



(12) **United States Patent**
Chilson et al.

- (54) **HELMET WITH SHOCK ABSORBING INSERTS**
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- (*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 49 days.
- (21) Appl. No.: **13/965,703**
- (22) Filed: **Aug. 13, 2013**

(65) **Prior Publication Data**

US 2015/0047110 A1 Feb. 19, 2015

- (51) **Int. Cl.**
A42B 3/12 (2006.01)
A42B 3/28 (2006.01)
- (52) **U.S. Cl.**
 CPC *A42B 3/28* (2013.01); *A42B 3/124*
 (2013.01); *A42B 3/127* (2013.01); *A42B 3/281*
 (2013.01); *Y10T 29/53996* (2015.01)
- (58) **Field of Classification Search**
 CPC *A42B 3/063*; *A42B 3/069*; *A42B 3/12*;
A42B 3/01; *A42B 3/124*; *A42B 3/127*
 USPC 2/414
 See application file for complete search history.

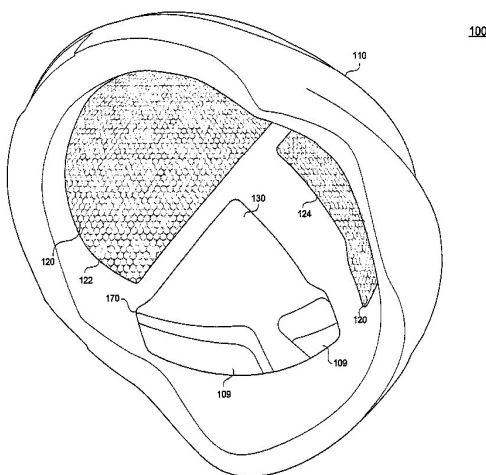
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Helmets and methods for manufacturing a helmet are described. An example helmet includes a shell and a shock absorbing liner attached to the shell. The shock absorbing liner includes a cavity. The helmet a shock absorbing insert formed of a material different than the material of the shock absorbing liner. The cavity is configured to retain the shock absorbing insert.

17 Claims, 6 Drawing Sheets



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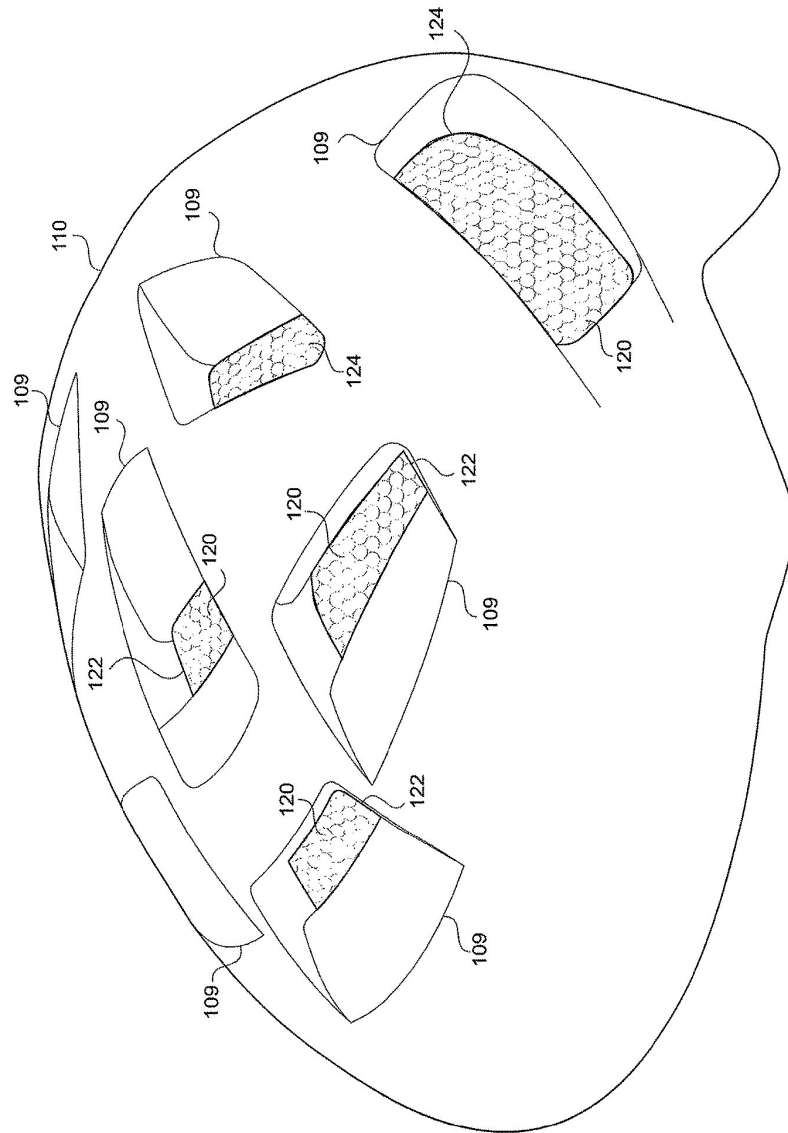
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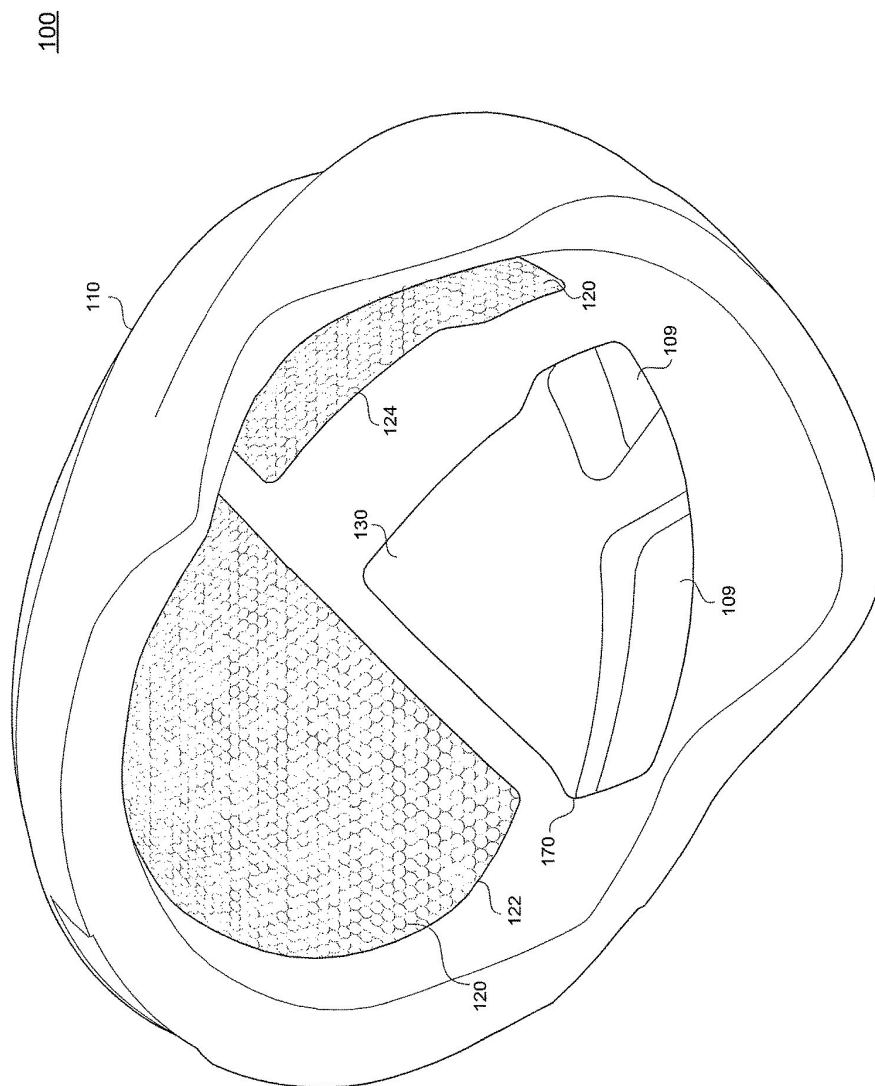


FIG. 2

300

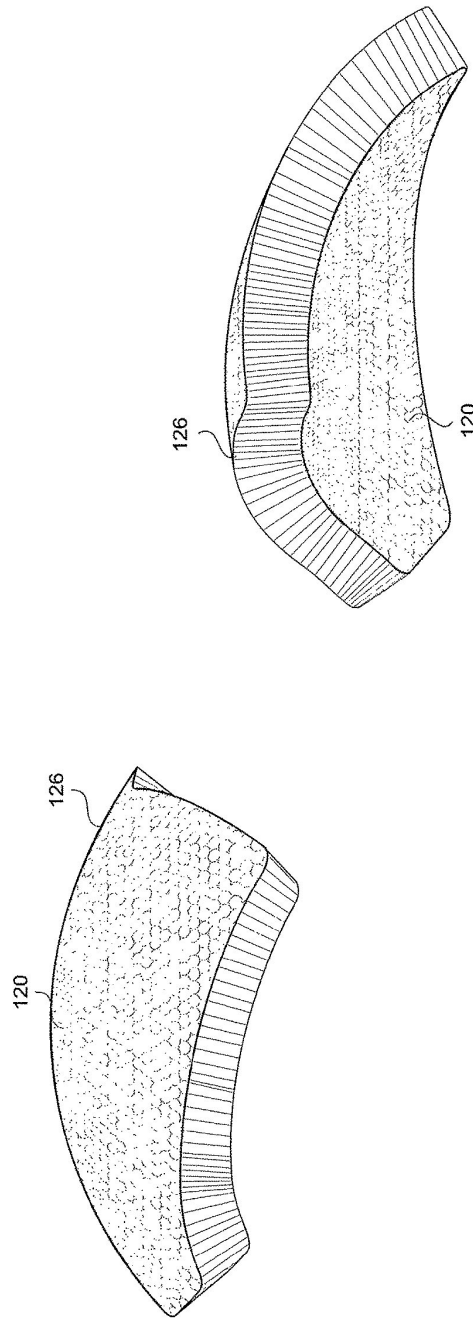


FIG. 3

100

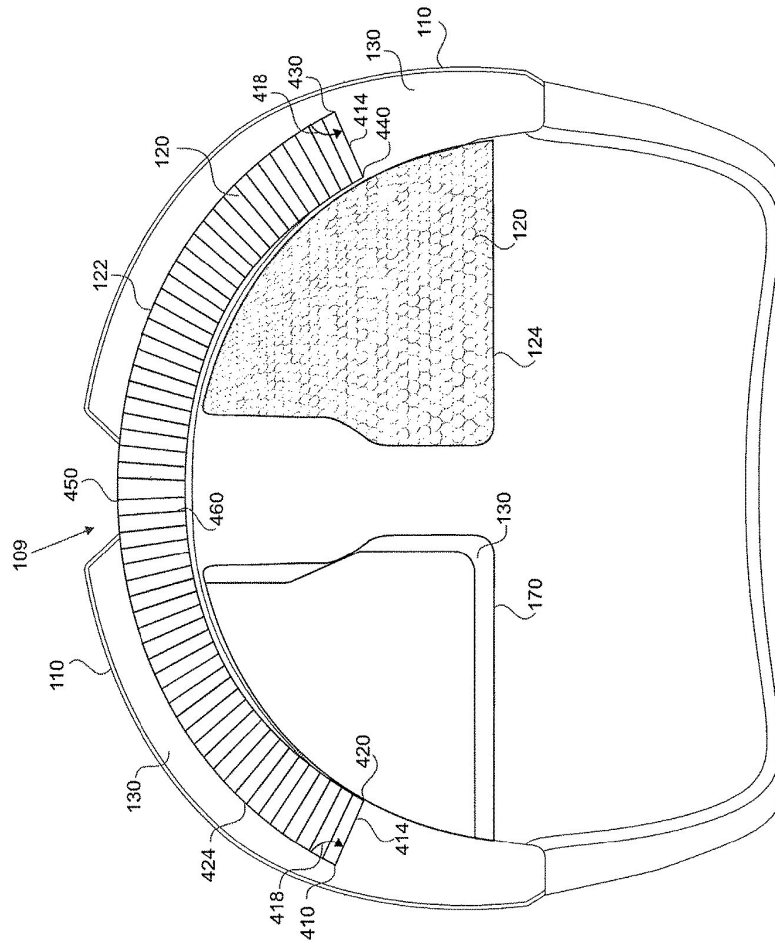


FIG. 4

100

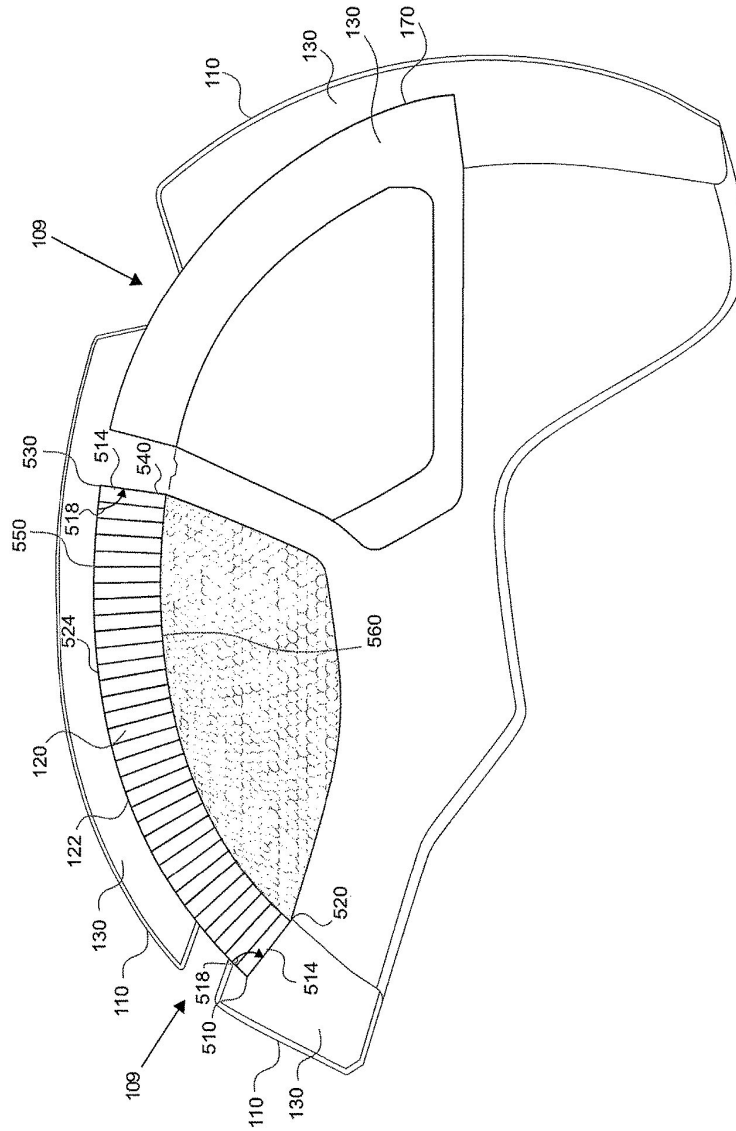


FIG. 5

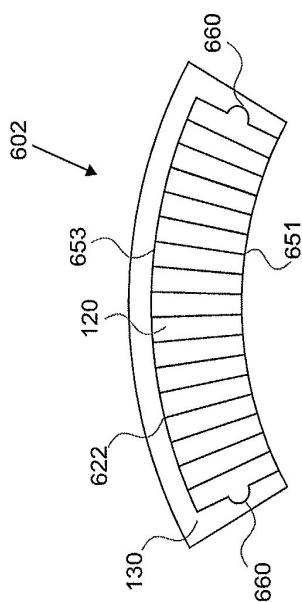


FIG. 6A

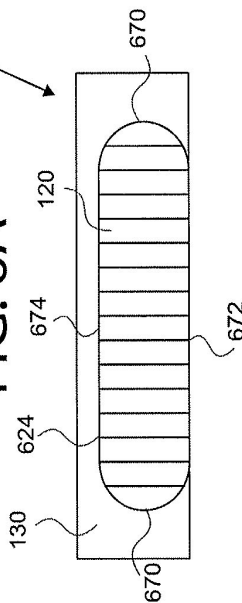


FIG. 6B

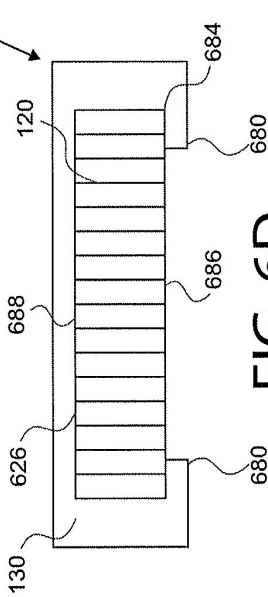


FIG. 6C

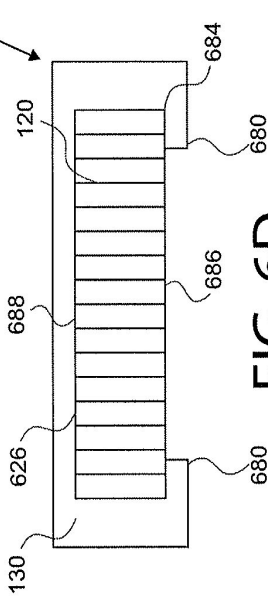


FIG. 6D

1

HELMET WITH SHOCK ABSORBING INSERTS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Helmets are used in many outdoor activities to protect the wearer from head injuries that may occur during the activity. For example, helmets worn during cycling sports protect the rider's head in the event of a fall or crash, as well as from equipment (e.g., bike) that may strike the wearer in the head.

Consumers measure the desirability of a helmet based on various criteria. For example, helmets should provide good protection to the head in the event of an impact, but should also be relatively light in weight and provide sufficient ventilation when worn. Helmets should also be affordable and have a design that facilitates manufacturability. Additionally, a helmet should be esthetically pleasing.

Often, these various criteria compete with one another. For example, a helmet that is light in weight and provides adequate ventilation is generally less impact resistant than one that has a heavier design. That is, a helmet can be designed with a harder shell material that is generally heavier than other lighter shell materials resulting in a helmet that provides greater protection but is not as light as desirable. A helmet may be designed to have less ventilation cavities to improve coverage of the head in the event of an impact, but this results in a helmet having less ventilation than is desirable. Additionally, a helmet providing good head protection and is light in weight may be complicated to manufacture and can be expensive.

Therefore, there is a need for alternative helmet designs that can balance various competing factors that are used in measuring the desirability of a helmet.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is an isometric view of the front, top, and left side of a helmet according to an embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 2 is an isometric view of the left side and the inside of the helmet of FIG. 1 including shock absorbing inserts according to an embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 3 includes isometric views of the shock absorbing inserts of FIG. 2.

FIG. 4 is a left to right vertical cross-sectional view of the helmet of FIG. 1 including a cross-section of a front shock absorbing insert.

FIG. 5 is a front to back vertical cross-sectional view of the helmet of FIG. 1 including a cross-section of the front shock absorbing insert, and a cross-section of a cavity for a rear shock absorbing insert.

FIGS. 6A-D are cross sectional views of shock absorbing insert shapes according to various embodiments of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The present invention is generally directed to a helmet formed having a shell, a shock absorbing liner formed from a first shock absorbing material (e.g., expanded polystyrene (EPS) material, expanded polypropylene (EPP) material, or another suitable shock absorbing material). The shock absorbing liner includes one or more cavities (e.g., openings, recesses, etc.) having a shape to receive a shock absorbing insert formed from a second shock absorbing material (e.g., a honeycomb material). The shape of the insert relative to a shape of a cavity (or cavity) in the first shock absorbing material is such that the insert must be deformed (e.g.,

2

compressed) in order to be removed from the cavity in the first shock absorbing material. Many of the specific details of certain embodiments of the invention are presented in the following description and in FIGS. 1-6A-D to provide a thorough understanding of such embodiments. One skilled in the art will understand, however, that the present invention may have additional embodiments, or that the present invention may be practiced without several of the details described in the following description.

FIG. 1 illustrates a helmet 100 according to an embodiment of the invention. The helmet 100 includes a shell 110 having vents 109 to provide ventilation to the head of a wearer. Viewed from inside the helmet 100, the shell 110 generally forms a bowl shape. Visible through the vents 109 of the shell 110 are inserts 122 and 124 constructed of a second shock absorbing material 120. As will be described further, in some embodiments the second shock absorbing material 120 may be a honeycomb material. A honeycomb material may be used to provide impact absorption and have tubes with open longitudinal ends that allow air to freely flow through the tubes in the shell 110 to the head of the wearer. For example, the honeycomb material includes tubes arranged in a closely packed array. In some embodiments, a visor (not shown) may be optionally included with the helmet 100. The visor may be attached to a front of the shell 110, or alternatively, integrally formed with a front of the shell 110.

FIG. 2 illustrates the helmet 100 depicted in FIG. 1 from another view. As explained above, the shell generally forms a bowl shape, and the shock absorbing liner 130 lines at least a portion of the interior of the shell 110. The shock absorbing liner 130 may include cavities into which inserts 122 and 124 are inserted. The cavities may be shaped to hold inserts 122 and 124 made of the second shock absorbing material 120. Note that an insert 126 is removed to show a cavity (e.g., an opening, a recess, etc.) 170 of the shock absorbing liner 130 in which the insert 126 may be inserted. Together, the shock absorbing liner 130 and the installed inserts 122, 124, and 126 generally form a bowl shape having a concave portion that is configured to receive a wearer's head.

FIG. 3 illustrates two views of an insert 126 according to an embodiment of the invention. The shock absorbing liner 126 may be placed in the cavity 170 of FIG. 2. As explained, the insert 126 may be constructed of a second shock absorbing material 120. In some embodiments, the second shock absorbing material 120 may be a porous shock absorbing material. For example, the second shock absorbing material 120 of the insert 126 may include a honeycomb material that includes an array of energy absorbing cells. In addition to providing impact absorption, each of the cells may include a tube, which may allow air to pass through, providing ventilation to the head of the wearer of the helmet 100 of FIG. 1 or FIG. 2. The insert 126 may have a shape relative to a shape of the cavity 170 of FIG. 2 where removing the insert 126 from the cavity 170 requires manually deforming (e.g., compressing) the insert 126. Examples of shapes of the insert 126 relative to a shape of the cavity 170 are described further with reference to FIGS. 6A-D. The tubes may be hollow structures having any regular or irregular geometry. The honeycomb structure of the insert 126 may provide improved shock absorbing protection as compared with the material of the shock absorbing liner 130, for example, EPS material or the EPP material, or other materials. It will be appreciated that inserts 122 and 124 of FIG. 2 may be formed from a similar material as the insert 126 of FIG. 3. Additionally, the inserts 122 and 124 may have a shape relative to a shape of each of their respective cavity in the

3

shock absorbing liner 130 of FIG. 2 that requires compressing the inserts 122 and 124 to be removed from their respective cavity. For example, an insert may have a curved shape corresponding to a curved interior surface of a respective cavity in the shock absorbing liner in which the insert is inserted.

The shock absorbing liner 130 may be formed to have an inner surface that is configured to receive the wearer's head with one or more cavities, such as the cavity 170. The cavity 170 may extend all of the way through the shock absorbing liner 130. In some embodiments, one or more cavities may not extend all of the way through the shock absorbing liner 130. The shock absorbing liner 130 may be attached (e.g., bonded) to an inner surface of the shell 110. The shock absorbing liner 130 may be seamless, aside from the seam formed with the inserts 122, 124, and 126. For example, the shock absorbing liner 130 may not be interrupted by joints or seams that may compromise the shock absorbing capabilities and/or the structural integrity of the shock absorbing liner 130 during impact of the helmet 100. That is, forming the shock absorbing liner 130 to have an inner surface that is seamless may result in greater structural strength than an inner surface that includes seams between different portions of the shock absorbing liner 130. Although a seamed shock absorbing liner 130 may be less desirable than one having a seamless inner surface, such a construction is within the scope of the present invention.

FIG. 2 depicts the cavity 170 in the shock absorbing liner 130 without the insert 124 installed. The depth and shape of the cavity 170 may be based on, for example, a desired level of shock absorbing protection, the shock absorbing characteristics of the first and second shock absorbing materials, and the size of the inner concave portion for receiving a wearer's head. Generally, a shape of the inserts 122, 124, 126 relative to a shape of the respective cavity 170 is such that the insert 122, 124, or 126 is required to be manually deformed (e.g., compressed) in order to be removed from the cavity 170. The inserts 122, 124, and 126 may be retained in the respective cavity 170 based on an expansion pressure of the sides of the insert 122, 124, and 126 against the sides of the respective cavity 170. In other embodiments, the insert 122, 124, 126 may be keyed to the cavity 170 in such a way that prevents removal of the insert 122, 124, and 126 from the cavity 170 without manually deforming the insert 122, 124, and 126. Thus, the inserts 122, 124, and 126 may be retained in the cavity 170 without being bonded or using an adhesive material. In some embodiments, the insert 122, 124, and 126 may have a thickness less than or equal to a thickness of the shock absorbing liner 130.

The shell 110 may be formed from polycarbonate (PC), Acrylonitrile butadiene styrene (ABS). The shell 110 may be formed from materials suitable for use in an in-mold manufacturing process. The shock absorbing liner 130 may be formed from various materials, for example, EPS material, EPP material, or other suitable shock absorbing materials. In some embodiments, the shell 110 and shock absorbing liner 130 components may be formed using in-mold technology. For example, the shell 110 may be formed by injection molding techniques, or from a PC flat sheet which is first thermally formed and then installed in the final EPS mold to heat bond with the final foam shape. As known, the shells may be insert molded. The shell 110 may be formed from other materials and/or using other manufacturing techniques as well. Thus the present invention is not limited to the particular materials previously described or made using an in-mold process.

4

As previously described, the second shock absorbing material 120 of the inserts 122, 124, and 126 may be a honeycomb material. The honeycomb material may have tubes that allow air to freely flow through to the head of the wearer. The honeycomb material may include an array of energy absorbing cells. Each of the cells may include a tube. In an embodiment, the tubes may be oriented along a thickness of the insert. In some embodiments, a tube of the insert may be generally oriented along a longitudinal axis that is normal to an adjacent point on the inner surface of the shell 110. For example, the longitudinal axis of a tube of a cell may be arranged at an angle of between 0° and 45° to a line normal to the adjacent point on the inner surface of the outer shell 110. The tubes may be a hollow structure having any regular or irregular geometry. In some embodiments, the tubes have a circular cylindrical structure or circular conical structure. As depicted in FIG. 1, at least a portion of one or more of the inserts 122, 124, and 126 may align with a vent 109 in the shell 110 to provide ventilation. Thus, a vent 109 of the shell 110 overlaps (e.g., aligns) with a portion of the cavity 170 of the shock absorbing liner 130. The vent 109 aligned with the insert 122, 124, or 126 is configured to allow air to flow through the vent 109 and the insert 122, 124, and 126 to the head of a wearer.

Helmet straps (not shown) may be attached to the shell 110 and/or the shock absorbing liner 130, and used to secure the helmet to a wearer's head. In some embodiments, the helmet straps are attached to helmet strap loops, which may be attached to the shock absorbing liner 130, for example, by having a portion embedded in the shock absorbing liner 130. Other attachment techniques may be used as well, for example, adhesive or other bonding techniques.

It will be appreciated that while FIG. 2 depicts three inserts 122, 124, and 126 in the first shock absorbing material, it would be recognized that the helmet may include more or less than three inserts. Further, the total area of the inserts may cover more than 50% of the inner surface that receives the wearer's head, and, in some embodiments, more than 90%.

FIG. 4 illustrates a vertical cross section of the helmet 100 of FIG. 1, including a cross section the insert 122 having the second shock absorbing material 120. The insert 122 is shown inserted having the second shock absorbing material 120. The cavity 170 is shown without the insert 122 installed. As previously described, a shape of the inserts 122, 124, 126 relative to a shape of the respective cavity 170 is such that the inserts 122, 124, or 126 are required to be manually deformed in order to be removed from the respective cavity 170. The cavity in which the insert 122 is inserted is configured such that the distance along the curved side 450 between the sidewalls 414 of the cavity is greater than the distance along the curved side 460 between the sidewalls 414. Forming the cavity in the shock absorbing liner 130 in his manner causes the insert 122 to be retained in the cavity, and removal of the insert 122 may require deforming the insert 122. As a result of the cavity in the shock absorbing liner 130 being configured to cause a distance along the curved side 450 from point 410 to point 430 that is greater than a distance along the curved side 460 from point 420 to point 440, the insert 122 may be retained in the cavity without bonding or use of an adhesive material.

The insert 122 may be removed from the cavity, for example, by deforming the insert to cause the curved side 450 to fit through the opening between points 420 and 440. The cavity may be configured to have an interior angle 418 formed by sidewall 414 relative to an interior surface 424 of the cavity to provide a distance between sidewalls 414 along

5

the curved side **450** to be longer than a distance between sidewalls **414** along the curved side **460**. In some embodiments, the interior angle **418** is 90 degrees or less. In some embodiments, the interior angle **418** is acute. Other configurations of cavities may be used in the alternative, or in combination to retain the insert **122** in the respective cavity without bonding or use of adhesive material. Examples of other configurations of cavities will be described in more detail with reference to FIGS. **6A-D**.

FIG. **5** illustrates a front to back vertical cross section of the helmet **100** of FIG. **1**, including a cross section of the insert **122**, and a cross section of the cavity **170** configured to receive the insert **126**. Similar to the description with reference to FIG. **4**, the cavity **170** may be configured to have a front to back distance along the curved side **550** to be greater than the front to back distance along the curved side **560**. The cavity may be further configured to have an interior angle **518** formed by sidewall **514** relative to an interior surface **524** of the cavity to provide a front to back distance along the curved side **550** to be greater than a front to back distance along the curved side **560**. In some embodiments, the interior angle **518** is 90 degrees or less. In some embodiments, the interior angle **518** is acute. Thus, the insert **122** (and the corresponding cavity in the shock absorbing liner **130**) having the distance across the curved side **550** from point **510** to point **530** that is greater than the corresponding distance across the curved side **560** from point **520** to point **540**. The insert **122** may be removed from the cavity by deforming the insert **122** to cause the curved side **550** to fit through the opening between points **520** and **540**. Other configurations for cavities will be described with reference to FIGS. **6A-D**.

FIGS. **6A-D** depict embodiments of cross sections of cavities that are configured to retain a shock absorbing insert. FIG. **6A** illustrates an embodiment including a curved shape with straight sidewalls **601**. FIG. **6B** illustrates an embodiment including a curved shape with recesses in the sidewalls that receive a corresponding protrusion formed in the shock absorbing insert. FIG. **6C** illustrates an embodiment including a flat rectangular shape with a semicircular recess at each sidewall that receives a corresponding semicircular portion formed in the shock absorbing insert. FIG. **6D** illustrates an embodiment including a flat rectangular shape with straight sidewalls and a lip configured to retain the shock absorbing insert. The cavities and corresponding shock absorbing inserts of FIGS. **6A-6B** may be used in addition, or in the alternative, to the cavities and correspondence shock absorbing inserts previously discussed.

The embodiment depicted in FIG. **6A** is similar to the cross sections of insert **122** in FIGS. **4** and **5**. The cavity in the first shock absorbing material **130** is such that the distance across the curved side **652** of the insert **620** is greater than the corresponding distance across the curved side **650** of the insert **620**.

The embodiment **602** depicted in FIG. **6B** includes protrusions (e.g., or keys) **660** around at least a portion of an edge (e.g., sidewall) of the insert **622** to retain the insert in the cavity of the first shock absorbing material **130**. The protrusions **660** may be keyed to a recess in the shock absorbing liner **130**. Thus, in order to remove the insert **622** from the cavity of the first shock absorbing material **130**, the insert **622** may have to be compressed to release the protrusions **660** from the respective recesses in the shock absorbing liner **130**. The protrusions **660** may have rounded or square corners. While the protrusions are located in the center of an edge of the insert **622**, they may be placed off-center. Further, a size of the protrusions **660** may pro-

6

trude further out from the edge of the insert **622** than depicted, and the recesses may be deeper into the shock absorbing liner **130** than depicted. Additionally, it will be recognized that the insert **622** may include more than one protrusion on each edge. The insert **622** may have similar curved side as those depicted in FIG. **6A**, relative distance and angles of sides of the insert **622** may be the same as those described with reference to FIGS. **4**, **5**, and **6A**. In other embodiments, the distance across the curved side **653** may be equal to or less than the corresponding distance across the curved side **651**. In other embodiments, sides **651** and **653** may be straight and have equal distances.

The embodiment **603** depicted in FIG. **6C** includes the insert **624** with rounded edges (e.g., sidewalls) **670** to retain the insert in the cavity of the first shock absorbing material **130**. A recess may be formed in the shock absorbing liner **130** that matches a shape of the rounded edges **670**. Thus, in order to remove the insert **624** from the cavity of the first shock absorbing material **130**, the insert **624** may have to be compressed to release the rounded edges **670** from the respective recesses in the shock absorbing material **130**. The rounded edges **670** may form a semicircular shape or a semi-ovular shape. The insert **624** may have straight sides, where a distance across of side **672** is equal to a corresponding distance across side **674**. In other embodiments, the sides **672** and **674** may be curved as described with reference to FIGS. **6A** and **6B**, where the distance across side **674** is greater than the corresponding distance across side **672**.

The embodiment **604** depicted in FIG. **6D** includes tabs **680** formed in the first shock absorbing material (or affixed to the first shock absorbing material) that protrude laterally across the cavity and are configured to retain the insert **626** in the cavity of the first shock absorbing material **130**. Thus, in order to remove the insert **626** from the cavity of the first shock absorbing material **130**, the insert **624** may have to be compressed to bypass the tabs **680** from the respective from the cavity of the **130**. Each of the tabs **680** may extend under the insert **626** by an equal amount. The insert **626** may have straight sides, where a distance across side **686** is equal to a corresponding distance across side **688**. In other embodiments, the sides **686** and **688** may be curved as described with reference to FIGS. **6A** and **6B**, where the distance across side **688** is greater than the corresponding distance across side **686**.

The above description of illustrated embodiments of the invention is not intended to be exhaustive or to limit the invention to the precise form disclosed. While specific embodiments of, and examples of, the invention are described in the foregoing for illustrative purposes, various equivalent modifications are possible within the scope of the invention, as those skilled in the relevant art will realize. Moreover, the various embodiments described above can be combined to provide further embodiments. Accordingly, the invention is not limited by the disclosure, but instead the scope of the invention is to be determined entirely by the following claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A helmet, comprising:

- a shell comprising a plurality of vents including a first vent defining a first opening and a second vent defining a second opening;
- a shock absorbing liner adjacent to and attached to the shell and comprising a cavity at least partially aligned with the plurality of vents; and
- a shock absorbing insert positioned in and substantially filling the cavity such that the shock absorbing insert is visible through and spans across at least a portion of

7

each of the plurality of vents, wherein at least a portion of the shock absorbing liner is positioned between the shell and the shock absorbing insert, wherein the shock absorbing insert comprises an array of energy absorbing cells, each having respective open first longitudinal ends and open second longitudinal ends, wherein the first longitudinal ends of a first plurality of adjacent cells of the array of energy absorbing cells are positioned within a perimeter of the first opening and the first longitudinal ends of a second plurality of adjacent cells of the array of energy absorbing cells are positioned within a perimeter of the second opening such that air is able to flow from an exterior side of the helmet through each of the first and second vents and through a respective one of the first and second plurality of adjacent cells toward an interior of the helmet.

2. The helmet of claim 1, wherein the shock absorbing liner is seamless.

3. The helmet of claim 1, wherein the array of energy absorbing cells of the shock absorbing insert comprises an array of tubes.

4. The helmet of claim 3, wherein the tubes are cylindrical in shape.

5. The helmet of claim 4, wherein the tubes are oriented along a thickness of the shock absorbing insert.

6. The helmet of claim 1, wherein the shock absorbing insert is one of a plurality of shock absorbing inserts which extend along more than 90% of an inner surface of the helmet.

7. The helmet of claim 1, wherein the shock absorbing insert extends to a portion of the helmet configured to be positioned at a back of a wearer's head.

8. The helmet of claim 1, wherein the shock absorbing liner comprises a first shock absorbing material defining, at least in part, an interior side of the helmet, and wherein the shock absorbing insert is one of a plurality of honeycomb inserts further defining the interior side of the helmet such that a larger portion of the interior side of the helmet is defined by the plurality of honeycomb inserts than by the first shock absorbing material.

9. A helmet comprising:

a shell having an interior surface and an exterior surface and defining a first vent a second vent, a third vent, and a fourth vent;

a shock absorbing liner coupled to the interior surface of the shell and defining a first insert cavity and a second insert cavity, wherein the first insert cavity is positioned beneath the first vent and the second vent and the second insert cavity is positioned beneath the third vent and the fourth vent;

a first shock absorbing insert positioned within the first insert cavity, wherein the first shock absorbing insert spans across at least the first vent and the second vent; and

a second shock absorbing insert positioned within the second insert cavity, wherein the second shock absorbing insert spans across at least the third vent and the fourth vent; wherein the first shock absorbing insert and the second shock absorbing insert are tubular arrays

8

formed of open tubes extending longitudinally relative to a thickness of the shock absorbing liner and direct air from an exterior of the helmet to an interior of the helmet.

10. The helmet of claim 9, wherein

the first insert cavity extends across at least 25% of the interior surface of the shell; and

the second insert cavity extends across at least 25% of the interior surface of the shell.

11. The helmet of claim 10, wherein the first shock absorbing insert and the second shock absorbing insert further span across more than 50% of the interior surface of the shell.

12. A helmet, comprising:

a shell including a first vent defining a first opening and a second vent defining a second opening;

a shock absorbing liner adjacent to and attached to the shell, the shock absorbing liner extends from and that spans across at least a portion of each of the first and second openings; and

a shock absorbing insert positioned in and substantially filling the cavity such that the shock absorbing insert is visible through and spans across at least a portion of each of the first and second vents, wherein the shock absorbing insert comprises an array of hollow structures defining a plurality of adjacent through-passages extending through a thickness of the shock absorbing insert, wherein a first portion of the shock absorbing insert that includes a first group of the plurality of adjacent through-passages overlaps with the first opening to allow air to enter through the first opening and pass through the first group of adjacent through-passages to an interior of the helmet, and wherein a second portion of the shock absorbing insert that includes a second group of the plurality of adjacent through-passages overlaps with the second opening to allow air to enter through the second opening and pass through the second group of adjacent through-passages to the interior of the helmet.

13. The helmet of claim 12, wherein the cavity is configured such that a distance along a first curved side of the shock absorbing insert is greater than a distance along a second curved side of the shock absorbing insert opposite the first curved side. When the shock absorbing insert is positioned in the cavity, the first curved side being closer to the shell than the second curved side.

14. The helmet of claim 12, wherein the shock absorbing insert extends over more than 50% of an interior area of the helmet.

15. The helmet of claim 12, wherein the array of hollow structures comprises an array of tubes oriented along the thickness of the shock absorbing insert.

16. The helmet of claim 15, wherein the tubes are cylindrical or circular conical in shape.

17. The helmet of claim 12, wherein the thickness of the shock absorbing insert is equal to or less than a thickness of the shock absorbing liner.

* * * * *

UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTION

PATENT NO. : 10,736,373 B2
APPLICATION NO. : 13/965703
DATED : August 11, 2020
INVENTOR(S) : James Andrew Chilson et al.

Page 1 of 1

It is certified that error appears in the above-identified patent and that said Letters Patent is hereby corrected as shown below:

In the Claims

Column 8, Line 18	Reads “shell, the shock absorbing liner extends from and that”	Should Read --shell, the shock absorbing liner having a cavity that extends from and--
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Signed and Sealed this
First Day of June, 2021



Drew Hirshfeld
*Performing the Functions and Duties of the
Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and
Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office*

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Page 1 of 1

It is certified that error appears in the above-identified patent and that said Letters Patent is hereby corrected as shown below:

On the Title Page

	Reads	Should Read
Item (73)	"Smith Optics, Inc., Portland, OR (US)"	--Smith Optics, Inc., Portland, OR (US); Koroyd SARL, Monaco, (MC)--

Signed and Sealed this
Twenty-fourth Day of August, 2021



Drew Hirshfeld
*Performing the Functions and Duties of the
Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and
Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office*