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(54) **FOOTWEAR WITH STABILIZING SOLE**

(57) A footwear component that includes a sole including a recessed area and a support member positioned in the recessed area. The support member includes a main support, a front support that extends at least partially over a front end of the main support, and a rear support that extends at least partially below a rear end of the main support. The front support of the support member moves toward the main support when pressure

is applied to the front support and moves away from the main support when pressure is released from the front support. Similarly, the rear support of the support member moves toward the main support when pressure is applied to the rear support and moves away from the main support when pressure is released from the rear support.

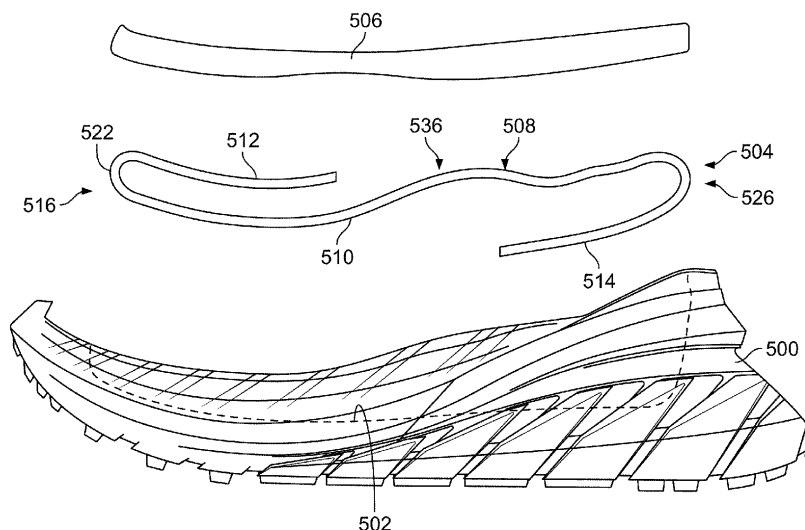


FIG. 80

Description

BACKGROUND

[0001] The present application relates generally to footwear, and more particularly, to a stabilizing sole for an article of footwear that provides stability and uniformly supports a user's feet while reducing impact forces on the user's feet and enhancing forward propulsion during impact movements such as walking, jogging and running.

[0002] Running is particularly hard on a person's feet and body. For example, the impact of each foot striking the ground during running is the equivalent of three to five times of your body weight or more. There is a particular large impact force in the heel area of the foot during each heel strike. Insufficient cushioning and support and misalignment of a person's feet within their shoes reduces the absorption of this impact, thereby transferring more of the shock and stress from such impact forces to the user's body, and unnecessarily stressing the knees, hips and lower back. As a person runs, the shock and stress are repeated at every foot strike with the ground, which can cause stress injuries, pain and excess wear on a person's joints.

[0003] Further, the running motion is a succession of weight bearing phases and suspension phases, where a stride is a combination of a contact phase and a thrust phase. During the ground contact phase, there is a deceleration of the forward progress of a runner's body, where energy is stored in the muscles when the runner's leg bends to absorb shock from the contact between the runner's feet and the ground. During the forward thrust phase, the runner's body accelerates by applying the largest force possible to the ground in the shortest amount of time. This force is created by the leg muscles and the release of stored energy when the leg relaxes. In this way, the ground contact phase and the suspension phase minimize deceleration upon contact with the ground and maximize forward thrust of the runner.

[0004] When the feet and ankles are properly supported, aligned and sufficiently stabilized on the ground, a person's body is able to remain balanced and absorb large impact forces. Also, biomechanical efficiency improves to help reduce impact forces, while forming an efficient lever to channel power correctly during propulsion.

[0005] Therefore, it is desirable to provide footwear that uniformly supports, aligns and balances a person's feet during impact movements, such as walking, jogging and running, to help reduce the stresses on a person's feet and body from impact forces while enhancing propulsion of the person's body.

SUMMARY

[0006] The present article of footwear has a sole that provides enhanced balance on different types of surfaces, and balance and stability to a user's foot during walk-

ing, jogging and running.

[0007] In an embodiment, an article of footwear is provided and includes an upper and a sole secured to the upper, where the sole includes an upper surface. A support member is positioned on the sole, and includes at least one portion positioned a designated distance above the upper surface of the sole to form a space between the support member and the sole, where the portion of the support member moves through the space and toward the upper surface of the sole when pressure is applied to the portion of the support member, and flexes away from the upper surface when pressure is decreased or released from the portion of the support member.

[0008] In another embodiment, an article of footwear is provided and includes an upper, a sole secured to the upper and including an upper surface and a recessed spring area below the upper surface that is between a forefoot area and a heel area of the sole. Additionally, a support member is placed on the sole for support and stability. The support member has a curved portion that is positioned adjacent to the recessed spring area of the sole, where the curved portion of the support plate moves or flexes toward the recessed spring area when pressure is applied to the curved portion of the support plate, and flexes away from the recessed spring area when pressure is decreased or released from the curved portion of the support plate.

[0009] In another embodiment, a footwear component is provided and includes a sole including a recessed area and a support member positioned in the recessed area. The support member includes a main support, a front support that extends at least partially over a front end of the main support, and a rear support that extends at least partially below a rear end of the main support. The front support of the support member moves toward the main support when pressure is applied to the front support and moves away from the main support when pressure is released from the front support. Similarly, the rear support of the support member moves toward the main support when pressure is applied to the rear support and moves away from the main support when pressure is released from the rear support.

[0010] In further embodiment, a footwear component is provided and includes a sole including a recessed area and a support member positioned in the recessed area of the sole. The support member includes a main support, a front support that extends at least partially below a front end of the main support, and a rear support that extends at least partially below a rear end of the main support. The front support of the support member moves toward the main support when pressure is applied to the front support and moves away from the main support when pressure is released from the front support, and the rear support of the support member moves toward the main support when pressure is applied to the rear support and moves away from the main support when pressure is released from the rear support.

[0011] In another embodiment, a footwear component

is provided and includes a sole including an upper surface and a recessed area and a support member positioned on the upper surface of the sole. The support member includes a medial arm extending along a medial side of the sole, a lateral arm extending along a lateral side of the sole, where the medial arm is spaced from the lateral arm, and a curved portion that is located over the recessed area. When a user's foot applies pressure to the curved portion of the support member, the curved portion moves toward the recessed area of the sole, and when the user's foot releases pressure from the curved portion, the curved portion moves away from the recessed area.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0012]

FIG. 1 is a right side view of an embodiment of the present footwear.

FIG. 2 is a left side view of the footwear of FIG. 1.

FIG. 3 is a top view of the footwear of FIG. 1 with the tongue and laces removed.

FIG. 4 is a bottom view of the footwear of FIG. 1.

FIG. 5 is a rear view of the footwear of FIG. 1.

FIG. 6 is a right side view of an embodiment of an outsole of the footwear of FIG. 1.

FIG. 7 is bottom view of the outsole of FIG. 6.

FIG. 8 is a left side view of the outsole of FIG. 6.

FIG. 9 is a top view of the outsole of FIG. 6.

FIG. 10 is a front view of the outsole of FIG. 6.

FIG. 11 is a rear view of the outsole of FIG. 6.

FIG. 12 is a right side view of the outsole of FIG. 6 including a tongue and gusset component attached to the outsole, where the left side view of the tongue and gusset component is a mirror images thereof.

FIG. 13A is a top view of an embodiment of the tongue shown in FIG. 12.

FIG. 13B is an exploded top view of the different material layers of the tongue shown in FIG. 13A.

FIG. 14 is a right side view of the outsole of FIG. 12 including a rear collar attached to the outsole, where the left side view of the rear collar is a mirror image thereof.

FIG. 15A is a front view of an embodiment of the rear collar shown in FIG. 14.

FIG. 15B is a rear view of the rear collar of FIG. 15A.

FIG. 16 is a right side view of the outsole of FIG. 15 including a vamp attached to the outsole, where the left side view of the vamp is a mirror image thereof.

FIG. 17 is a left side view of another embodiment of the present footwear.

FIG. 18 is a top view of the footwear of FIG. 17.

FIG. 19 is a cross-section view of the footwear shown in FIG. 18 substantially along line B-B in the direction generally indicated.

FIG. 20 is a cross-section view of the footwear shown in FIG. 18 substantially along line C-C in the direction generally indicated.

FIG. 21 is a cross-section view of the footwear shown in FIG. 18 substantially along line D-D in the direction generally indicated.

FIG. 22 is a top view of another embodiment of the present footwear having a front stabilizing member.

FIG. 23 is a top view of a further embodiment of the present footwear having a rear stabilizing member.

FIG. 24 is a top view of another embodiment of the present footwear having a rear stabilizing member.

FIG. 25 is a top view of a further embodiment of the present footwear having lateral stabilizing members.

FIG. 26 is a top view of another embodiment of the present footwear having a peripheral rear stabilizing member.

FIG. 27 is a top view of a further embodiment of the present footwear having a front stabilizing member and a rear stabilizing member.

FIG. 28 is a top view of another embodiment of the present footwear having a front stabilizing member and lateral stabilizing members.

FIG. 29 is a cross-section view of the footwear in FIG. 27 taken substantially along line B-B in the direction generally indicated.

FIG. 30 is a top view of another embodiment of the present footwear having a front stabilizing member, lateral stabilizing members and a rear stabilizing member.

FIG. 31 is a top view of a further embodiment of the present footwear having a lateral stabilizing member having opposing lobes extending outwardly from a rear portion of the sole.

FIG. 32 is a top view of another embodiment of the present footwear having a front portion and a rear portion with different contact surface areas.

FIG. 33 is a top view of an embodiment of the present footwear including a peripheral stabilizing member connected to the sole by a peripheral support member.

FIG. 34 is a left side view of another embodiment of the present footwear.

FIG. 35 is a right side view of the footwear of FIG. 34.

FIG. 36 is a bottom view of the footwear of FIG. 34.

FIG. 37 is a top view of the footwear of FIG. 34 with the tongue and laces removed.

FIG. 38 is a rear view of the footwear of FIG. 34.

FIG. 39 is a right side view of an embodiment of a sole of the footwear of FIG. 34.

FIG. 40 is left side view of the sole of FIG. 39.

FIG. 41 is a top view of the sole of FIG. 39.

FIG. 42 is a front view of the sole of FIG. 39.

FIG. 43 is a rear view of the sole of FIG. 39.

FIG. 44 is a top view of the embodiment of the sole of FIG. 39 where the stabilizing member includes slots extending along the length of the shoe.

FIG. 45 is a rear view of the sole of FIG. 44.

FIG. 46 is a top view of another embodiment of the sole of FIG. 39 where the stabilizing member includes slots extending within the medial and lateral

balancing members.

FIG. 47 is an embodiment of plates inserted in the slots shown in FIG. 44.

FIG. 48 is a top view of another embodiment of the present footwear.

FIG. 49 is a top view of a further embodiment of the present footwear.

FIG. 50 is a rear view of the footwear shown in FIG. 49.

FIG. 51 is a rear view of another embodiment of the footwear of FIG. 49 in which the separating portion includes perforations.

FIG. 52 is a top view of a further embodiment of the present footwear in which the sole includes a partial groove.

FIG. 53 is a rear view of the footwear shown in FIG. 52.

FIG. 54 is a rear view of another embodiment of the footwear shown in FIG. 52 in which a platform is positioned at an intermediate position in the groove in the sole.

FIG. 55A is a rear view of a further embodiment of the present footwear in which the sole includes material between the medial and lateral balancing members that forms a bottom groove where the material gradually increases in thickness toward the upper.

FIG. 55B is a bottom view of another embodiment of the present footwear in which the sole includes an elongated channel leading to a groove in the sole.

FIG. 56 is a side view of another embodiment of the present footwear including a support plate forming a space between the upper and the sole.

FIG. 57 is a top view of the footwear shown in FIG. 56.

FIG. 58 is an exploded side view of the footwear shown in FIG. 56.

FIG. 59 is a top view of an embodiment of the sole of the footwear of FIG. 56 where the sole includes recessed areas for receiving the support plate.

FIG. 60 is a top view of the support plate shown in FIGs. 56 and 58.

FIG. 61 is a top view of another embodiment of a sole including a support plate.

FIG. 62 is a cross-section view of the sole in FIG. 61 taken substantially along line 62-62 in the direction generally indicated.

FIG. 63 is a left side view of the sole of FIG. 61.

FIG. 64 is a bottom view of the sole of FIG. 61.

FIG. 65 is a front view of the sole of FIG. 61.

FIG. 66 is a rear view of the sole of FIG. 61.

FIG. 67 is a cross-section view of the sole in FIG. 64 taken substantially along line 67-67 in the direction generally indicated.

FIG. 68 is a cross-section view of the sole in FIG. 64 taken substantially along line 68-68 in the direction generally indicated.

FIG. 69 is a cross-section view of the sole in FIG. 64 taken substantially along line 69-69 in the direction generally indicated.

FIG. 70 is a cross-section view of the sole in FIG. 64 taken substantially along line 70-70 in the direction generally indicated.

FIG. 71 is a cross-section view of the sole in FIG. 64 taken substantially along line 71-71 in the direction generally indicated.

FIG. 72 is a cross-section view of the sole in FIG. 64 taken substantially along line 72-72 in the direction generally indicated.

FIG. 73 is a top view of the support plate shown in FIG. 61.

FIG. 74 is a left side view of the support plate of FIG. 73.

FIG. 75 is a right side view of the support plate of FIG. 73.

FIG. 76 is a side view of another embodiment of the support plate.

FIG. 77 is a top view of the support plate of FIG. 76.

FIG. 78 is a bottom view of the support plate of FIG. 76.

FIG. 79 is a side view of another embodiment of the support plate.

FIG. 80 is an exploded side view of an embodiment of a sole including a support member.

FIG. 81 is a perspective view of the support member of FIG. 80.

FIG. 82 is a side view of the support member of FIG. 81.

FIG. 83 is a top view of the support member of FIG. 81.

FIG. 84 is a bottom view of the support member of FIG. 81.

FIG. 85 is a top view of the sole of FIG. 80 including the support member.

FIG. 86 is a cross section view of the sole taken along the line 86-86 in FIG. 85 in the direction generally indicated.

FIG. 86 is a cross section view of the sole taken along the line 86-86 in FIG. 85 in the direction generally indicated.

FIG. 87 is a cross section view of the sole taken along the line 87-87 in FIG. 86 in the direction generally indicated.

FIG. 88 is a cross section view of the sole taken along the line 88-88 in FIG. 86 in the direction generally indicated.

FIG. 89 is a cross section view of the sole taken along the line 89-89 in FIG. 86 in the direction generally indicated.

FIG. 90 is a cross section view of the sole taken along the line 90-90 in FIG. 86 in the direction generally indicated.

FIG. 91 is a cross section view of the sole taken along the line 91-91 in FIG. 86 in the direction generally indicated.

FIG. 92 is a cross section view of the sole taken along the line 92-92 in FIG. 86 in the direction generally indicated.

FIG. 93 is an exploded side view of a further embodiment of a sole including a support member.

FIG. 94 is a perspective view of the support member of FIG. 93.

FIG. 95 is a side view of the support member of FIG. 94.

FIG. 96 is a top view of the support member of FIG. 94.

FIG. 97 is a bottom view of the support member of FIG. 94.

FIG. 98 is a top view of the sole of FIG. 93 including the support member.

FIG. 99 is a cross section view of the sole taken along the line 99-99 in FIG. 98 in the direction generally indicated.

FIG. 100 is a cross section view of the sole taken along the line 100-100 in FIG. 99 in the direction generally indicated.

FIG. 101 is a cross section view of the sole taken along the line 101-101 in FIG. 99 in the direction generally indicated.

FIG. 102 is a cross section view of the sole taken along the line 102-102 in FIG. 99 in the direction generally indicated.

FIG. 103 is a cross section view of the sole taken along the line 103-103 in FIG. 99 in the direction generally indicated.

FIG. 104 is a cross section view of the sole taken along the line 104-104 in FIG. 99 in the direction generally indicated.

FIG. 105 is the cross section view of the sole in FIG. 99 with insert members positioned within support member.

FIG. 106 is a perspective view of different insert members that may be positioned within the support member of FIG. 105.

FIG. 107 is a perspective view of another embodiment of a support member positioned on a sole.

FIG. 108 is a schematic side view of the support member on the sole in FIG. 107.

FIG. 109 is a top view of the support member of FIG. 107.

FIG. 110 is a left side view of the support member of FIG. 107.

FIG. 111 is a right side view of the support member of FIG. 107.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0013] The present footwear includes a balanced sole attached to an upper to form an article of footwear that stabilizes and cushions a user's feet during walking, jogging and running while enhancing propulsion. More specifically, the present article of footwear includes a sole having a stabilizing portion that extends outwardly from the upper at a rear end of the article of footwear and an extended toe portion positioned at a height above the ground that provides enhanced stability and propulsion

for a user's feet during movement on different ground surfaces.

[0014] Referring now to FIGs. 1-16, an embodiment of the present article of footwear or shoe, generally indicated as 20, includes a sole 22 having a midsole 24 and an outsole 26, and an upper 28 attached to the sole. The midsole 24 extends from a heel portion 30 to a forefoot portion 32 of the shoe 20 and has a first height above the ground 34 at the heel portion 30 of the shoe 20 and a second height above the ground 34 at the front or toe portion 36 of the shoe. As shown in FIG. 1, the midsole 24 curves downwardly from the heel portion 30 toward the midfoot portion 38 of the shoe 20 and then curves upwardly from the midfoot portion 38 to the toe portion 36. In an embodiment, the midsole 24 has a first thickness T1 at the heel portion 30, a second thickness T2 at the midfoot portion 38 and a third thickness T3 at the forefoot portion 32 of the shoe where the second thickness is greater than the first and third thicknesses. In the illustrated embodiment, the first thickness T1 is 3.5 to 4.5 cm, the second thickness T2 is 4.0 cm to 6.0 cm and the third thickness T3 of the midsole is 3.0 cm to 5.0 cm. It should be appreciated that the thickness of the midsole may be the same from the heel to the forefoot of the shoe, and that the midsole 24 may also have any suitable thickness or combination of thicknesses based on the desired cushioning of the shoe. This construction provides more stability and cushioning in the midfoot and forefoot portions of the shoe 20 to help absorb impact forces when the forefoot portion 38 of the shoe repeatedly contacts the ground 34 during walking, jogging or running. In the illustrated embodiment, the midsole 24 is made of Ethylene Vinyl Acetate (EVA). It should be appreciated that the midsole 24 may be made of any suitable material or combination of materials.

[0015] As shown in FIGs. 1-3 and 5, in an example embodiment, the sole 22 has a forefoot portion 40 that has a length of 9.0 cm and curves to a point that is at a height of at least 2.0 cm above the ground 34. The extended length and increased height of the forefoot portion 40 are both designed to increase the contact time between the forefoot portion 32 of the shoe 20 and the ground 34 and lengthen a user's gait cycle, i.e., the period of time between when a user's foot initially contacts the ground and when that same foot contacts the ground again, during walking, jogging or running. The combination of increasing the contact time and lengthening the gait cycle enables a user to move more smoothly on the ground, increases the propulsion force of a user's foot on the ground and also helps to delay fatigue during walking, jogging or running.

[0016] In the illustrated embodiment, the midsole 24 is attached to a top surface 42 of the outsole 26, and extends from the heel portion 30 to the toe portion 36 of the shoe 20. As shown in FIGs. 1-3, 5, 6 and 8, the outsole 26 includes a stabilizing portion 44 that extends outwardly from the midsole 24 at a designated angle Θ and distance relative to the midsole. As shown in FIG. 17, the

angle Θ is the angle between the vertical line extending from the rear end of the midsole (such as E4) and a line at the top surface of the rear stabilizing member. To enhance stability and balance on different underlying surfaces, the stabilizing portion 42 extends about the periphery or perimeter of the heel portion 30 from a medial side 46 to a lateral side 48 of the shoe 20. In an embodiment, the stabilizing portion 44 forms an angle Θ of at least 50 degrees, and more preferably, at least 75 degrees. In another embodiment, the angle Θ is 65 to 80 degrees and more preferably 75-80 degrees, relative to the bottom surface 50 of the midsole 24, and extends outwardly from the midsole at least 4.0 cm, and preferably at least 5.0 cm from the rear end of the upper. By providing the stabilizing portion 44, which has a wider base near the heel portion 30, the present shoe 20 is able to remain relatively balanced and stable on different surfaces including uneven surfaces commonly found on trails and in urban areas. This construction thereby helps a user to walk, jog or run more smoothly and evenly on many different types of surfaces. In this embodiment, the stabilizing portion 44 is made of a combination of EVA and a foam material to provide both stability and cushioning to a user's feet during use. It should be appreciated that the stabilizing portion 44 may be made out of any suitable material or combination of materials.

[0017] Referring now to FIGs. 12 to 15B, the upper 28 is attached to the top surface 52 of the midsole 24 and is constructed of a plurality of different components. As shown in FIG. 12, a tongue 54 and an integrated gusset 56 are attached to the midsole 24. Specifically, the gusset 56 includes opposing lateral members 58 where one of the lateral members is attached to the medial side of the midsole 24 and the other lateral member is attached to the lateral side of the midsole 24 by stitching or other suitable attachment method. The gusset 56 further includes a forwardly extending top member 60 that is integrally formed with the lateral members 58 and extends over at least a portion of a user's foot near the toe cap 62. Preferably, the gusset 56 is made of a flexible fabric material but may be made with any suitable material.

[0018] The tongue 54 shown in FIGs. 13A and 13B has a body 64 with a connecting part 66 and a tongue member 68. In the illustrated embodiment, the tongue 54 is preferably made with a similar material as the gusset 56 but may be made with any suitable material. As shown in FIGs. 3 and 13A, the connecting part 66 is attached to the gusset 56 by stitching, an adhesive or other suitable attachment method. The tongue member 68 extends from the gusset 56 toward the heel portion 30 of the shoe 20, and each side of the tongue member 68 includes a flap 70 that extends around at least a portion of the opposing sides of a user's foot. A pull member 72 at the end of the tongue member 68 provides a gripping area so that a user may grip the tongue member to adjust the fit and position of the tongue 54 and shoe 20 relative to a user's foot.

[0019] FIG. 13B shows the different material layers that

combine to form the tongue 54. A first layer or base layer 74 is made of a first material that is preferably a stretchable and breathable material. A second layer 76 is attached to the first layer by stitching or adhesive and is made of a breathable material. A third layer 78 is attached to the second layer 76 and is made of a thin material the overlays the second layer and promotes the flow of air through the second and third layers of the tongue. A fourth layer 80 having a central opening 82 that is attached to the third layer 78 so that the combination of the second and third layers is exposed on the top side of the shoe. The first, second, third and fourth layers 74, 76, 78 and 80 may be made with any suitable material or combination of materials.

[0020] Referring to FIG. 14, a rear collar 84 is attached to the rear portion 86 of the midsole 24 by stitching or other suitable attachment method. As shown in FIGs. 16A and 16B, the rear collar 84 includes an outer lining 88, an inner lining 90 attached at least at the peripheral edge of the outer lining, and a foam material 92 positioned between the inner and outer linings. The foam material 92 is a polyurethane foam and is positioned in predetermined areas adjacent to a user's foot to provide cushioning and comfort. The rear collar 84 has upwardly extending arms 94 that extend to opposing sides of the tongue 54 as shown in FIG. 15 and overlap at least a portion of the outer surface of the tongue. In the illustrated embodiment, the inner and outer linings 88, 90 are made of a stretchable and breathable material, but may be made out of any suitable material.

[0021] Referring to FIG. 16, a vamp 96 having a general U-shape includes a first side 98 that extends along the medial side 46 of the shoe 20, and a second side 100 that extends along a lateral side 48 of the shoe 20. The vamp 96 further includes a toe portion 98 that connects the first and second sides 98, 100 and extends over at least a portion of the forefoot area of a user's foot. The vamp 96 is made of a durable material where the first and second sides 98, 100 of the vamp each include a series of tabs 102. Some of the tabs 102 form loops 104 and some of the tabs include holes 106. As shown in FIGs. 1 and 2, a shoe lace 108 is threaded through the loops 104 and holes 106 associated with the tabs 102 on the first and second sides 98, 100 of the vamp 96 in a crisscross pattern to adjust the fit of the shoe 20 on a user's foot. It should be appreciated that the first and second sides 98, 100 of the vamp 96 may include tabs forming loops, tabs including holes or a combination of tabs forming loops and tabs with holes.

[0022] As shown in FIG. 3, the upper 28 is constructed to have a wider throat area 108, i.e., width between the opposing sides of the upper, at the heel portion 30 to allow for even pressure distribution by the user's heel on the shoe and to provide more comfort to the user's foot. Further, the upper 28 is constructed to extend higher along a user's foot in the heel portion 30 to enhance the stability and comfort of the shoe 20.

[0023] To enhance the positioning of the shoe 20 on a

user's foot, a strap 110 is attached to the heel portion 30 of the shoe and extends from the medial side 46 to the lateral side 48 of the shoe about the heel portion. As shown in FIG. 1, at least a portion of the strap 110 extends a distance away from the heel portion 30 to form a loop at the heel portion of the shoe 20. The strap 110 can therefore be grabbed by a user to adjust the position of the shoe 20 on the user's foot or help to pull the shoe 20 onto the user's foot. A part of the strap 110 includes a reflective material to help make the shoe 20 and thereby the user visible in low light conditions. The strap 110 is preferably made out of a fabric webbing material.

[0024] As shown in FIG. 4, a bottom surface 112 of the outsole 26 includes a plurality of tread members 114 that extend from the bottom surface. The tread members 114 are made of a rubber material and help the shoe 20 engage and grip an underlying surface. It should be appreciated that the tread members 114 may be any suitable size and shape, and may be any combination of sizes and shapes as shown in the illustrated embodiment.

[0025] Referring now to FIGs. 17-31, in the following embodiments of the present shoe 198, the sole 200 comprises three structural axes that are embodied by stabilizing members extending outwardly from the general profile of the upper 202, i.e. to the front, to the rear or laterally, where the stabilizing members perform independently from one another, and according to different combinations. According to different embodiments discussed in the following paragraphs, the stabilizing members may consist of the same material as the sole 200, a different material than the sole 200, synthetic materials, composite materials, an insert molded in a synthetic material, or any combination of suitable materials, and may extend partially over the sole or over the entire sole 200.

[0026] In the illustrated embodiments, the midsole 208 includes a peripheral rim 204 consisting of a wall 206 extending upwardly that creates a recessed portion or cradle on the top of the midsole that receives and surrounds the bottom part of the upper 202. In other words, the top part of the sole 200 comprises the midsole 208 consisting of a hollow profile open at the top that is intended to receive the upper 202, the midsole 208 including the peripheral rim 204. It should be appreciated that the shoe 198 may be equipped with a glued or removable insole or footbed. As shown in the figures, the sole 200 extends substantially under the entire bottom surface of the upper 202 and upwardly along at least a portion of the upper, where the thickness thereof is typically greater at the heel than at the toe. In this way, the peripheral wall 206 provides support to the sides of the upper 202 to help support and balance a user's foot while walking, jogging or running on uneven terrain. In an embodiment, the length (LU) of the upper 202 corresponds substantially to the shoe size, i.e., women's size 7, men's size 9.5, etc. Note that a conventional sole extends to the front beyond the upper profile over a length of approximately 2.0 to 25 millimeters, i.e. approximately 0.8% to 6% of the length (LU) of the upper 202, and generally covers

the front upper end of the upper, i.e., a toe cap, so as to protect the user's toes. The length ranges relative to the upper are not routine for sports shoes, but more suitable for walking or safety shoes, which are not suitable for running and particularly not for a long-distance run, or a speed run, particularly because they have an outsole, generally substantially planar, thick and rigid, having a Shore D hardness between 55 and 65.

[0027] Referring to FIGs. 17-21, in an embodiment, a shoe 198a includes sole 200, comprising a front stabilizing member 210 extending outwardly, longitudinally from the front of the sole 200 relative to the general profile of the upper 202. The front stabilizing member 210 provides a propulsion effect at the end of a stride while a user is walking, jogging or running. In the illustrated embodiments, the length (L2) of the front stabilizing member 210 is 7% to 60% of the length (LU) of the upper 202, and preferably 9% to 60% of the length (LU). It is also contemplated that the front stabilizing member 210 may be 9% to 40% of the length (LU), 9% to 25% of the length (LU), or 20% to 25% of the length (LU).

[0028] In this embodiment, the length (L2) of the front stabilizing member 210 is 9% to 11% of the length (LU) of the upper 202. Alternatively, according to the embodiments illustrated in FIGs. 29 and 30, the length (L2) of the front stabilizing member 210 is 25% to 25% of the length (LU) of the upper 202. In one embodiment, not shown, the length (L2) of the front stabilizing member 210 is 25% to 60% of the length (LU) of the upper 202. Note that the length (L2) of the front stabilizing member 210 corresponds to the length between the distal end of the upper 202, relative to the heel, and the distal end of the front stabilizing member 210. The profile of the sole 200 extends to the front by the front stabilizing member 210. As shown, the front profile of the sole 200 curves upwardly, and thereby, decreases in thickness conventionally from the metatarsal region to the front end of the upper 202.

[0029] In an embodiment, the front stabilizing member 210 has a uniform, or substantially uniform thickness at thickness points (E3, E3a, E3b), along substantially the entire length (L) of the shoe (FIG. 18). Alternatively, the thickness points or thicknesses (E3, E3a, E3b) of the front stabilizing member 220 may decrease from the proximal end to the distal end of the sole 200 relative to the heel, or may be different thicknesses (E3, E3a, E3b). In the illustrated embodiment, the mean thickness (E3) of the front stabilizing member 210 is 2% to 30% of the length (LU) of the upper 202, i.e., the thickness (E3a) at the base of the front stabilizing member 210 is 2% to 30% of the length (LU) of the upper 202, and the thickness (E3b) substantially at the distal end of the front stabilizing member 210 is 2% to 30% of the length (LU) of the upper 202. Note that the thickness (E3a) at the base of the front stabilizing member 210 corresponds to the thickness of the sole 200 at the distal end of the upper 202 relative to the heel, whereas the thickness (E3b) substantially at the distal end of the front stabilizing member 210 corre-

sponds to the thickness of the front stabilizing member 210 at approximately 4% of the length (LU) of the upper 202 relative to the distal end of the front stabilizing member 210. In this embodiment, the mean thickness (E3) of the front stabilizing member 210 is preferably 2% to 25% of the length (LU) of the upper 202, and more preferably 3% to 20% of the length (LU).

[0030] In one embodiment, the ratio between the thickness (E3b) at substantially the distal end thereof and the thickness (E3a) at the base of the front stabilizing member 210 is 0.25 to 2, more preferably 0.5 to 2. It should be appreciated that the thickness (E3) of the front stabilizing member 210 may be modulated according to the thickness of the sole 200, the constituent material(s) of the sole 200 and the length of the sole 200. A relatively large thickness (E3) of the front stabilizing member 210, measured from the bottom to the top of the front stabilizing member 210, makes it possible to store energy during the compression of the front stabilizing member 210 at the end of a stride and to release the stored energy during the launch phase of the weight bearing leg.

[0031] In the illustrated embodiment, the width (L2) of the widest part of the upper 202 is located at the metatarsal region and decreases toward the distal end of the upper 202, i.e., at the toe. As shown, the front stabilizing member 210 originates at the widest part of the front part of the upper 202 and extends distally, longitudinally outward. In other words, the front stabilizing member 210, forming an outward extension of the sole 200, extends from the widest zone of the front part of the upper 202 to the front, i.e. in the distal direction of the front end of the upper 202. Additionally, the curvature of the distal end of the front stabilizing member 210 is less than or equal to the curvature of the distal end of the upper 202. In the illustrated embodiment, the curvature is oriented toward the medial part (PM) of the shoe, where the volume of the medial part (PM) of the front stabilizing member 210 is greater than the volume of the lateral part (PL) of the front stabilizing member 210. Note that the curvature of the front stabilizing member 210 enhances the propulsion effect by increasing the volume in the medial part (PM) of the front stabilizing member 210, which promotes ground contact and relaunch of a user's stride.

[0032] In the above embodiment, the front stabilizing member 210 is an integral part of the sole 200 and protects the front of the sole 200 in the distal direction of the front end of the upper 202. In another embodiment, the front stabilizing member 210 has an upward curvature, i.e., directed from the bottom end of the sole 200 to the upper 202. In this embodiment, the height (H2) of the distal end of the bottom surface of the front stabilizing member 210 relative to the bottom surface of the center of the sole 200, i.e., with respect to the ground, is 0% to 60% of the length (LU) of the upper 202, preferably 3% to 30% of the length (LU) of the upper 202, more preferably 3% to 20% of the length (LU) of the upper 202. It should be appreciated that the height (H2) may be modified based on the material(s) of the front stabilizing mem-

ber 210 and the specific use of the shoe.

[0033] In the illustrated embodiment, the thickness (E2) of the sole at the widest part of the upper, i.e., at the base of the metatarsals, is 9.5% to 30% of the length (LU) of the upper 202, preferably 20% and 30% of the length (LU) of the upper 202, more preferably 20% to 25% of the length (LU) of the upper 202. Note that the thickness (E2) corresponds to the distance between the bottom end of the upper 202 and the bottom end of the sole 200, where the end of the sole 200 is in contact with the ground. In this embodiment, the range of thickness (E2) of the sole 200 at the metatarsal region, i.e. at the widest part 212 of the upper 202, provides a progressive shock absorbing effect, during repeated rolling contact between the shoe and the ground during walking, jogging and running. It should be appreciated that in an embodiment, the present shoe may include sole 200 having only the front stabilizing member 210, such as with shoe 198b shown in FIG. 22. In this embodiment, the front stabilizing member 210 extends a distance or length (L2) from the front of the upper.

[0034] Referring to FIGs. 17-19, 23, 24, 26, 27, 29 and 30, the sole 200 according to one embodiment, comprises a rear stabilizing member 214, extending longitudinally to the rear relative to the general profile of the upper 202. In these embodiments, the rear stabilizing member 214 extends the rolling ground contact phase, by initiating the ground contact earlier and distally relative to the heel. Note that the rear stabilizing member 214 provides a more progressive impact compared to a conventional shoe, through a fluidity of the pressure paths during each strike at the heel with the ground.

[0035] In the illustrated embodiments, the length (L3) of the rear stabilizing member 214 is at least 20% of the length (LU) of the upper 202, and preferably 9% to 60% of the length (LU) of the upper 202, more preferably 22% and 40% of the length (LU) of the upper 202, and more preferably 23% and 25% of the length (LU) of the upper 202. Note that the length (L3) of the rear stabilizing member 214 corresponds to the distance between the proximal end of the upper 202, i.e. the rear end of the upper 202 at the heel, and the distal end of the rear stabilizing member 214. Preferably, the rear stabilizing member 214 has a uniform, or substantially uniform, thickness (E4) along substantially the entire length of the rear stabilizing member 214. It is also contemplated that the thickness (E4) of the rear stabilizing member 214 decreases from the proximal end to the distal end of the rear stabilizing member. It should be noted that the mean thickness (E4) of the rear stabilizing member 214 is 7% to 40% of the length (LU) of the upper 202, preferably 9% to 30% the length (LU) of the upper 202, and more preferably 22% to 25% the length (LU) of the upper 202. In an embodiment, the thickness (E4) of the rear stabilizing member is at least 1.0 cm. Also, the thickness (E4) of the rear stabilizing member 214 may be modified according to the thickness, the constituent material(s) and the length of the sole.

[0036] A relatively large thickness (E4) of the rear stabilizing member 214 helps to enhance shock absorption during compression of the rear stabilizing member at the start of a stride and promotes the initiation of the ground contact phase from a strike downstream from the heel to a heel contact, followed by a forward propulsion. Also, combining a large thickness (E4) of the rear stabilizing member 214 with a large thickness of the general profile of the sole 200 creates longitudinal shear strain at the sole, which reduces the strain sustained by the joints and the back of a user.

[0037] As shown in FIGs. 17-18, the thickness (E4) of the rear stabilizing member 214 is greater than the thickness (E2) of the sole 200 at the heel 216. Note that the thickness (E2) corresponds to the distance between the bottom end of the upper 202 at the heel 216 and the bottom surface of the sole 200, i.e. the end of the sole 200, that contacts the ground. In the illustrated embodiment, the top part of the rear stabilizing member 214 substantially encases an outer periphery of the top part of the heel, which promotes shock absorption during ground contact of the heel. As shown in FIG. 2, the rear stabilizing member 214 has a concave shape, along a cross-section perpendicular to the bottom surface of the sole 200, where the concave shape of the rear stabilizing member 214 provides optimized strain distribution.

[0038] Referring to FIG. 29, in another embodiment, the rear stabilizing member 214 is raised upwardly, i.e. the rear stabilizing member is embodied by a tongue-shaped profile which has a concave curvature, along a perpendicular plane to the bottom surface of the sole 200.

[0039] Referring to FIG. 24, in a further embodiment, a shoe 198d includes sole 200 with rear stabilizing member 214, which originates at the widest part (L2) of the front part of the upper 202, and extends distally, longitudinally to the rear of the shoe, the lateral profile thereof following the rear lateral profile of the upper 202, but more broadly, extending distally beyond the heel. In this embodiment, the rear stabilizing member 214, forming an extension of the rear part of the sole 200, extends from the widest part 212 of the front part of the upper 202 to the rear, i.e., in the distal direction with respect to the heel.

[0040] In another embodiment shown in FIG. 23, a shoe 198c has a sole where the rear stabilizing member 214 originates at the narrowing part 218 of the upper 202 facing the arch of the foot and extends distally longitudinally to the rear of the shoe, the lateral profile thereof following the lateral profile of the upper 202, and extending distally beyond the heel. In all of these embodiments, the difference in lateral thickness of the rear stabilizing member 214 relative to the lateral profile of the upper 202 is 2% to 6% of the length (LU) of the upper 202, as illustrated for example, in FIG. 24.

[0041] In an embodiment, the curvature of the distal end of the rear stabilizing member 214, along a sectional plane parallel with the bottom surface of the sole 200, is equal to, or greater than, the curvature of the proximal end of the upper 202 at the heel. In another embodiment,

the distal curvature cited above relative to the heel, of the rear stabilizing member 214 is equal to that of the upper 202. In a further embodiment, the distal curvature cited above relative to the heel, of the rear stabilizing member 214 is greater than that of the upper 202. It should be noted that the relatively large width (L6) of the rear stabilizing member 214 enables optimized contact with the ground upon an early strike of a stride, i.e. distally with respect to the heel. To this end, the mean width (L6) of the rear stabilizing member 214 is 20% to 40% of the length (LU) of the upper 202.

[0042] In the illustrated embodiment, the rear stabilizing member 214 is an integral part of the sole 200 and protects the rear of the sole 200 in the distal direction of the rear end of the upper 202. Also, the bottom surface of the rear stabilizing member 214 has an upward curvature, i.e. directed from the bottom end of the sole 200 to the upper 202. Furthermore, the height (H2) of the distal end of the bottom surface of the rear stabilizing member 214 relative to the bottom surface of the center of the sole 200, i.e., with respect to the ground, is 0 to 60% of the length (LU) of the upper 202, preferably 3% to 60% of the length (LU) of the upper 202, more preferably, 4% to 60% of the length (LU) of the upper 202, more preferably 4% to 30% of the length (LU) of the upper 202, more preferably 5% to 20% of the length (LU) of the upper 202.

[0043] Referring to FIG. 25, in a further embodiment, a shoe 198e includes sole 200 comprising a lateral stabilizing member 220 located on both sides of the heel. The lateral stabilizing member 220 includes two lobes (222a, 222b), i.e., a lateral lobe 222a and a medial lobe 222b, that are located on and extend outwardly from opposing sides of the rear part of the upper 202 at the heel. During use of the shoe, the lateral stabilizing member 220 increases the lateral stability during a strike at the heel, by realigning the pressure paths toward the longitudinal median axis of the shoe profile. Further, upon poor positioning of the foot on ground contact, the lateral stabilizing member provides a sufficient delay time for the reflex mechanism to react and recover from the poor positioning, which helps to prevent injury to the user. Also, the lateral stabilizing member 220 helps to realign a user's feet during the strike phase, which limits fatigue by improving the regularity of motion during stride sequences. It should be appreciated that the lateral stabilizing member may extend outwardly from the medial side, the lateral side or both sides of the shoe.

[0044] In the illustrated embodiment, the lateral width (L4) of the lateral stabilizing member 220, on one side of the upper 202 at the heel, i.e., the lateral width (L4) of a lobe (222a, 222b), i.e., the distance the lobes each extend outwardly from the upper, is at least 5% of the length (LU) of the upper 202, and preferably 5% to 20% of the length (LU) of the upper 202, and more preferably 5% to 22% of the length (LU) of the upper 202. Furthermore, in an embodiment, the width of the medial lobe 222b or inner lobe (i.e., the medial distance that the lobe 222b

extends from the upper), is less than the width of the lateral lobe 222a or the outer lobe (i.e., the lateral distance that the lobe 222a extends from the upper). It should be appreciated that the width of the medial lobe 222b may be greater than the width of the lateral lobe 222a or the medial and lateral lobes may have the same width. Further, the greatest lateral width (L5) from one edge to the other edge of the lateral stabilizing member 220, at the bottom surface of the sole 200, is 50% to 60% of the length (LU) of the upper 202, and preferably 52% and 57% of the length (LU) of the upper 202.

[0045] In an embodiment, the greatest width (L5) of the lateral stabilizing member 220 at the bottom surface of the sole 200 is equal to or greater than the largest width (L2) of the upper 202 at the metatarsal region. Further, the ratio between the greatest width (L5) of the lateral stabilizing member 220 at the bottom surface of the sole 200 and the greatest width (L2) of the upper 202 at the metatarsal region, is 2 to 3, preferably 2.2 to 2.5, more preferably 2.2 to 2.5. It should be appreciated that the ratio may also be 2.25 to 2, or within a range greater than or equal to 2.3 and less than 2. Note that in the illustrated embodiment, the ratio of the shoe is at least less than 2.0, and preferably 0.6 to 0.9. As shown in FIG. 25, the outer profile of the lateral stabilizing member 220 originates at the widest part 222 of the front part of the upper 202, and more specifically, at the center or midfoot area of the upper 202, i.e., preferably at least at the center of the arch of the foot, to extend in a flared manner up to the rear end of the upper 202. Note also that the greatest width (L5) of the lateral stabilizing member 220 is located substantially facing the rear end of the upper 202, and at least located straight above the heel 226, so as to provide maximum stability at the ground contact zone of the heel.

[0046] In another embodiment, the lateral stabilizing member 220, or the part of the sole 200 forming the lateral stabilizing member 220, i.e., the lobes (222a, 222b), is more flexible than the other parts of the sole 200. In this way, the lateral stabilizing member 220 limits torque effects by limiting any overly abrupt return effects to a normal position of the shoe upon poor positioning of the heel on the ground and then recovery to a natural position.

[0047] In the illustrated embodiment, the lateral stabilizing member 220, i.e., the lobes (222a, 222b), include depressions, i.e., hollow parts, such as outer grooves, that soften the sole 200 on either side of the heel. In an embodiment, the lateral stabilizing member 220, i.e., the lobes (222a, 222b), is made of a more flexible material, i.e. having a lower Shore D hardness than the rest of the sole 200. It should be appreciated that the lateral stabilizing member may have the same or different hardness than the other parts of the sole 200.

[0048] In a further embodiment shown in FIG. 26, a shoe 198f includes sole 200 comprising a rear stabilizing member 214 and a lateral stabilizing member 220, thereby forming a rear peripheral stabilizing member 224 about the heel area of the shoe. In this embodiment, the

rear peripheral stabilizing member 224 spreads out and realigns the stride, alleviates strain concentrations upon a heel strike, thereby spreading out the impact forces on a user's body. As shown in FIGs. 18 and 26, the rear peripheral stabilizing member 224 has an outer shape similar to an arc of a circle. As such, the rear peripheral stabilizing member 224 limits drifts and deviations relative to the positioning of the shoe along the preferential ground contact line of a natural stride. Note that the rear peripheral stabilizing member 224 thus extends distally relative to the heel over a length (L3) corresponding to the length of the rear stabilizing member 224 cited above, as well as over a width (L5) corresponding to that of the lateral stabilizing member 220.

[0049] Referring now to FIG. 27, in a further embodiment, a shoe 198g includes sole 200 comprising a front stabilizing member 210 and a rear stabilizing member 214, which increases the propulsion phase and generates a greater stride length or height. As such, the presence of the rear stabilizing member 214 in the combination cited above makes it possible, due to the increase particularly in the stride length, to initiate landing, and thereby initiate the ground strike phase earlier, which provides fluidity of motion of the user's stride. This fluidity of motion is provided both during the propulsion phase of a leg to the landing upstream from the heel on the other leg, and during the rear stride engagement phase to the forward rolling of the foot to the propulsion phase.

[0050] Referring to FIG. 28, in another embodiment, a shoe 198h includes sole 200 comprising a front stabilizing member 210 and a lateral stabilizing member 220. In the preceding embodiment, due to the support of the front stabilizing member 210, the risk of drift of the force line of the launch and suspension phase increases. The presence of the lateral stabilizing member 220 in this embodiment thereby realigns the rear ground contact during the landing phase and limits the risk of loss of balance and consequently, the risk of injuries.

[0051] Referring to FIGs. 17-19, 29 and 30, in a further embodiment, a shoe 198i includes sole 200, which has a front stabilizing member 210, as well as a rear peripheral stabilizing member 214 formed from a rear stabilizing member 214 and a lateral stabilizing member 220, to form a full peripheral stabilizing member 226 of the sole 200. The full peripheral stabilizing member 226 provides fluidity of a stride between the propulsion phase and the early landing phase and vice versa. Furthermore, the full peripheral stabilizing member 226 also limits the risk of drift along the preferential ground contact line, i.e., potential risks of drift of the landing phase, due to the propulsion phase, which is increased, and due to the strike phase initiation phase which is also early. In this embodiment, the material(s) of the sole 200 have a Shore D hardness between 30 and 35, but may have any suitable hardness value or combination of hardness values.

[0052] Referring to FIG. 31, in another embodiment, a shoe 198j has a sole 200 with a rear stabilizing member 214 and a lateral stabilizing member 228, where the lat-

eral stabilizing member includes protruding lobes 228a and 228b that extend outwardly from the rear portion of the sole. In an embodiment, the lobes 228a and 228b are integrally formed with and extend outwardly from the outsole 200 and are separated from the rear stabilizing member. In another embodiment, the shoe only includes the lateral stabilizing member 228 with lobes 228a and 228b and does not include the rear stabilizing member 214. In each embodiment, the lobes 228a and 228b provide lateral support and stability to a user while reducing impact forces on the user's feet. It should be appreciated that in each embodiment, the lobes 228a and 228b have a width, i.e., lateral distance from the upper, that is at least 5% of the length (LU) of the upper.

[0053] In an embodiment of the present footwear or shoe, a semi-rigid support plate, such as a carbon plate, is inserted between the midsole and the outsole to provide additional stability and support to a user's foot. The support plate is a generally planar plate that extends along at least a portion of the midsole. Alternatively, the plate may be inserted in or integrally formed with the midsole. The plate may extend along a portion of the midsole and outsole, such as in the heel area, or along the entire length (L) of the shoe. Additionally, the plate may be made out of metal, metal fibers encased by a resin, plastic or any suitable materials or combination of materials.

[0054] In another embodiment, a spring plate is inserted between the midsole and the outsole. The spring plate is a generally planar plate that extends under the upper and beyond the rear end of the wall 206 shown in FIG. 18 to provide resilient support in the heel area of the shoe to help absorb the impact force on a user's heel during heel strikes while walking, jogging or running. In another embodiment, the spring plate extends beyond the front end of the wall 206 to provide support during propulsion, i.e., push off force between the forefoot and the ground. It is contemplated that the spring plate may extend along the entire length (L) of the shoe, extend from the front end of the wall 206 to a point beyond the rear end of the wall 206, extend from the rear end of the wall 206 to a point beyond the front end of the wall 206 or extend beyond both the front end and the rear end of the wall 206. In this embodiment, the spring plate is made of a resilient metal, but may be made with plastic or any suitable material or combination of materials.

[0055] Referring to FIG. 32, in another embodiment, a shoe 198k includes an upper 232 having a bottom surface and a length, and a sole 230 secured to the bottom surface of the upper 232 and including a midsole and an outsole. As shown, the sole 230 has a front portion 234 with a front contact surface area and a rear portion 236 with a rear contact surface area, where the front portion has a front length (FL) and the rear portion has a rear length (RL) that are equal to each other relative to the overall length of the shoe (L) as shown in the illustrated embodiment. In this embodiment, the rear contact surface area (area of the bottom of the sole that contacts the ground) is equal to or greater than the front contact

surface area to provide stability and balance to a user during walking, jogging and running, and to spread or reduce the impact force on a user's heel along the rear contact surface area thereby reducing the impact force on the user's body while enhancing propulsion. It should be appreciated that the length of the front portion 234 may be less than, equal to or greater than the rear portion 236 as long as the rear contact surface area is equal to or greater than the front contact surface area.

[0056] Referring to FIG. 33, in a further embodiment, a shoe 1981 includes sole 237 having a midsole and an outsole. A peripheral stabilizing member 238 extends from a medial side 240a to a lateral side 240b of the sole and is attached to the midsole by a peripheral support member 242. In this embodiment, the peripheral support member 242 is a lattice structure that extends outwardly from the midsole to the peripheral stabilizing member 238 such that the peripheral stabilizing member is not directly connected to the sole 237. This provides a hollow space below the peripheral support member between the sole 237 and the peripheral stabilizing member 238 that allows the support member 242 and the peripheral stabilizing member 238 to flex during use to provide support and balance to a user on different terrains while reducing the impact force on the user's feet. In another embodiment, the peripheral stabilizing member is attached to the outsole by the peripheral support member. It should be appreciated that the peripheral stabilizing member 238 and the peripheral support member 242 may extend about a portion of the peripheral surface of the sole 237 from the medial to lateral sides of the sole or about the entire rear peripheral surface of the sole as shown in FIG. 33. It should also be appreciated that the peripheral support member 242 may be a lattice structure, a solid structure or any suitable structure that attaches the peripheral stabilizing member to the sole 237.

[0057] Furthermore, in the above embodiments, the front stabilizing member, the lateral stabilizing member including the opposing lobes, and the rear stabilizing member may be made out of the same material or different materials. Similarly, the front stabilizing member, the lateral stabilizing member and rear stabilizing member may be made of materials having the same hardness value or different hardness values. For example, one or more of the front stabilizing member, the lateral stabilizing member and rear stabilizing member may have the same hardness value or different hardness values.

[0058] Referring to FIGs. 34-47, another embodiment of the present article of footwear or shoe, generally indicated as 300, includes a sole having a midsole 24 and an outsole 26, and an upper 28 attached to the sole. It should be appreciated that the shoe components in this embodiment are described above and have the same reference numbers. In this embodiment, the sole, and more specifically, the rear stabilizing member 302 of the sole, includes a v-shaped groove or cutout 304, extending from the midsole 24 and through the entire outsole 26. The v-shaped groove 304 separates the rear stabi-

lizing member 302 into a medial balancing member 306 and a lateral balancing member 308. In this embodiment, the groove has a v-shape, but it is contemplated that the groove may have a v-shape, u-shape or any suitable shape. In the illustrated embodiment, the inner surfaces 310, 312 respectively of the medial balancing member 306 and the lateral balancing member 308 forming the v-shaped groove 304 are each substantially flat surfaces. It should be appreciated that the groove 304 between the medial balancing member 306 and the lateral balancing member 308 may have any suitable shape, such as a v-shape, u-shape or other shape. Further, the inner surfaces 310, 312 of the medial and lateral balancing members 306, 308 may be flat (as shown), curved outwardly, curved inwardly or have any suitable shape or configuration. The rear end or rear edge 314 of the groove 304, i.e., the end or edge of the groove closest to the upper 28, may be directly adjacent to the upper 28 or at any suitable distance from the upper. For example, in the illustrated embodiment, the rear edge 314 of the groove 304 is 2.0 cm from the upper 28.

[0059] The groove 304 in the rear stabilizing member 302 enables the medial and lateral balancing members 306, 308 to move independently of each other and flex outwardly upon impact on an underlying surface 34 to provide enhanced support, balance and stability to a user's foot and help with turning and banking during movement, such as while walking, hiking, jogging or running. For example, when the shoe 300 impacts an underlying surface on the medial side 46 of the shoe, the medial balancing member 306 flexes outwardly away from the lateral balancing member 308 to provide more stability and balance on the medial side of the shoe. Similarly, when the shoe 300 impacts an underlying surface on the lateral side 48 of the shoe, the lateral balancing member 308 flexes outwardly away from the medial balancing member 306 to provide more stability and balance on the lateral side of the shoe. A central impact between the heel 30 of the shoe 300 and an underlying surface, causes both the medial and lateral balancing members 306, 308 to flex outwardly to provide more stability on the underlying surface. In this way, the shoe 300 provides enhanced support, suspension and stability on different terrains. The groove 304 also reduces the weight of the rear stabilizing member 302 and thereby the weight of the shoe 300 to help reduce stress and fatigue on a user's feet and legs. In this embodiment, the medial and lateral balancing members 306, 308 may be made of the same material or different materials. For example, the medial and lateral stabilizing members 306, 308 may be made with materials having different hardness values to provide more stability and balance or more shock absorption on the medial or lateral sides of the shoe 300. Furthermore, the medial and lateral balancing members 306, 308 may have different hardnesses to enhance propulsion during movement. It should be appreciated that the medial and lateral balancing members 306, 308 may be made of materials having the same hardness, different

hardnesses or portions having different hardnesses.

[0060] Referring to FIGs. 44-47, in a further embodiment, the medial and lateral balancing members 306, 308 of the rear stabilizing member 302 include elongated slots 316 that extend from the end of the rear stabilizing member 302 to the front of the sole, i.e., front of the shoe 300. The slots 316 are each configured to receive an elongated plate 318 having a designated width, length and thickness. The plates 318 may be carbon plates or made with any suitable material or combination of materials. Further, in an embodiment, the plate 318 inserted in the slot 316 associated with medial balancing member 306 is different from the plate 318 inserted in the slot 316 associated with the lateral balancing member 308. In this regard, the plates 318 may differ in size, shape, length, thickness, hardness or any combination of these properties. In one embodiment, each plate 318 varies in hardness along the length of the plate. For example, different portions of the plates 318 may have a greater hardness than other portions of the plates to provide more stability at designated locations of the shoe, such as in the heel area 30 or in the arch on the medial side 46. Also, the plates 318 may have different lengths. For example, the plates 318 may extend the length of the shoe 300 as shown in FIG. 44 or extend only within the medial and lateral balancing members 306, 308 as shown in FIG. 46. It should be appreciated that the plates 318 may be the same length or different lengths and may also be any suitable length.

[0061] In the above embodiment, the plates 318 may be molded in the sole during manufacturing of the shoe 300, such that the plates are not removable from the sole. In another embodiment, the plates 318 are removable from the slots 316 formed in the medial and lateral balancing members 306, 308 so that a user may replace the plates with different plates, such as plates with a lesser or greater hardness, or replace broken or damaged plates. In this embodiment, the plates 318 include a gripping member 320 at the ends of the plates so that a user can easily grab and pull the plates out of the slots 316 and also insert and push the plates 318 into the slots 316. In these embodiments, that plates 318 may have a symmetrical shape as shown in FIG. 47, or have an asymmetrical shape such as a curved shape. It should be appreciated that the plates 318 may have any suitable shape.

[0062] In another embodiment, the slots 316 formed in the sole are in a different plane or at positioned at a different angle relative to each other within the sole or in a different plane and at a different angle relative to each other. For example, one of the slots 316 may be a greater distance above the underlying surface than the other slot 316. Alternatively, one of the slots 316 may be at an angle of 25 degrees relative to the bottom surface of the upper and the other slot may be at an angle of 60 degrees relative to the bottom surface of the upper. In this way, the plates 318 may be in different planes in the sole and/or positioned at different angles relative to the bottom sur-

face of the upper to adjust the support, balance, stability and propulsion of the shoe. It should be appreciated that the slots 316, and thereby the plates 318, may be at any suitable plane and at any suitable angle within the sole.

[0063] Referring to FIG. 48, another embodiment of the present article of footwear or shoe, generally referred to as reference number 322, is shown and includes a groove 324 formed in the stabilizing member 326 of the sole that separates the stabilizing member into a medial balancing member 328 and a lateral balancing member 330 as described in the above embodiments. In this embodiment, the medial and lateral balancing members 328, 330 are asymmetrical relative to a longitudinal axis 332 extending through the center portion of the shoe 322. More specifically, the medial balancing member 328 has a length LM that is greater than a length LL of the lateral balancing member 330. It should be appreciated that the medial and lateral balancing members 328, 330 may be symmetrical or asymmetrical in length, width, thickness or any combination of these parameters. In this way, the medial and lateral balancing members may be adjusted or tuned to enhance balance, stability, support, propulsion or other desired performance characteristics of the shoe.

[0064] Referring now to FIGs. 49-51, another embodiment of the present shoe is shown where the shoe 334 includes a stabilizing member 336 having a separating portion 338 instead of a groove, where the separating portion 338 is made of a material that is different than the material of the stabilizing member. Specifically, in this embodiment, the separating portion 338 is made of a material that is softer than the material of the stabilizing member 336, to form the medial and lateral balancing members 340, 342. Forming the separating portion 338 with a softer material, enables the separating portion to flex and move to allow the medial and lateral stabilizing members 340, 342 to move independently of each other as described above. In another embodiment shown in FIG. 51, the separating portion 344 of shoe 345 is made of a perforated material having several holes 346 that enable the separating portion, and thereby the medial and lateral balancing members 348, 350, to flex and move in a similar way to the softer material. It should be appreciated that the separating portion may be made out of any suitable material or combination of materials.

[0065] Referring to FIGs. 52-54, a further embodiment of the present shoe is shown where the shoe 352 includes a groove 354 having different depths. For example, the groove 354 in stabilizing member 356 in FIG. 52 forms medial and lateral balancing members 358, 360 where the groove 354 does not extend completely through the sole. Instead, a platform 362 is located at the bottom of the groove and extends between the medial and lateral stabilizing members. In this embodiment, an upper surface of the platform 362 is substantially flat. It should be appreciated that the upper surface of the platform 362 may flat or angled, and may have any suitable thickness. Additionally, the platform 362 may be positioned at any

distance or height above the underlying surface as shown in FIG. 54. It should be appreciated that the platform 362 may be at the top end of the groove 354 such that the groove extends from the bottom surface of the platform 362, through the sole and is open to the underlying surface, or at any suitable position in the groove. It should also be appreciated that a plurality of platforms may be positioned within the groove 354 and extend between the medial and lateral balancing members. In this embodiment, the platforms may be separated from each other or be positioned directly adjacent to each other, and two or more of the platforms may be made of the same material or different materials.

[0066] Referring to FIG. 55A, in a further embodiment, a shoe 355 is shown and includes a groove 357 formed by the medial and lateral balancing members 359 and 361. As shown in the illustrated embodiment, the groove 357 is located at a bottom end of the medial and lateral balancing members 359 and 361 and the portions of the medial and lateral balancing members forming the groove gradually increase in thickness toward the upper such that the top end 363 is primarily filled with material between the medial and lateral balancing members. It should be appreciated that the groove may be formed in any suitable portion of the rear stabilizing member and that thicknesses of the medial and lateral balancing members 359, 361 may be any suitable thickness. It should also be appreciated that the material between the medial and lateral balancing members 359, 361 may be the same material as the medial and lateral balancing members or a different material.

[0067] Referring to FIG. 55B, in another embodiment, a shoe 364 is shown and includes an elongated channel 366 formed in the bottom of the sole that extends from the midfoot portion of the shoe to a groove 368 formed in the stabilizing member 370. In this embodiment, the depth of the channel 366 gradually increases until reaching the groove 368. It should be appreciated that the channel may extend from any portion of the shoe including the front end or the forefoot portion of the shoe. Further, the channel 366 may have any suitable length, width and/or depth.

[0068] Referring now to FIGs. 56-60, in a further embodiment, a shoe generally referred to as reference number 372 is shown, and includes an upper 374 and a sole 376, which may be comprised of a midsole and an outsole, or just an outsole. The sole 376 has a balancing portion 378 that extends outwardly from the upper 374 and continuously along the medial, lateral and rear portions 380a, 380b and 380c of the shoe. In this embodiment, a curved support plate 382 is positioned between the upper 374 and the sole 376 as shown in FIGs. 56 and 58. More specifically, the support plate 382 is positioned in recessed areas shown in FIG. 59 so that the rear end 384 of the support plate 382 is in recessed area 386 and the front end 388 of the support plate is in recessed area 390 where recessed areas 386 and 390 are separated or spaced from each other. The curves in the

support plate 382 enable the support plate to be positioned on the sole 376 so that the rear curved portion 392 of the support plate 382 is at a distance above the upper surface 394 of the sole 376. In this way, a space 396 is formed between the support plate 382 and the sole 376 so that the support plate is able to flex or move upwardly and downwardly relative to the sole 376 to provide support and spring to a user's foot during movement. In the illustrated embodiment, the support plate 382 has two curved portions, namely, the rear curved portion 392 and front curved portion 398, but may have any suitable number of curved portions depending on the desired support and spring. Further, each curved portion 392, 398 may have any suitable degree of curvature. Preferably, the support plate 382 has a generally elongated, narrow rectangular shape but may be any shape. Also, the support plate 382 is made of carbon fibers and resin but may be made out of any suitable material or combination of materials.

[0069] Referring now to FIGs. 61-72, in another embodiment, a sole for an article of footwear is shown and generally indicated as 400, where the sole includes an upper surface 402 configured to receive an upper 404, and a bottom surface 406. More specifically, the sole 400 includes a midsole 408 made with a material that provides cushioning and support to a user's foot, such as EVA or other suitable material. An outsole 410 is attached to a bottom surface 412 of the midsole 408 and includes tread members 414 that contact and at least partially grip an underlying surface for support and stability while moving on different terrain. The outsole 410 is preferably made with rubber, but may be made with any suitable material or combination of materials.

[0070] As shown in Figs. 61 and 62, a support member, such as support plate 416, is placed on the upper surface 402 of the sole 400 to provide stability and support to different areas of a user's foot. The support plate 416 has a front part 418, a middle part 420 and a rear part 422. In the illustrated embodiment, the front part 418 is positioned at least partially in a forefoot area of a user's foot and includes a front medial arm 424, which extends along a medial side 426 of the sole 400 and into a toe area 428 of the sole. A front lateral arm 430 is spaced from the front medial arm 424, and extends at least partially along a lateral side 432 of the sole 400 and at least partially in the forefoot area 434. As shown in the illustrated embodiment, the front medial arm 424 has a length that is greater than a length of the front lateral arm 430. In another embodiment, the length of the front lateral arm 430 is greater than the length of the front medial arm 424. It should be appreciated that the lengths of the front medial arm 424 and the front lateral arm 430 may be adjusted to provide different levels of stability and support on the medial and lateral sides 426, 432 of the sole.

[0071] To provide lateral balance, the rear part 422 of the support plate 416 has a V-shape formed by a rear medial arm 434 and a rear lateral arm 436. As shown in Fig. 61, the rear medial arm 435 and the rear lateral arm

436 each have lengths that are the same. In another embodiment, the lengths of the rear medial arm 434 and the rear lateral arm 436 are different. As with the front part 418 described above, the lengths of the rear medial arm 434 and the rear lateral arm 436 may be adjusted based on a desired level of stability and support in the heel area 438 of the sole 400. Separating the rear medial arm 434 and the rear lateral arm 436 so that there is a space 440 between the rear medial arm and the rear lateral arm, enables the rear medial arm 434 and the rear lateral arm 436 to move or flex relative to or independently of each other.

[0072] The middle part 420 of the support plate 416 connects the front part 418 and the rear part 422. Preferably, the middle part 420 is flexible and positioned a designated distance above the upper surface of the sole to form space 442, so that the middle part is able to move toward and away from the upper surface 402 of the sole. This configuration provides resilient support to the insole area of user's foot while the user is walking, jogging or running. For example, as the user's foot presses down on the middle part 420 of the support plate 416, the support plate 416 moves at least partially through the space 442 and toward the upper surface 402 of the sole 400. As the user's foot releases pressure on the middle part 420, the middle part 420 moves away from the upper surface 402 and back to its original position. As shown in Fig. 61, the middle part 420 of the support plate 416 has a width that is less than a width of the front part 418 and a width of the rear part 422. The width of the middle part 420 may be adjusted to provide different levels of support to the user's foot. Similarly, the middle part 420 of the support plate 416 may be formed with a curved shape, such as a convex shape as shown in Figs. 61 and 62, to adjust the level of support provided to the user's foot.

[0073] In an embodiment, the middle part 420 of the support plate 416 includes an upwardly projecting ridge 444 that extends along at least a portion of the middle part. The ridge 444 is used to adjust the stiffness of the middle part 420, which corresponds to the rigidity or flexibility of the middle part, where the ridge 444 may extend along a portion of the length of the middle part 420 or along the entire length of the middle part 420. In another embodiment, the ridge 444 is replaced by an opening or through-hole (not shown) that also adjusts the stiffness and flexibility of the middle part.

[0074] In the illustrated embodiment, the front part 418 has a width W1 and the rear part 422 has a width W2 that are both greater than a width W3 of the middle part 420 of the support plate 416. It should be appreciated that the widths W1, W2 and W3 may be the same or each width may be different as shown in Fig. 61. Further, the width W1 may be the same as the width W2 or the width W3, and the width W3 may be the same as the width W2. Adjusting the widths of the support plate 416 in different areas of a user's foot, adjusts the support provided by the support plate 416 in the different areas of the user's

foot. Similarly, the thickness of the support plate 416 may be uniform along the entire length of the support plate 416 or the support plate may have different thicknesses relative to the different areas of the user's foot. Further, in the above embodiments, the support plate 416 is preferably made of a carbon-fiber material. It should be appreciated that the support plate may be made of metal, a composite material or any suitable material or combination of materials.

[0075] Also in the above embodiments, the support plate 416 may be positioned on the upper surface 402 of the sole 400, embedded or molded within the sole 400 or the sole 400 may have a recessed area that has a size, a shape and a depth that corresponds to the size, the shape and the thickness or thicknesses of the support plate 416. In this way, the recessed area limits the movement of the support plate 416 relative to the sole 400 and thereby secures the support plate in position on the sole. In another embodiment, the support plate 416 is secured to the upper surface 402 of the sole 400 using an adhesive or other suitable attachment method.

[0076] In use, a user's foot is inserted in an article of footwear, such as a shoe or sandal, so that the user's foot is adjacent to the support plate 416 and more specifically, so that the arch of the user's foot is on the middle part 420 of the support plate 416. As the user walks, jogs or runs, their foot presses against the middle part 420 when the shoe is relatively flat on an underlying surface, such that the middle part 420 moves downward through the space 442 toward the upper surface 402 of the sole 400. The amount of compression of the middle part 420 of the support plate 416 depends on the configuration of the middle part, such as the thickness, the width and the material used to form the middle part, as well as if there is a ridge 444 or opening formed in the middle part as described above. As the pressure of the user's foot decreases on the middle part 420, such as when the user's foot is rolling onto the forefoot area of the sole 400, the resilient middle part 420 moves away from the upper surface 402 of the sole 400 to its original non-compressed or non-flexed position. In this way, the middle part 420 provides support to the arch or insole of the user's foot to help the user's foot to propel the user forward.

[0077] Referring now to Figs. 76-79, another embodiment of the support plate 446 is shown where the support plate 446 has a first support member 448 and a second support member 450 that combine to form the support plate. In this embodiment, the first support member 448 has an upper part 452 with a curved portion 454 and a lower part 456 that extends from an end of the upper part 452 and beneath at least a portion of the upper part as shown in Fig. 76. Similarly, the second support member 450 is a separate component that has an upper part 458 and a lower part 460 that extends from an end of the upper part 458 and underneath at least a portion of the upper part. The lower parts 456 and 460 of the first support member and the second support member are spaced a designated distance from the upper parts 452

and 458 and are each made of a resilient material so that the lower parts 456, 460 act as springs as the lower parts move toward and away from the upper parts 452, 458 during use. In the illustrated embodiment, the support plate 446 includes the first support member 448 and the second support member 450 where the first and second support members are separate components that are positioned on, embedded in or molded in a sole of an article of footwear. In another embodiment, the support plate 446 is a single, integral component that includes the first support member 448 and the second support member 450 as shown in Fig. 79. It should be appreciated that the support plate 446 may have the same or different thicknesses and/or the same or different widths as described above. Further, the support plate 446 is preferably made with a carbon-fiber material but may also be made with a metal, a composite material or any suitable material or combination of materials.

[0078] Referring to Fig. 79, in another embodiment, a support plate 462 is formed as an integral unit or integral component. In this embodiment, the support plate 462 has an upper part 464 and lower parts 466 and 468 that extend from each end of the upper part and at least partially beneath each end of the upper part. As shown, the lower parts 466, 468 are spaced a designated distance from the upper part, where the spaces 470 and 472 between the upper part and each lower part may be adjusted so that the distances between the upper part and each lower part are the same or different. The support plate 462 is preferably made of a stable, resilient material, such as a carbon fiber-based material, so that the upper part 464 may flex or move toward and away from the lower parts 466, 468 when pressure is placed on a front end 474 and/or a rear end 476 of the upper part 464. In the illustrated embodiment, the upper part 464 includes a curved portion 478 that is positioned at or near the arch or insole of a user's foot. The curved portion 478 provides support to the user's foot when the upper part 464 is pressed toward one or both of the lower parts 466, 468 by a user's foot. It should be appreciated that the support plate 462 may also be made of a metal, a composite material or any suitable material or combination of materials.

[0079] Referring to Figs. 80 to 92, another embodiment of the present sole 500 is shown where the sole includes a recessed area 502 configured to receive a support member, such as support plate 504. The recessed area 502 in the sole may have a size and shape to receive different support members with different sizes and shapes or have a size and shape that corresponds to the size and shape of a particular support member. After the support plate 504 is inserted into the recessed area 502, an insert member, such as pad 506, is placed on top of the support plate 504 in the recessed area 502 to secure the support plate in place and provide cushioning between the support member and a user's foot. The pad 506 may be made of a foam material or any suitable material or combination of materials.

[0080] As shown in Figs. 81 to 84, the support plate 504 has a body 508 including a main support 510, a front support 512 that extends over a portion of the main support and a rear support 514 that extends under a portion of the main support. The front end 516 of the main support 510 curves upwardly and has a front medial arm 518 and a front lateral arm 520 that are spaced from each other and extend to the front support 512 via a front connecting member 522. The ends of the front medial arm 518 and the front lateral arm 520 are connected together by front end member 524 as shown in Fig. 81. Similarly, the rear end 526 of the main support 510 curves upwardly and has a rear medial arm 528 and a rear lateral arm 530 that are spaced from each other and extend to the rear support 514 via a rear connecting member 532. The ends of the rear medial arm 528 and the rear lateral arm 530 are connected together by a rear end member 534 as shown in Fig. 81. A central portion 536 of the main support 510, which is located between the front end 516 and the rear end 526, has a convex curvature (upwardly extending curvature) that provides support to a midfoot area of a person's foot. The central portion 536 also has an elongated opening 538 that defines a central medial arm 540 and a central lateral arm 542, where the opening 538 enables the central portion 536 to be more flexible and resilient during use. In the illustrated embodiment, the support plate is made with a carbon fiber-based material but also may be made with metal, EVA or any suitable material or combination of materials. Also, the thickness of the support plate 504 is 1.0 to 2.0 mm, but may be any suitable thickness or have different thicknesses along the length of the support plate.

[0081] In a further embodiment, the front support 512 and the rear support 514 are not attached to the main support 510 by the front connecting member 522 and the rear connecting member 532. Instead in this embodiment, the front support 512, the rear support 514 and the main support 510 are positioned in the sole so that the front support and the rear support are spaced from the main support and function as described above.

[0082] Referring to Figs. 85 to 92, after the support plate 504 is positioned in the recessed area 502 of the sole 500, a front cushion member 544 is placed between the front support 512 and the main support 510 and a rear cushion member 546 is placed between the rear support 514 and the main support 510. The front cushion member 544 and the rear cushion member 546 are preferably made of ethylene-vinyl acetate (EVA) or a foam material but may be made with any suitable material or combination of materials. In the illustrated embodiment, the front and rear cushion members 544, 546 control the flexibility of the front support 512 and the rear support 514 relative to the main support 510. For example, if the front cushion member 544 and the rear cushion member 546 are not placed in the positions shown in Fig. 86, the front support 512 and the rear support 514 can flex or move toward the main support 510 until the front support and/or the rear support contact the main support. Insert-

ing the front cushion member 544 and the rear cushion member 546 within the support plate 504 as shown, helps to control the flexibility or movement of the front support and the rear support relative to the main support. The amount of flexibility or movement of the front support 512 and the rear support 514 relative to the main support 510 determines the overall support and propulsion provided by the support plate 504 to a user's foot during use.

[0083] The flexibility and support provided by the front cushion member 544 and the rear cushion member 546 is determined by the overall support and propulsion desired for the shoe. In this regard, the flexibility and support provided by the support plate 504 may be adjusted by increasing or decreasing the hardness, i.e., hardness value, of the material used to make the front cushion member 544 and the rear cushion member 546. For example, a material with a high hardness value will cause the front and rear supports 512, 514 to be more rigid and less flexible during use, which is desirable for hiking or running on uneven terrain such as trails. A material with a low hardness value will cause the front and rear supports 512, 514 to be less rigid and more flexible during use, which is desirable during walking or running on relatively level terrain, such as on a track, sidewalk or street, where cushioning and propulsion are important. It should be appreciated that the material used to make the front and rear cushion members 544, 546 may be the same material or different materials including materials with different hardness values.

[0084] Another way to adjust the flexibility and support provided by the front and rear cushion members 544, 546 is to adjust the size and/or shape of the front and rear cushion members. As shown in Fig. 86, the front and rear cushion members 544, 546 have a size that only fills a portion of the space 548 between the front support 504 and the main support 510 and a portion of the space 550 between the rear support 514 and the main support 510. Adjusting the size and/or shape of the front and rear cushion members 544, 546 to fill a greater amount of the spaces, will cause the front and rear supports to be more rigid and less flexible. Alternatively, decreasing the size and/or shape of the front and rear cushion members 544, 546 so that they fill less of the spaces 548, 550, will cause the front and rear supports 512, 514 to be more flexible and resilient. In the illustrated embodiment, the front and rear cushion members 544, 546 are the same size and shape. In another embodiment, the front and rear cushion members 544, 546 are different sizes and/or shapes so that the cushioning, support and/or flexibility of the front and rear supports 512, 514 is different.

[0085] During walking or running, a user's heel strikes the ground first, which compresses the support plate 504 in the heel area of the sole 500 and causes the rear support 514 to flex or move toward the main support 510 of the support plate. The flexing of the rear support 514 provides enhanced cushioning and support to the heel area of a user's foot as compared to conventional soles made with a uniform material where the cushioning and

support is uniform along the entire length of the sole. Similarly, as a user's foot transitions or rocks toward the midfoot area and releases pressure on their heel, the front support 512 begins to flex or move toward the main support 510 while the rear support 514 flexes or moves away from the main support 510 and back to a non-compressed position. Then, the front support 513 becomes fully compressed as the user's foot transitions to the forefoot area during movement. The flexing and resiliency of the front support 512 helps to cushion a user's foot upon initial impact and then propel their foot forward as the front support moves back to a non-compressed position. In this way, the support plate 504 provides enhanced cushioning and support to a user's foot during movement while also propelling their foot forward to help increase power and speed.

[0086] Referring now to Figs. 93 to 104, a further embodiment of the sole indicated as 548 is shown where the sole includes a recessed area 550 configured to receive a support member, such as support plate 552, as described above. After the support plate 552 is inserted into the recessed area 550, an insert member, such as pad 554, is placed on the support plate 552 in the recessed area 550 to secure the support plate in place and provide cushioning between the support plate and a user's foot. The pad 554 may be made of a foam material or any suitable material or combination of materials.

[0087] As shown in Figs. 94 to 97, the support plate 552 has a body 556 including a main support 558, a front support 560 that extends under a portion of a front end 562 of the main support and a rear support 564 that extends under a portion of a rear end 566 of the main support. The front end 562 of the main support 558 has an elongated opening 568 and a front connecting member 570 that curves downwardly and is attached to the front support 560. A central portion 572 of the main support 558 has a convex shape, i.e., upward facing curvature, that provides support to a midfoot area of a user's foot. An inclined portion 574 is located next to the upward facing curvature of the central portion 572 and is angled toward the front end 562 of the main support 558. The central portion 572 also has an opening 576 that defines a central medial arm 578 that extends along a medial side of the sole 548 and a central lateral arm 580 that extends along a lateral side of the sole 548. At the rear end 566 of the main support 558, a rear medial arm 582 and a rear lateral arm 584 are spaced from each other and extend to the rear support 564 via a rear connecting member 586. As shown, the rear medial arm 582 and the rear lateral arm 584 of the rear support 564 are connected together by an end member 588.

[0088] Similar to the rear support 564, the front support 560 has a front medial arm 590 and a front lateral arm 592 that are spaced from each other. Incorporating the openings 568, 576, the front medial arm 590 and the front lateral arm 592 and the rear medial arm 582 and the rear lateral arm 584 in the support plate 552, reduces the material of the support plate to help minimize the amount of

weight added to the shoe while enhancing the flexibility of the of the front end 562 and the rear end 566 of the support plate. In the illustrated embodiment, the support plate 552 is made with a carbon fiber-based material but also may be made with metal, EVA or any suitable material or combination of materials. Also, the thickness of the support plate 552 is 1.0 to 2.0 mm, but may be any suitable thickness or have different thicknesses along the length of the support plate.

[0089] In a further embodiment, the front support 560 and the rear support 564 are not attached to the main support 558 by the front connecting member 570 and the rear connecting member 586. Instead in this embodiment, the front support 560, the rear support 564 and the main support 558 are positioned in the sole so that the front support and the rear support are spaced from the main support and function as described above.

[0090] During use, such as walking or running, a user's heel strikes the ground first, which compresses the support plate 552 in the heel area of the sole and causes the rear support 564 to flex or move toward the main support 558 of the support plate and against the rear cushion member 546. The flexing of the rear support 564 provides enhanced cushioning and support to the heel area of a user's foot as compared to conventional soles made with a uniform material where the cushioning and support is uniform the entire length of the sole. Furthermore, the rear support 564 helps to propel a user's foot forward due to the dual levels of support from the main support 558 and the rear support 564. Next, the user's foot transitions or rocks toward the midfoot area while releasing pressure from the heel area. While the midfoot area of the user's foot impacts the ground via the sole, the upward facing curvature (or dome curvature) in the central portion 572 of the main support 558 compresses under the load from the user's body and provides enhanced cushioning and suspension of the user's foot. Additionally, the inclined portion 574 of the main support 558 contributes to transferring the user's weight forward making movement easier and faster.

[0091] After impacting the midfoot area, the user's foot transitions or rocks toward the forefoot area and causes the front support 560 to flex or move toward the main support 558 and against the front cushion member 544, while the rear support 564 flexes or moves away from the main support 558 and back to a non-compressed position. The flexing and resiliency of the front support 560 helps to cushion a user's foot upon initial impact and propel their foot forward to facilitate a roll forward motion of the foot as the front support moves back to a non-compressed position. Also, the front medial arm 590 and the front lateral arm 592 of the front support 560 act as propulsive elements to further enhance the forward propulsion of the foot. In this way, the support plate 552 provides enhanced cushioning and support to a user's foot during movement while also propelling their foot forward to help increase power and speed and make movement smooth and efficient.

[0092] Referring now to Figs. 105 to 106, another embodiment is shown where after the support plate 552 is positioned in the recessed area 550 of the sole 548, a front cushion member 594 is placed between the front support 560 and the main support 558 and a rear cushion member 596 is placed between the rear support 564 and the main support 558. The front cushion member 594 and the rear cushion member 596 are preferably made of ethylene-vinyl acetate (EVA) or a foam material but may be made with any suitable material or combination of materials. In the illustrated embodiment, the front and rear cushion members 594, 596 control the flexibility of the front support 560 and the rear support 564 relative to the main support 558. For example, if the front cushion member 594 and the rear cushion member 596 are not placed in the positions shown in Fig. 105, the front support 594 and the rear support 596 can flex or move toward the main support 558 until the front support and/or the rear support contact the main support. Inserting the front cushion member 594 and the rear cushion member 596 within the support plate 552 as shown, helps to control the flexibility or movement of the front support and the rear support relative to the main support. The amount of flexibility or movement of the front support 560 and the rear support 564 relative to the main support 558 helps to determine the overall support and propulsion provided by the support plate 552 to a user's foot during use.

[0093] As described above, the flexibility and support provided by the front cushion member 594 and the rear cushion member 596 is determined by the overall support and propulsion desired for the shoe. In this regard, the flexibility and support provided by the support plate 552 may be adjusted by increasing or decreasing the hardness, i.e., hardness value, of the material used to make the front cushion member 594 and the rear cushion member 596. For example, a material with a high hardness value will cause the front and rear supports 594, 596 to be more rigid and less flexible during use, which is desirable for hiking or running on uneven terrain such as trails. A material with a low hardness value will cause the front and rear supports 594, 596 to be less rigid and more flexible during use, which is desirable during walking or running on relatively level terrain, such as on a track, sidewalk or street, where cushioning and propulsion are important. It should be appreciated that the material used to make the front and rear cushion members 594, 596 may be the same material or different materials including materials with different hardness values.

[0094] Furthermore, the size and shape of the front and rear cushion members 594, 596 may be the same or different. As shown in Fig. 106, the front and rear cushion members 594, 596 may both have the same size and shape, such as the size and shape of cushion member 598a. Also, the size and shape of the front and rear cushion members 594, 596 may be different. For example, the front cushion member 594 may have the size and shape of cushion member 598a and the rear cushion member 596 may have the size and shape of cushion

member 598b. It should be appreciated that the front and rear cushion members 594, 596, or any additional cushion members positioned in the sole or in the support plate, may be any suitable size and/or shape. As described above, the front and rear cushion members help to adjust the flexibility and support provided by the support plate.

[0095] Referring to Figs. 107 to 111, another embodiment of the present sole is provided and generally indicated as 600, where the sole includes a support member positioned on the sole to provide enhanced support and propulsion to a user's foot during movement. Specifically, the sole 600 includes a peripheral wall 602 that defines an upper surface 604 for receiving an upper (not shown). The sole 600 also includes a recessed area 606 that extends below the upper surface 604. The support member, such as support plate 608, is positioned on the upper surface 604 of the sole 600. The support plate 608 has a body 610 with a medial arm 612 and a lateral arm 614 at a first end 616 and an elongated portion 618 that extends from the medial arm and the lateral arm to the second end 620 of the body. In the illustrated embodiment, the medial arm 612 extends along a medial side of the sole 600 and has a length that is greater than a length of the lateral arm 614. Further, the medial arm 612 includes a front support 622 that extends transversely from the end of the medial arm and is generally located in a toe area of the sole 600. The lateral arm 614 extends along a lateral side of the sole 600 where the lateral arm is spaced from the medial arm. In this way, the medial and lateral arms 612, 614 provide support to the medial and lateral sides of the forefoot area of a user's foot. Similarly, the elongated portion 618 of the body 610 provides support to the midfoot and heel areas of the user's foot. It should be appreciated that the lateral arm 614 may have a length that is greater than a length of the medial arm 612 where the medial and lateral arms may be any suitable size and shape.

[0096] As shown in Figs. 108 and 110, the support plate 608 is positioned on the upper surface 604 of the sole 600 so that a curved portion 624 is located over the recessed area 606. The curved portion 624 of the support plate 608 is positioned in the midfoot area of a user's foot to provide support and propulsion as described below. During use, when the midfoot area of the sole 600 impacts the ground, the user's foot presses downwardly on the curved portion 624 of the support plate 608, thereby causing the curved portion to flex or move toward and into the recessed area 606. The space created by the recessed area 606 allows the curved portion 624 to flex or move a greater distance relative to the sole 600. As the user's foot rocks toward the forefoot area of the sole 600, the pressure on the curved portion 624 is released and the curved portion moves away from the sole 600 and back to a non-compressed position. As the curved portion 624 moves back to the non-compressed position, the support plate 608 supports and pushes the user's foot to help propel their foot in a forward direction. In this way, the support plate 608 provides added support to the

user's foot while helping to propel the foot forward, which reduces fatigue and improves speed and efficiency during walking or running.

[0097] While particular embodiments of the present sole are shown and described, it will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that changes and modifications may be made thereto without departing from the invention in its broader aspects and as set forth in the following claims.

Claims

1. A footwear component comprising:

- a sole (500) including a recessed area (502); and
- a support member (504) positioned in said recessed area (502) of the sole (500), said support member (504) including a main support (510), a front support (512) that extends at least partially over a front end (516) of said main support (510), and a rear support (514) that extends at least partially below a rear end (526) of said main support (510), wherein said front support (512) of said support member (504) moves toward said main support (510) when pressure is applied to said front support (512) and moves away from said main support (510) when pressure is released from said front support (512), and wherein said rear support (514) of said support member (504) moves toward said main support (510) when pressure is applied to said rear support (514) and moves away from said main support (510) when pressure is released from said rear support (514).

2. The footwear component of claim 1, wherein said front support (512) includes a front medial arm and a front lateral arm that are spaced from each other, said front medial arm and said front lateral arm extending to at least a portion of said main support (510).

3. The footwear component of claim 1 or 2, wherein said rear support (514) includes a rear medial arm and a rear lateral arm that are spaced from each other, said rear medial arm and said rear lateral arm extending to at least a portion of said main support (510).

4. The footwear component of anyone of claims 1 to 3, wherein said main support (510) includes a central portion (536) including an opening, said opening defining a central medial arm and a central lateral arm that are spaced from each other.

5. The footwear component of anyone of claims 1 to 4, wherein said main support (510) includes a central portion (536) including an upwardly facing curved portion, said central portion (536) preferably including an opening, said opening defining a central medial arm and a central lateral arm that are spaced from each other.

6. The footwear component of anyone of claims 1 to 5, further comprising:

- a front cushion member (544) positioned between said front support (512) and said main support (510), wherein said front cushion member (544) is configured to control movement of said front support (512); and/or
- a rear cushion member (546) positioned between said rear support (514) and said main support (510), wherein said rear cushion member (546) is configured to control movement of said rear support (514).

7. The footwear component of anyone of claims 1 to 6, further comprising a pad (506) positioned on said support member (504) in said recessed area (502).

8. A footwear component comprising:

- a sole (500) including a recessed area (502); and
- a support member (504) positioned in said recessed area (502) of the sole (500), said support member (504) including a main support (510), a front support (512) that extends at least partially below a front end (516) of said main support (510), and a rear support (514) that extends at least partially below a rear end (526) of said main support (510), wherein said front support (512) of said support member (504) moves toward said main support (510) when pressure is applied to said front support (512) and moves away from said main support (510) when pressure is released from said front support (512), and wherein said rear support (514) of said support member (504) moves toward said main support (510) when pressure is applied to said rear support (514) and moves away from said main support (510) when pressure is released from said rear support (514).

9. The footwear component of claim 8, wherein said front support (512) includes a front medial arm and a front lateral arm that are spaced from each other.

10. The footwear component of claim 8 or 9, wherein said rear support (514) includes a rear medial arm and a rear lateral arm that are spaced from each

other, said rear medial arm and said rear lateral arm extending to at least a portion of said main support (510).

11. The footwear component of anyone of claims 8 to 10, wherein said main support (510) includes an opening that is positioned above said front support (512). 5

12. The footwear component of anyone of claims 8 to 11, wherein said main support (510) includes a central portion (536) including an opening defining a central medial arm and a central lateral arm that are spaced from each other. 10

13. The footwear component of anyone of claims 8 to 12, wherein said main support (510) includes a central portion (536) including an upwardly facing curved portion, said main support (510) preferably including an inclined portion positioned between said upwardly facing curved portion and the front end of said support member (504). 15
20

14. The footwear component of anyone of claim 8 to 13, further comprising a pad (506) positioned on said support member (504) in said recessed area (502). 25

15. A footwear component comprising:
 - a sole (400) including an upper surface (402) and a recessed area; and 30
 - a support member (416) positioned on said upper surface (402) of said sole (400), said support member (416) including a medial arm (424) extending along a medial side (426) of said sole (400), a lateral arm (430) extending along a lateral side (432) of said sole (400), wherein said medial arm (424) is spaced from said lateral arm (430), and a curved portion that is located over said recessed area, 35
40

wherein when a user's foot applies pressure to said curved portion of said support member (416), said curved portion moves toward said recessed area of said sole (400), and when the user's foot releases pressure from said curved portion, said curved portion moves away from said recessed area. 45

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55

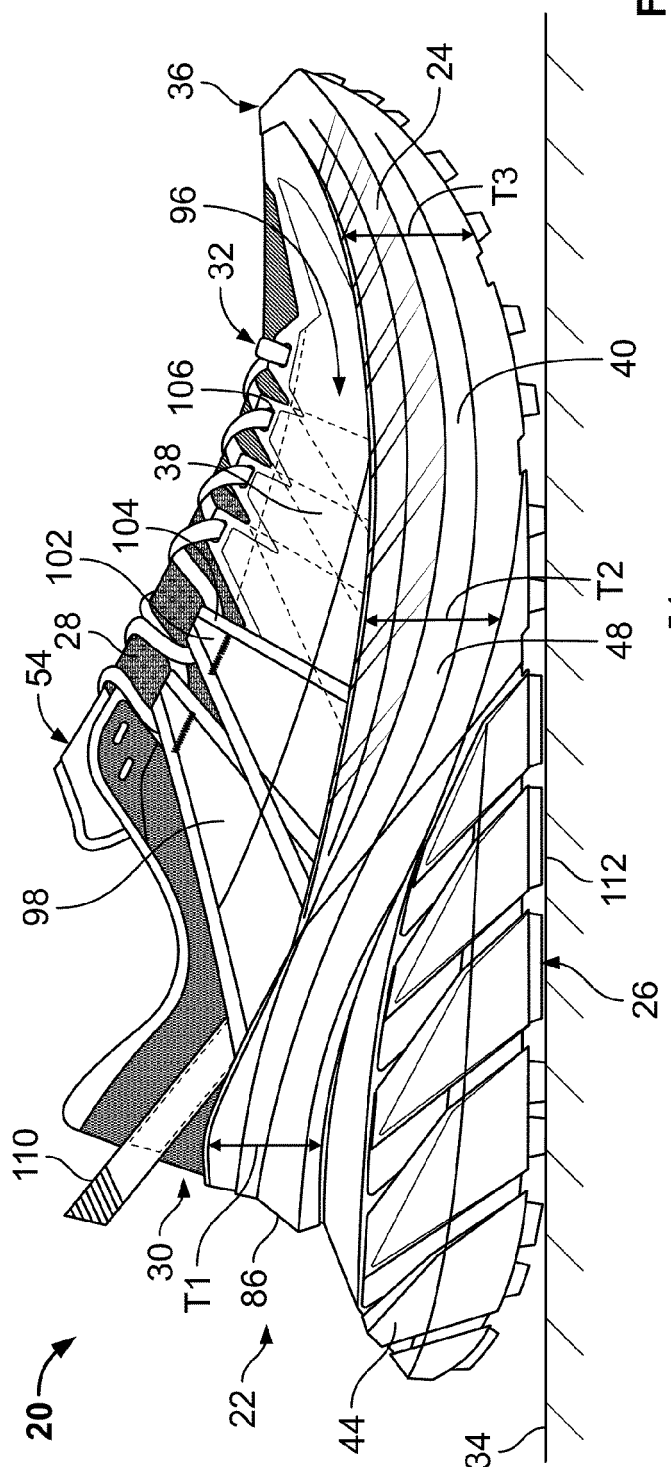


FIG. 1

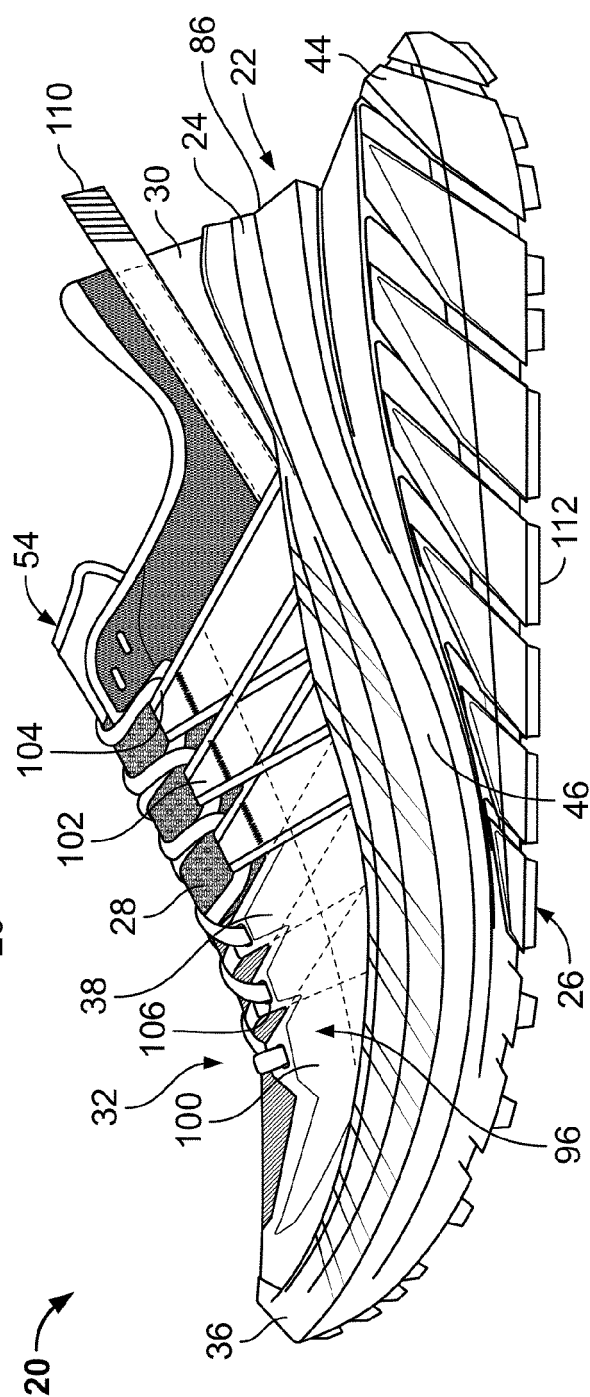


FIG. 2

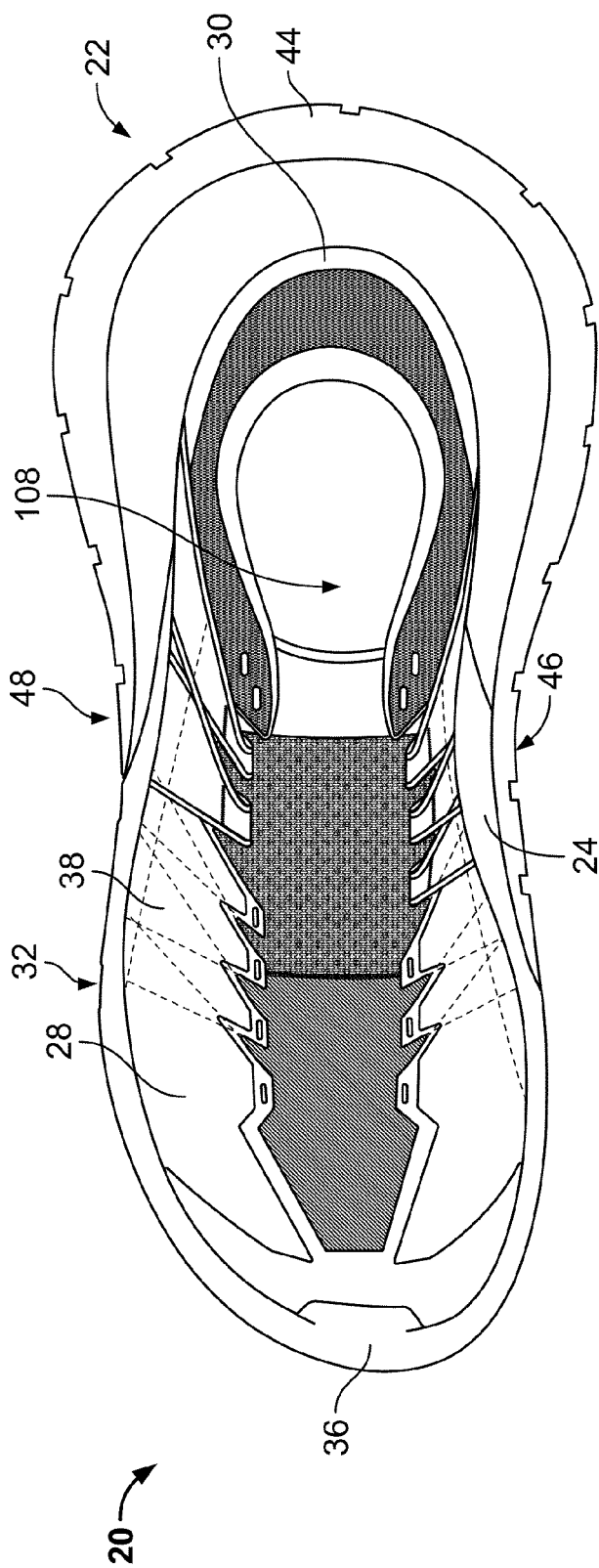


FIG. 3

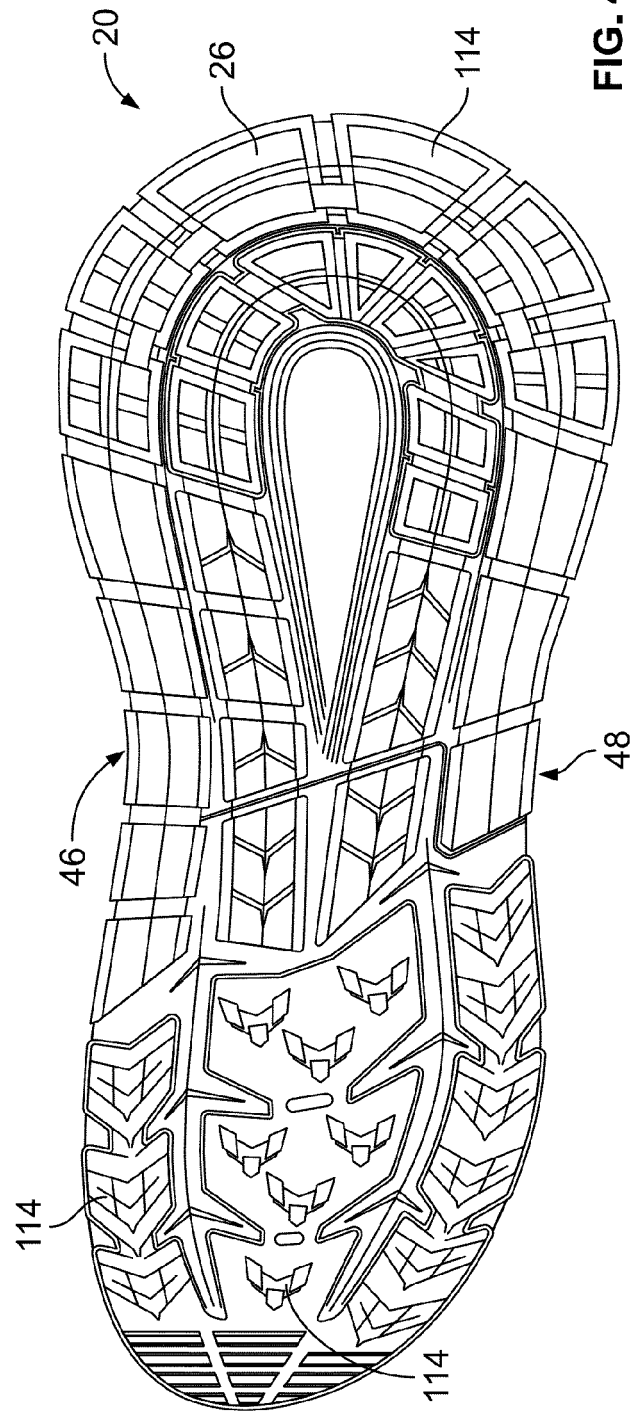


FIG. 4

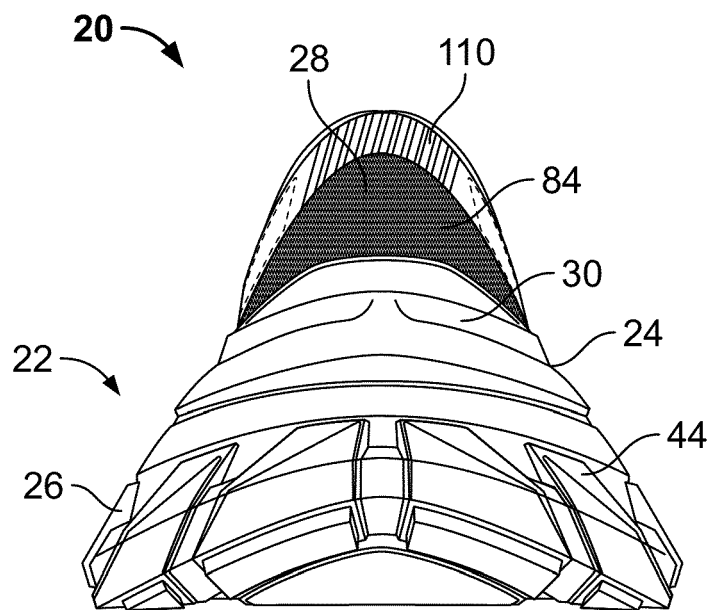


FIG. 5

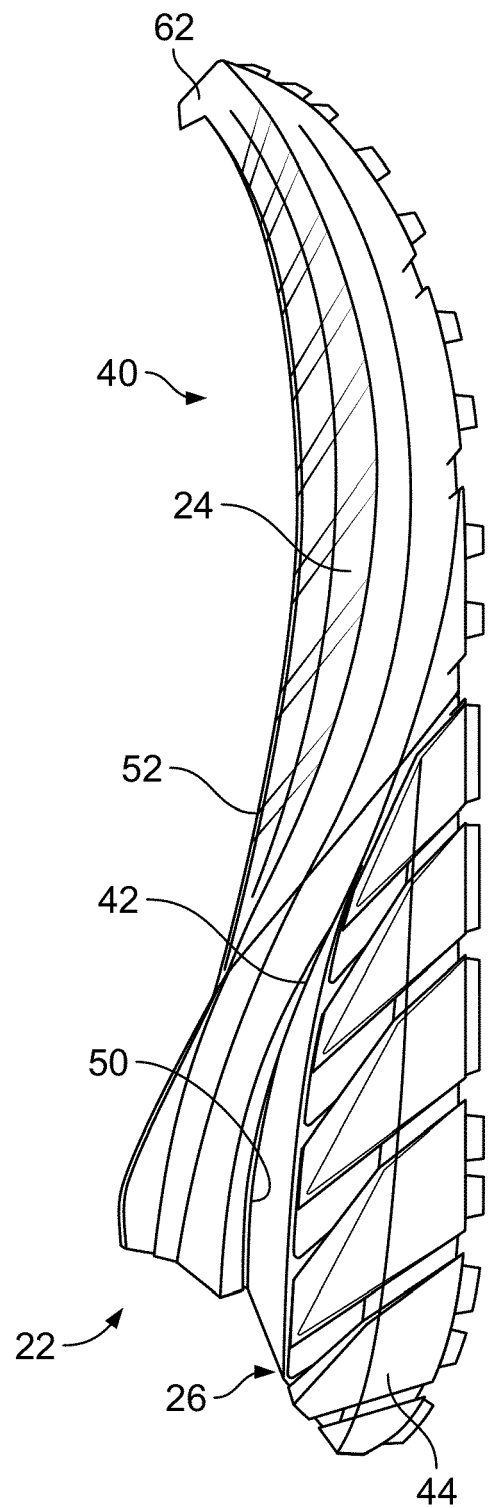


FIG. 6

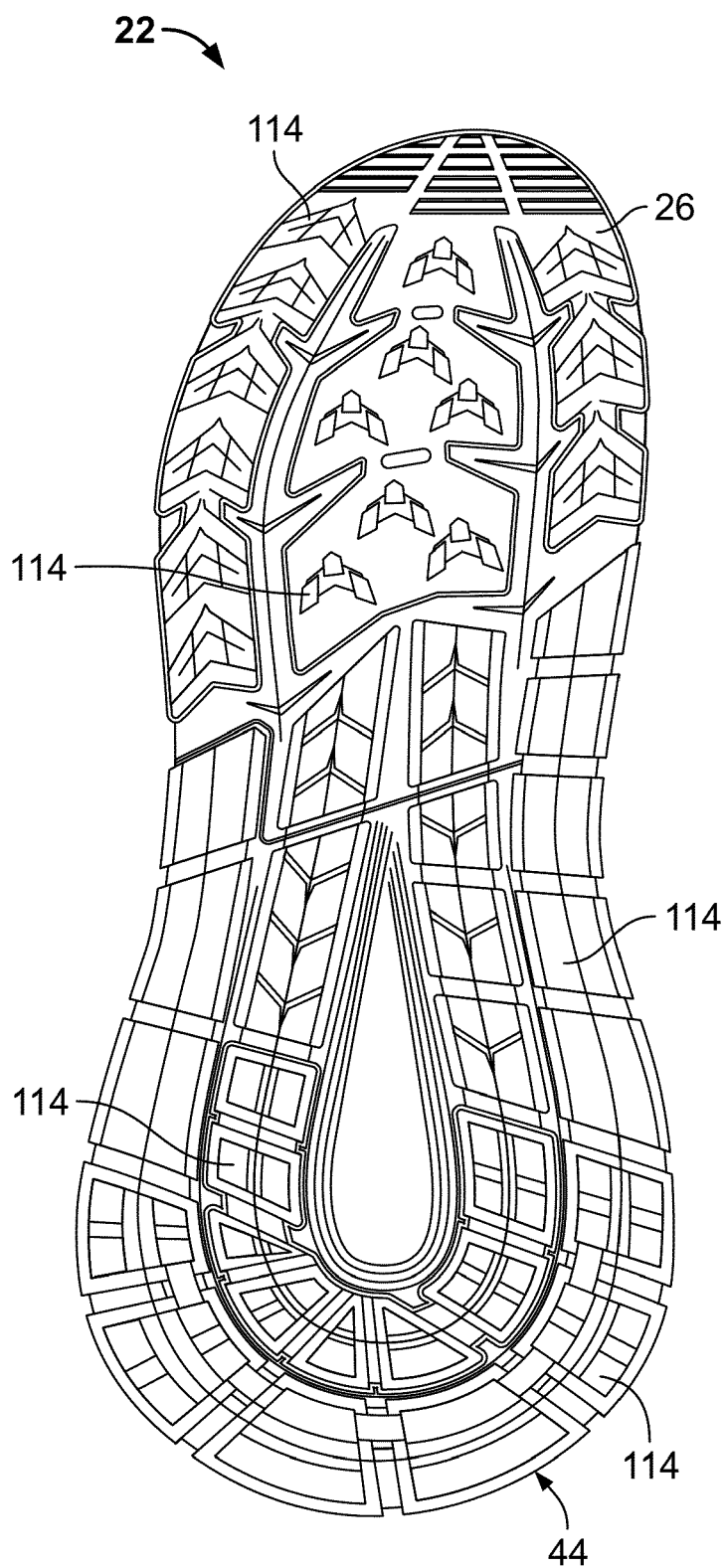


FIG. 7

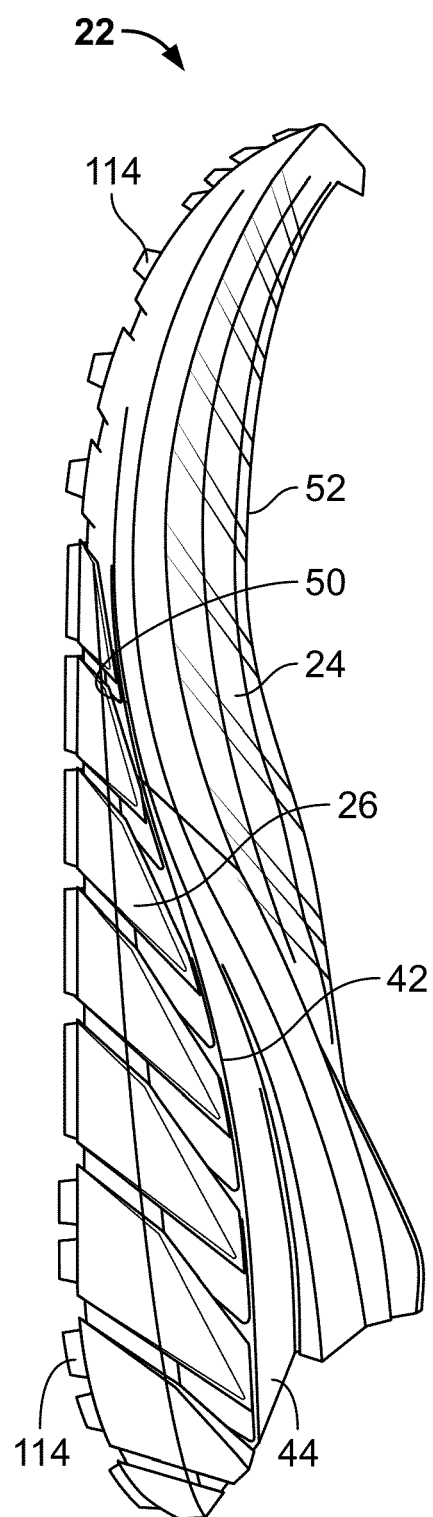


FIG. 8

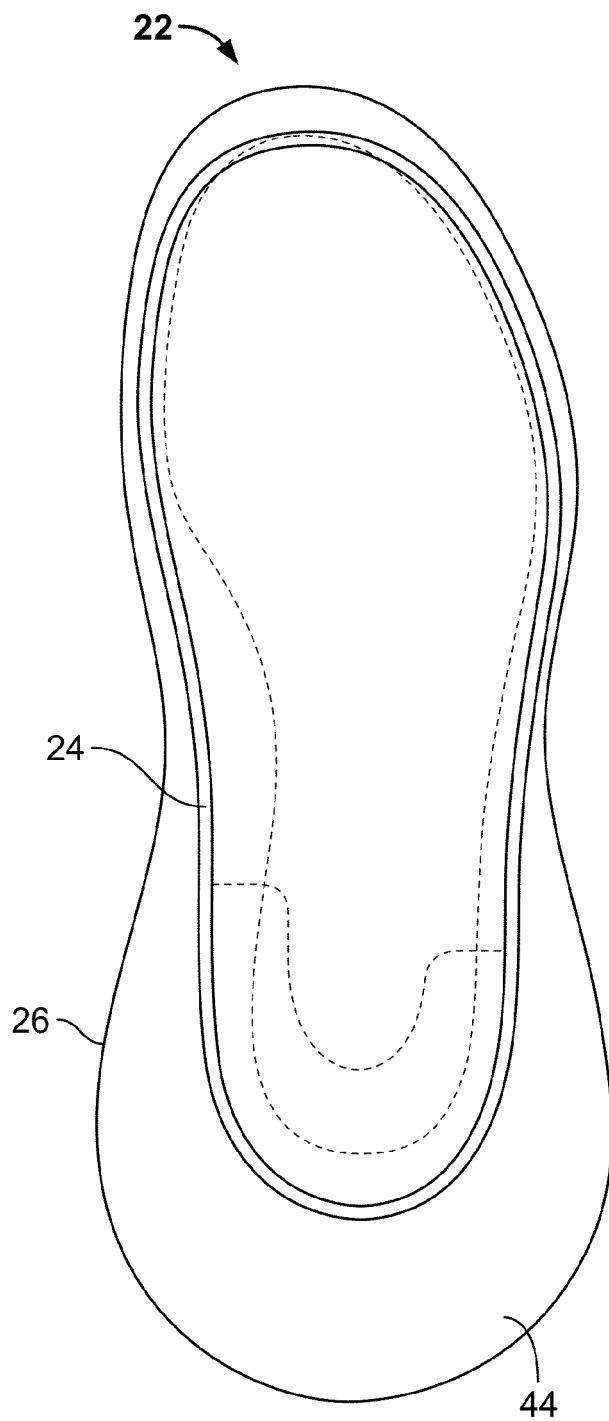


FIG. 9

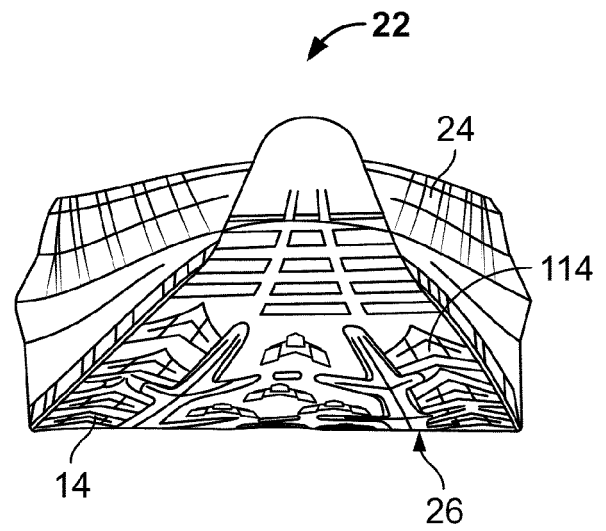


FIG. 10

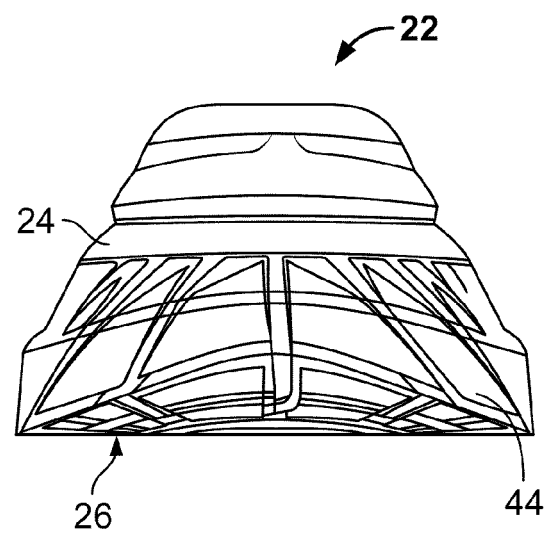
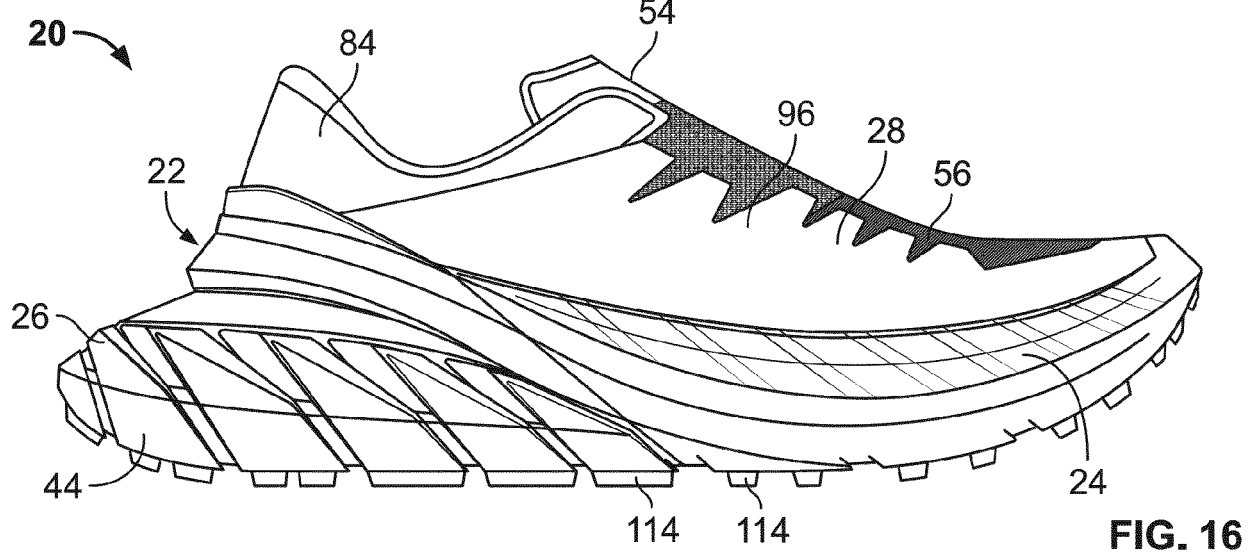
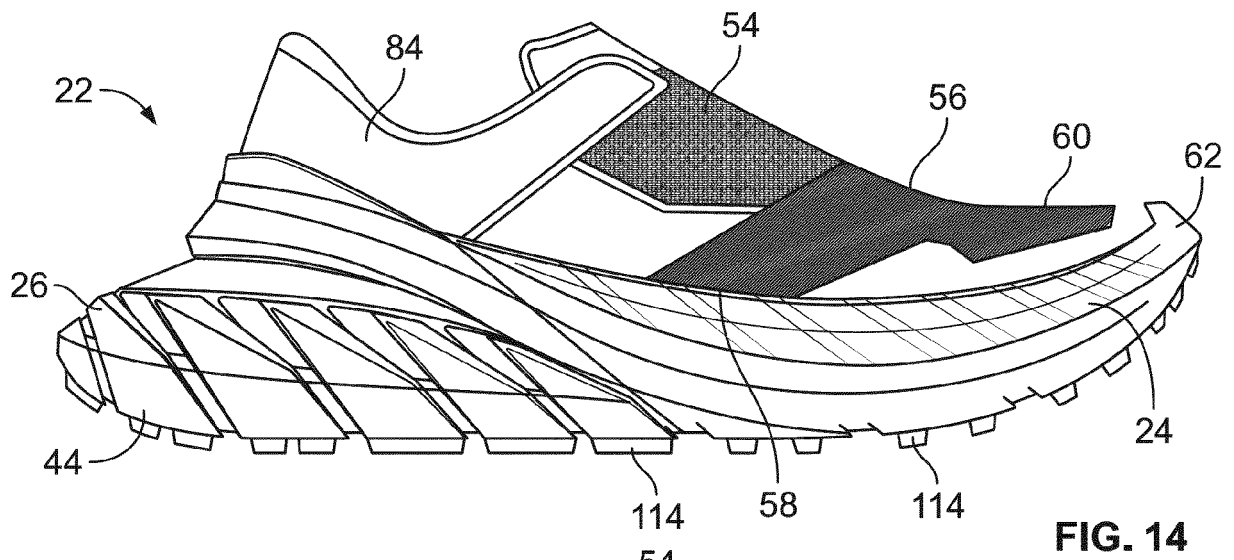
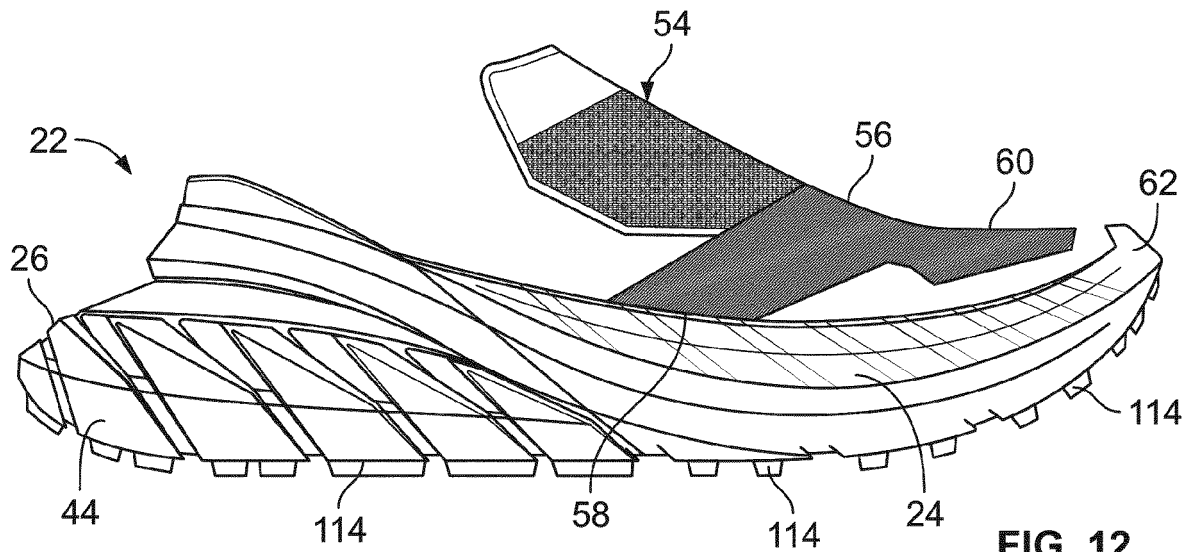


FIG. 11



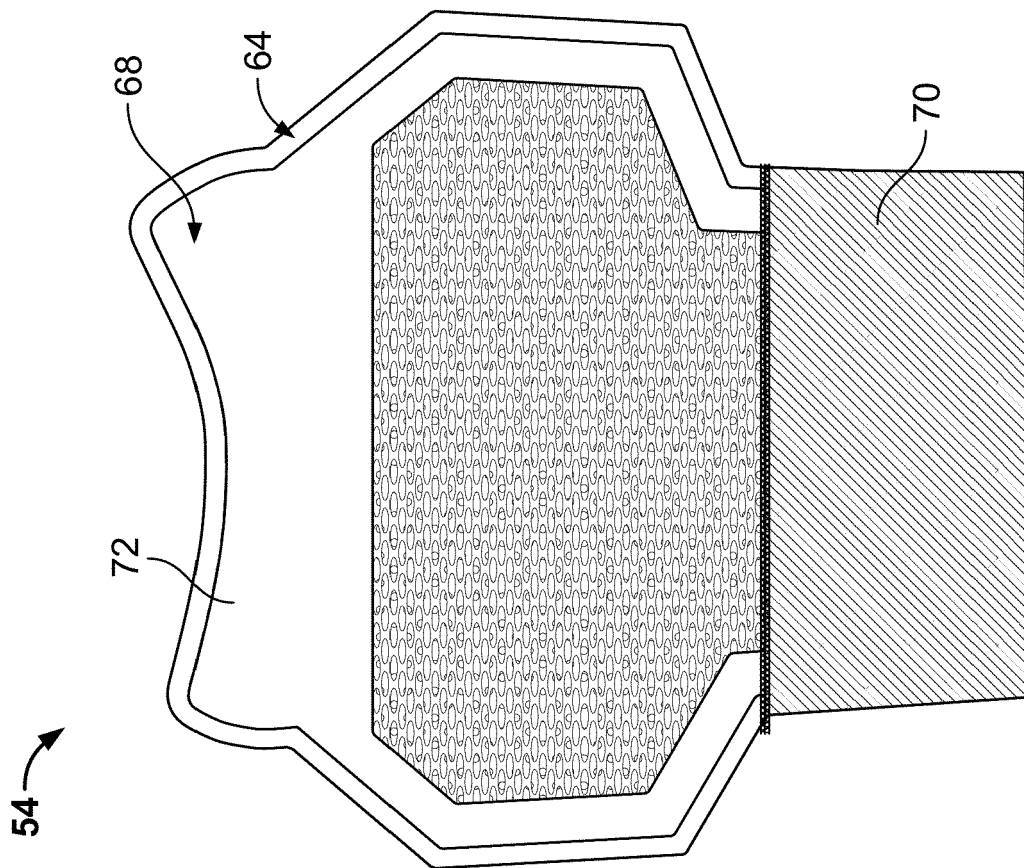


FIG. 13A

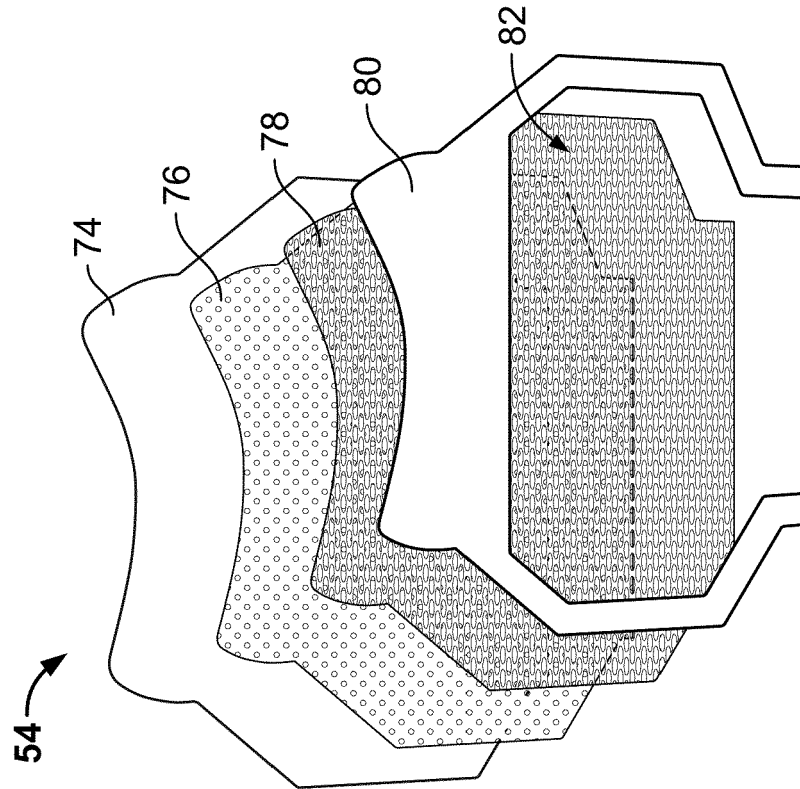


FIG. 13B

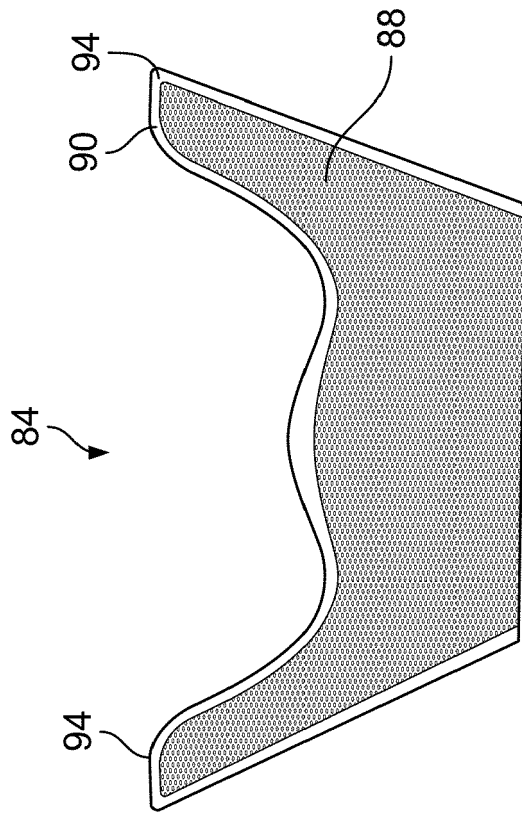


FIG. 15A

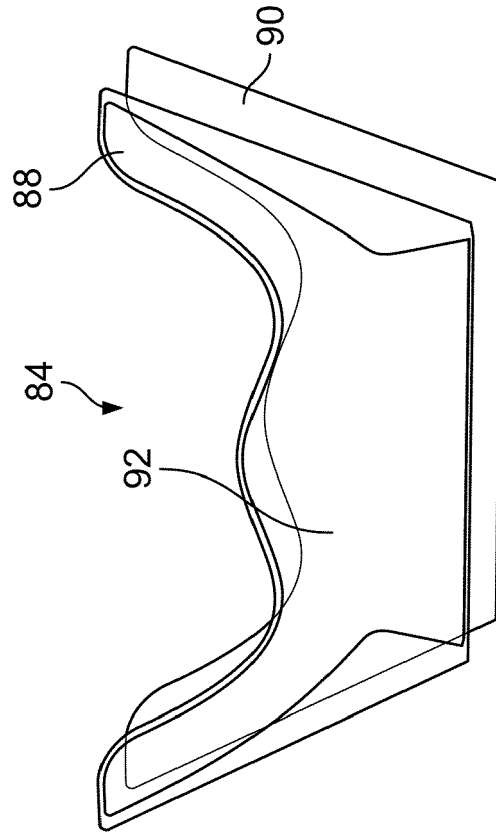


FIG. 15B

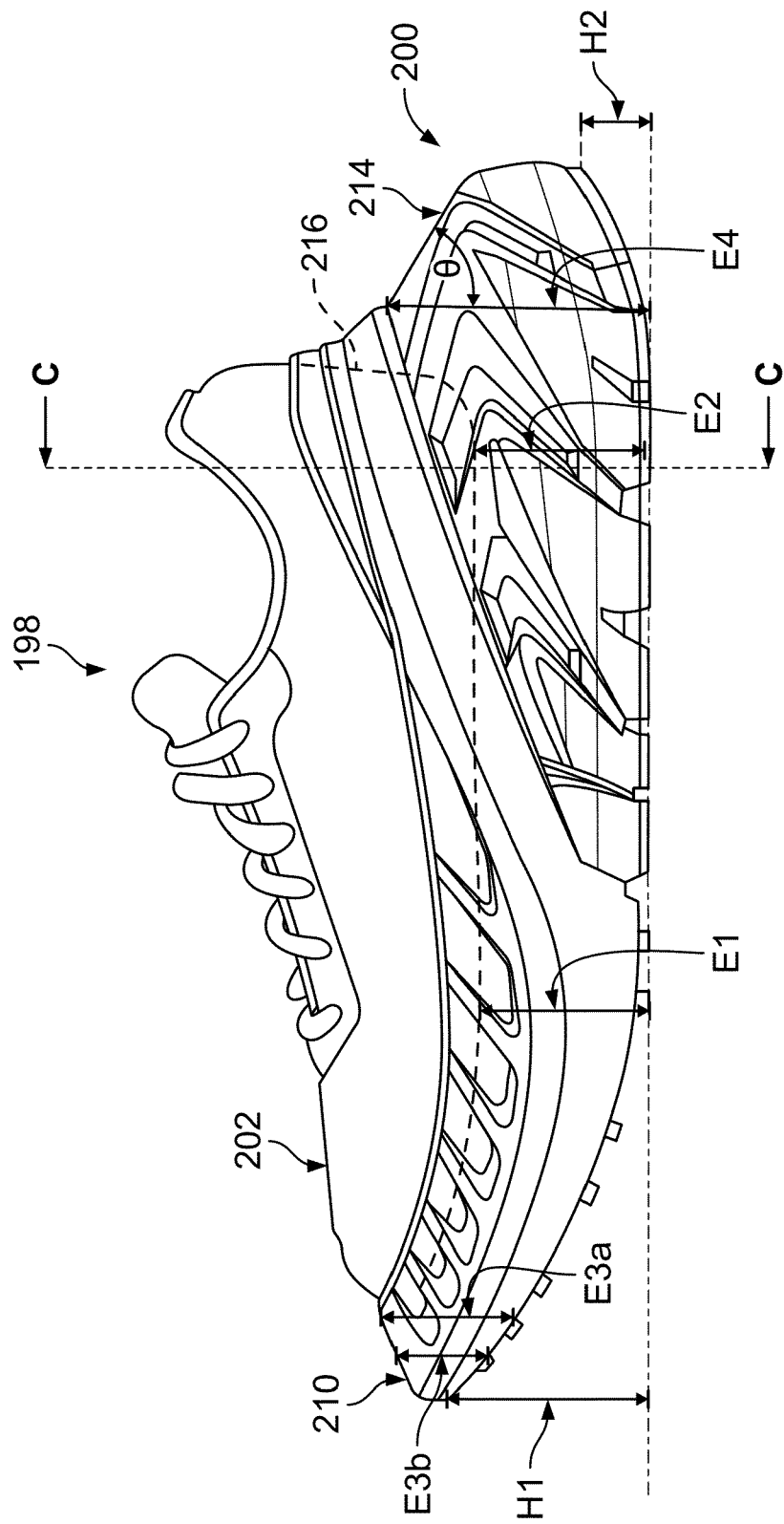


FIG. 17

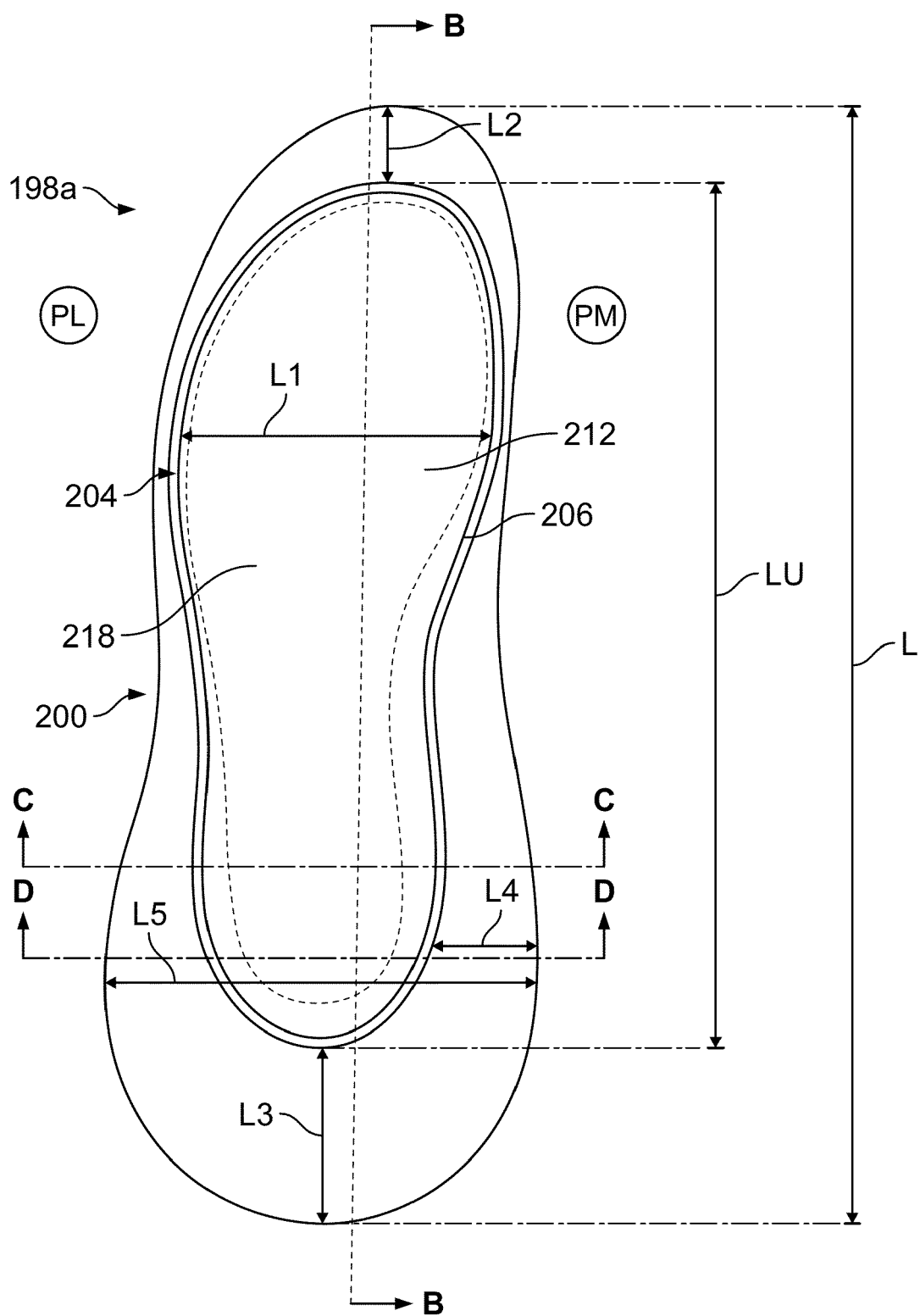


FIG. 18

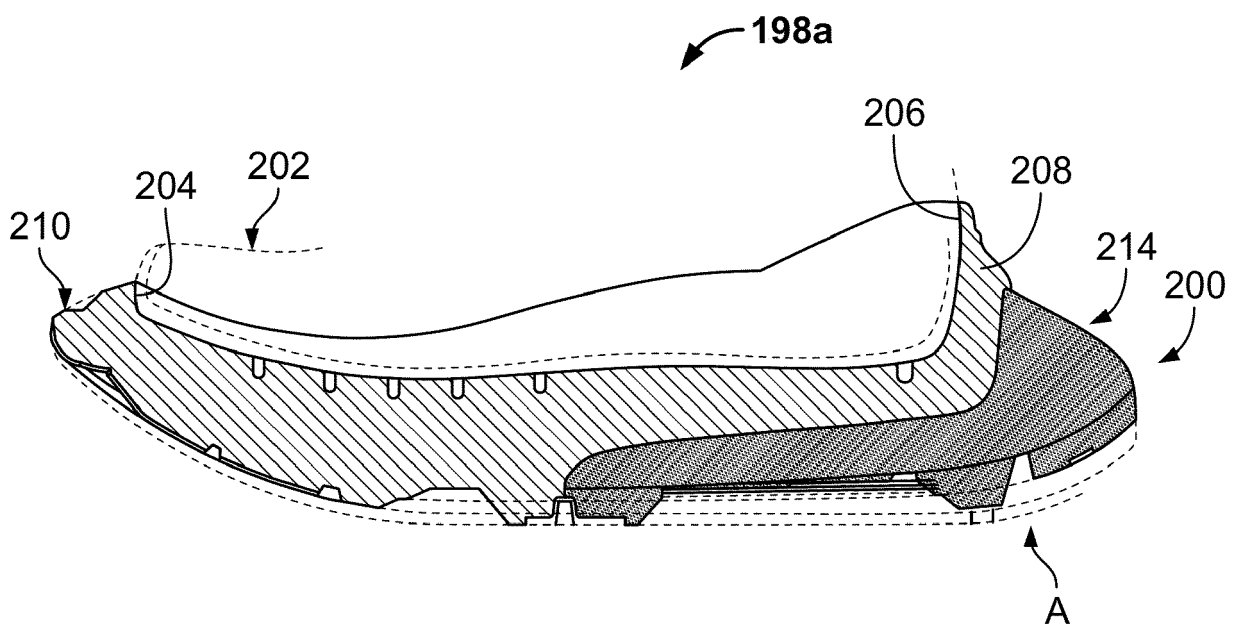


FIG. 19

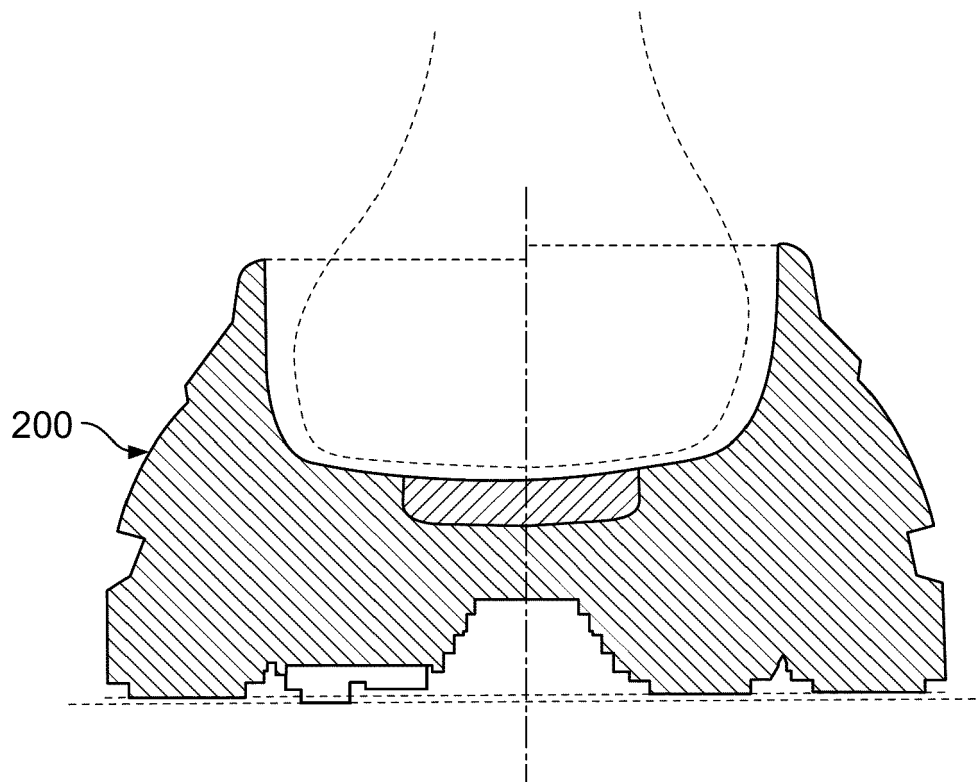


FIG. 20

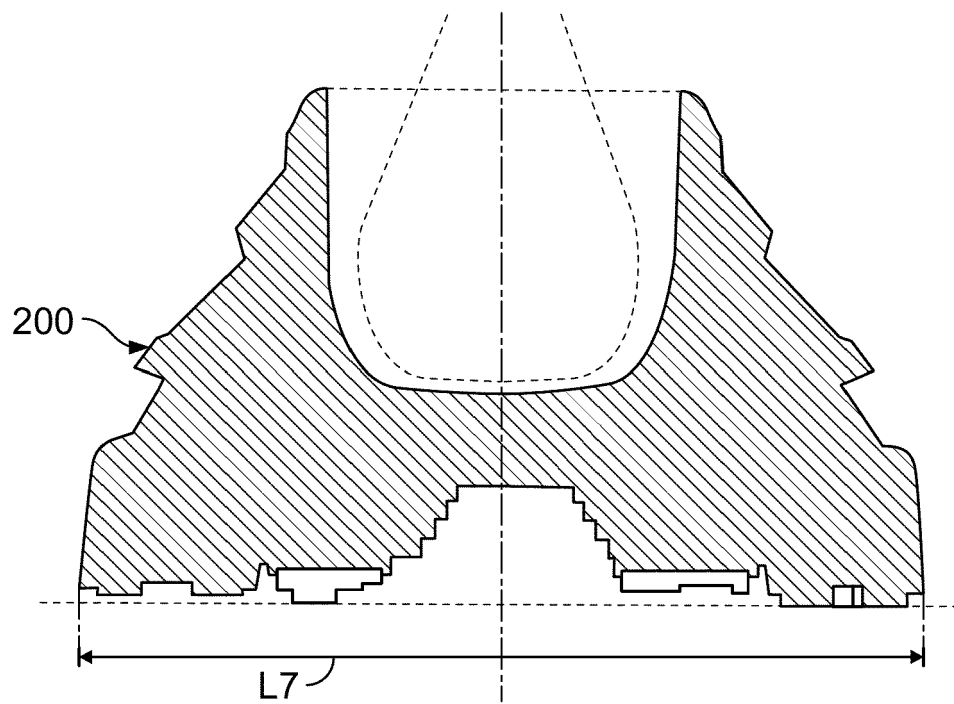


FIG. 21

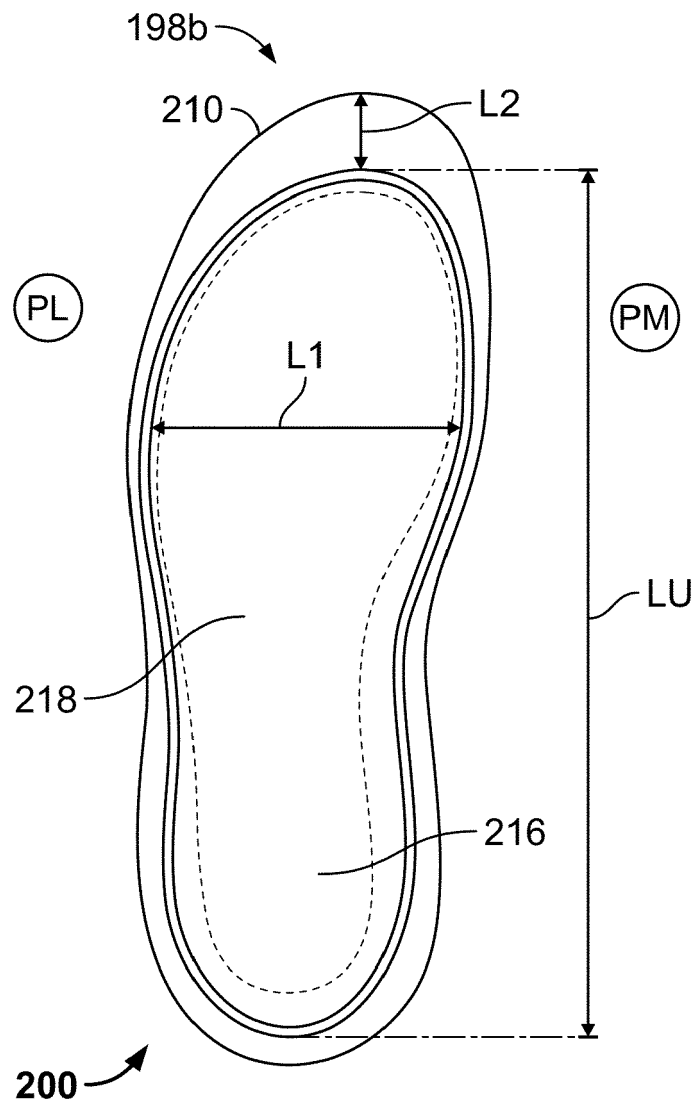


FIG. 22

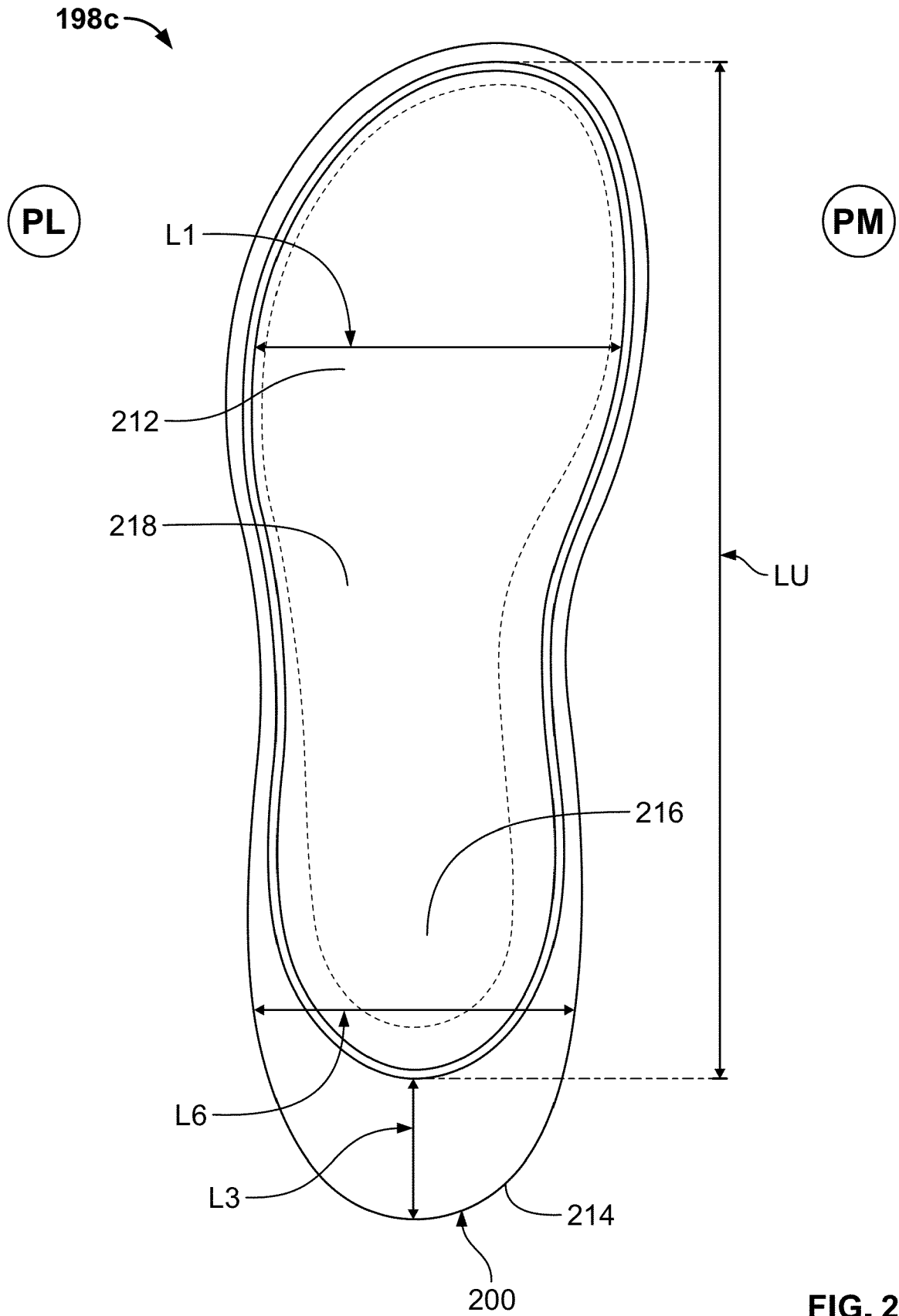


FIG. 23

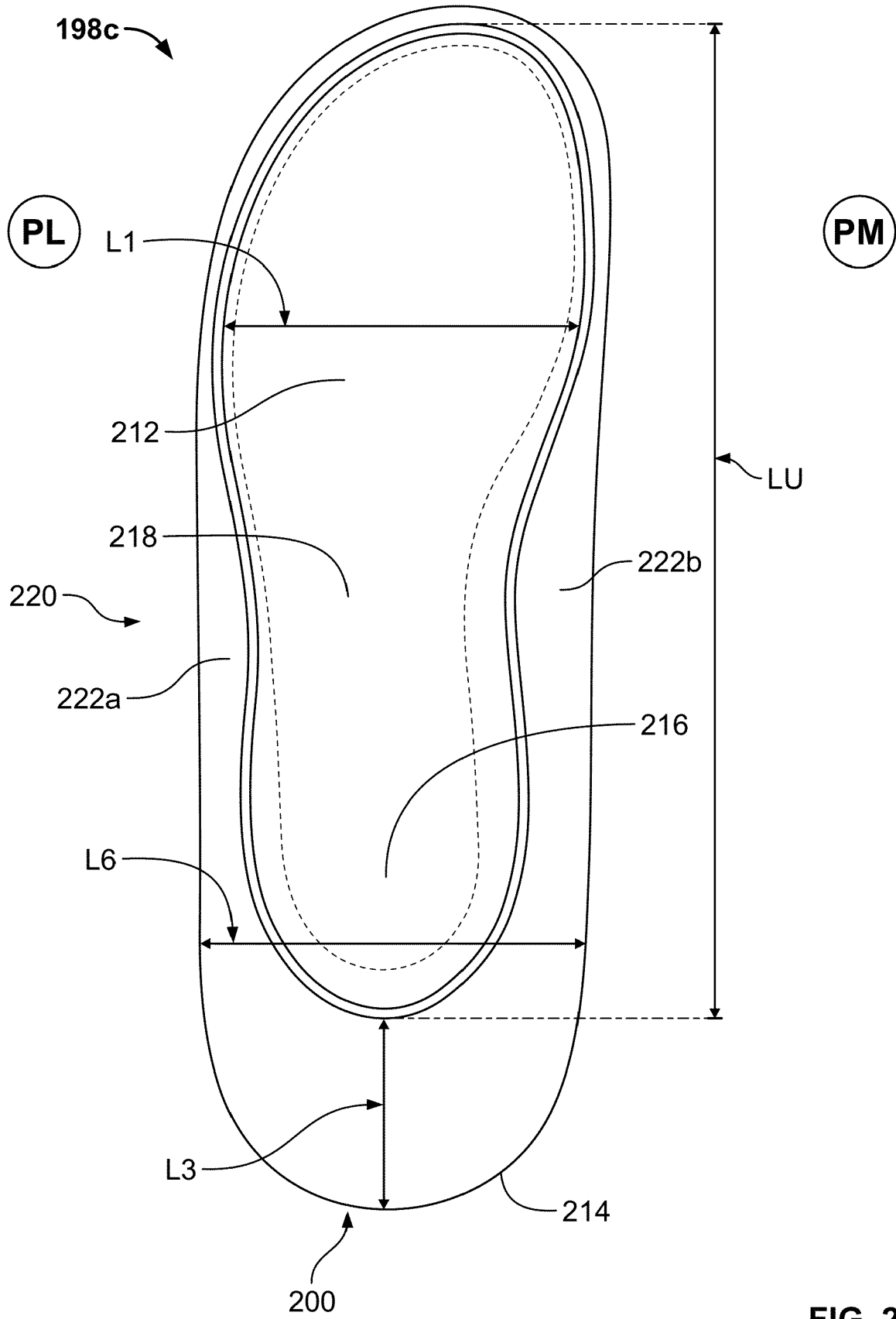


FIG. 24

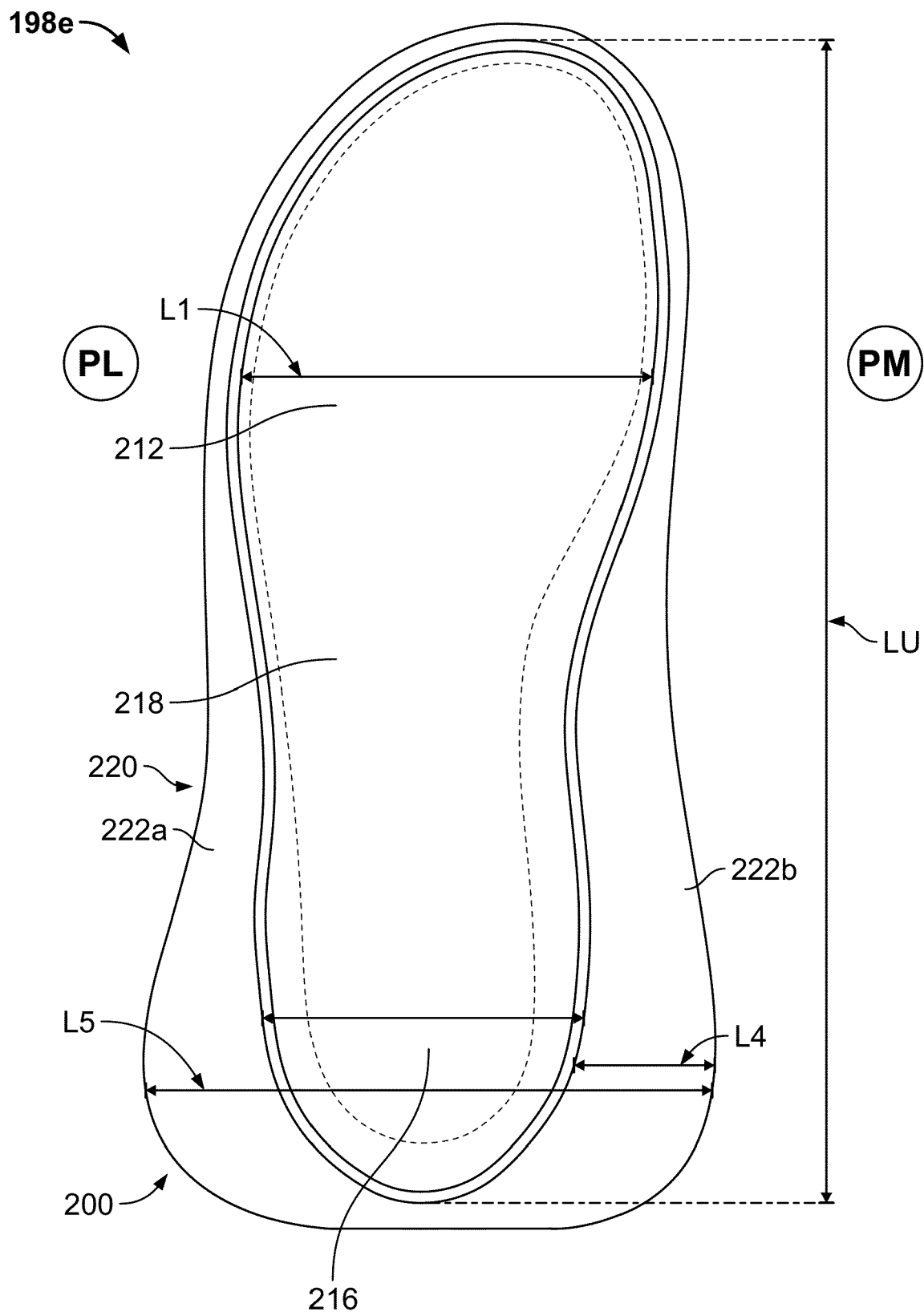


FIG. 25

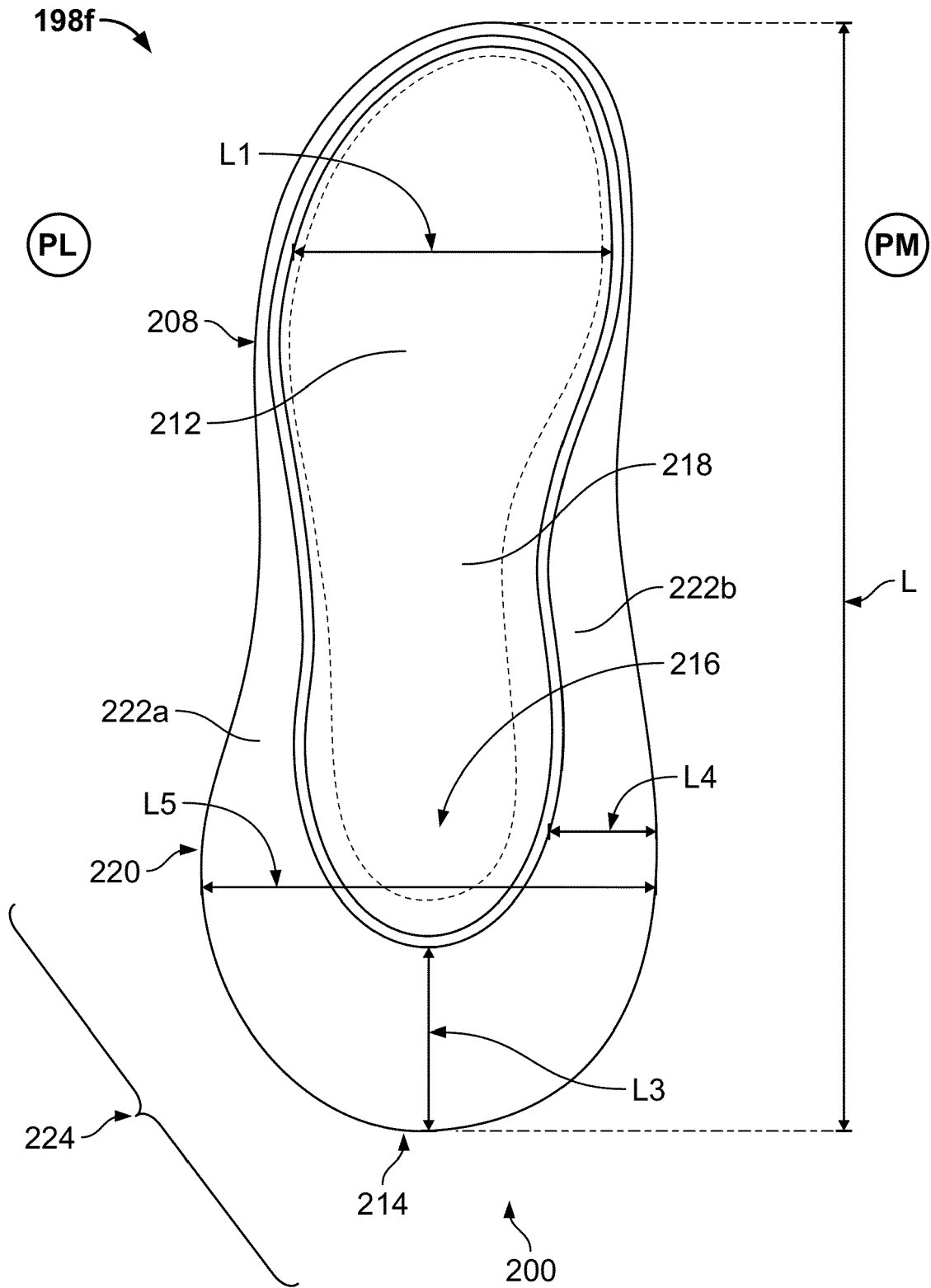


FIG. 26

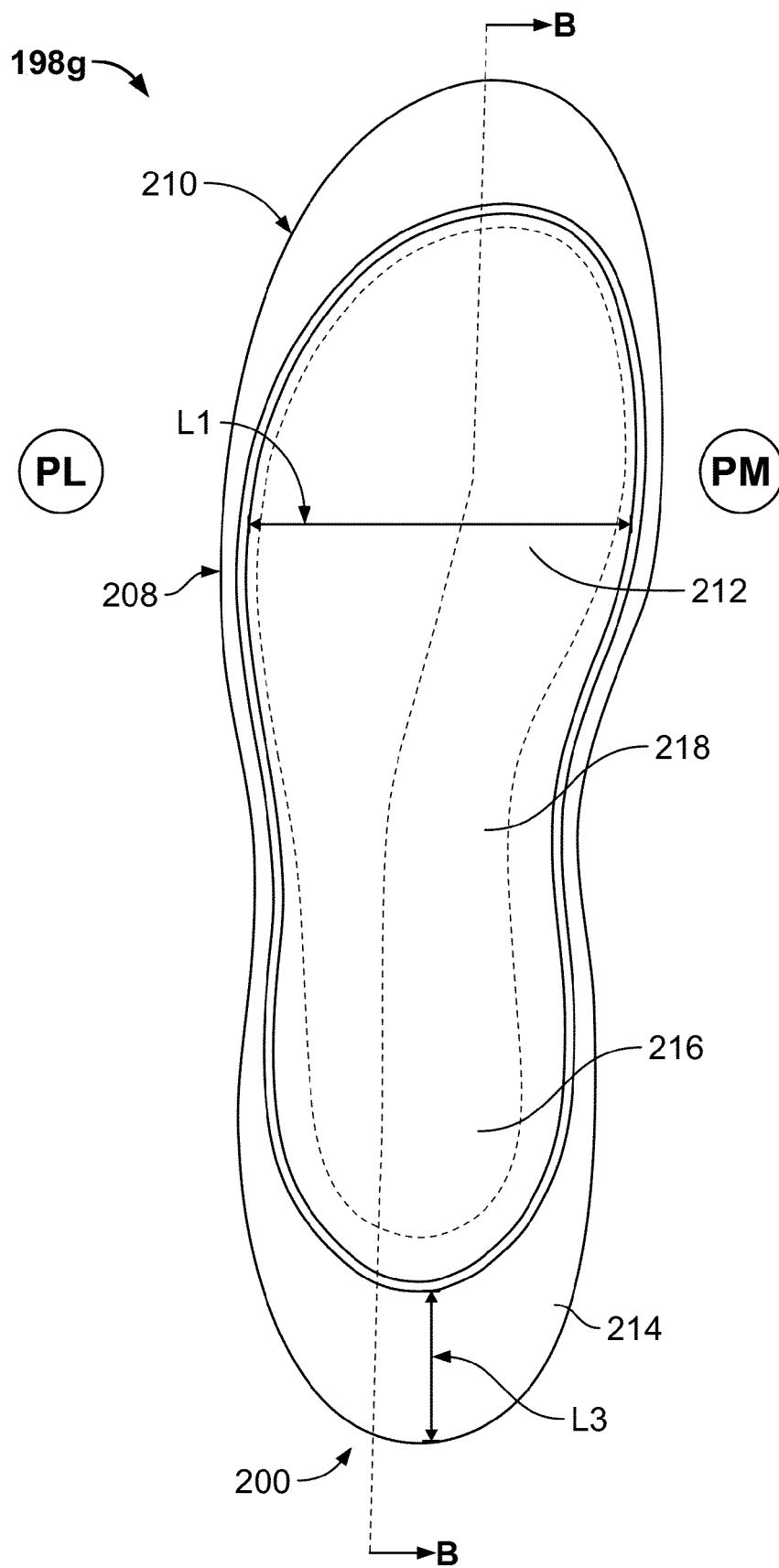


FIG. 27

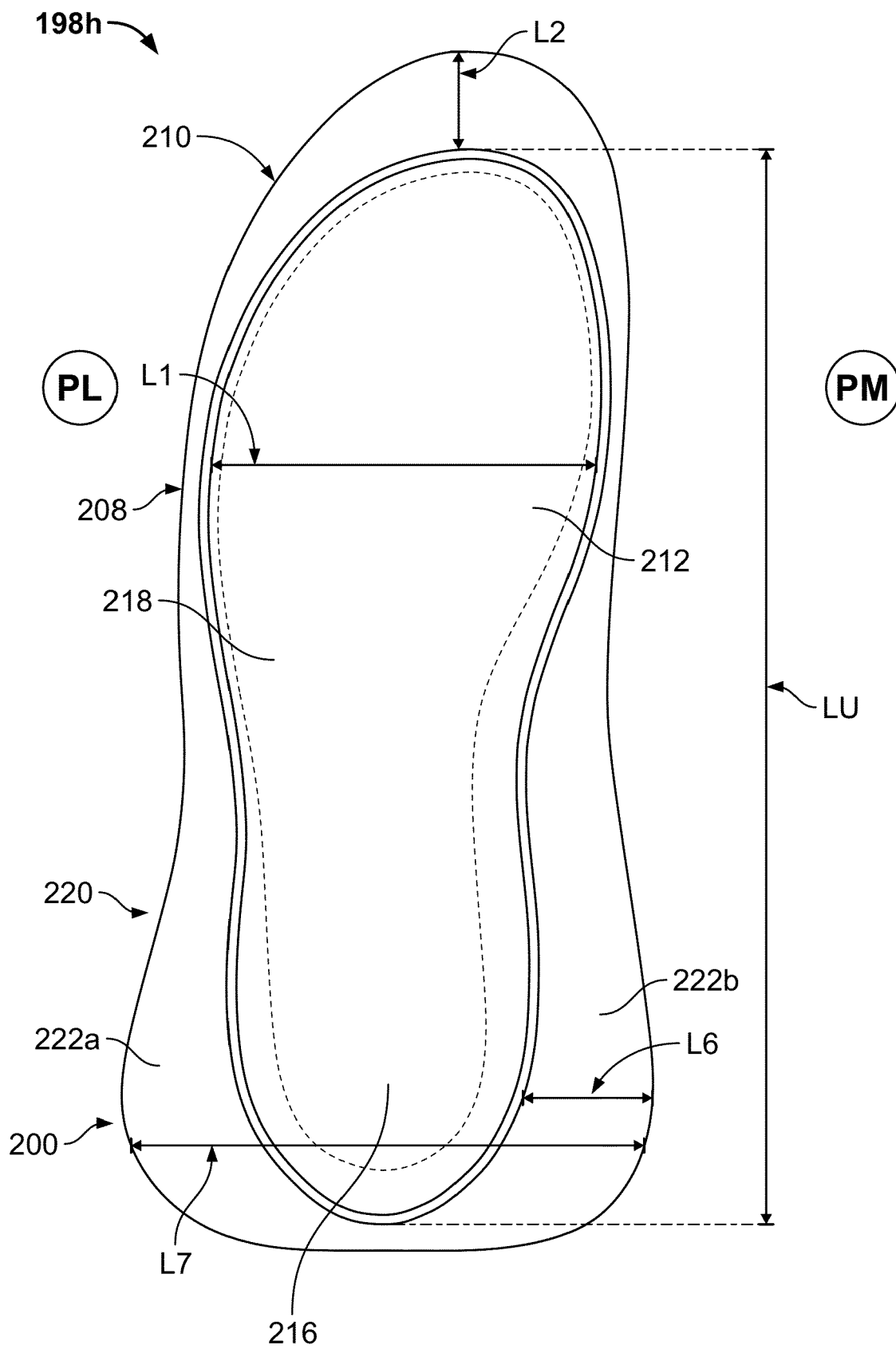


FIG. 28

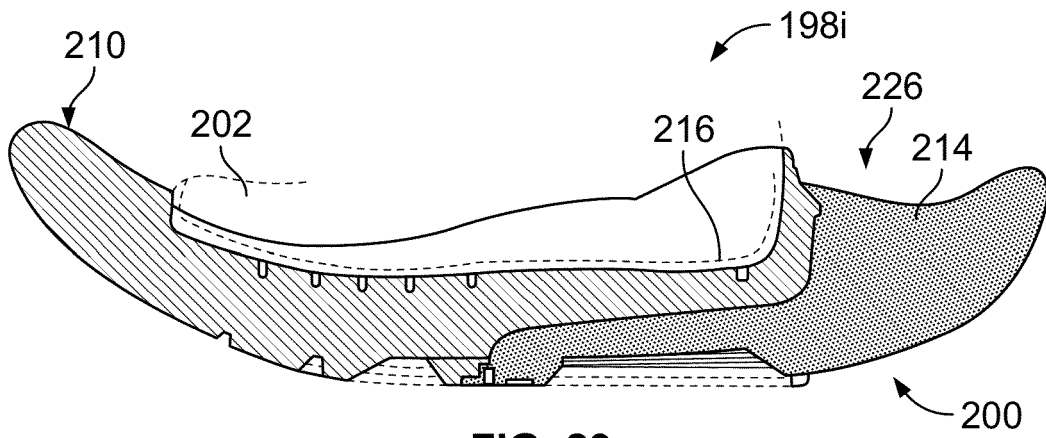


FIG. 29

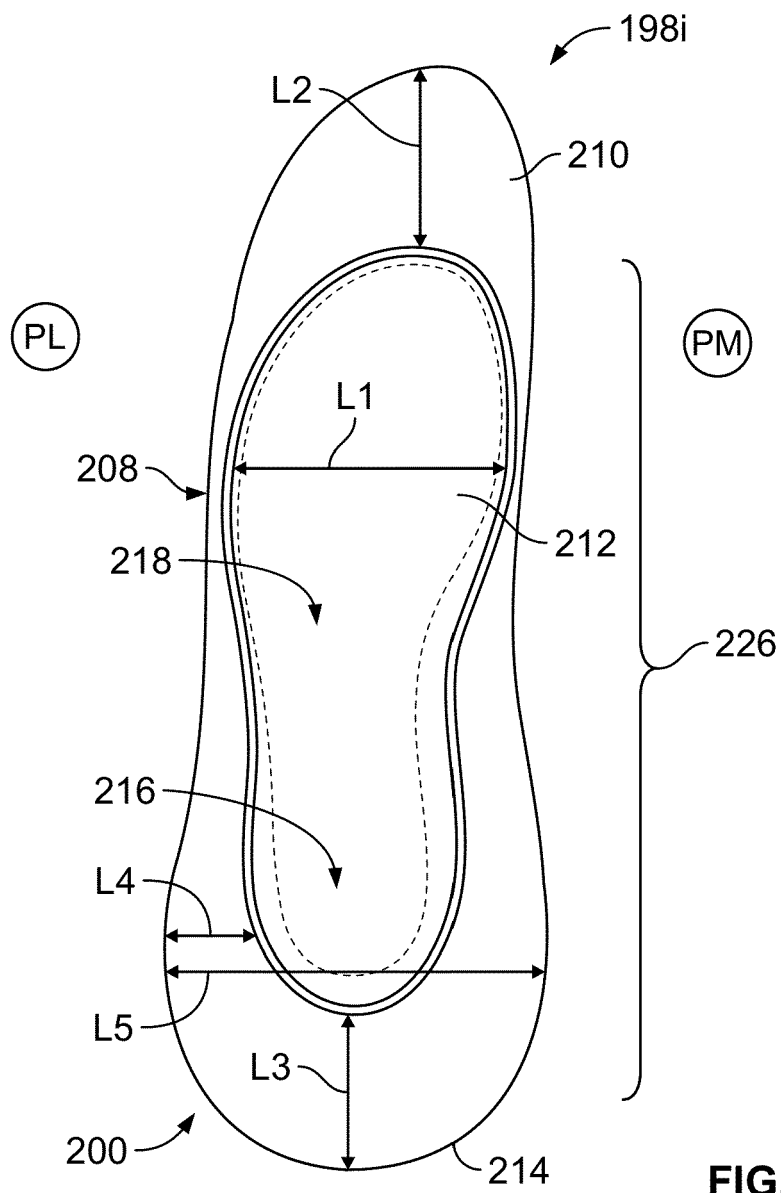


FIG. 30

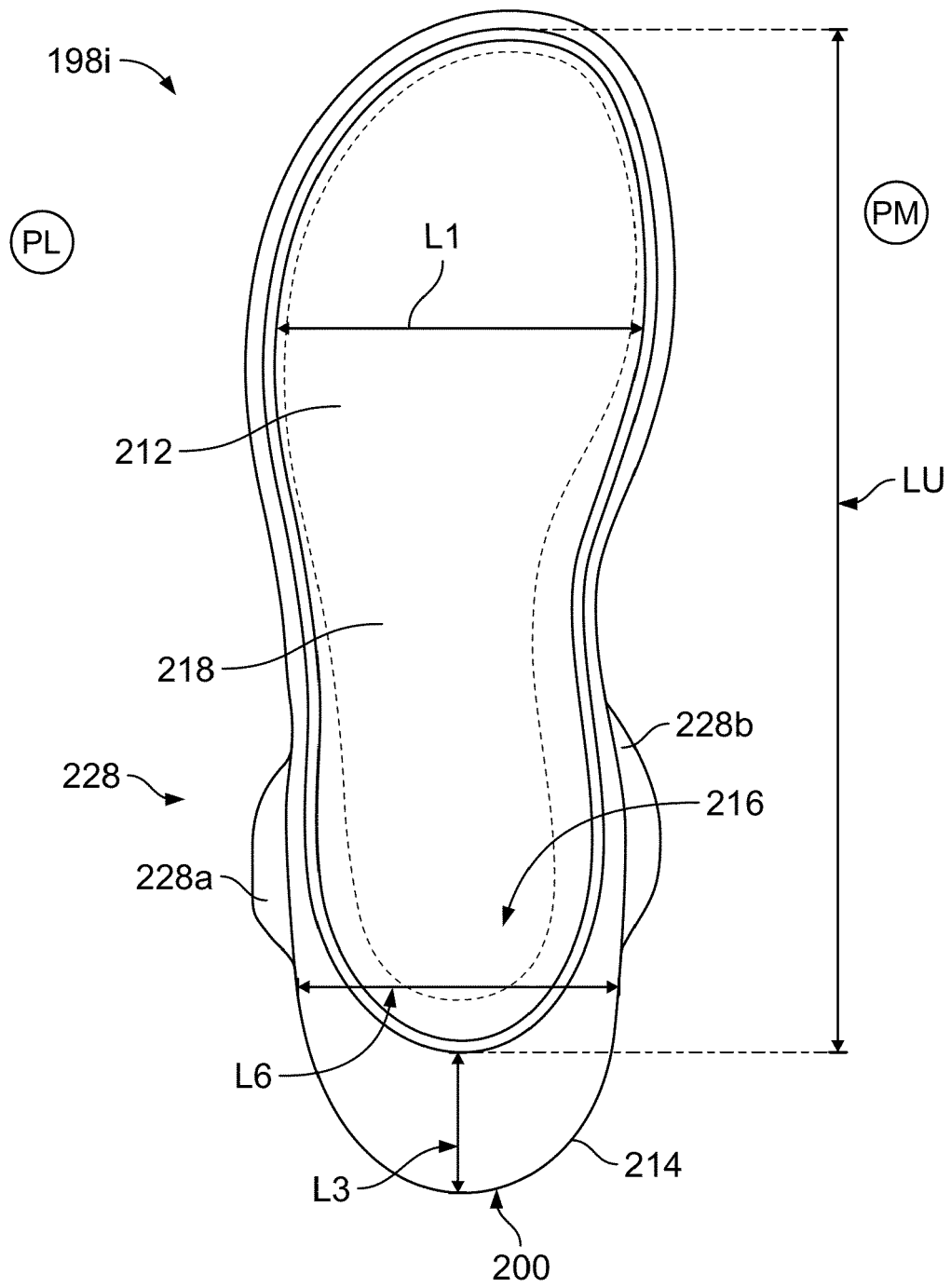


FIG. 31

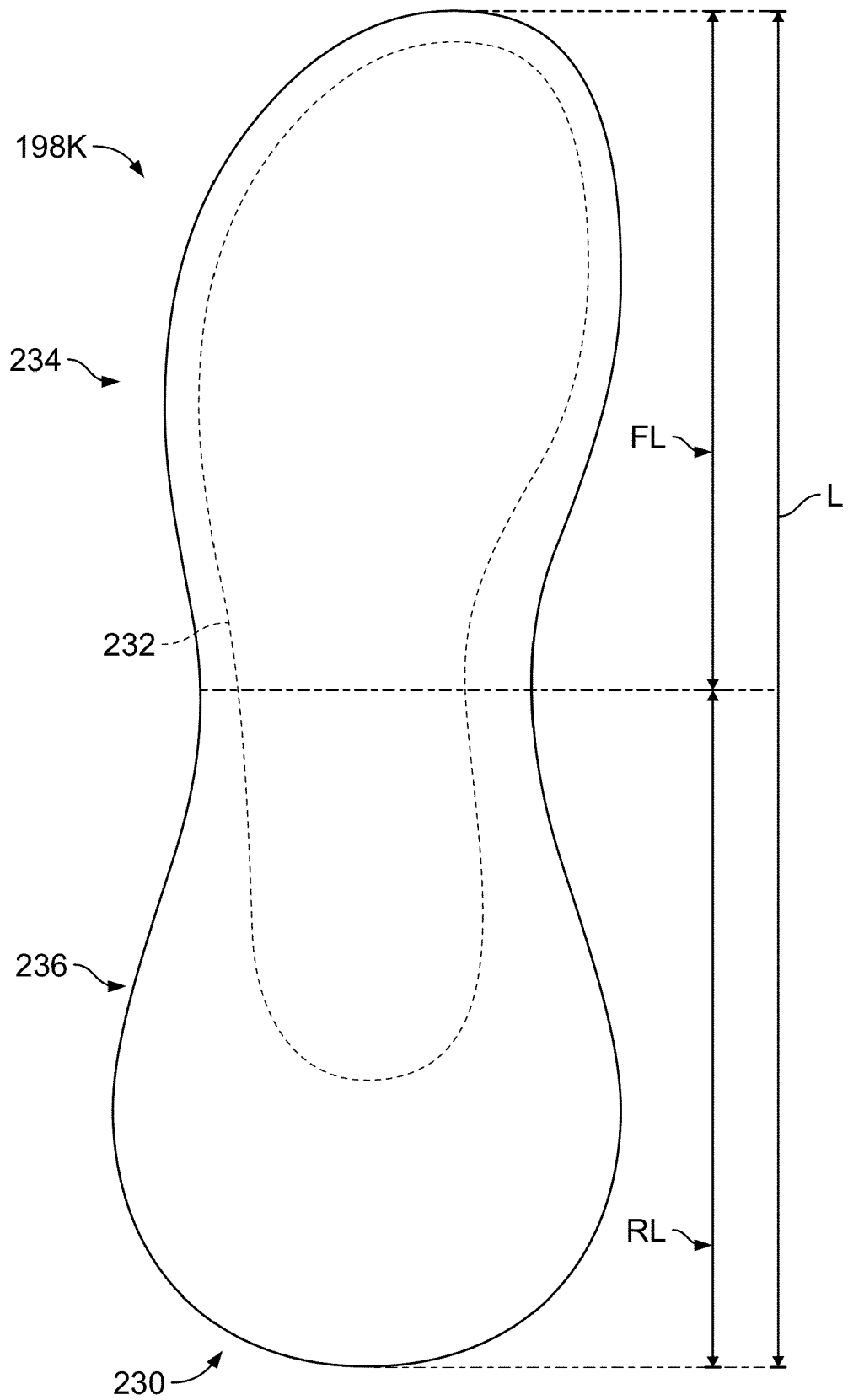


FIG. 32

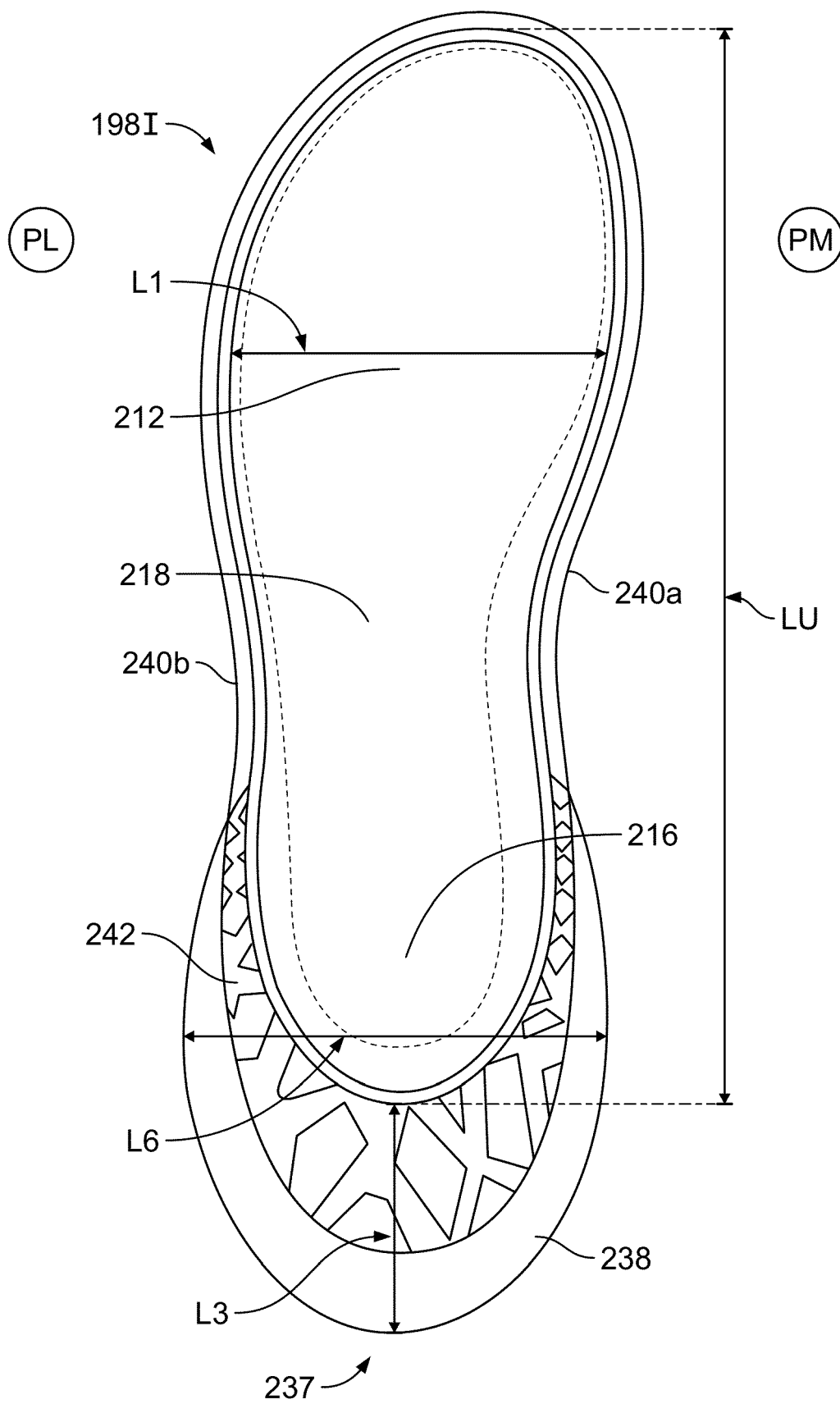
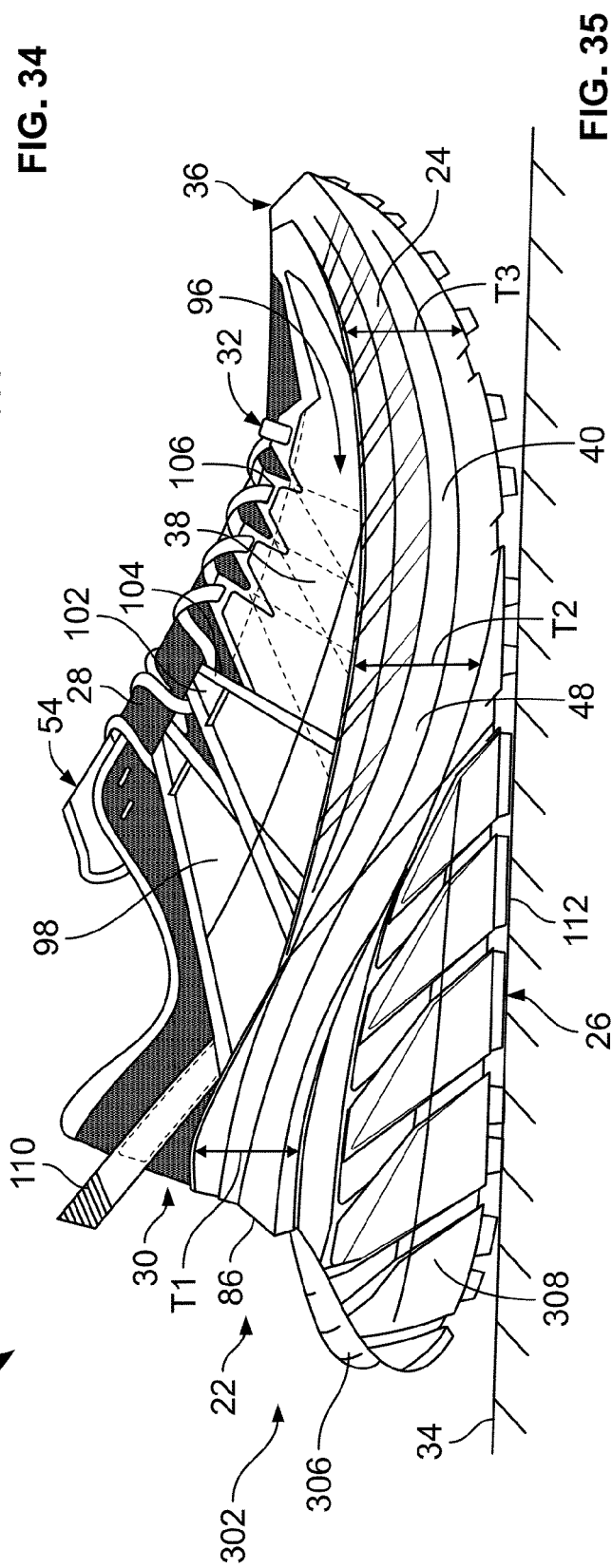
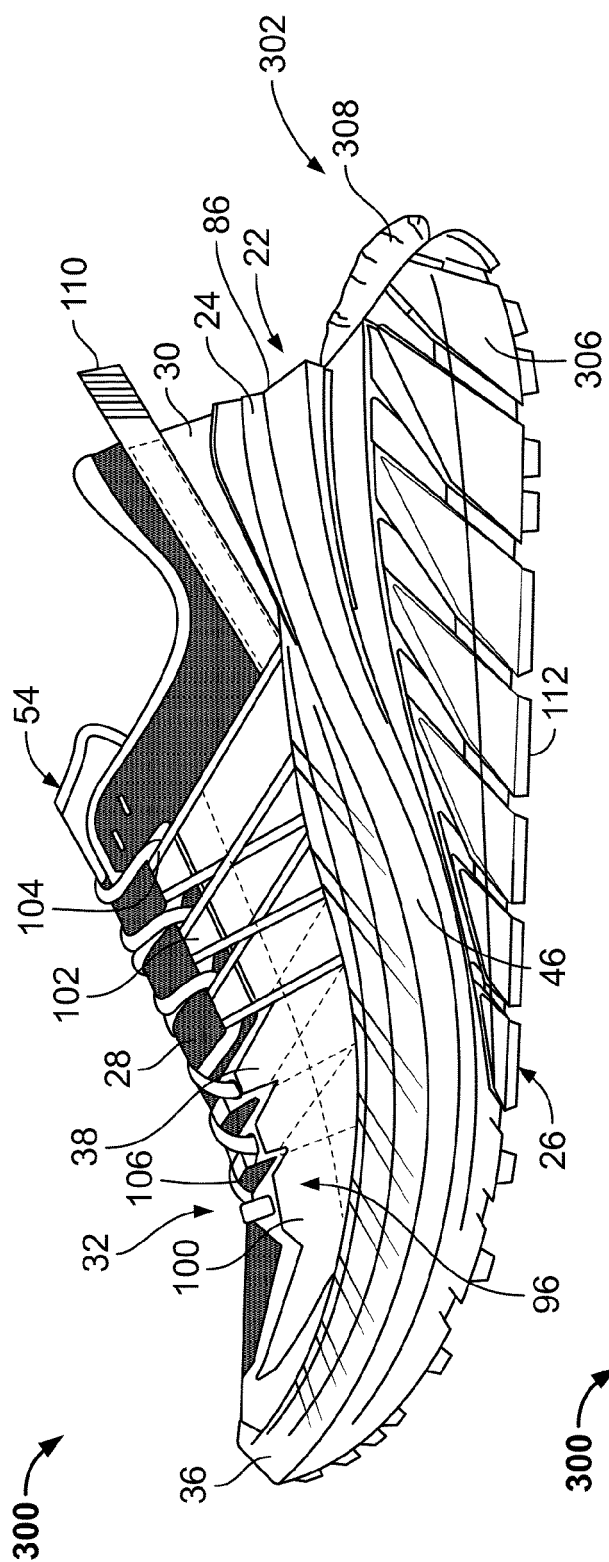
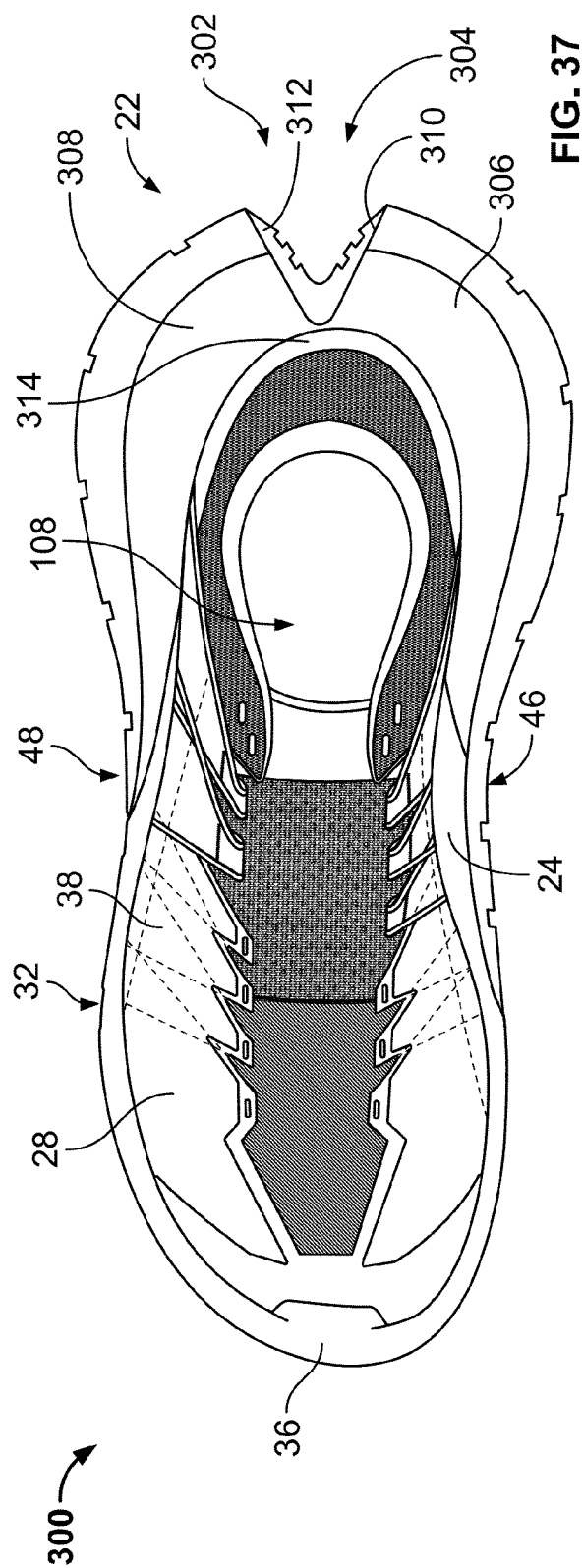
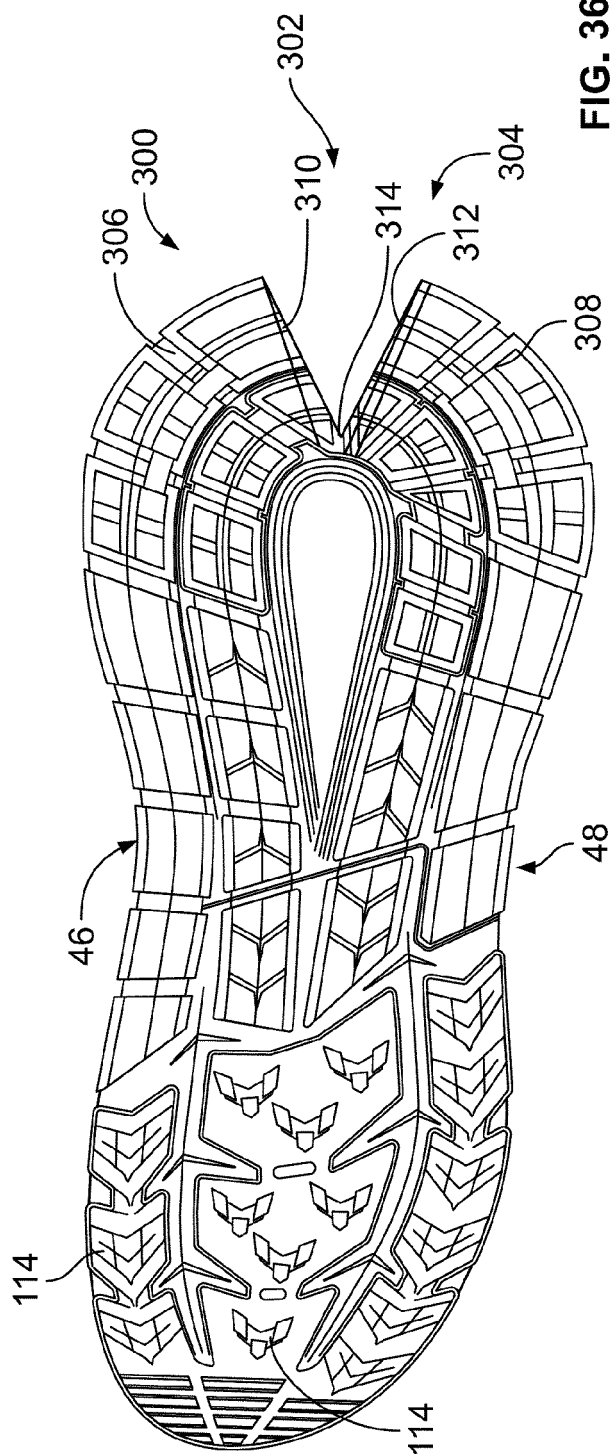


FIG. 33





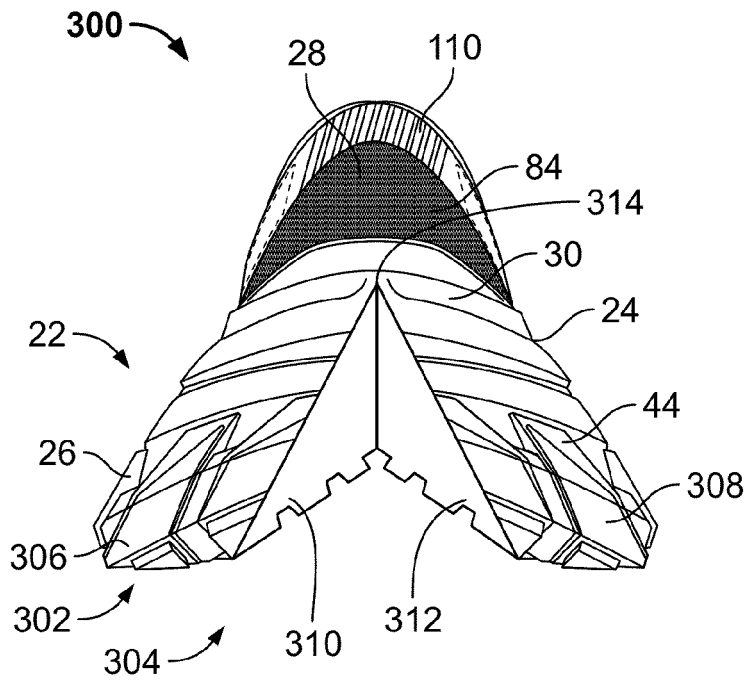


FIG. 38

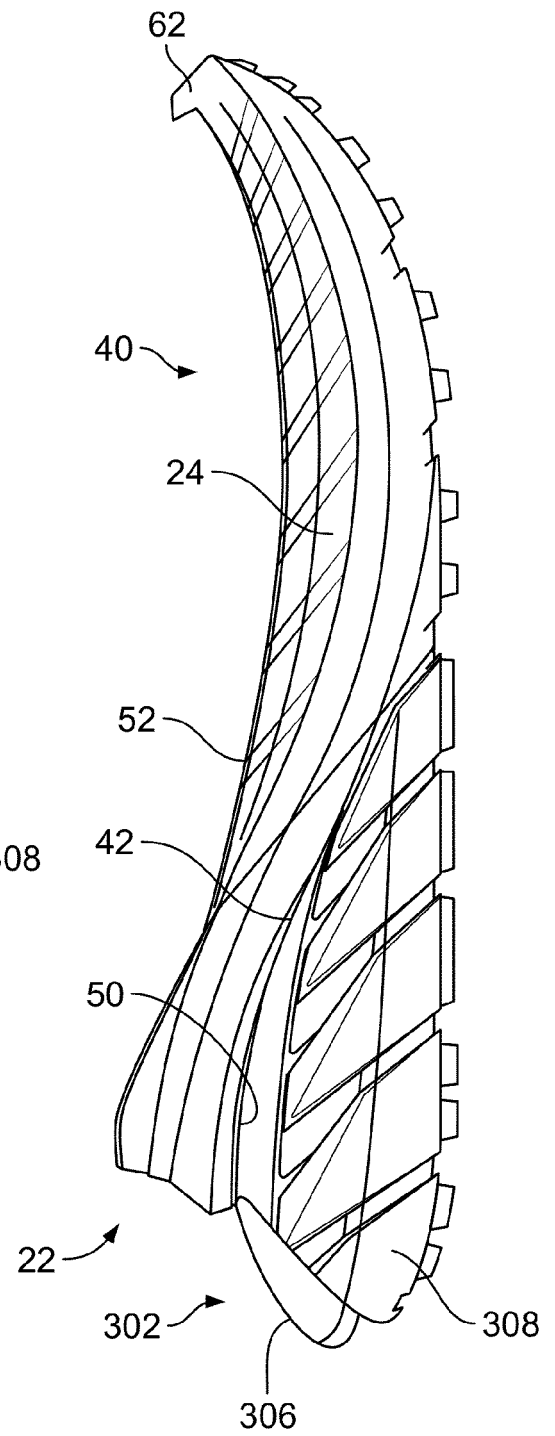


FIG. 39

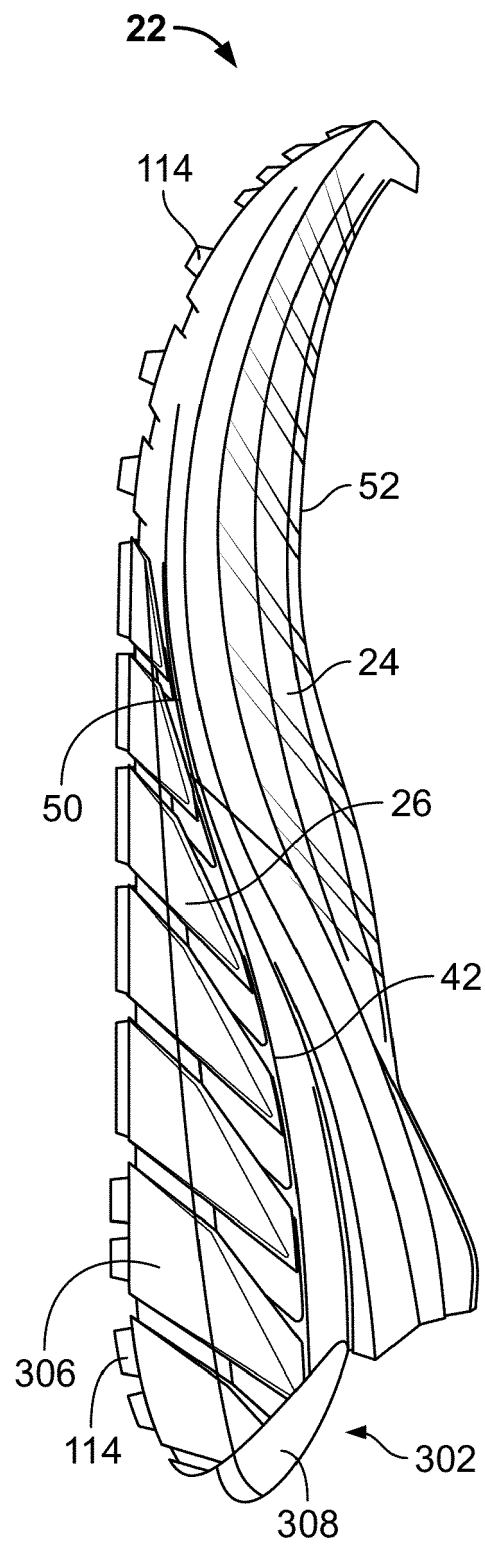


FIG. 40

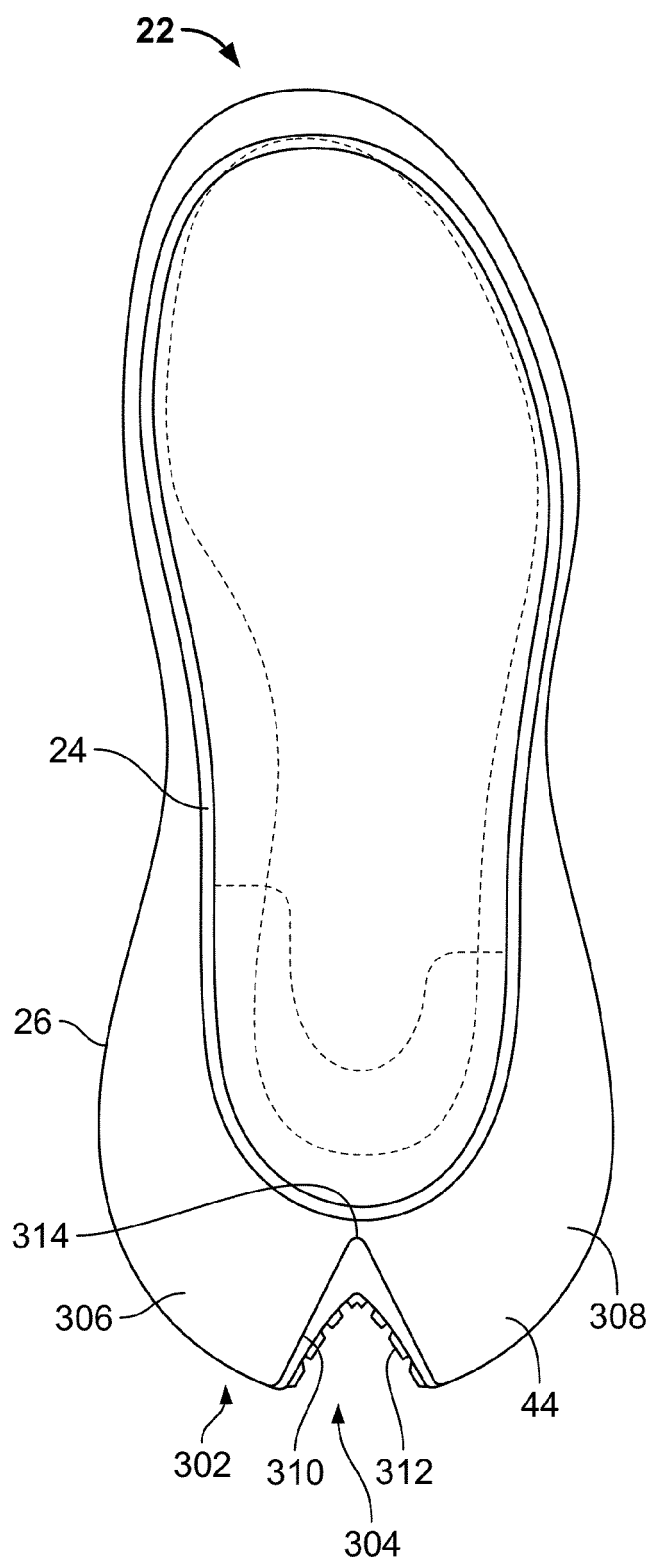


FIG. 41

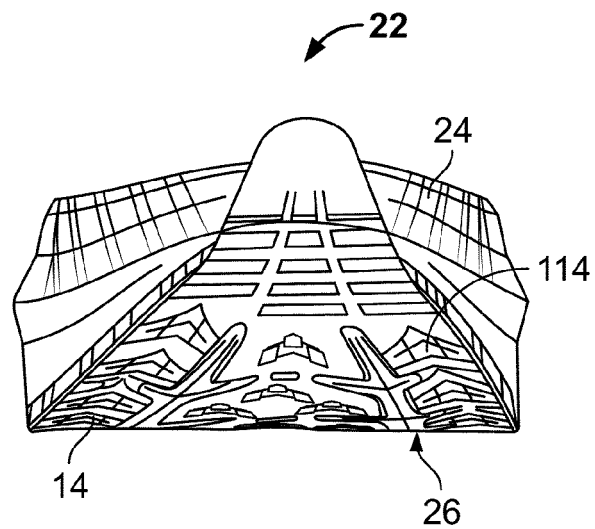


FIG. 42

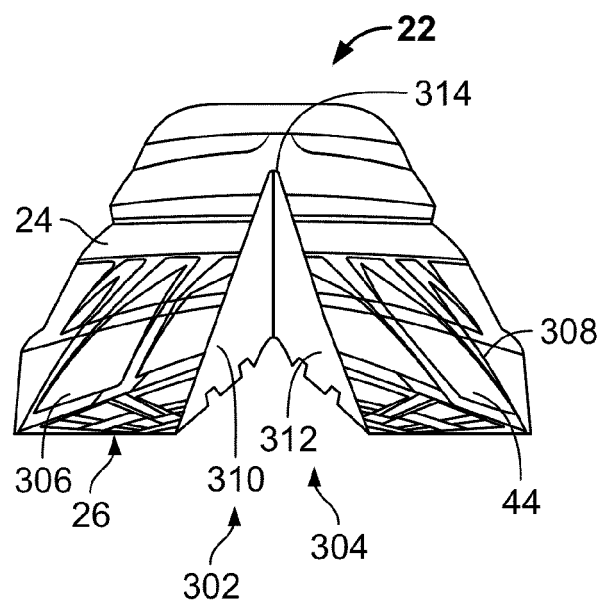
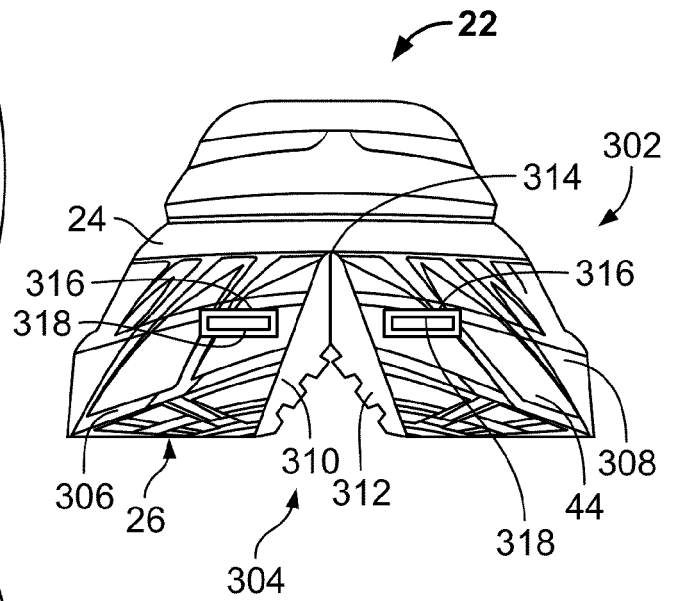
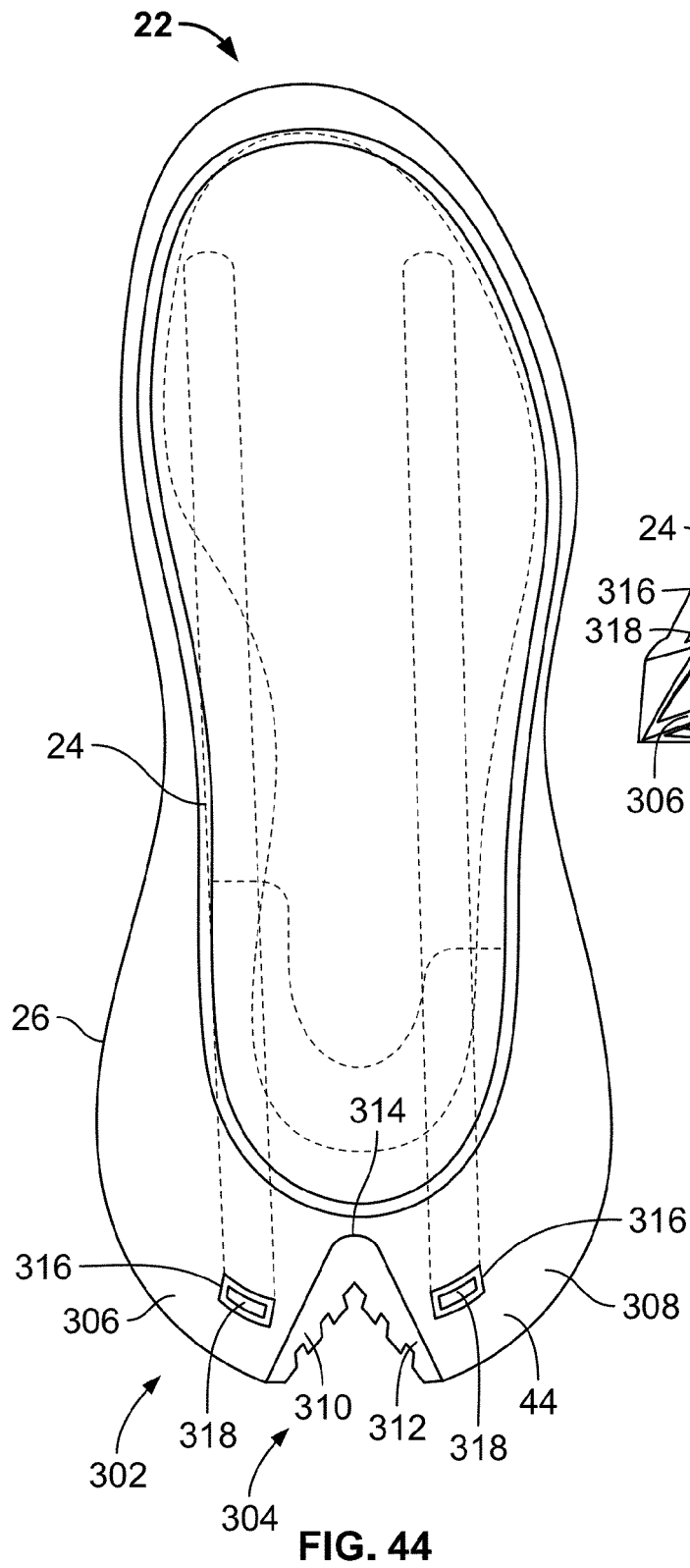


FIG. 43



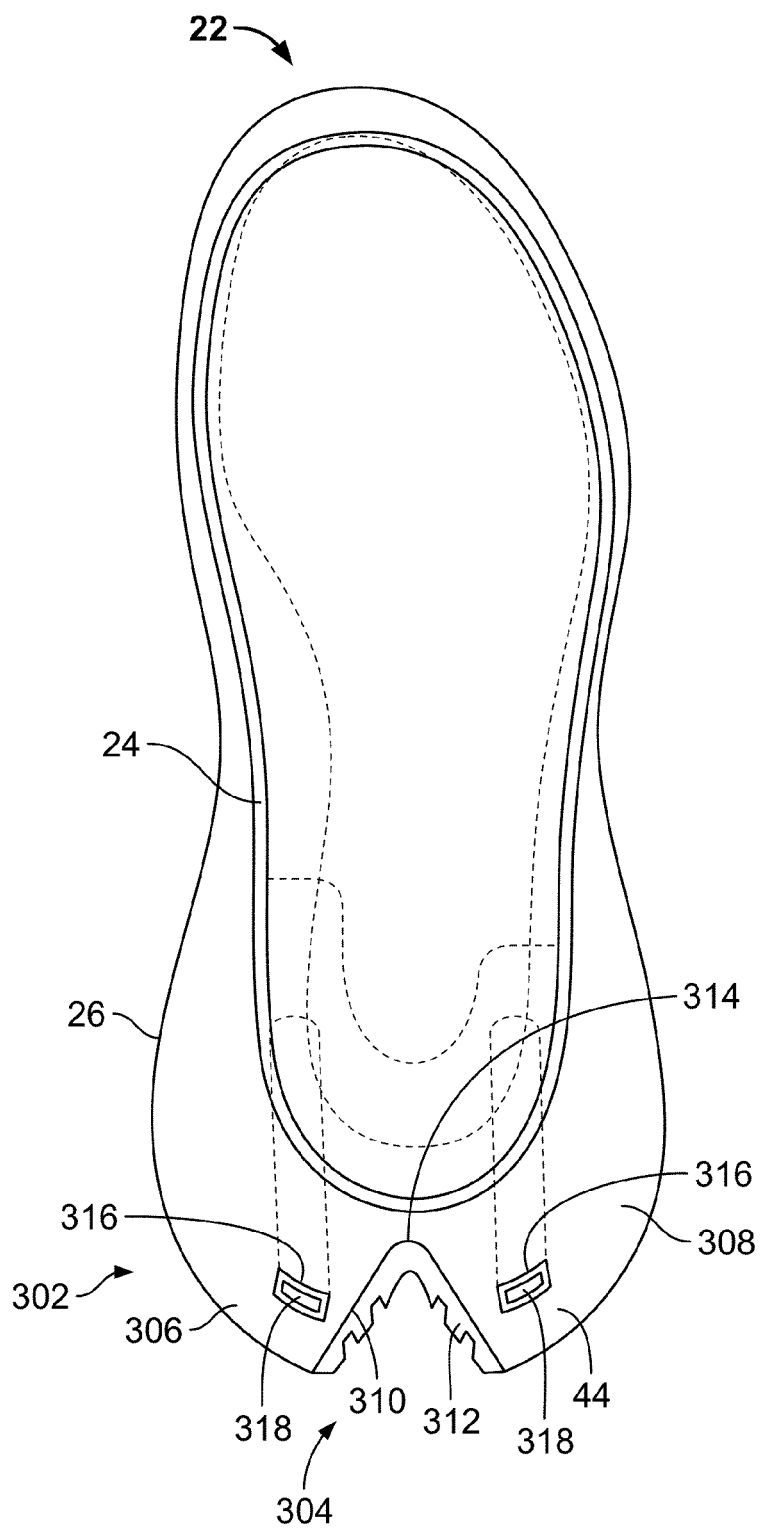


FIG. 46

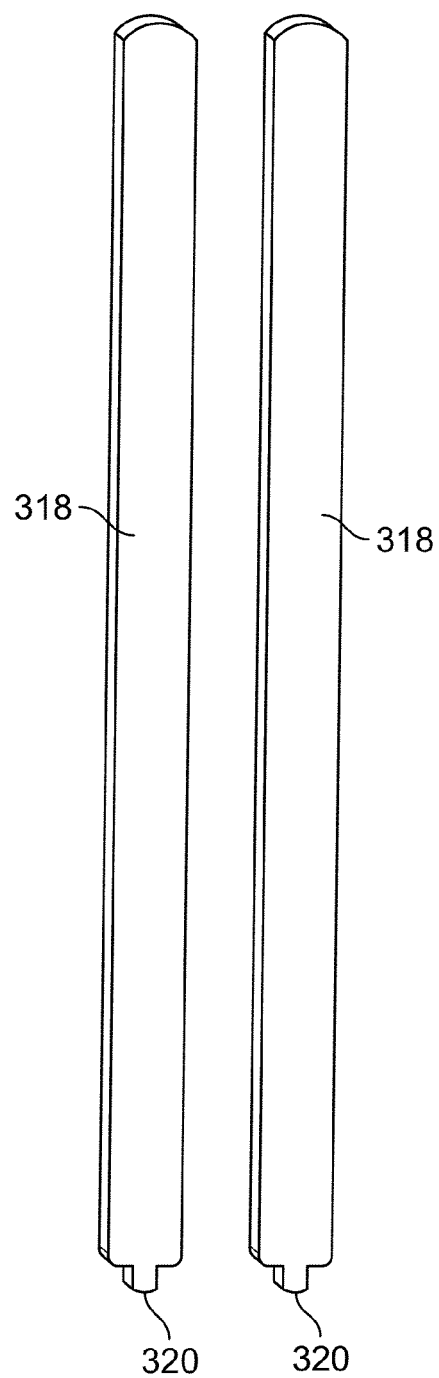


FIG. 47

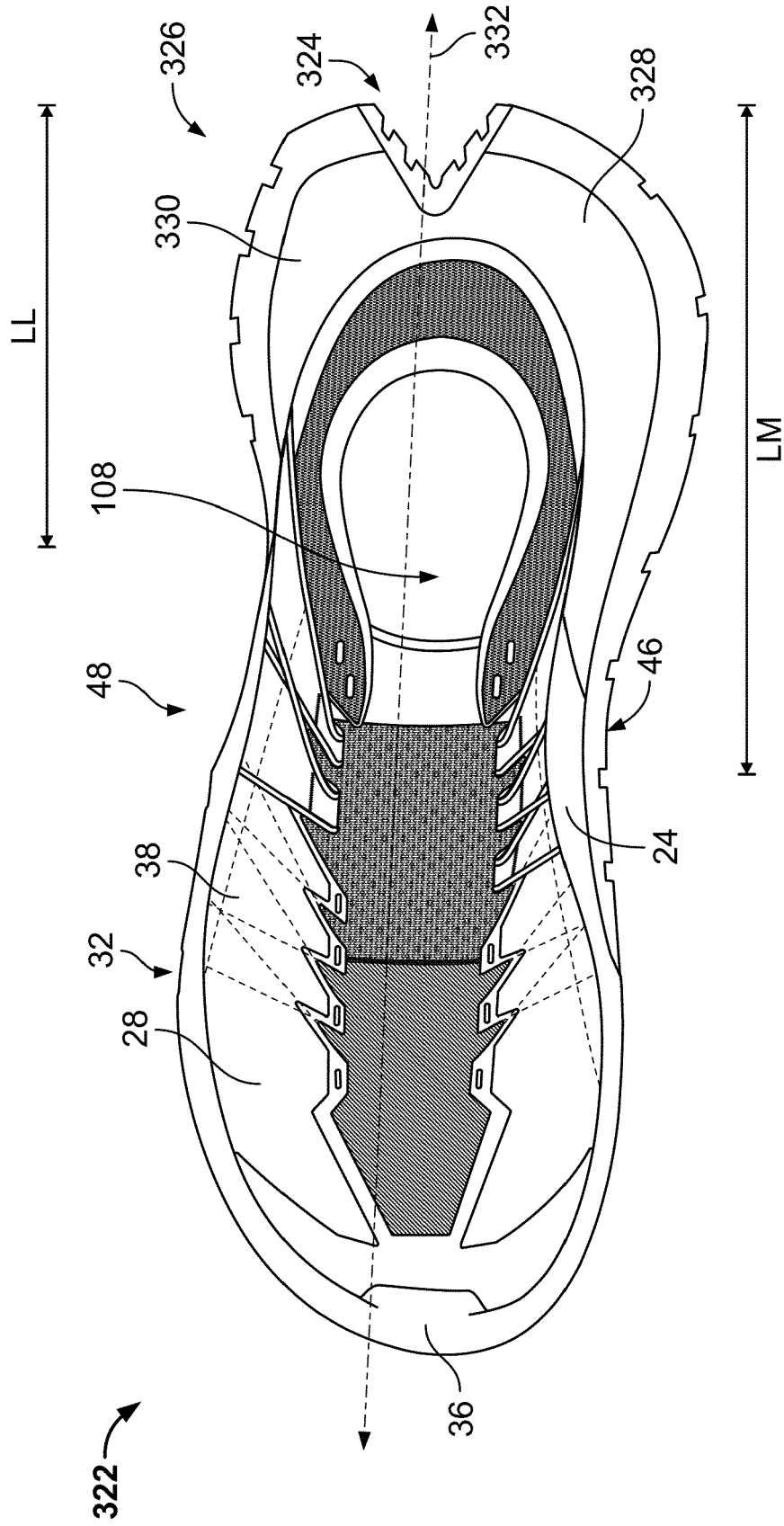


FIG. 48

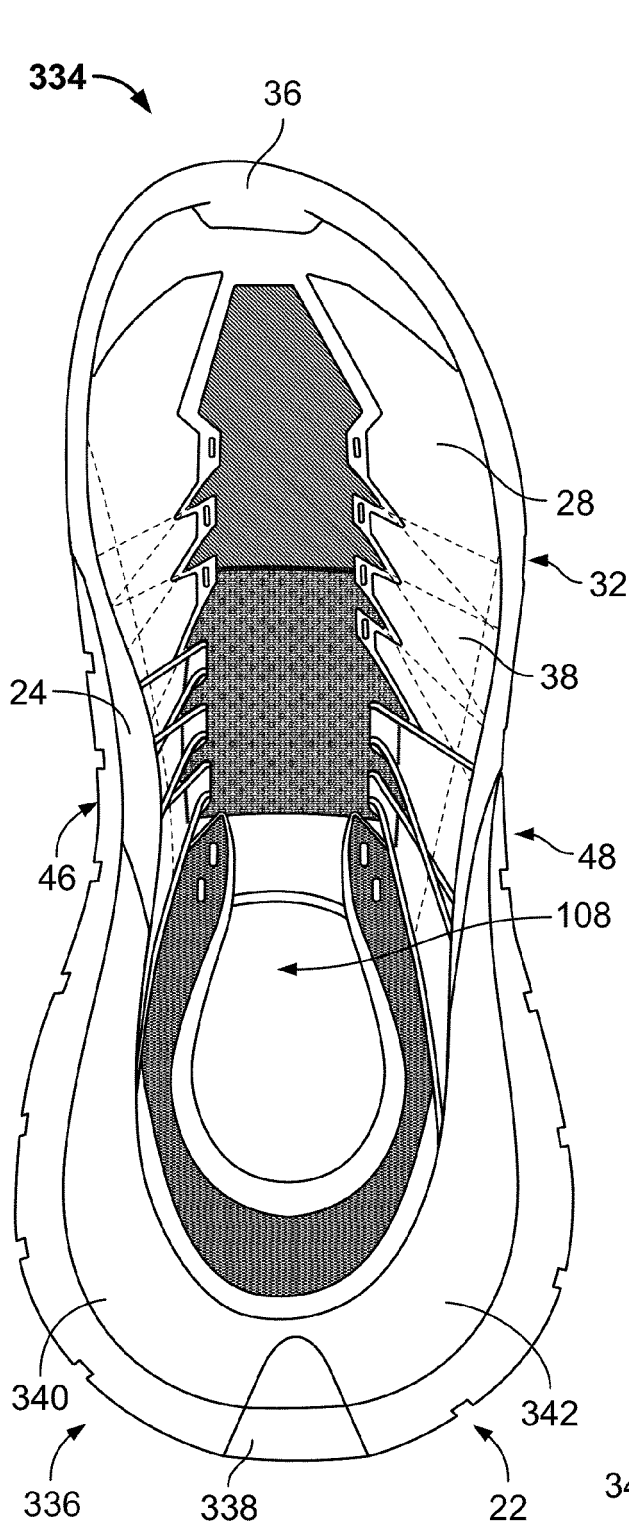


FIG. 49

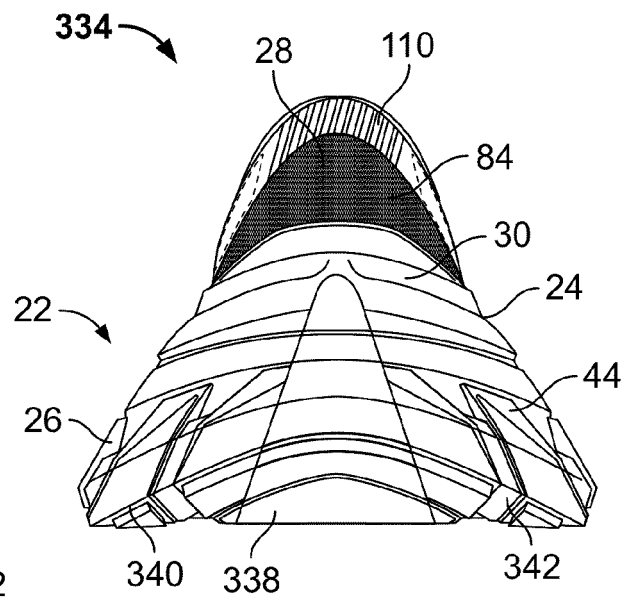


FIG. 50

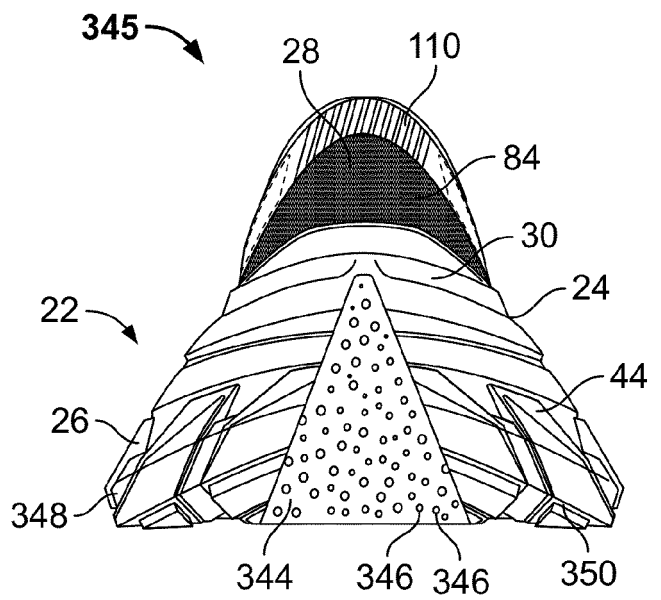


FIG. 51

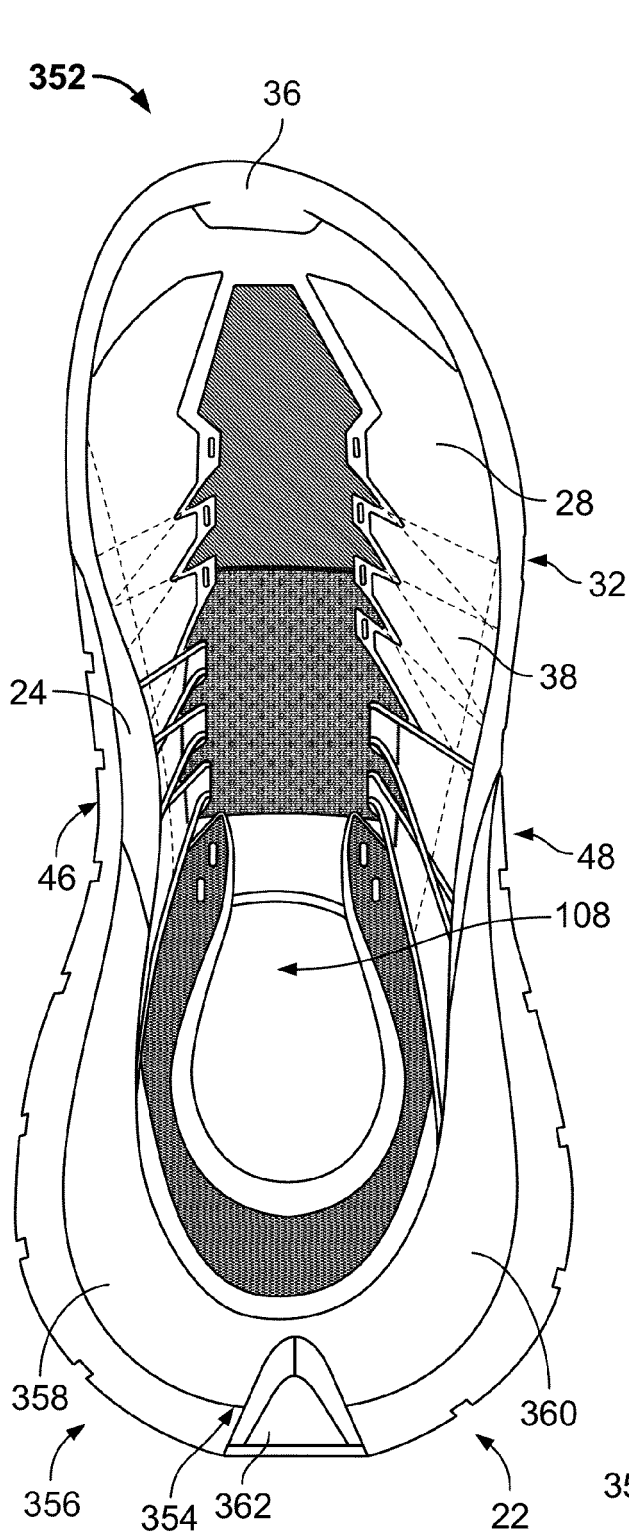


FIG. 52

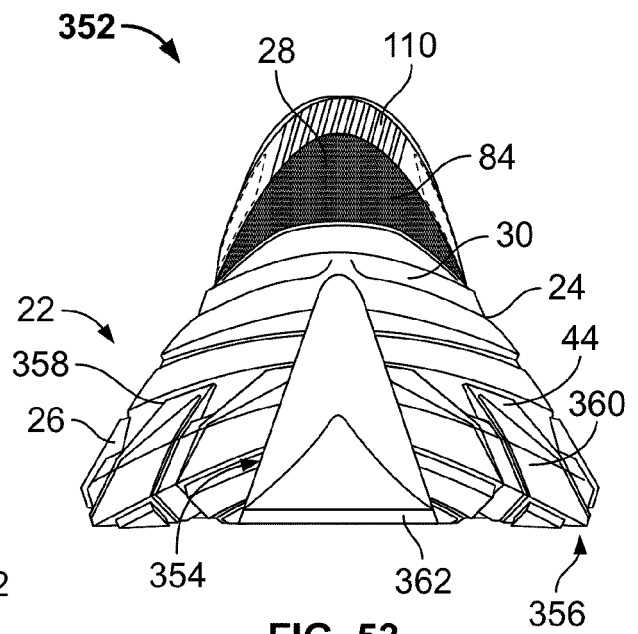


FIG. 53

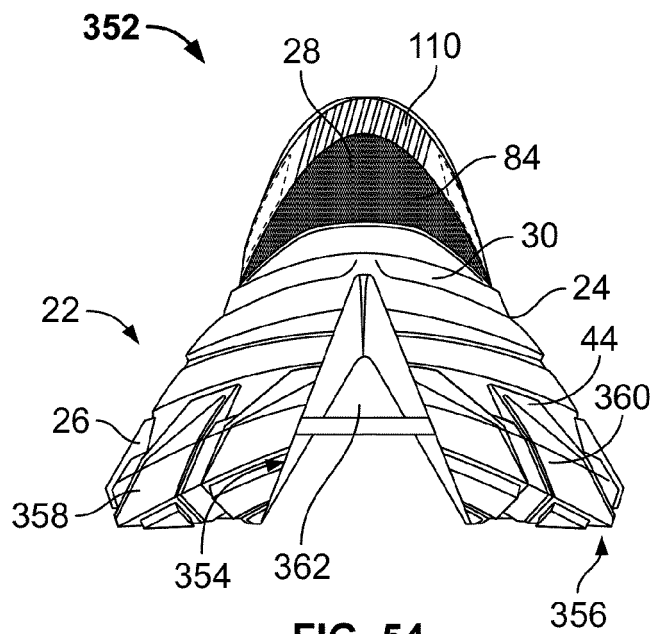


FIG. 54

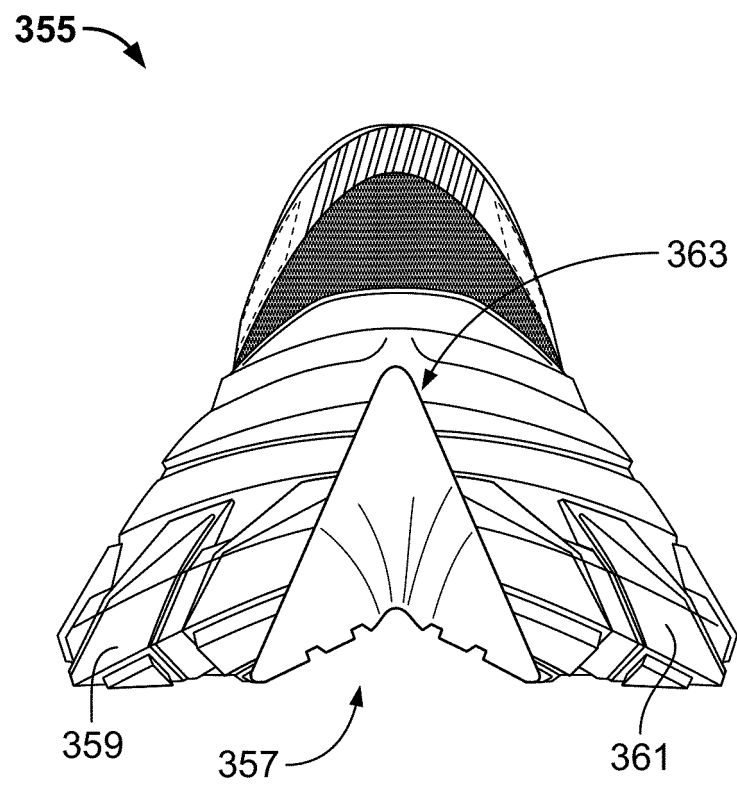


FIG. 55A

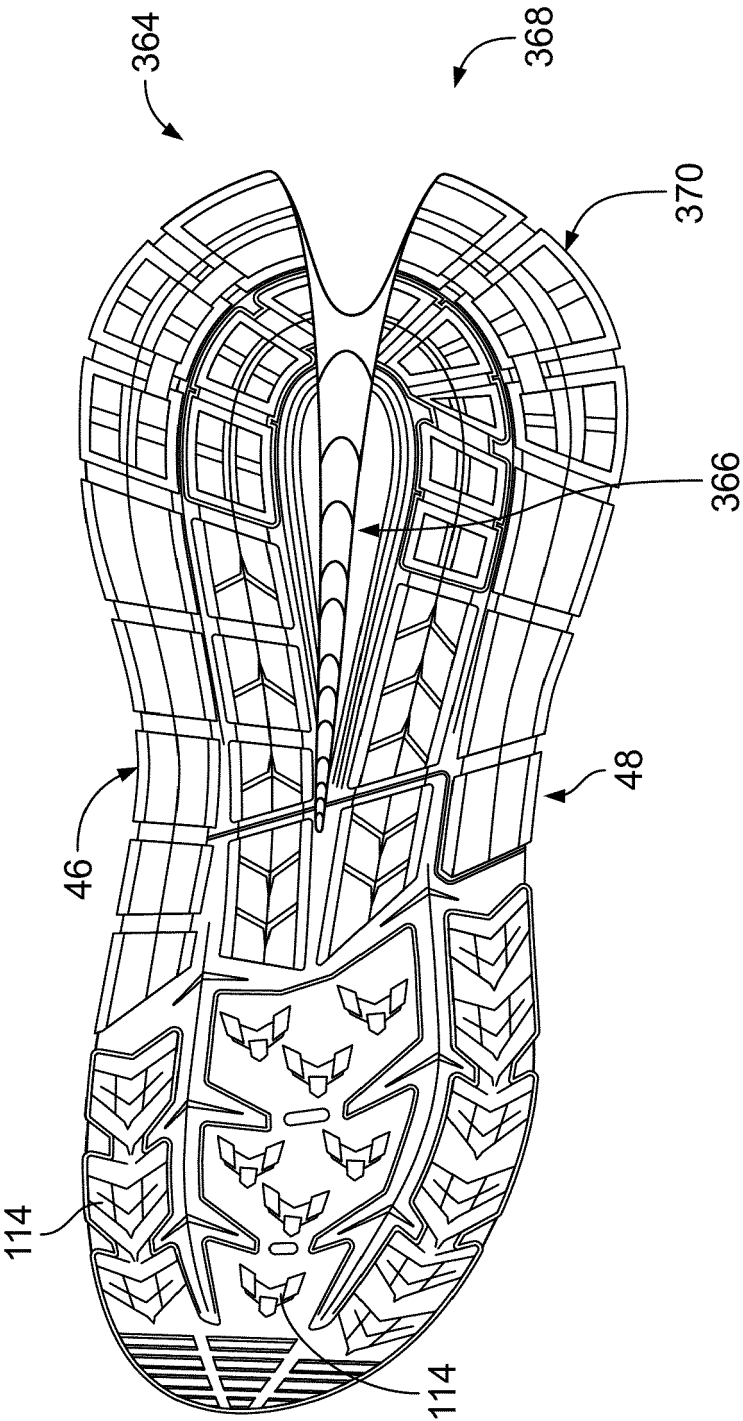


FIG. 55B

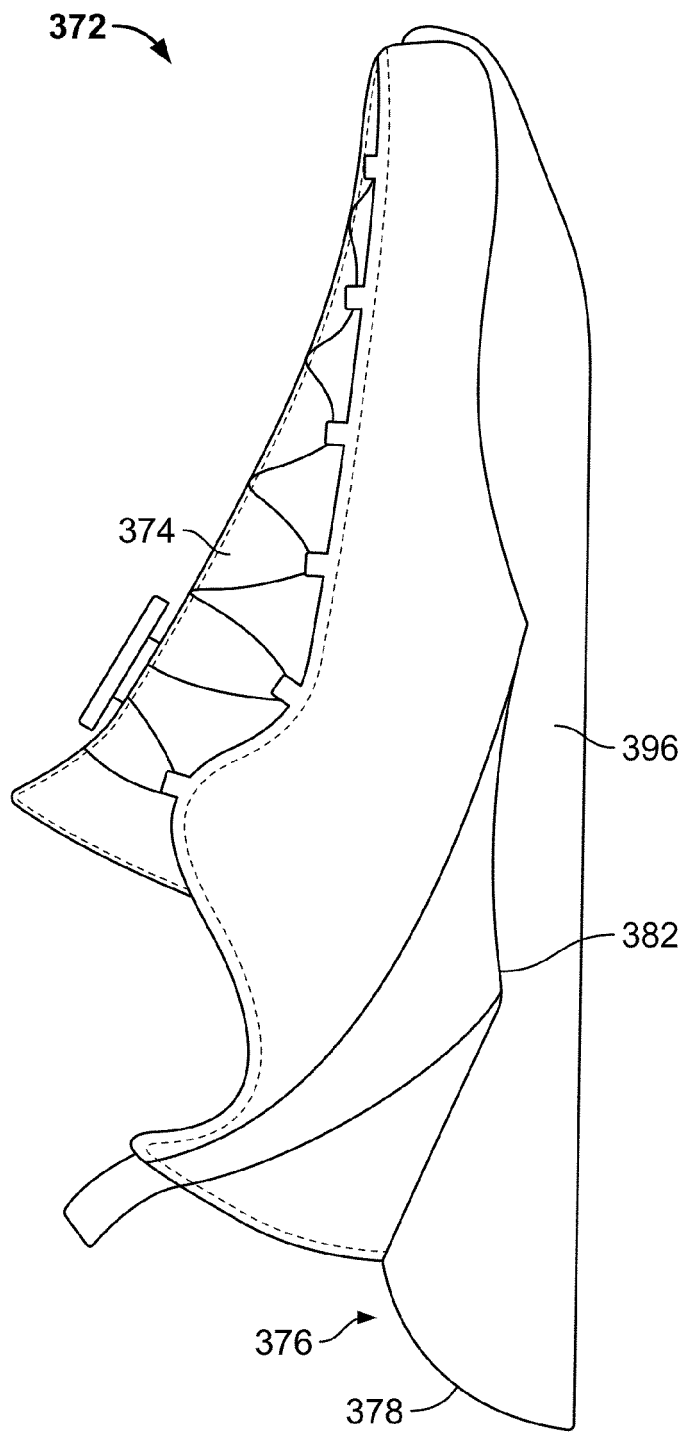


FIG. 56

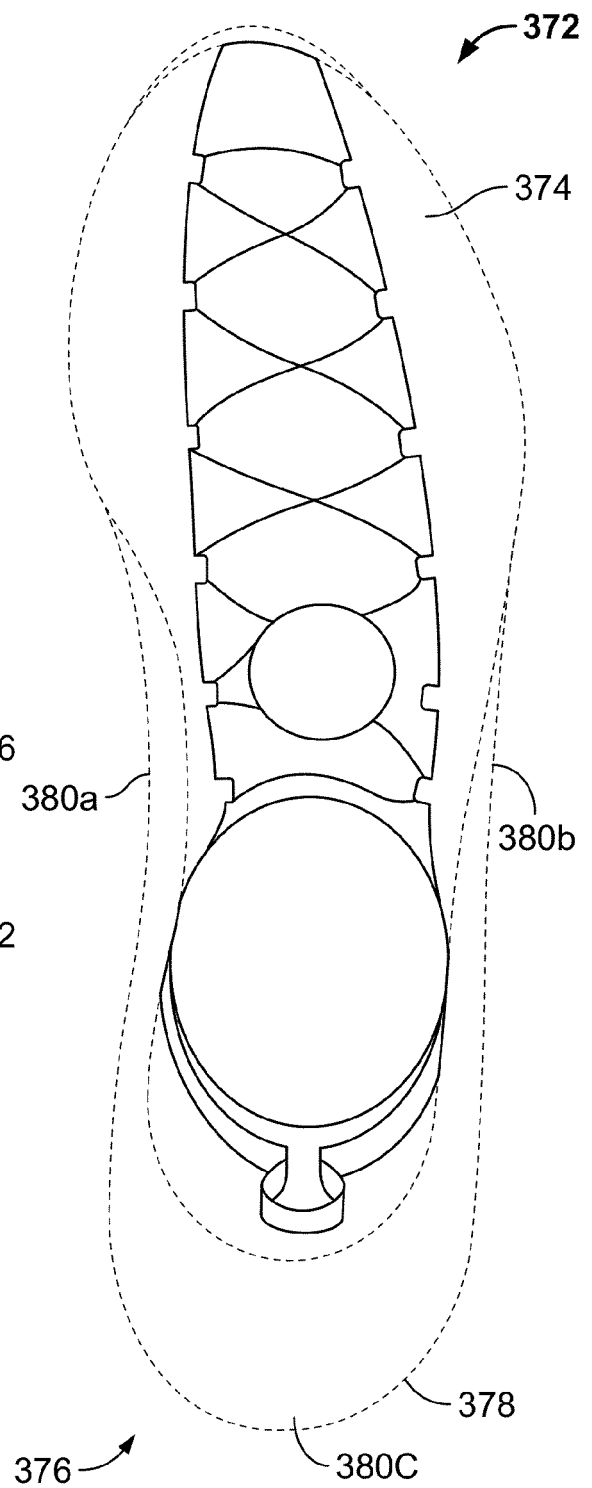


FIG. 57

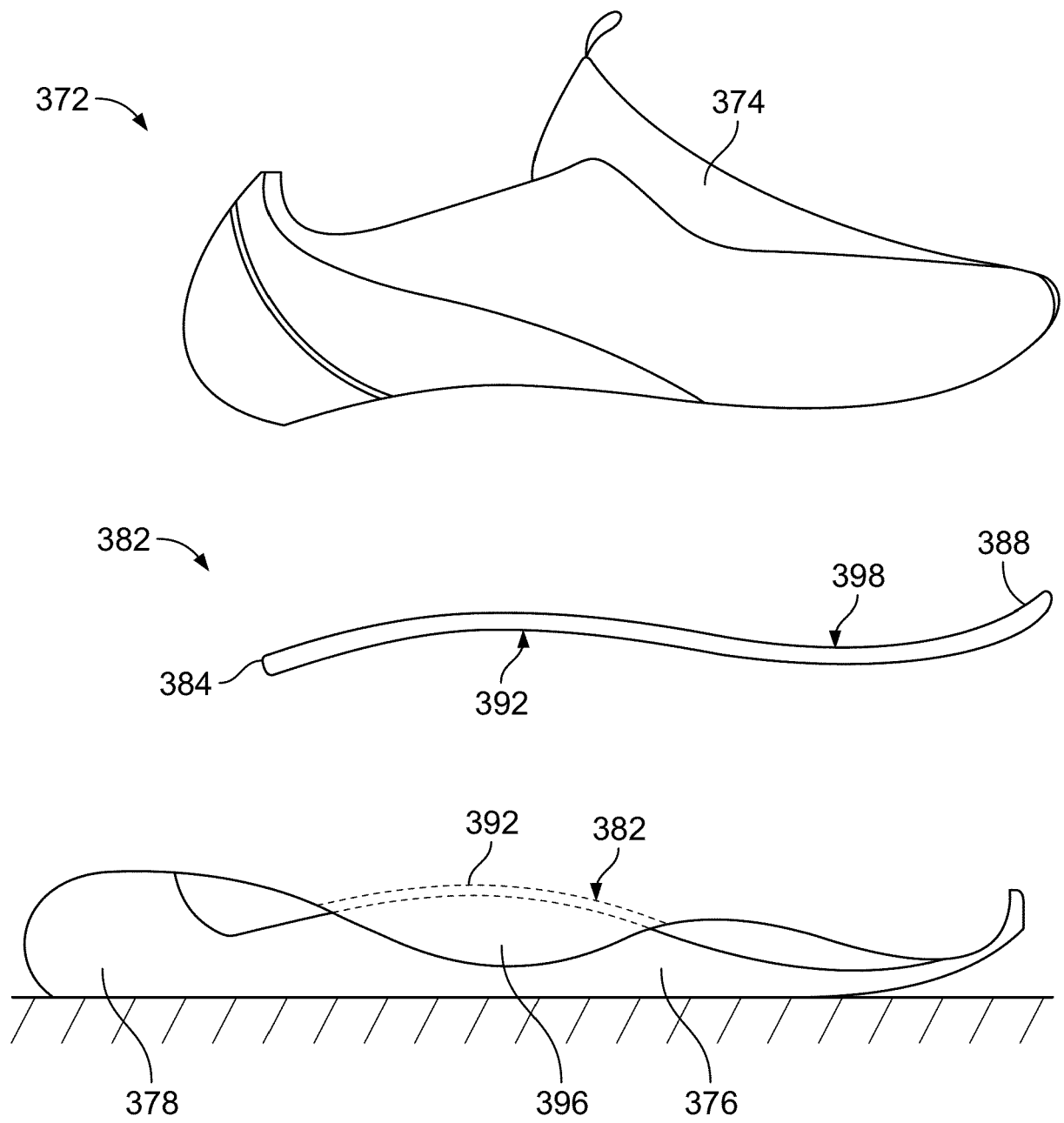


FIG. 58

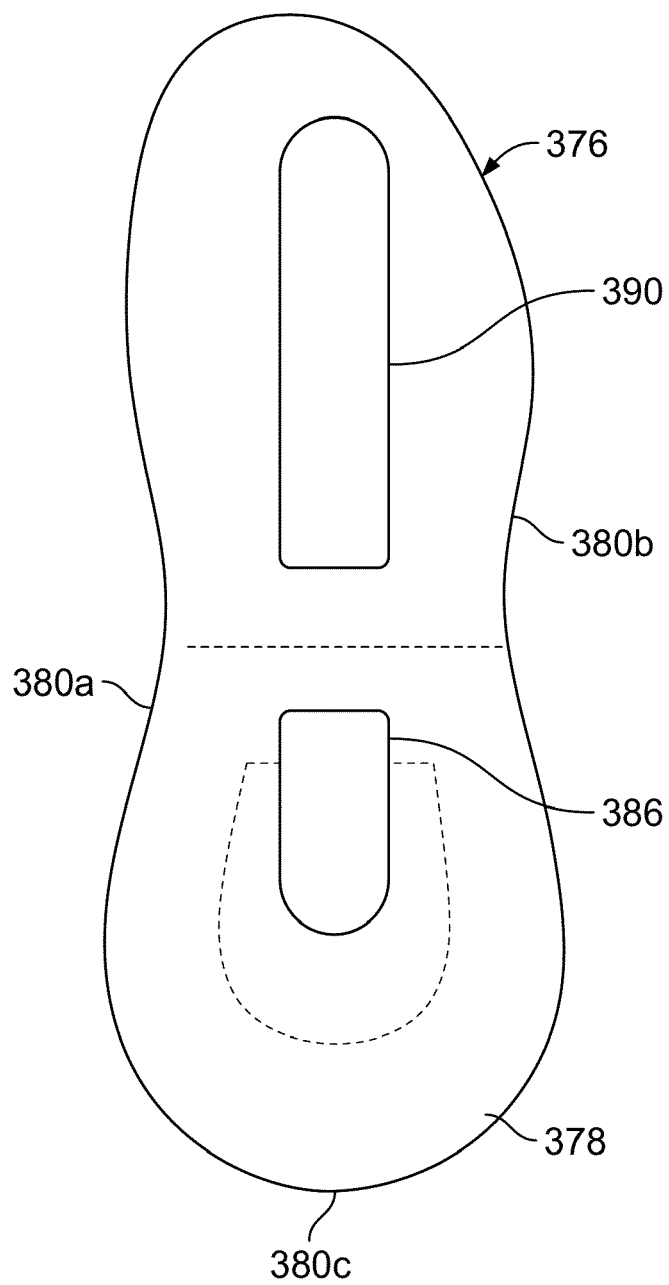


FIG. 59

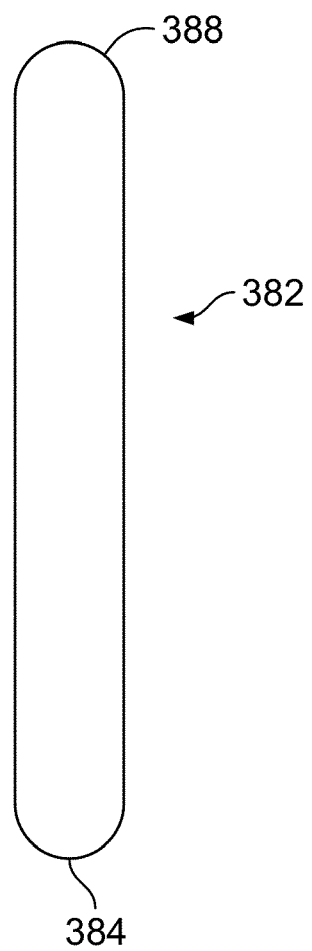


FIG. 60

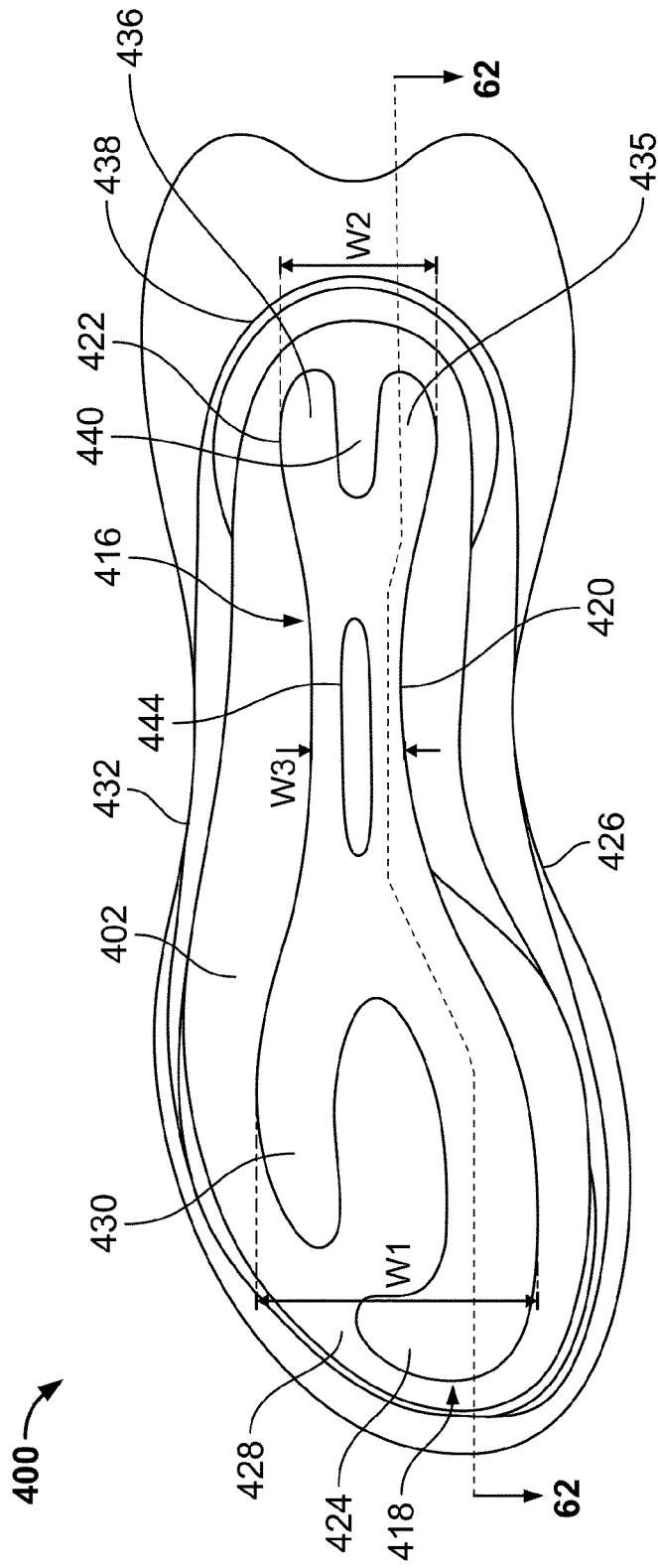


FIG. 61

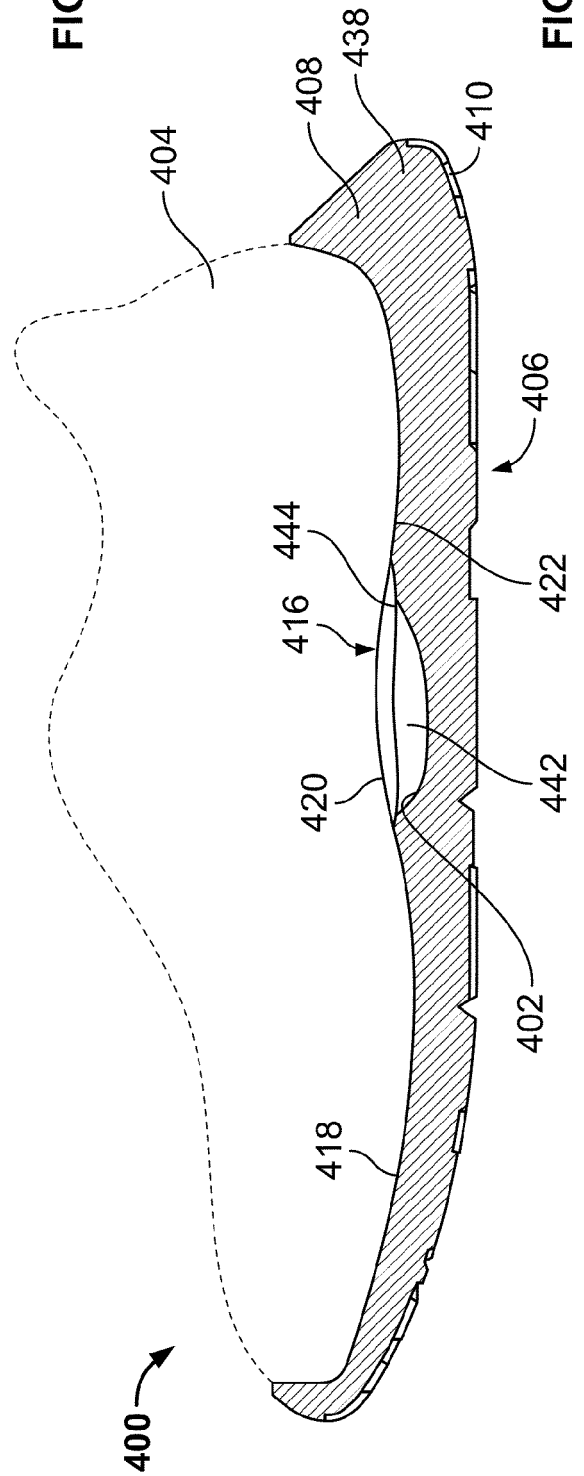


FIG. 62

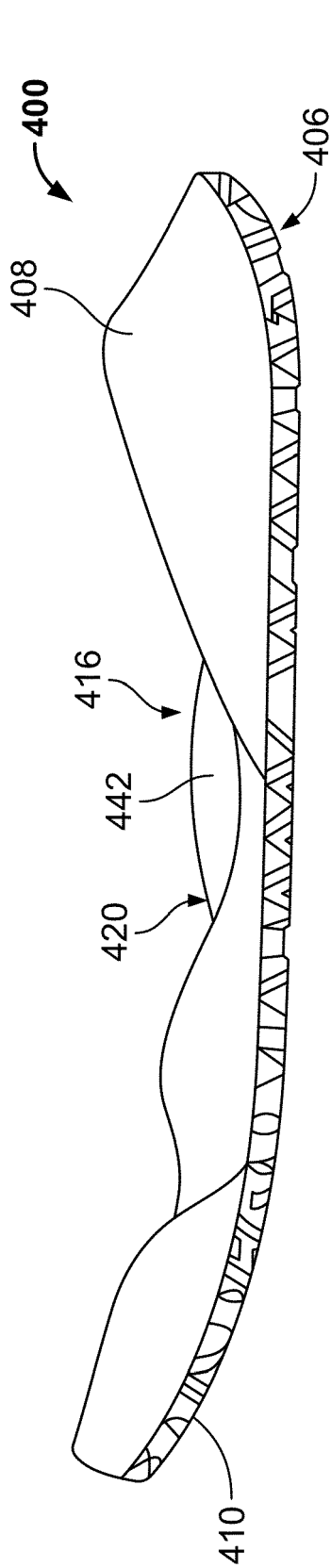


FIG. 63

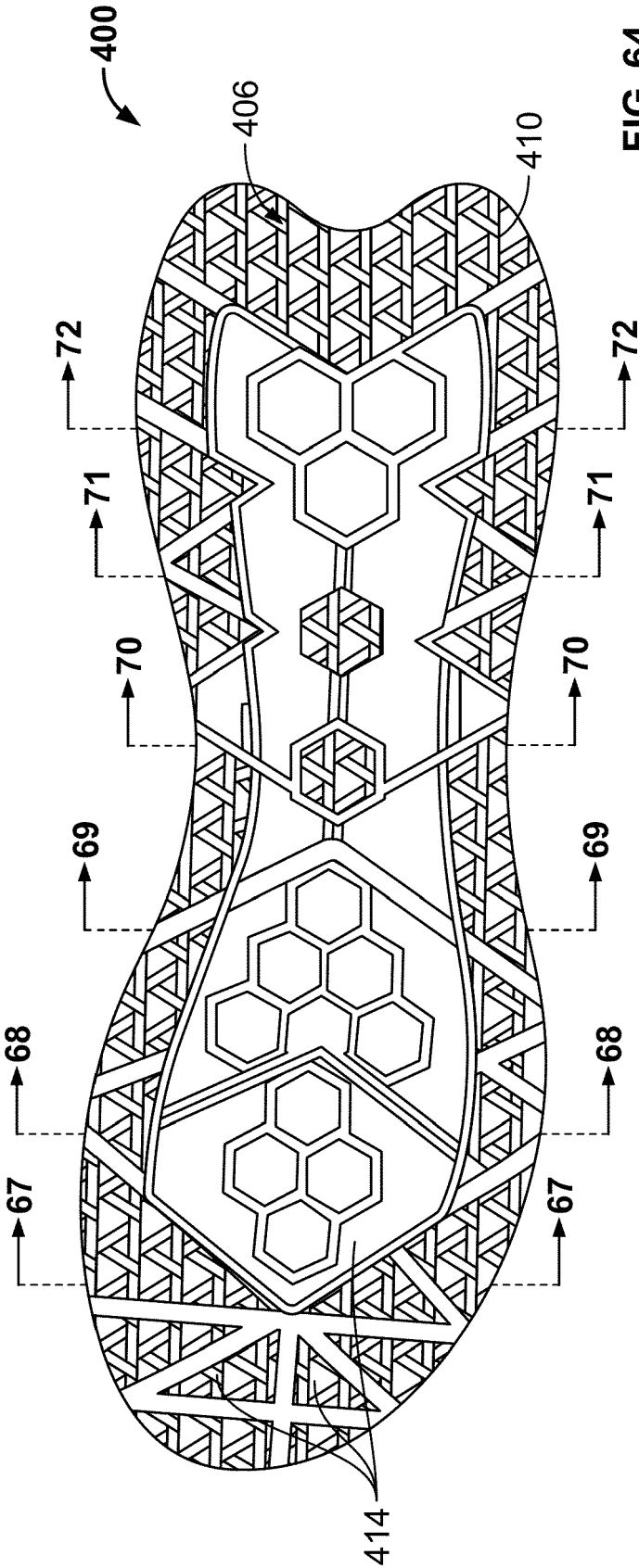
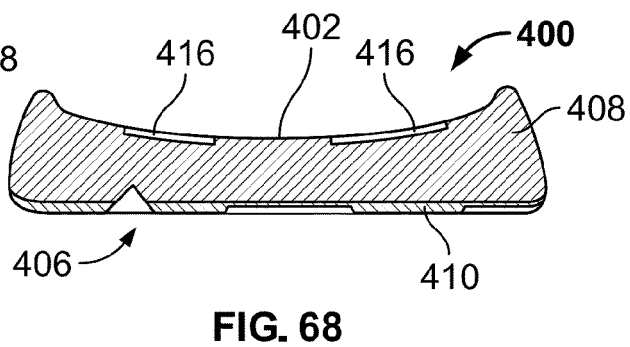
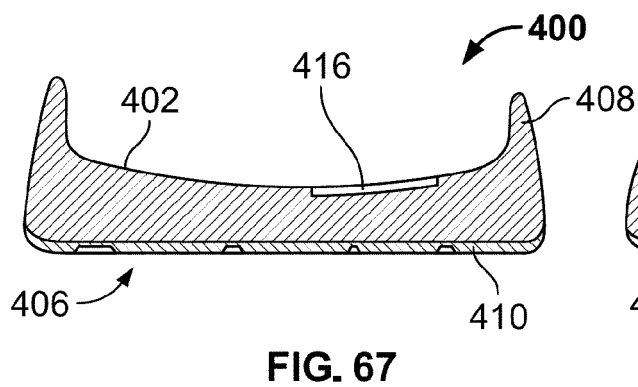
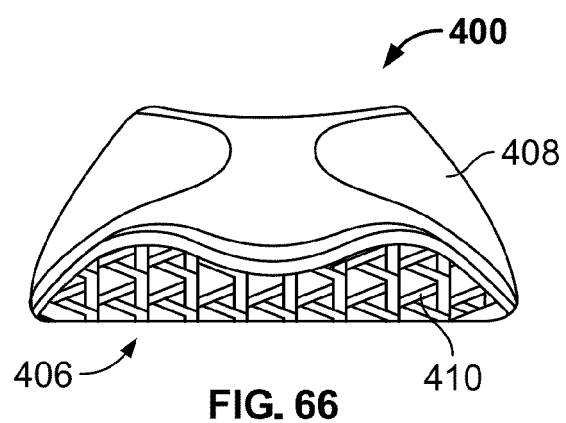
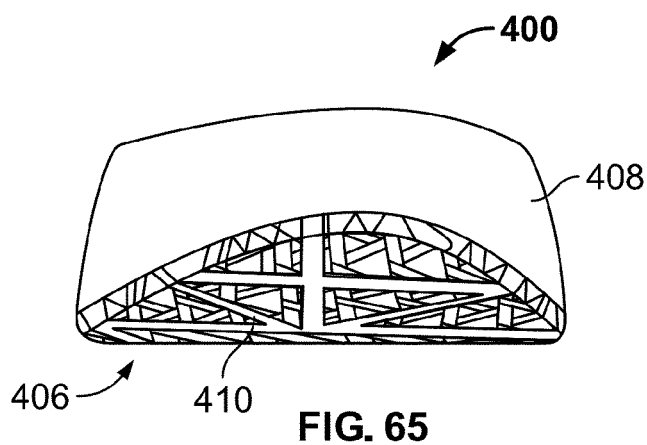


FIG. 64



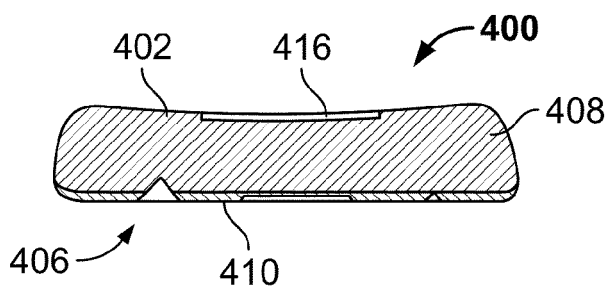


FIG. 69

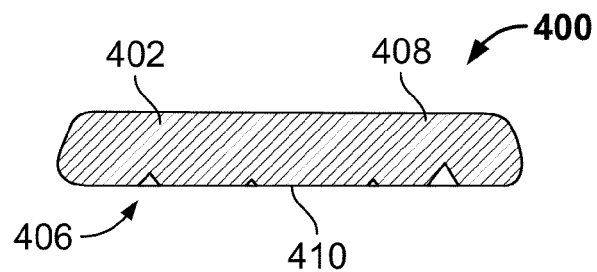


FIG. 70

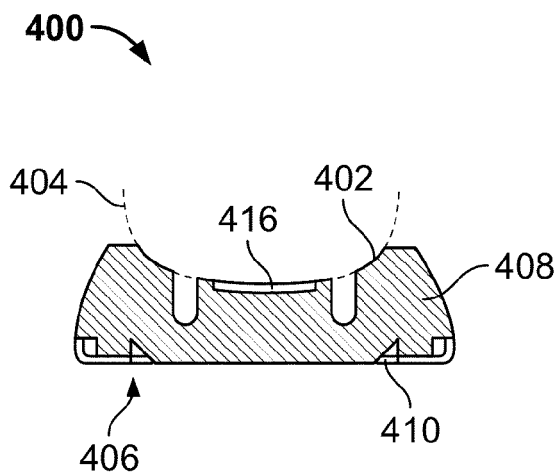


FIG. 71

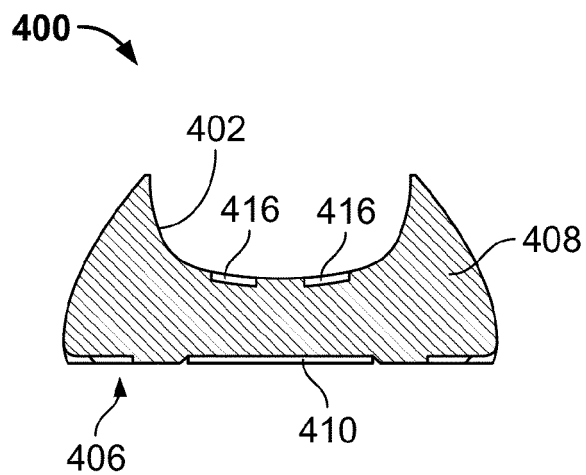


FIG. 72

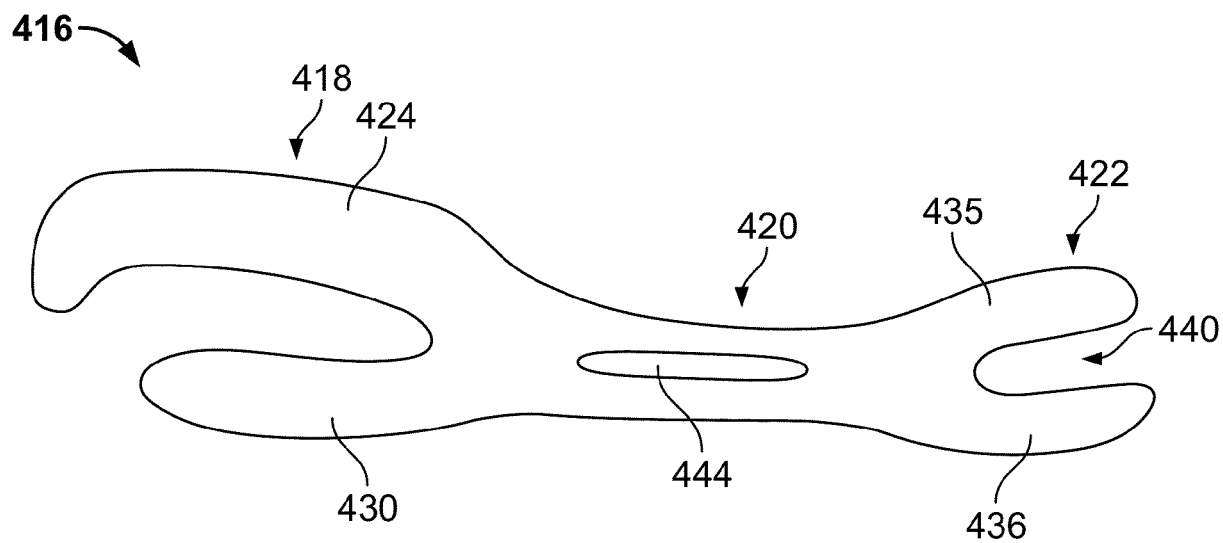


FIG. 73

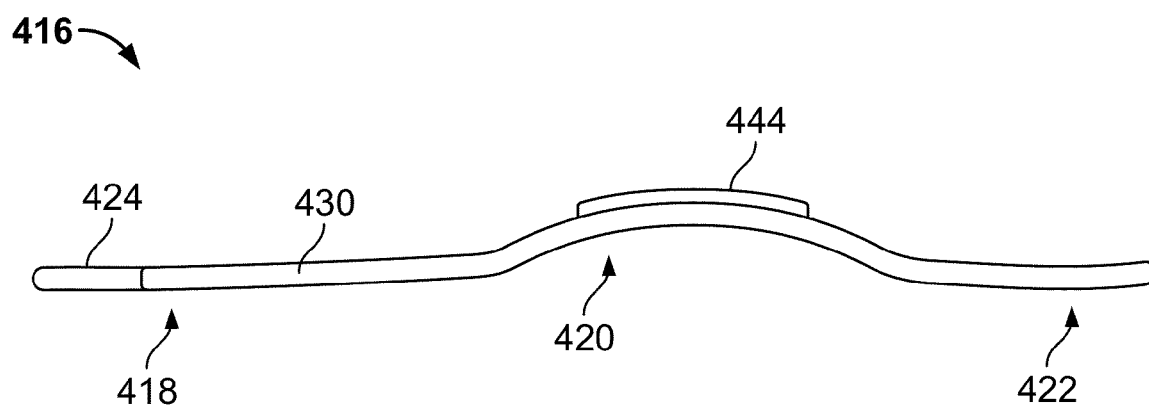


FIG. 74

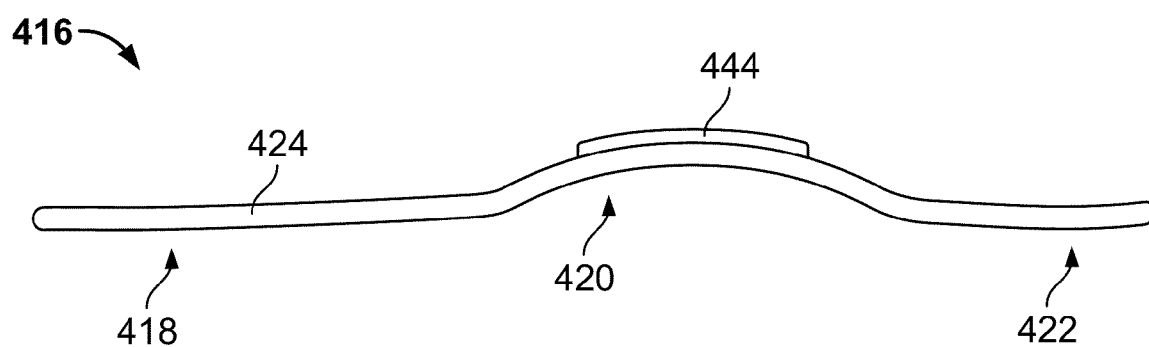


FIG. 75

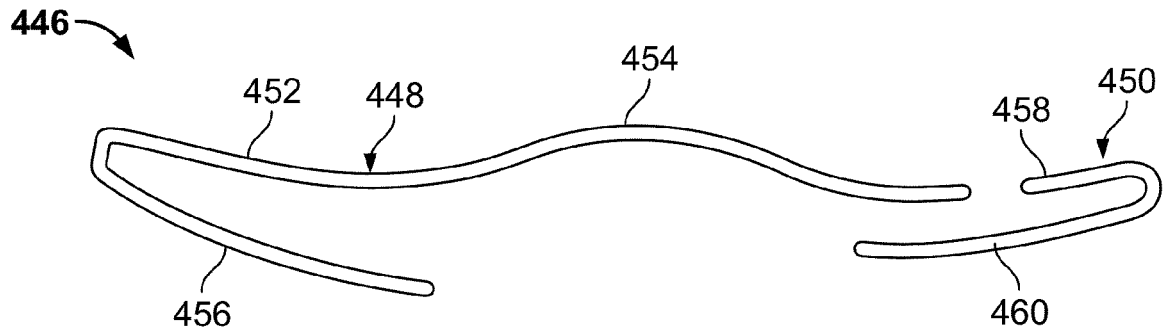


FIG. 76

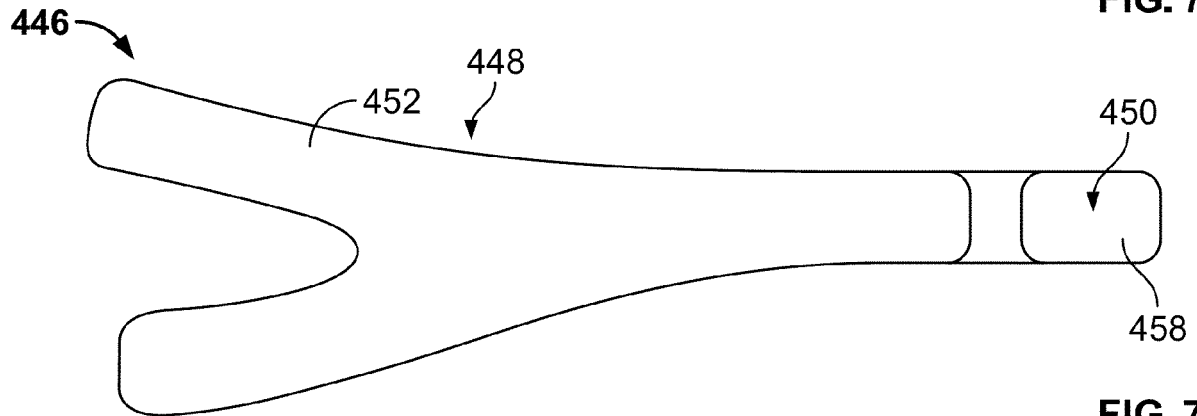


FIG. 77

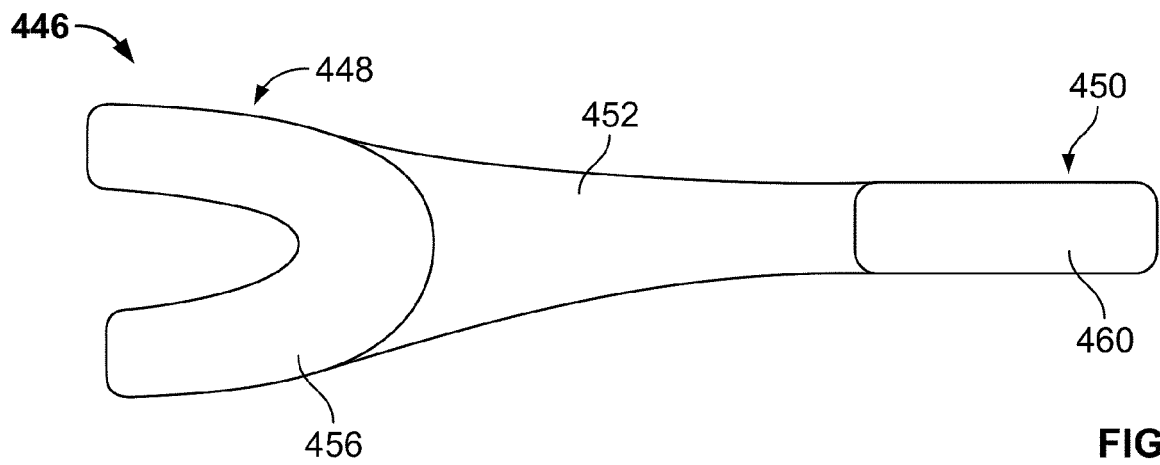


FIG. 78

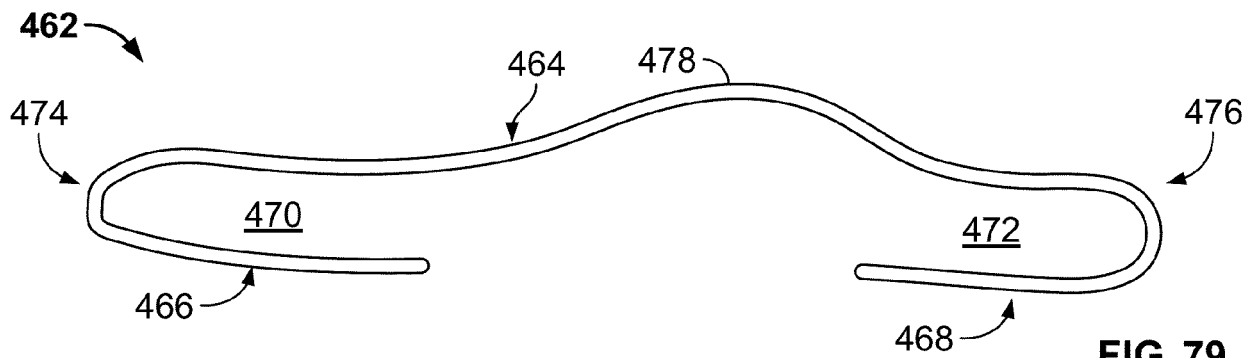


FIG. 79

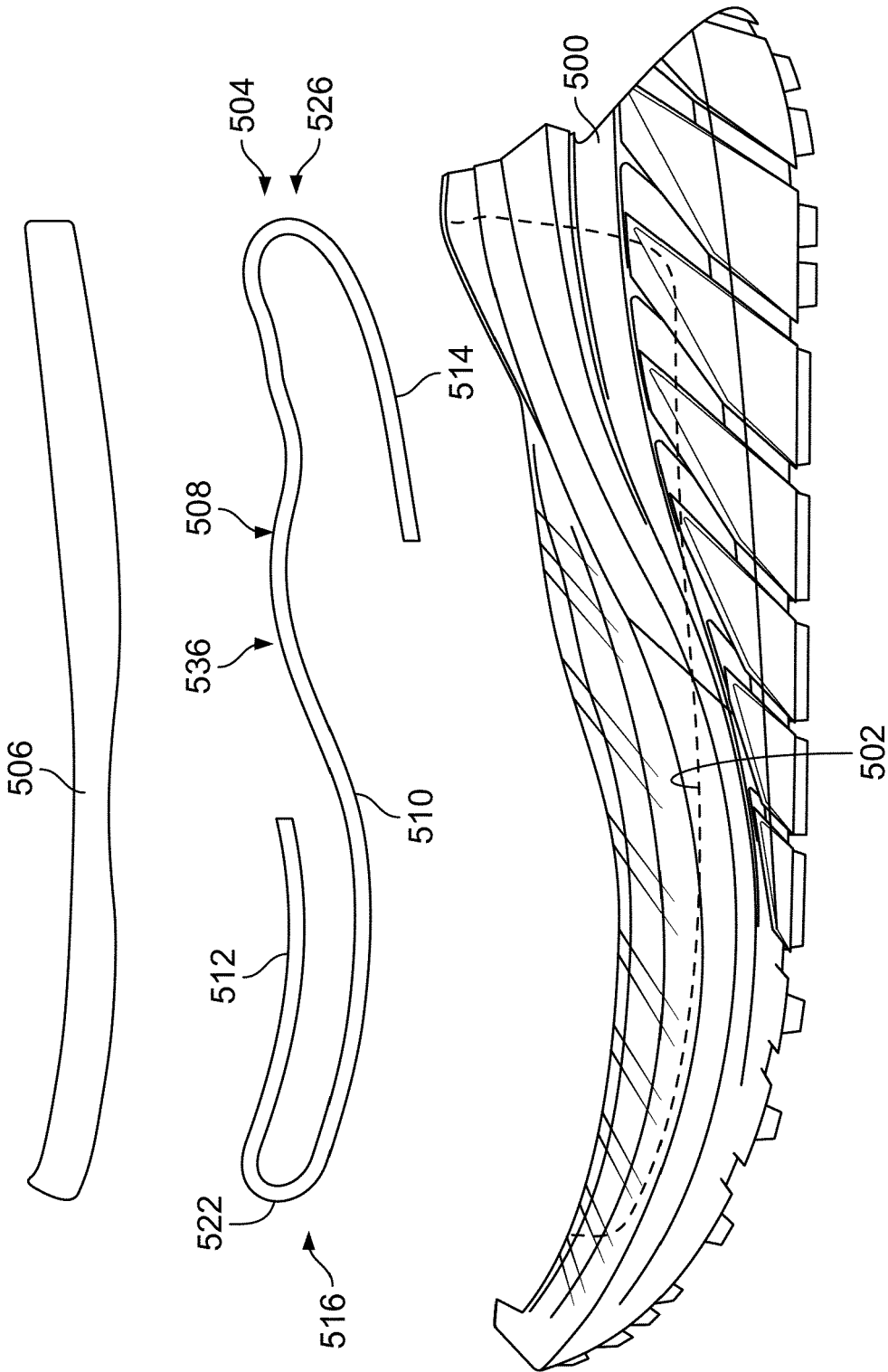


FIG. 80

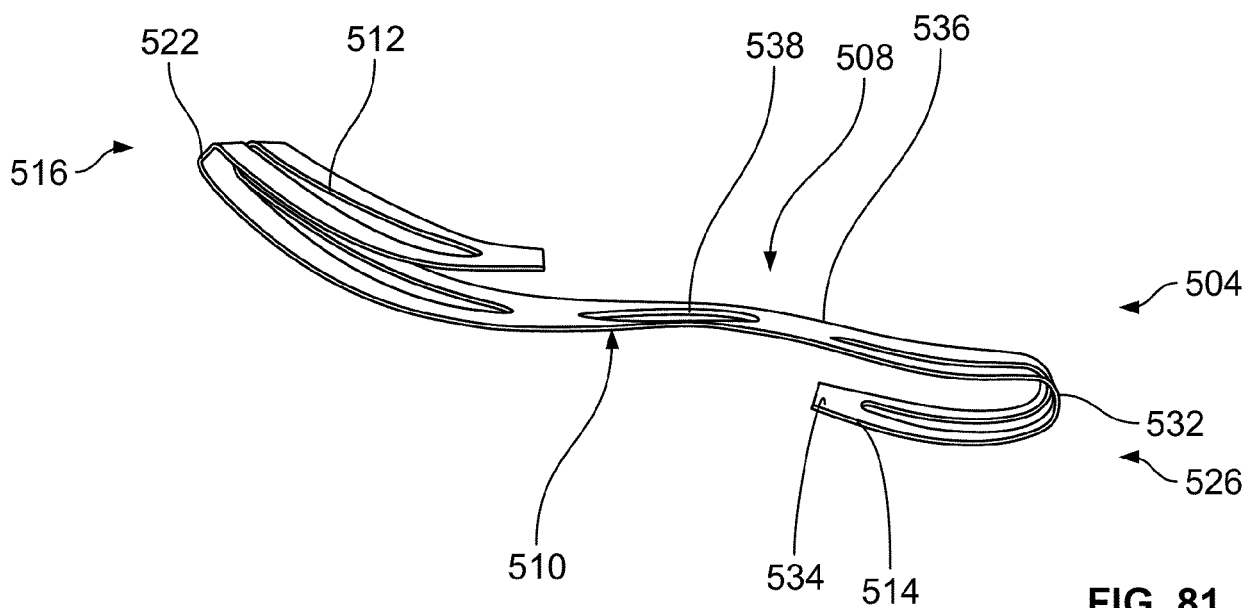


FIG. 81

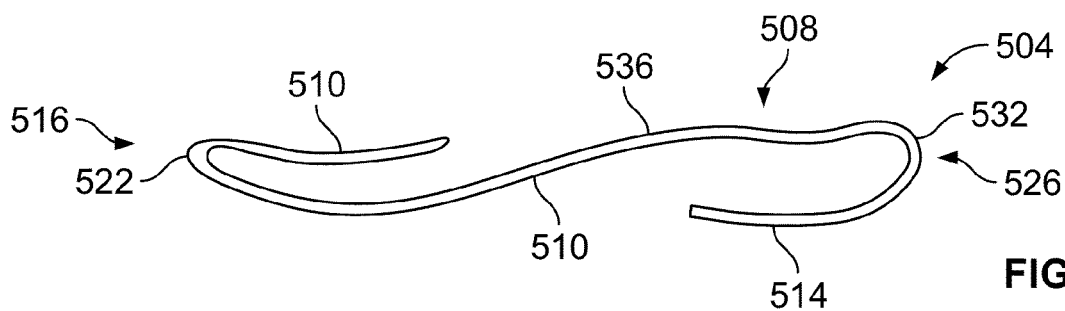


FIG. 82

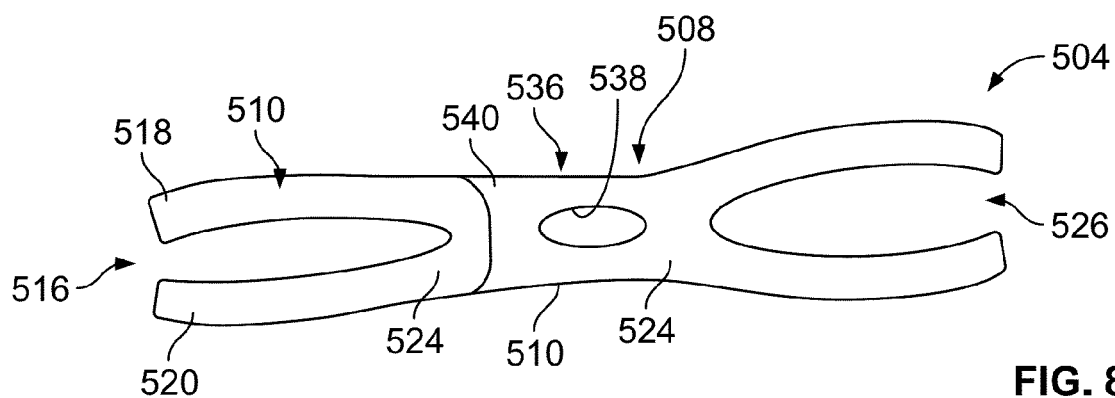


FIG. 83

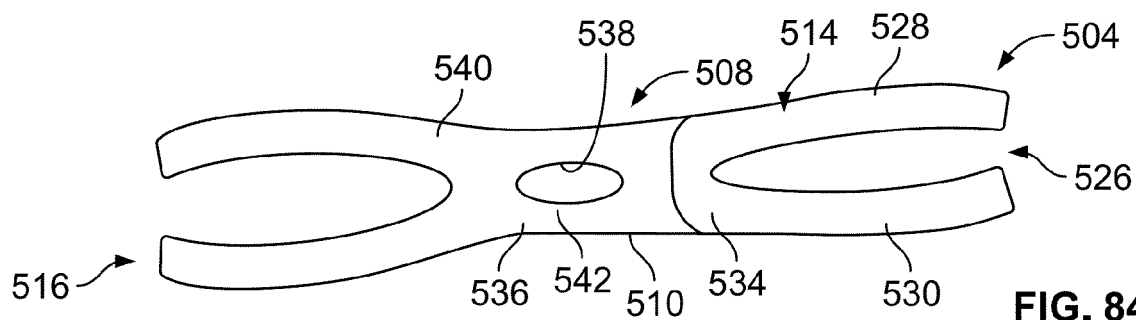


FIG. 84

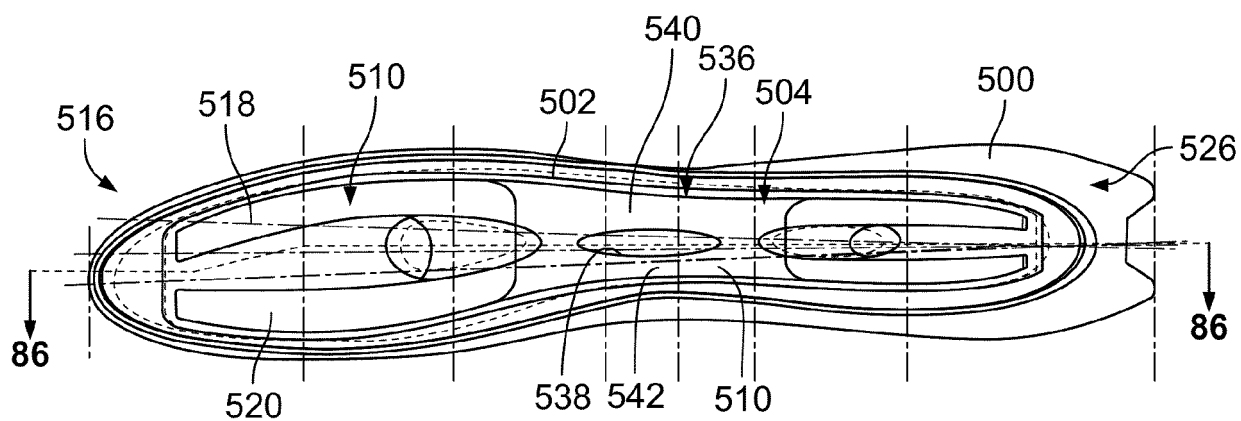


FIG. 85

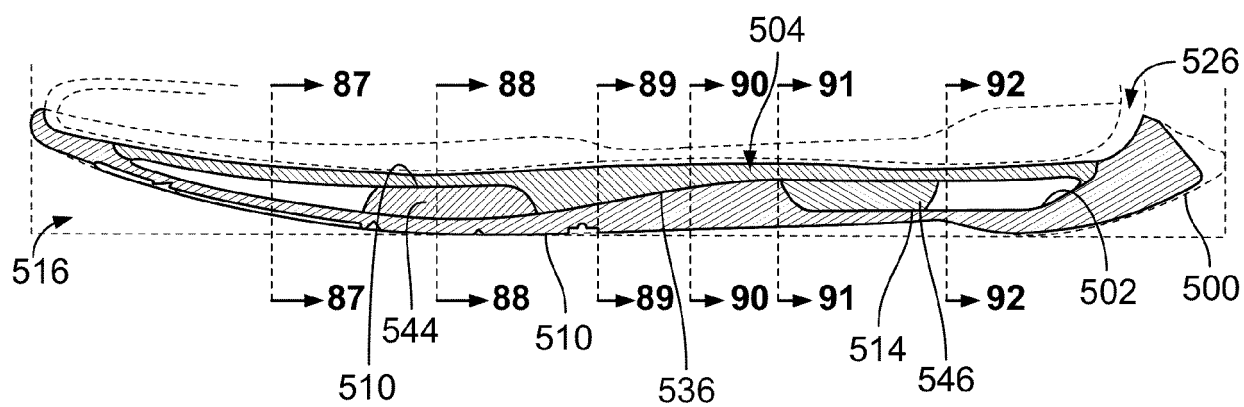


FIG. 86

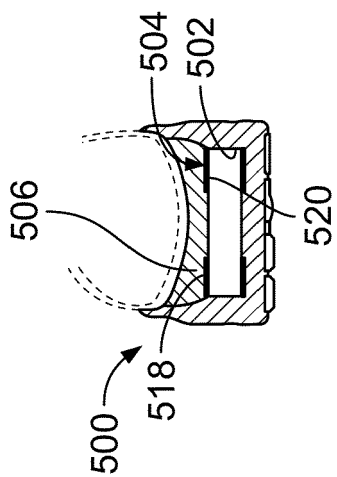


FIG. 87

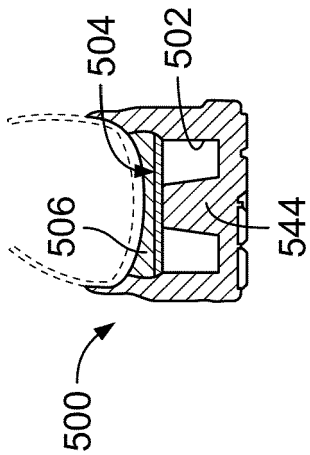


FIG. 88

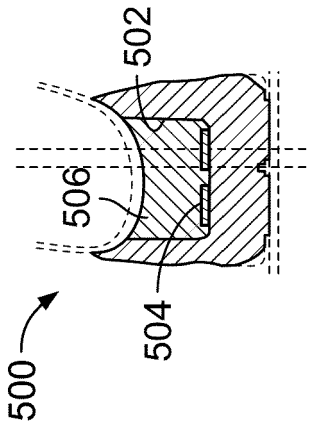


FIG. 89

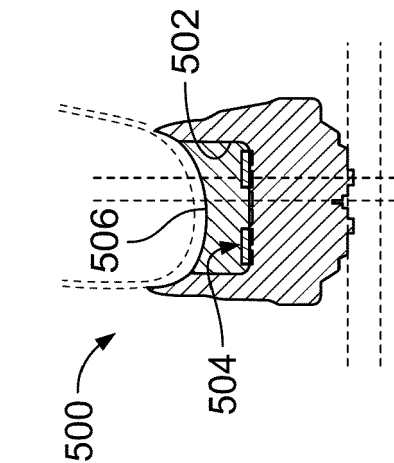


FIG. 90

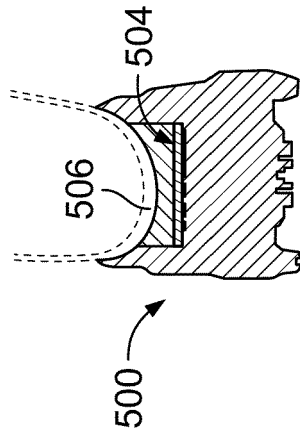


FIG. 91

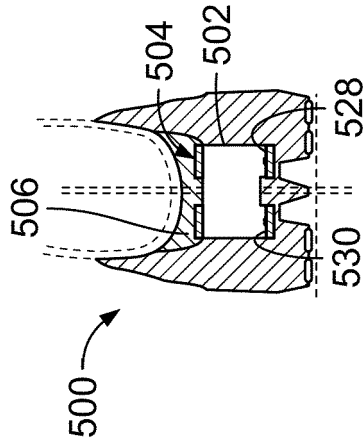


FIG. 92

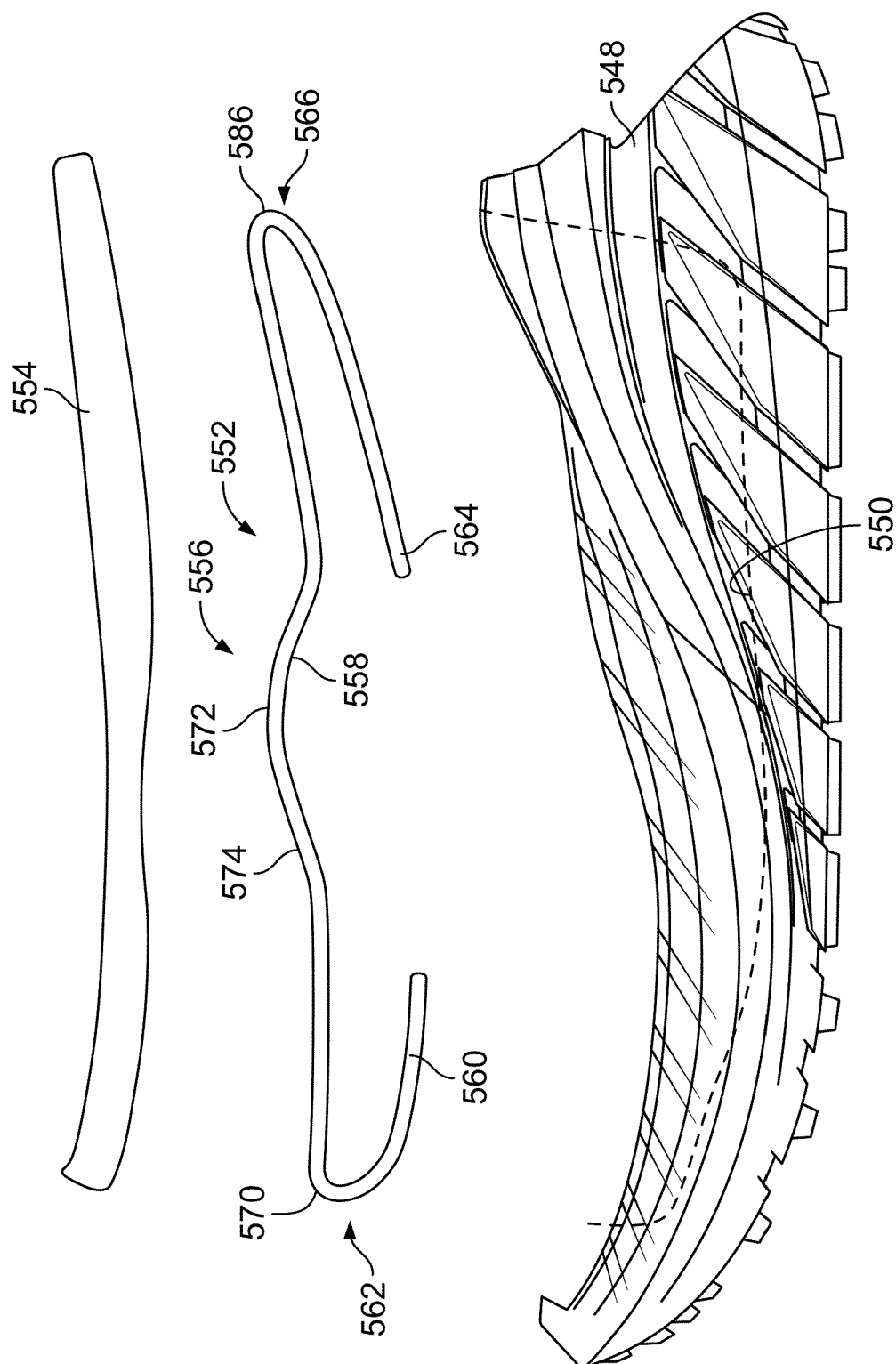
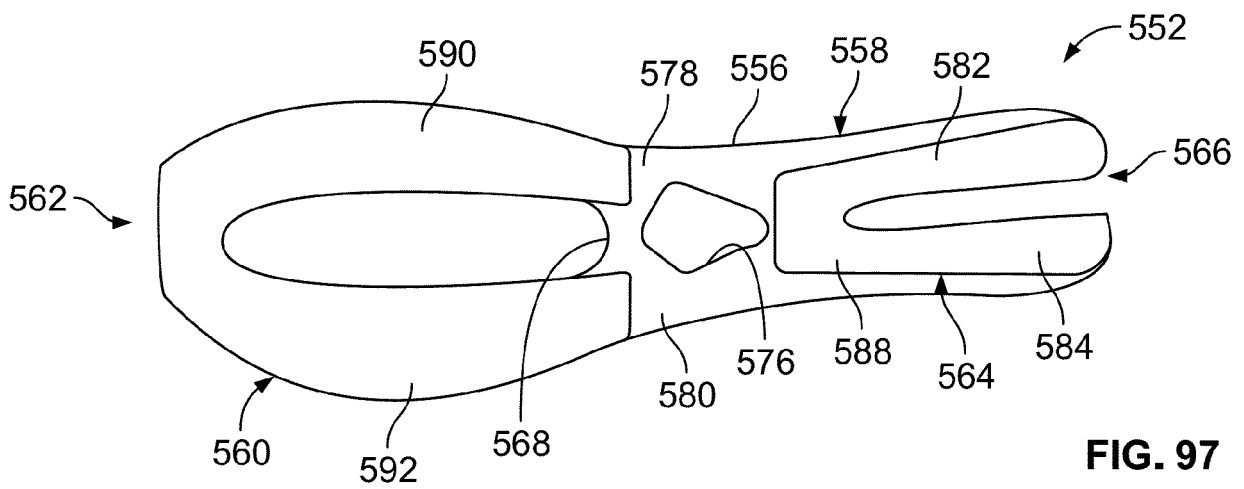
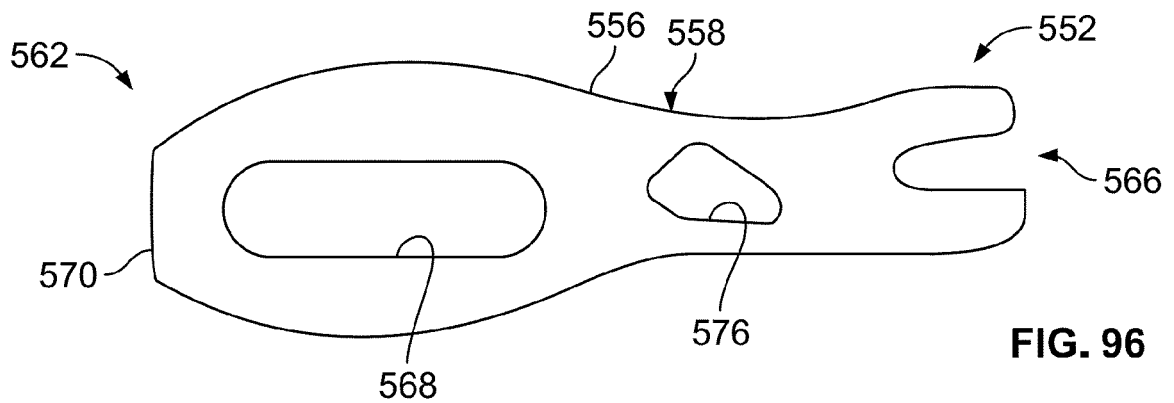
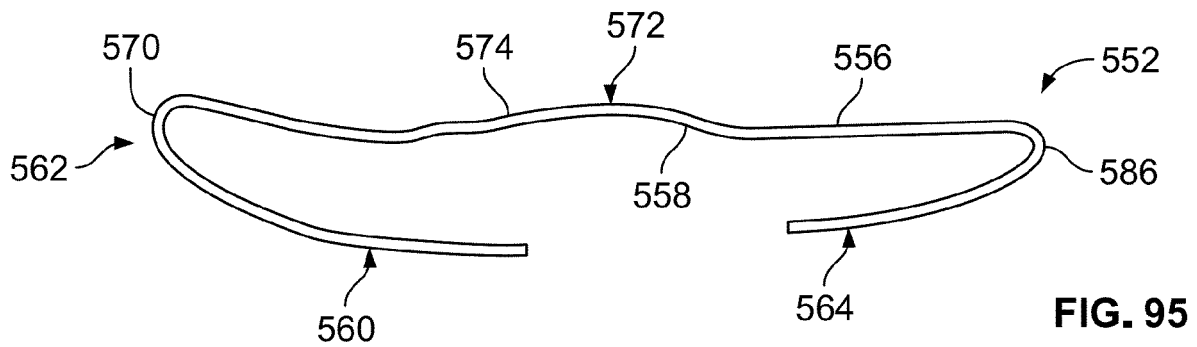
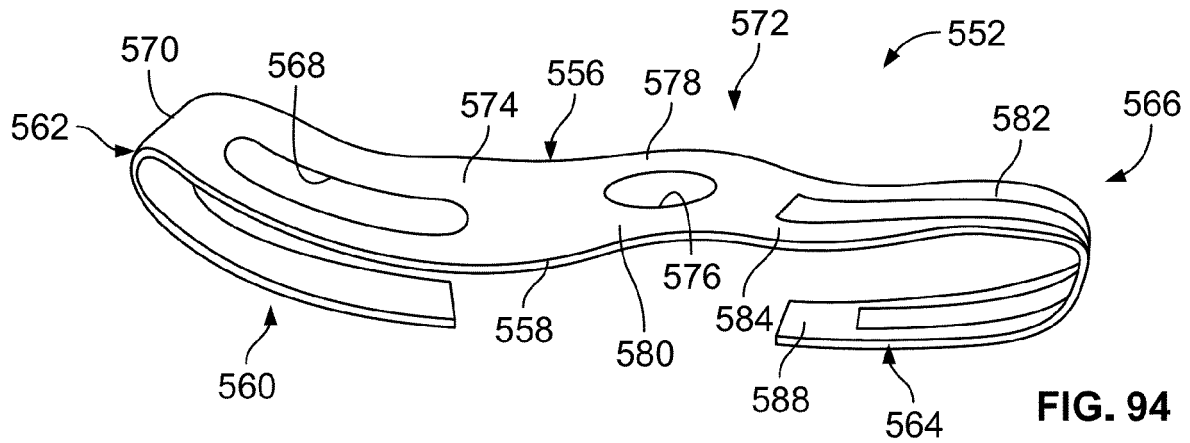


FIG. 93



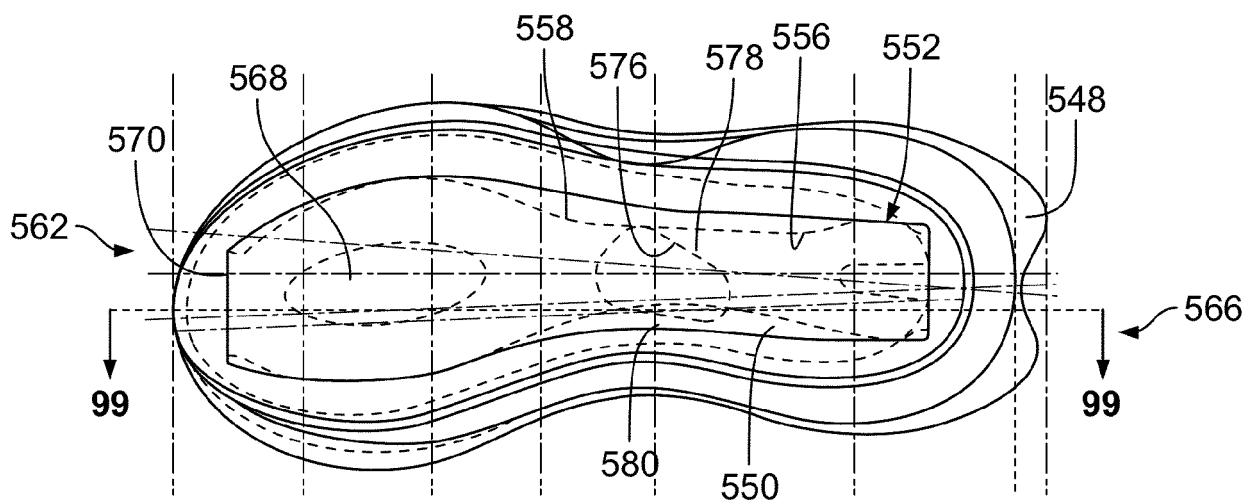


FIG. 98

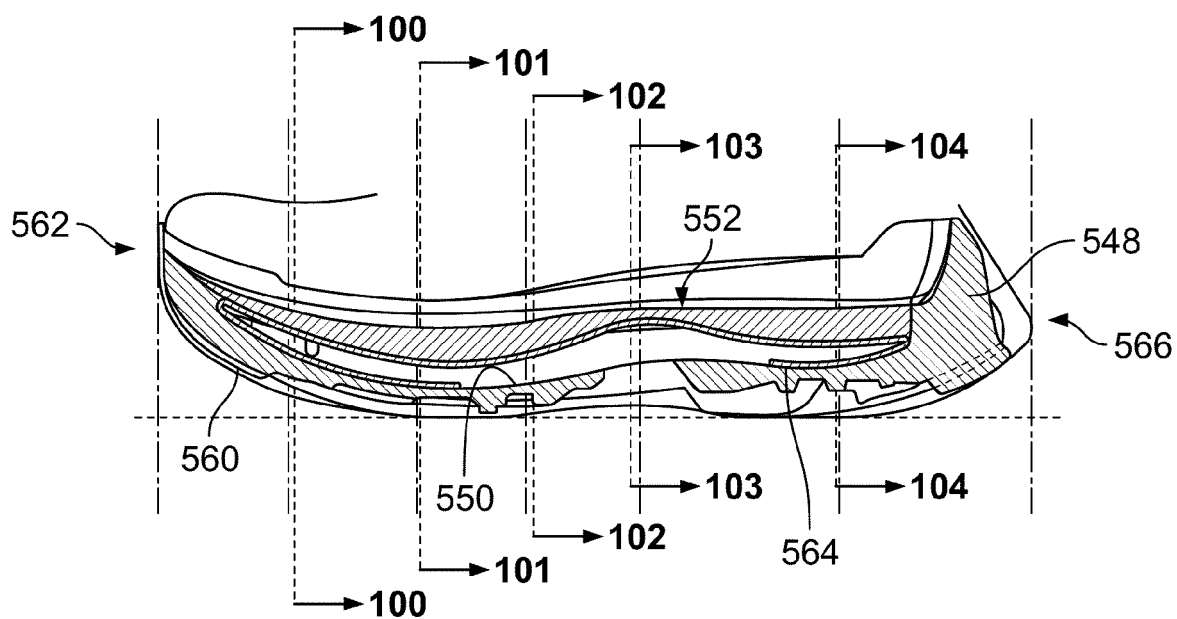


FIG. 99

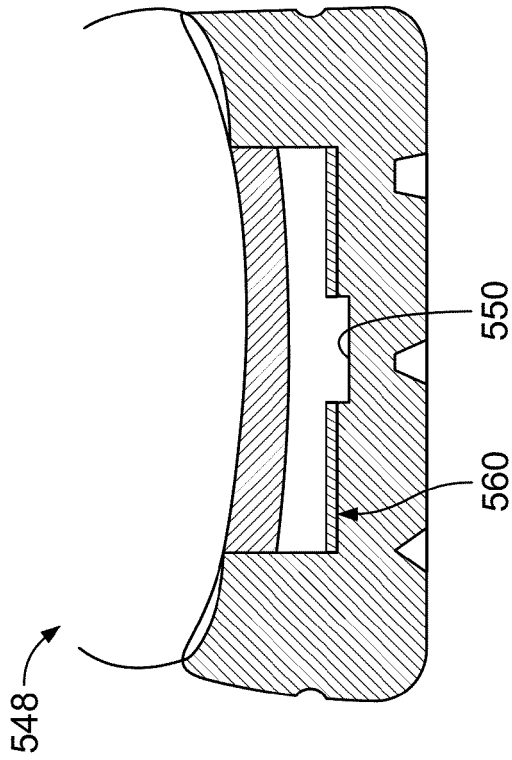


FIG. 100

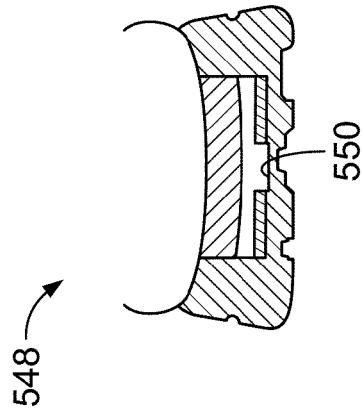


FIG. 101

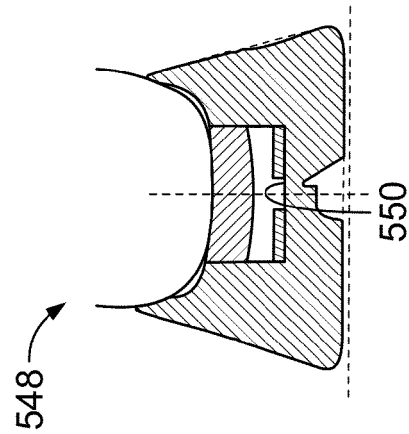


FIG. 103

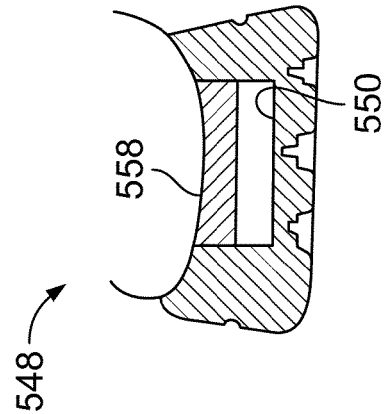


FIG. 102

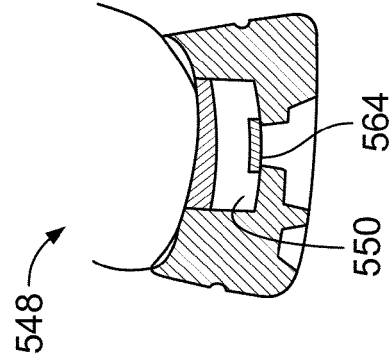


FIG. 104

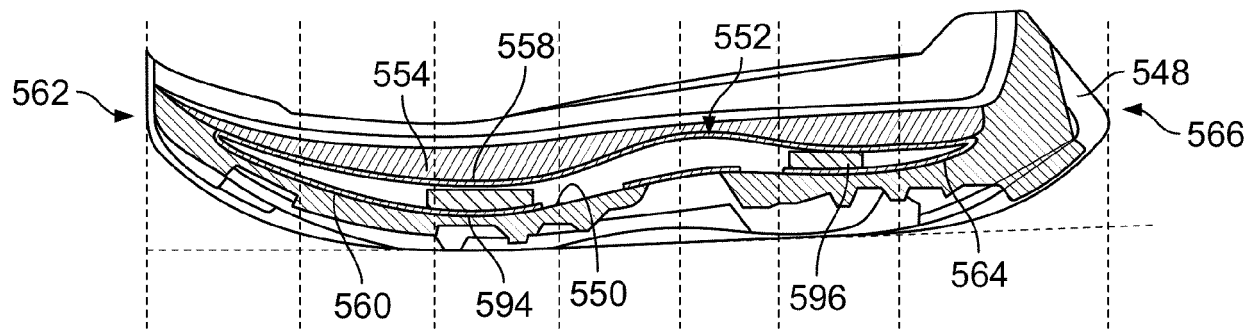


FIG. 105

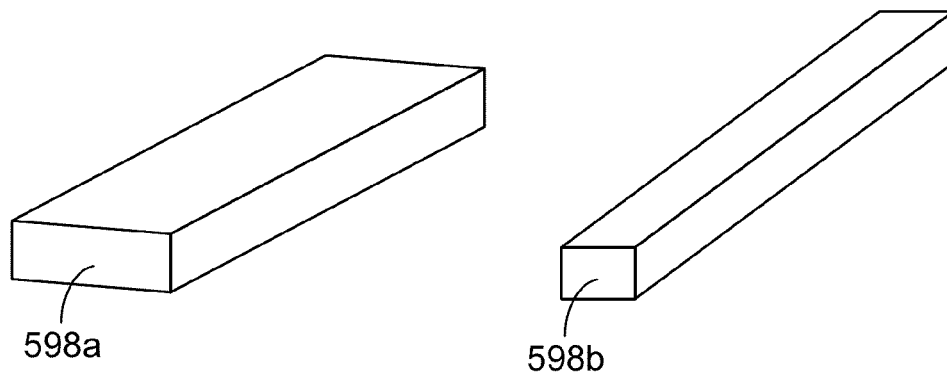


FIG. 106

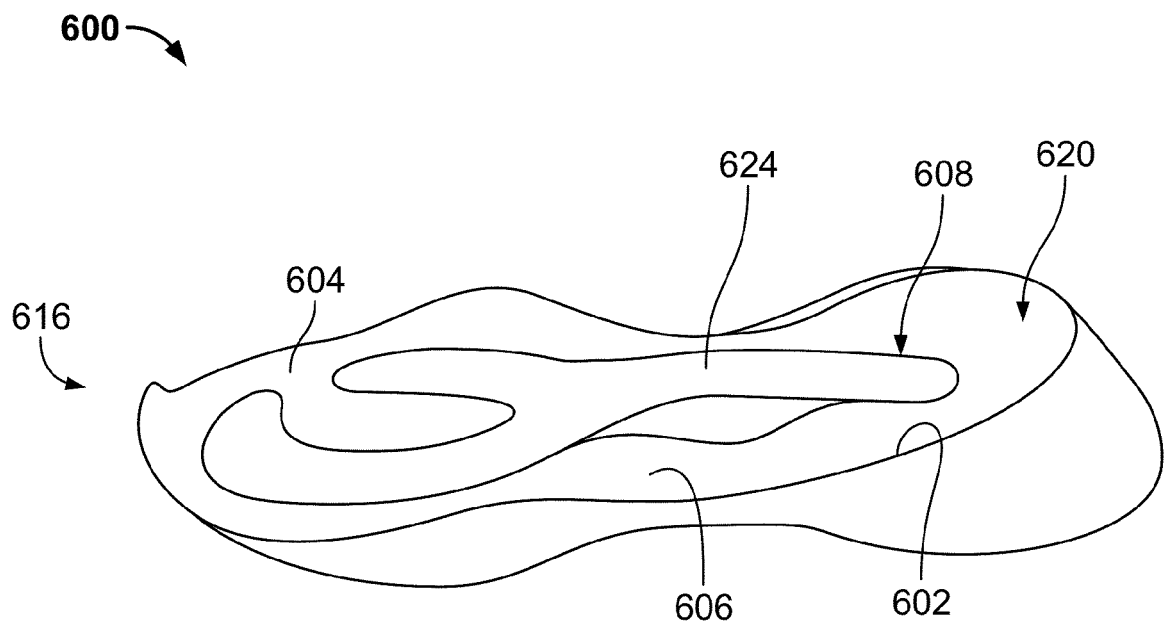


FIG. 107

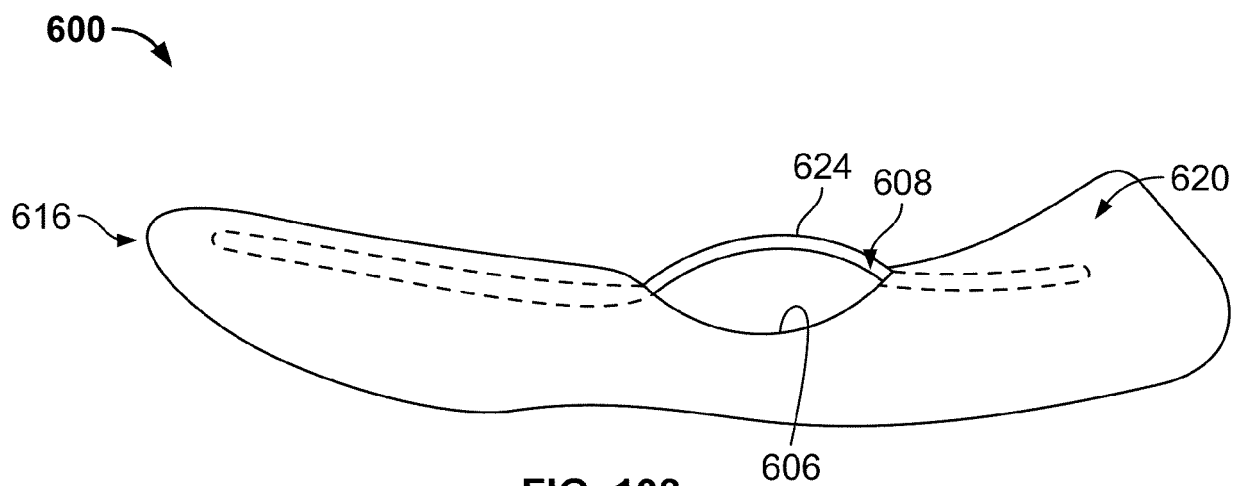
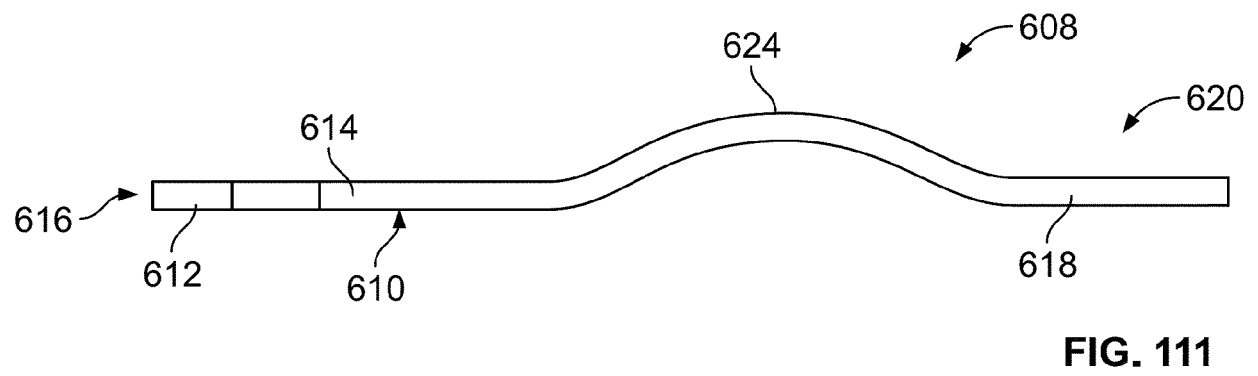
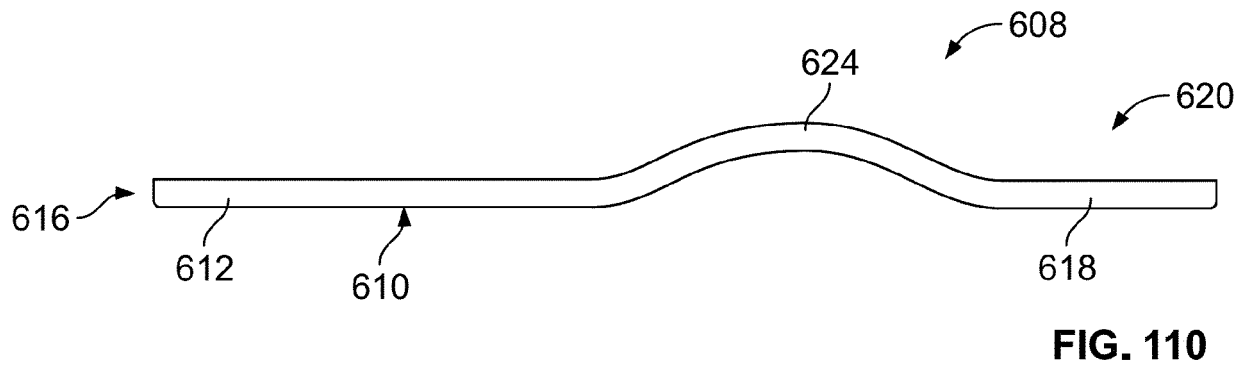
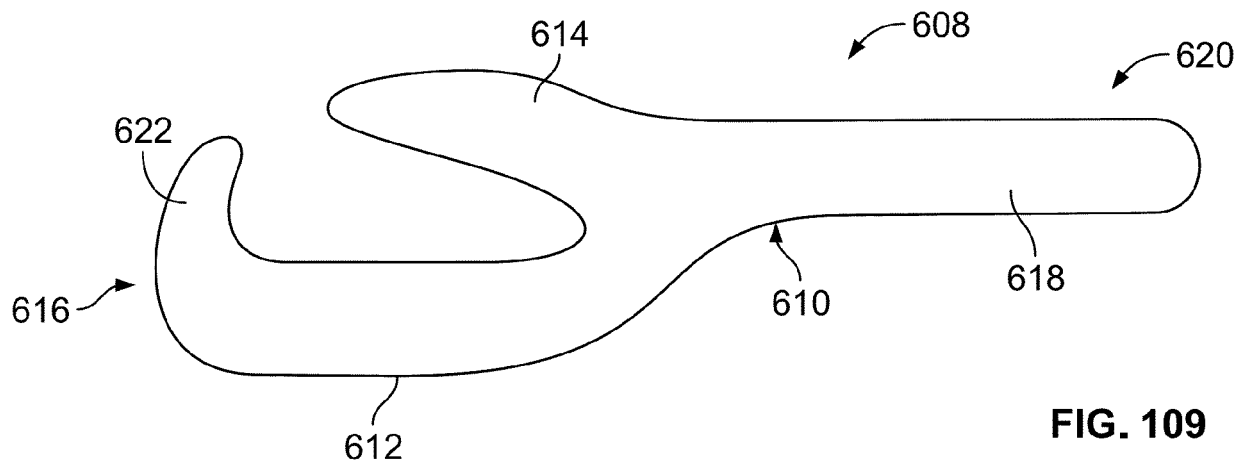


FIG. 108





EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number

EP 22 18 5361

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Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (IPC)
X	WO 2015/138815 A2 (HANSEN THOMAS M [US]) 17 September 2015 (2015-09-17) * figures *	1, 2, 7	INV. A43B13/12 A43B13/18
A	-----	3-6	
X	WO 2016/094714 A1 (BAUM HOWARD [US]; MALMUT ALAN [US]) 16 June 2016 (2016-06-16) * figures *	8-10, 13	
A	-----	11, 12, 14	
X	WO 2015/175605 A1 (ARIAT INT INC [US]) 19 November 2015 (2015-11-19) * figures *	15	
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	WO 2010/033238 A1 (BAUM MALMUT ASSOCIATES LLC [US]; BAUM HOWARD [US]; MALMUT ALAN [US]) 25 March 2010 (2010-03-25) * figures *		

The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (IPC)
			A43B
Place of search			Examiner
The Hague			Gkionaki, Angeliki
Date of completion of the search			
17 November 2022			
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