodiments, a non-magnetic stirrup having a cover and a base can be modified to include a magnetic system, which comprises the spacer **314**, the magnetic member **318** and the cover **322** shown in FIGS. **10-12**. Thus, an existing stirrup is modified to magnetically attract a riding boot, such as the riding boot **14** shown in FIGS. **1-3**.

[0069] In some embodiments, the opening **318** can be directly formed in the stirrup **310** and configured to receive the magnetic member **126** with the cover **322** substantially surrounding the hole **318** and the magnetic member **126**.

[0070] FIGS. **13**A and **13**B illustrate a boot sole **410** for the riding boot **14** according to another embodiment of the invention. The boot sole **410** is magnetically attracted to a stirrup (e.g., stirrups **10**,**110**, **210** or **310**) having a magnetic member (e.g., magnetic members **50** or **126**) coupled thereto. The sole **410** is generally formed of rubber or other polymeric material, and includes a first surface **414** for engaging the stirrup and a second surface **418** opposite the first surface for attaching to the riding boot **14**. The first surface **414** includes ribs or treads **422** to frictionally engage the stirrup.

[0071] The sole **410** also includes openings or pockets **426** for receiving respective magnetic members **430**. The magnetic members **430** are positioned in the openings **426** and are recessed from the first surface **414**. The openings **426** extend from the first surface **414** into the sole **410**, and each opening **426** includes channels **434** extending substantially parallel to the first and second surfaces **414**, **418**. The channels **434** extend wider than the openings **426** and receive tabs **438** of the magnetic members **430**. In some embodiments, the opening or pockets **426** are formed with a hot knife, sanding, or other machining process.

[0072] The magnetic members **430** are two metal plates (e.g., two steel plates) spaced slightly apart from one another. In other embodiments, the sole **410** may include more or less than two magnetic members **430**. In some embodiments, the magnetic members **430** are recessed from the first surface so as to prevent a user from walking on the magnetic members **430**, which may cause various sounds and slipperiness for the user. In other embodiments, the magnetic members **430** may be flush with the first surface **414**, which may increase the magnetic effectiveness of the magnetic members **430** in com-

parison with the recessed position. The gap or spacing between the two plates (i.e., the magnetic members **430**) allows the sole **410** to flex during use. In other embodiments, the magnetic members **430** are other shapes and objects, such as round tock, pellets or other constructions of magnetic material so as to form the magnetic member **430**. The tabs **438** extending from the magnetic members **430** are held in the channels **434** and resist removal of the magnetic members **430** from the sole **410**.

[0073] In some embodiments, the magnetic members **430** are injection molded into the openings **426** and channels **434**. In another embodiment shown in FIG. **14**, the sole **410** is formed of multiple layers **442**, **446**, **450** and the magnetic members **430** are assembled between the layers of the sole **410**. In particular, the layers of the sole **410** shown in FIG. **14** include an outer sole **442** including the ribbed surface **414** for engaging the stirrup, a base sole **446** for engaging the riding boot and a mid-sole **450** positioned between the outer and base soles **442**, **446**. The outer sole **442** and mid-sole **450** include the openings **426** in which the magnetic members **430** are inserted therethrough. The tabs **438** of the magnetic members **430** are positioned between the mid-sole **450** and the base sole **446**. The width of the openings **426** is less than the distance from the extremities of the tabs **438** and thus resists removal of the magnetic members **430** from the sole **410**. The layers **442**, **446**, **450** may be assembled using adhesive or fasteners.

[0074] In some embodiments, the first magnetic member may be imbedded between layers of the riding boot. In some embodiments, a specialized insole may have the first magnetic member imbedded within or may perform as the first magnetic member thereby having magnetic capabilities. In still other embodiments, an additional layer of material, including but not limited to, rubber material or water repellant tape, may be provided between the sole and the mid-sole to prevent water from affecting the mid-sole.

[0075] In some embodiments, the tabs **438** are part of a backing plate or other steel plate utilized to increase the effectiveness of the magnetic member(s).

[0076] In still other embodiments, the magnetic member **430** is an insole insert that is configured to be removably placed in the interior of the riding boot beneath the foot of the user. The insole insert is formed of a magnetic material, including but not limited to, flexible magnets and steel.

[0077] In some embodiments, the sole **410** including the magnetic member **430** is molded around or otherwise coupled to the riding boot **14**. In such embodiments, the existing sole of the riding boot **14** may be sanded or otherwise ground off to receive the sole **410**.

[0078] In yet other embodiments, the sole **410** is substantially formed of metal, steel, or other magnetic material. The sole **410** is molded using injection molding (i.e., high or low pressure injection molding), gravity molding, vacuum molding, or any molding process. In some embodiments, the sole **410** is formed of alternating layers of rubber or other polymeric material and steel, metal, or other magnetic material. The layers may be assembled using adhesive, fasteners, or other coupling means.

[0079] FIG. **15** illustrates a boot sole **510** according to another embodiment of the invention. The boot sole **510** is similar to the boot sole **410** shown in FIG. **14**; therefore like structure is identified by the same reference numerals. The boot sole **510** comprises two layers **514**, **518** and the magnetic members **430** are inserted through the openings **426** in one of the sole layers **514** and coupled to the other sole layer **518** via fasteners (e.g., nails or screws) through multiple apertures **522**.

[0080] FIG. **16** illustrates a magnetic system **610** according to another embodiment of the invention. The magnetic system **610** includes a support member **614** formed of, for example, rubber and magnetic members **618** coupled to the support member **614**. In the illustrated embodiment, the magnetic system **610** includes two magnetic members **618**, although in other embodiments fewer or more than two magnetic members **618** may be utilized. Each magnetic member **618** is formed of steel (e.g., 12 gauge carbon steel) and includes a backing plate **622** formed of steel (e.g., 22 gauge carbon steel). The backing plate **622** extends beyond the magnetic member **618** defining tabs **626**. In the illustrated embodiment, the two magnetic members **618** are shown removed from the support member **614** for ease of illustrated. The support member **614** is molded over the magnetic members **618** such that the magnetic members **618** are imbedded in the support members **614**. The support member **614** includes openings or pockets **630** for receiving the magnetic members **618**, and channels **634** recessed from the openings **630** into the support member **614** for receiving the tabs **626** (i.e., backing plate **622**). The tabs **626** are imbedded in the support member **614** to secure the magnetic members **618** in the support member **614**.

[0081] FIG. **16**A illustrates the magnetic system **610** positioned for placement in a boot sole **628**. In the illustrated embodiment, the support member **614** is formed of a polymer, such as plastic, that is injection-molded around the magnetic members **618** to substantially seal the magnetic members **618** in the polymer. The magnetic system **610** may then be assembled into the boot sole **628**. Enclosing the magnetic member in the polymeric over-molding protects the magnetic member from rusting or other water damage, as well as reduces the migration of water or other substances into the boot. In some embodiments, the magnetic system **610** may include a texture on it to provide a traction surface for the riding boot.

[0082] The magnetic system **610** can be utilized in the place of any of the magnetic members in any of the soles discussed herein. In other embodiments, the support member **614** and the magnetic members **618** are assembled.

[0083] FIGS. **17** and **18** illustrate the magnetic stirrup **10** of FIGS. **1-3**, a riding boot **710** and a magnetic strap system **714** according to another embodiment of the invention. The riding boot **710** illustrated in FIGS. **17** and **18** is similar to the riding boot **14** shown in FIGS. **1-3**; therefore, like structure will be identified by the same reference numerals. The strap system **714** includes a band or strap **718** removably coupled to toe **722** of the riding boot **710** and a first attractant or first magnetic member **726** coupled to or imbedded in a bottom of the strap **718**. The strap **718** is adjustable and is able to accommodate various contours and sizes of riding boots **710**. The first magnetic member **726**, similar to the first magnetic member **42** shown in FIGS. **1-3**, attracts the second magnetic member **50** in either the foot pad **30**, or the stirrup base **18**. In some embodiments, the strap **718** is injection molded and the first magnetic member **726** is coupled to or imbedded in the strap **718**.

[0084] In some embodiments, the first magnetic member **726** is coupled to or imbedded in, for example, a piece of leather, elastic, or rubber that is removably coupled to the toe **722** of the riding boot **710**.

[0085] FIGS. **19-22** illustrate a magnetic system **810** according to another embodiment of the invention. The magnetic system **810** is utilized with a riding boot, such as the riding boot **710** shown in FIGS. **17** and **18**, and includes a magnetic plate system **814** and a strap system **818** coupled to the plate system **814**. Referring to FIG. **22**, the plate system **814** includes a boot plate **822** and magnetic members **826** coupled to the boot plate **822** for attraction to a magnetic stirrup (e.g., stirrups **10**, **110**, **210** or **310**). The boot plate **822** is formed of steel (e.g., 20 gauge carbon steel) and the magnetic members **826** are formed of steel (e.g., 14 gauge carbon steel). The boot plate or backing plate **822** includes a first surface **830** for engaging the riding boot and a second surface **834** opposite the first surface **830** adjacent to the magnetic members **826**. The boot plate **822** has multiple fastener apertures **838** extending from the first surface **830** to the second surface **834** at opposite ends **842**, **846** of the plate **822**, as well as multiple gripper portions **850** extending from the first surface **830** to frictionally engage a sole of the riding boot and thereby provide added traction for the riding boot. The fastener apertures **838** are used to couple the strap system **818** to the plate system **814**. In the illustrated embodiment, the boot plate **822** and the magnetic members **826** include multiple through holes **854** formed therein. The holes **854** are utilized to adjust the magnetic effectiveness of the plate system **814**. In other words, by removing material from the boot plate **822** and the magnetic members **826**, the magnetic attraction increases.

[0086] In the illustrated embodiment, two magnetic members **826** are spot welded to the boot plate **822**, although in other embodiments, various affixing methods may be used to couple the magnetic members **826** to the boot plate **822**. In other embodiments, the plate system **814** may include more or less than two magnetic members **826**.

[0087] The strap system **818** defines an adjustable portion of the magnetic system **810** and includes a ring **858**, a first (main) strap **862** and a second (secondary) strap **866**. In the illustrated embodiment, the ring **858** is made of steel (e.g., stainless steel) and the straps **862**, **866** are made of leather (e.g., chap leather), which is generally smooth leather. Each strap **862**, **866** includes a hook portion **870** and a loop portion **874** defining a hook-and-loop type strap system **818**. The edges of the hook and loop portions **870**, **874** are flush with the edges of the leather straps **862**, **866**. In the illustrated embodiment, the hook and loop portions **870**, **874** are coupled to the straps **862**, **866** using adhesive, although other methods, such as stitches, can be utilized. One end **878** of each strap **862**, **866** is folded and coupled to the plate system **814**, specifically to the opposing ends **842**, **846** of the boot plate **822** via rivets **882** (e.g., double cap rivets), although other fastening methods may be used. The folded strap ends **878** abut the magnetic members **826** and have approximately the same thickness (when folded) as the thickness of the magnetic members **826**. The folded strap ends **878** provide added strength in the coupling of the straps **862**, **866** to the plate system **814**.

[0088] Another end **886** of each strap **862**, **866** is inserted through the ring **858** and wrapped around respective sides **890** of the ring **858** so as to define a closed or assembled position, as shown in FIGS. **19-21**. In an open position, at least one of the straps is removed from the ring **858** and the hook and loop portions **870**, **874** of each strap **862**, **866** are separated from one another. Thus, the straps **862**, **866** may be laid flat or substantially parallel with the boot plate **822** (i.e., the first and second surfaces **830**, **834**). In the open position, the straps **862**, **866** have a substantially curved shape, which allows the strap system **818** to fit the contours of the riding boot (e.g., the toe **722** shown in FIGS. **17** and **18**). In the illustrated embodiment, the first and second straps **862**, **866** have a radius of approximately **12.25** inches, although in other embodiments other radii amounts may be used.

[0089] The first and second straps **862**, **866** are adjustable to fit the strap system **810** securely onto the riding boot. Generally, the first strap **862** provides rough adjustment of the size of the strap system **810** and the second strap **866** provides fine adjustment for the size of the strap system **810**. Particularly, the first strap **862** is used prior to attaching the strap system **810** to the riding boot. Referring to FIG. **20**, a user roughly adjusts the hook and loop portions **870**, **874** of the first strap **862** until the closed circumference of the strap system **810** is slightly larger than the circumference of the riding boot. Then, the strap system **810** is attached to the riding boot and, referring to FIG. **21**, the user adjusts the hook and loop portions **870**, **874** of the second strap **866** until the strap system **810** fits to a desired tightness around the riding boot.

[0090] In some embodiments, the boot plate **822** and/or the magnetic members **826** include a finishing coat, which may comprise a liner, a mask or other coatings. The coating may be applied through immersion or spraying. Further, various known manufacturing techniques may be applied to resist running and overspray of the coating.

[0091] In other embodiments, hook and loop fasteners, adhesive (e.g., double sided tape), rubber bands and/or string may be utilized to attach the stirrup to the riding boot.

[0092] In one embodiment of the invention, magnetic pedals are provided for a bicycle. Like the magnetic stirrup **10** described above, each of a rider's shoes includes a first magnetic member. The first magnetic member may be similar to either the first magnetic member **42** (FIGS. **2** and **3**), which is a magnet coupled to or imbedded in a sole of the shoe, or similar to the first magnetic member **726** (FIGS. **17** and **18**), which is a magnet coupled to or imbedded in straps that couple to the shoes. Each shoe includes an incline or ramp integrally formed in the sole of the shoe or coupled to the sole of the shoe. In some embodiments, the first magnetic member is imbedded in or coupled to the incline and each incline is removably coupled to the shoes.

[0093] The pedal includes a base and a second attractant or second magnetic member. The second magnetic member may be similar to the second magnetic member **50** (FIGS. **2** and **3**), which is a magnet coupled to or imbedded in the base of the pedal. Each base includes an incline or ramp having a complementing shape to the shoe ramp. In other embodiments, the second magnetic member is coupled to or imbedded in a tread or pad associated with the pedal. The tread or pad may include a frictional surface for the rider's shoes to abut, and may couple to or be integrally formed with the base.

[0094] The rider's shoes and the pedals are magnetically coupled to one another via the magnetic field created between the first magnetic member and the second magnetic member. When the shoes are inserted in or positioned on the pedals, toward a riding position, the ramps of the shoes and the bases mate. The first and second magnetic members are thereby brought into a magnetic range of one another and cause the shoes and pedals to magnetically attract to one another. When the ramps are mated and therein magnetically coupled, the rider's shoes are positioned in a proper and comfortable riding position. To release the rider's shoes from the pedal, the

shoes are pivoted or twisted sideways such that the ramps slide and rotate against one another to create a space between the ramps and break the magnetic bond therebetween. In some embodiments, the first and second magnetic members of the shoes and pedals limit or remove the requirement of clips for the bicycle pedals.

[0095] Thus, the invention provides, among other things, a stirrup that either attracts or is attracted to a riding boot through magnetic attraction. Although the invention has been described in detail with reference to certain preferred embodiments, variations and modifications exist within the scope and spirit of one or more independent aspects of the invention as described.

What is claimed is:

1. A riding boot for use with a stirrup, the riding boot comprising:

a sole for engaging the stirrup, the sole coupled to the riding boot; and

a magnetic member coupled to the sole;

wherein the magnetic member is a polymer including a magnetic metal.

2. The riding boot of claim **1** wherein when the sole is positioned proximate the stirrup, the magnetic member is attracted to the stirrup to releasably secure the riding boot to the stirrup.

3. The riding boot of claim **1** wherein the magnetic member comprises at least one plate.

4. The riding boot of claim **1**, further comprising a strap coupled to the magnetic member, the strap configured to releasably couple the magnetic member to the sole.

5. The riding boot of claim **1** wherein the sole includes a recessed area and the magnetic member is positioned in the recessed area.

6. The riding boot of claim **5** wherein the recessed area is defined by an opening for supporting the magnetic member and at least one channel extending from the opening for supporting at least one tab extending from the magnetic member, the tabs configured to hold the magnetic member in the opening.

7. The riding boot of claim **1** wherein the sole includes a first surface for engaging the stirrup and a second surface opposite the first surface, and further wherein the magnetic member is recessed from the first surface.

8. The riding boot of claim **7** wherein the first surface includes a tread-like texture and the recessed area is open to the first surface.

9. The riding boot of claim **1** wherein the sole includes a first layer for engaging the stirrup and a second layer positioned between the first layer and the riding boot, the recessed area being formed in the first and second layers.

10. The riding boot of claim **1** wherein the sole includes a first layer for engaging the stirrup, a second layer adjacent the riding boot, and a third layer positioned between the first and second layers, the recessed area being formed in the first and third layers.

11. The riding boot of claim **1** wherein the magnetic member is coupled to the riding boot using a fastener.

12. The riding boot of claim **1** wherein the magnetic member is configured for placement in an interior of the riding boot.

13. The riding boot of claim **1** wherein the sole is formed of magnetic material.

14. A strap system for use with a riding boot and stirrup, the strap system comprising:

a strap body defining an adjustable portion, wherein the strap body is adjustable to releasably couple the strap system to the riding boot; and

a magnetic member.

15. The strap system of claim **14** wherein the strap body is elastic.

16. The strap system of claim **14**, further comprising at least one gripper portion for engaging a sole of the riding boot to couple the riding boot to the magnetic member.

17. The strap system of claim **14** wherein the strap body includes a first strap and a second strap.

18. The strap system of claim **17** wherein at least one of the first strap and the second strap provide fine adjustment of the strap system, and wherein an other of the first strap and the second strap provide rough adjustment of the strap system.

19. A stirrup comprising:

a base for supporting a riding boot;

a magnetic member supported by the base, the magnetic member being configured to magnetically attract the riding boot to the base so as to releasably secure the riding boot to the stirrup; and

a pad coupled to the base wherein the magnetic member is positioned between the pad and the base.

20. The stirrup of claim **19** wherein the pad includes ribs for engaging the riding boot and providing traction for the riding boot.

21. The stirrup of claim **19** wherein the pad includes a pocket and the magnetic member is positioned in the pocket so as to be positioned within the pad.

22. The stirrup of claim **19** wherein a recessed area is formed in the base and the magnetic member is positioned in the recessed area.

23. The stirrup of claim **19**, further comprising a spacer in which the magnetic member is positionable and a cover to surround the spacer, the magnetic member and the base.

24. The stirrup of claim **19**, further comprising a pocket formed in a sole of the riding boot, the pocket configured to support a second magnetic member which is magnetically attracted to the magnetic member supported by the base.

25. The stirrup of claim **19**, further comprising a holder base coupled to the base on a side of the base opposite the pad.

26. The stirrup of claim **25** wherein fasteners extend from the holder base to the pad to couple the magnetic member to the stirrup.

27. A method of manufacturing a sole for a riding boot, the method comprising:

forming a pocket in the sole, the sole configured for coupling to the riding boot; and

inserting a magnetic member in the pocket;

wherein the magnetic member is substantially surrounded by a polymeric material.

28. The method of claim **27**, further comprising forming the pocket to extend from a first surface of the sole to a second surface of the sole opposite of the first surface.

29. The method of claim **27**, further comprising securing the magnetic member to the riding boot using fasteners.

30. The method of claim **27**, further comprising forming the magnetic member as at least one steel plate.

31. The method of claim **27**, further comprising imbedding the magnetic member in the sole.

32. The method of claim **27**, further comprising molding the sole around the magnetic material.

33. The method of claim **27**, further comprising press fitting the magnetic member into the sole of the riding boot.

34. The method of claim **27**, further comprising forming the magnetic material into at least one plate.

35. A sole kit for a riding boot, the sole kit comprising:

a sole including a pocket; and

a magnetic member positioned in the pocket, at least one of the sole and the magnetic member configured for coupling to the riding boot.

36. The sole kit of claim **35** wherein the magnetic member is a polymer including a magnetic metal.

37. The sole kit of claim **35** wherein the sole is configured to replace an existing sole of the riding boot.

38. The sole kit of claim **35** wherein the sole includes a first surface and a second surface opposite of the first surface for engaging the riding boot.

39. The sole kit of claim **38** wherein the pocket extends from the first surface toward the second surface.

40. The sole kit of claim **38** wherein the pocket extends from the second surface toward the first surface.

41. The sole kit of claim **38** wherein the magnetic member includes at least on tab embedded in the sole so as to secure the magnetic member in the pocket.

42. The sole kit of claim **35**, further comprising at least one channel extending from the pocket into the sole, the channel configured to support a portion of the magnetic member and thereby resist removal of the magnetic member from the sole.

43. The sole kit of claim **35** wherein the sole is formed of at least two layers and the magnetic member is secured between the two layers.

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