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(54) GOLF CLUB HEAD

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Publication Classification

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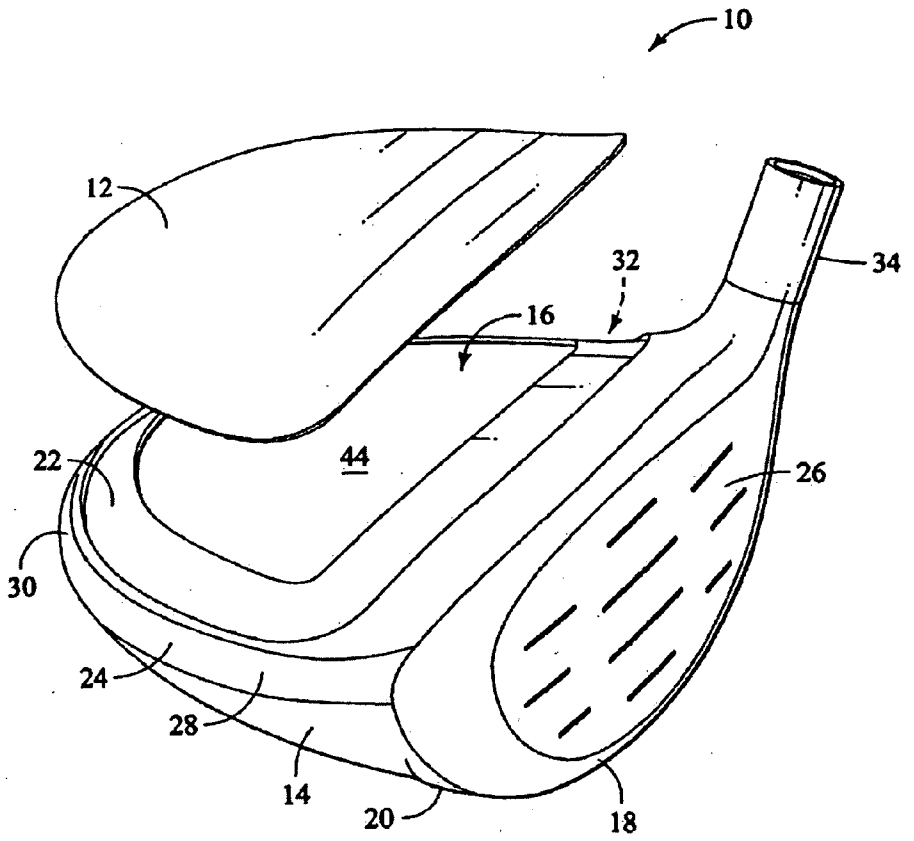
(57) **ABSTRACT**

The present invention resides in a golf club head having a high COR that is durable and has desirable acoustic qualities. The club head includes a body portion, a striking face and a crown forming a hollow cavity of at least 150 cc in volume. The body portion defines a front opening and an upper opening, and it includes a sole and a side section that extends rearward of the front opening. The striking plate is secured to the body portion, enclosing the front opening. While partially assembled, final weighting and/or other attachment of other members to the inner surface of the club head can be preformed, as desired. The crown is secured to the body portion, enclosing the upper opening. A surface veil may also be provided about a junction of the crown and body. The crown has a maximum thickness no greater than about 2 mm. The density of the crown is less than the density of the body portion. At least one of the striking plate and the crown is attached to the second portion by adhesive bonding, and the golf club head has a maximum coefficient of restitution of at least 0.80.



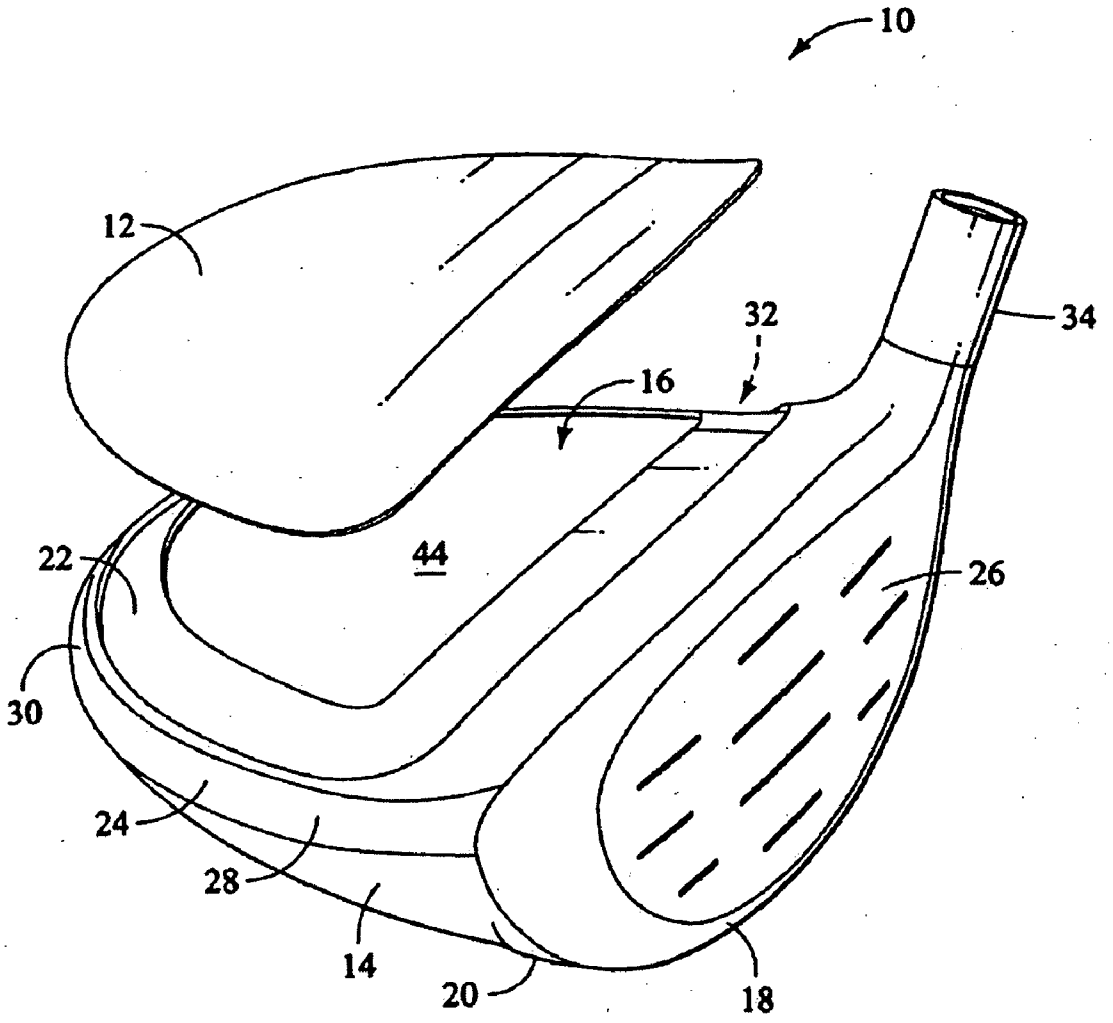


FIG. 1

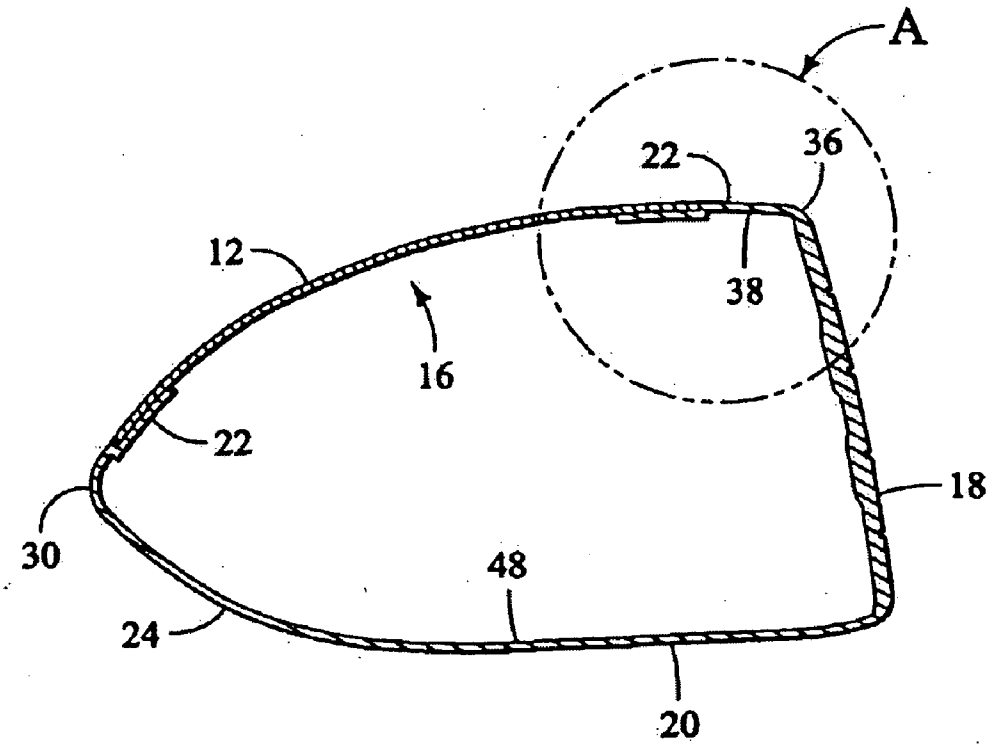


FIG. 2

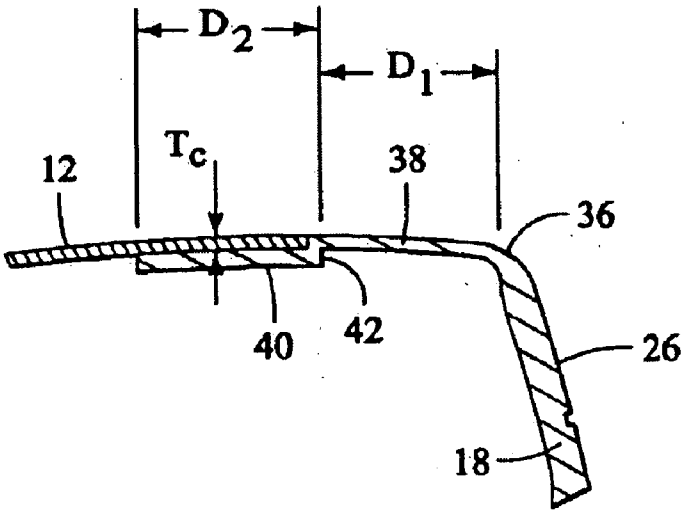


FIG. 3

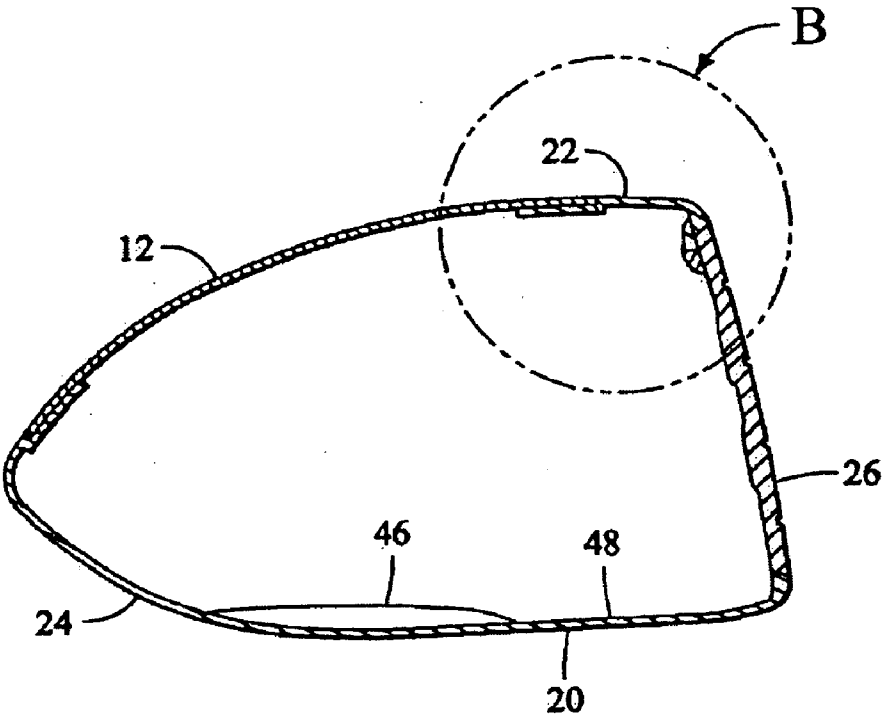


FIG. 4

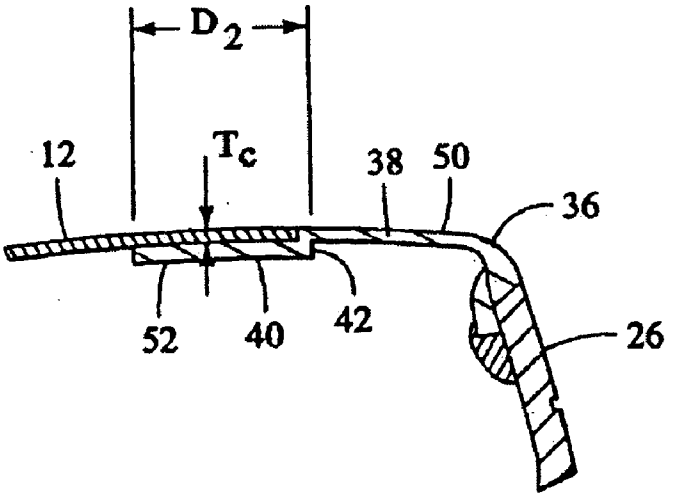


FIG. 5

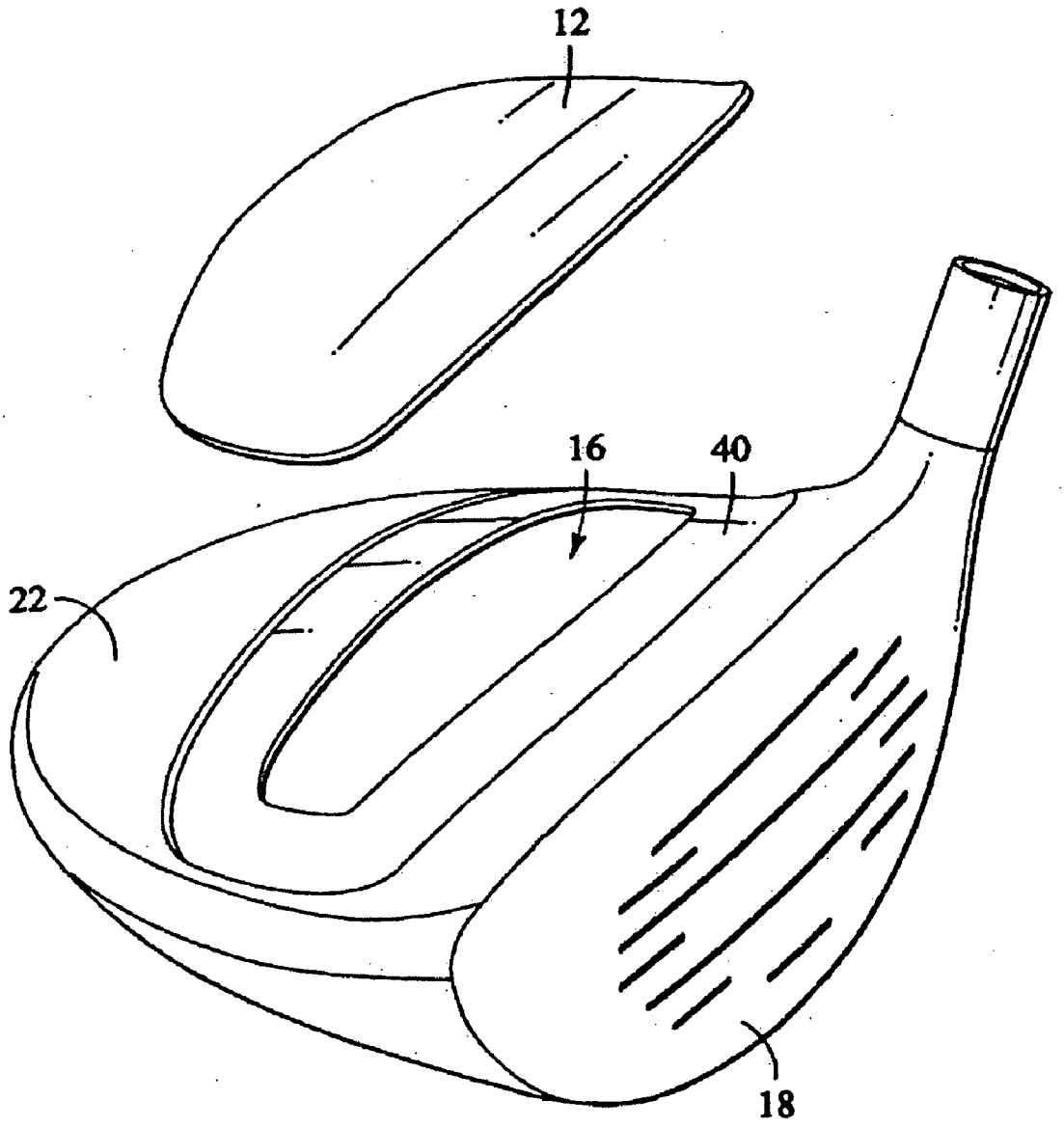


FIG. 6

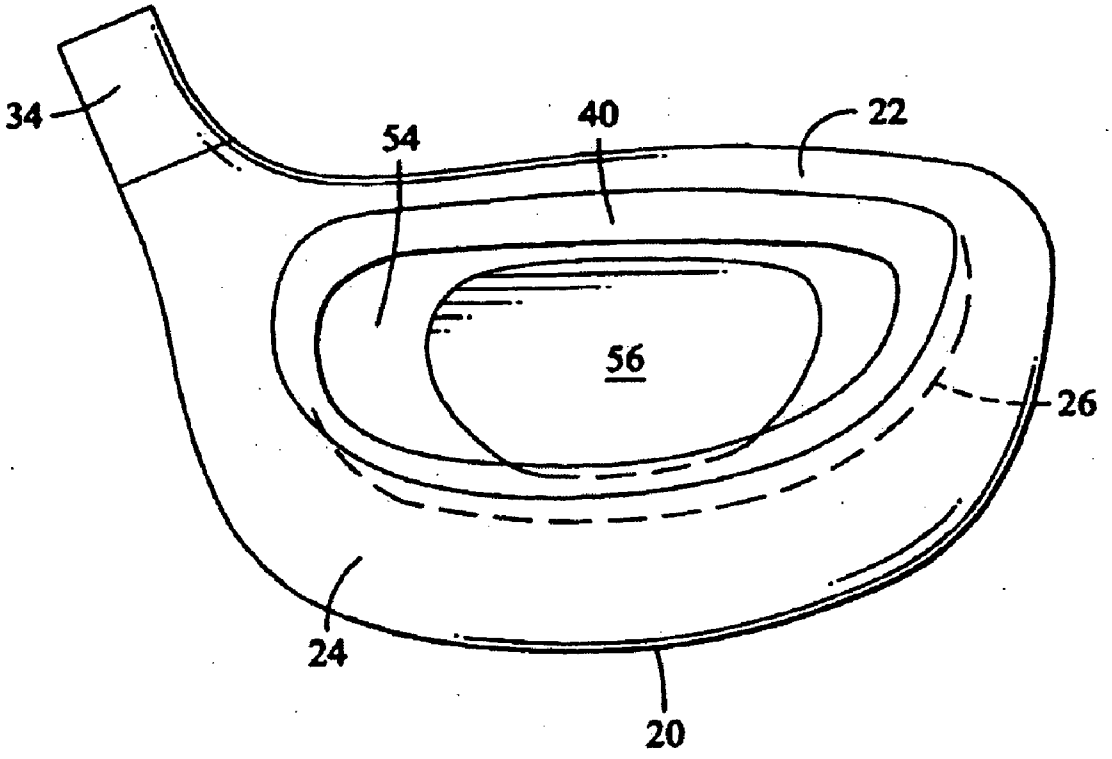


FIG. 7

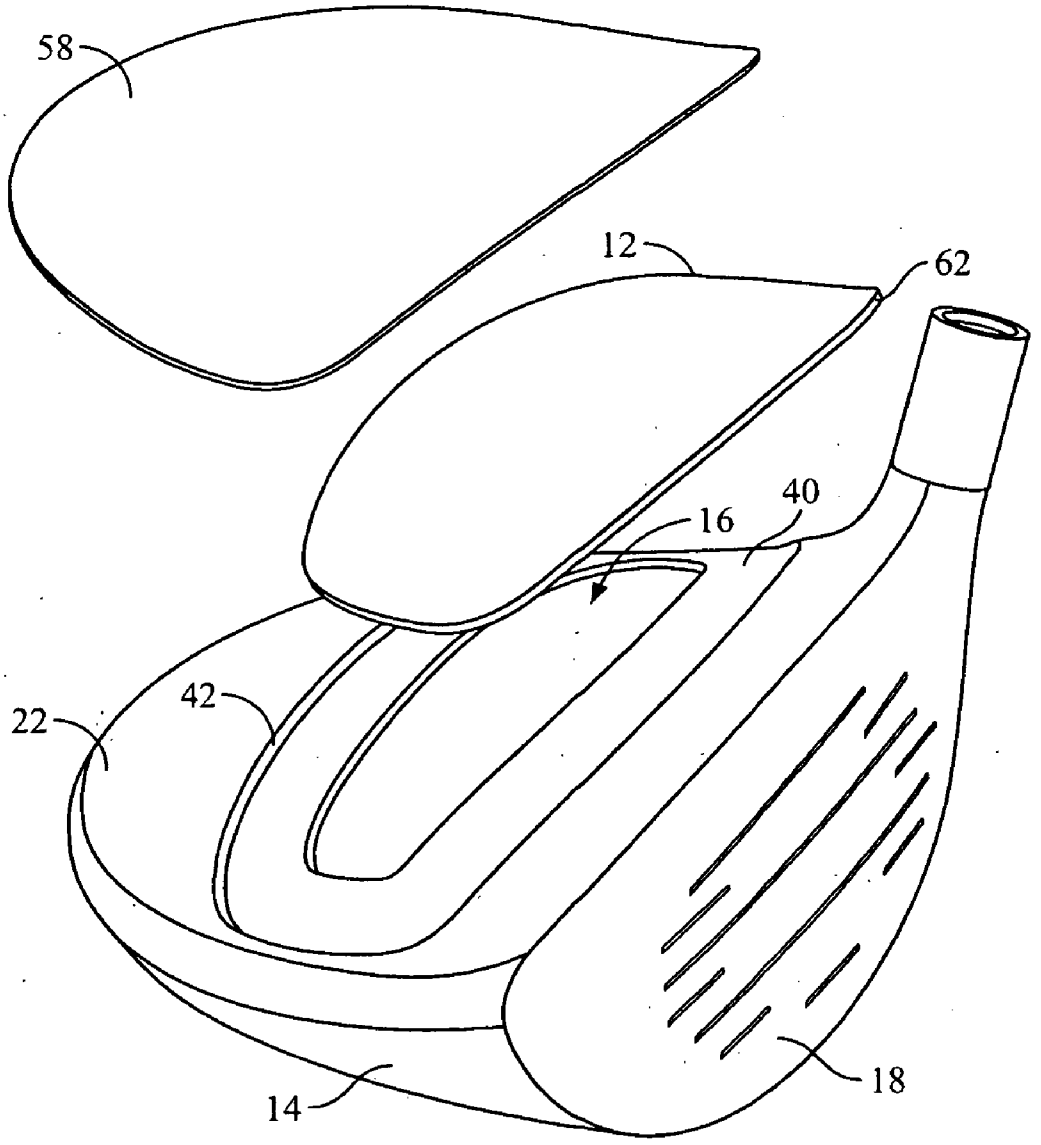


FIG. 8

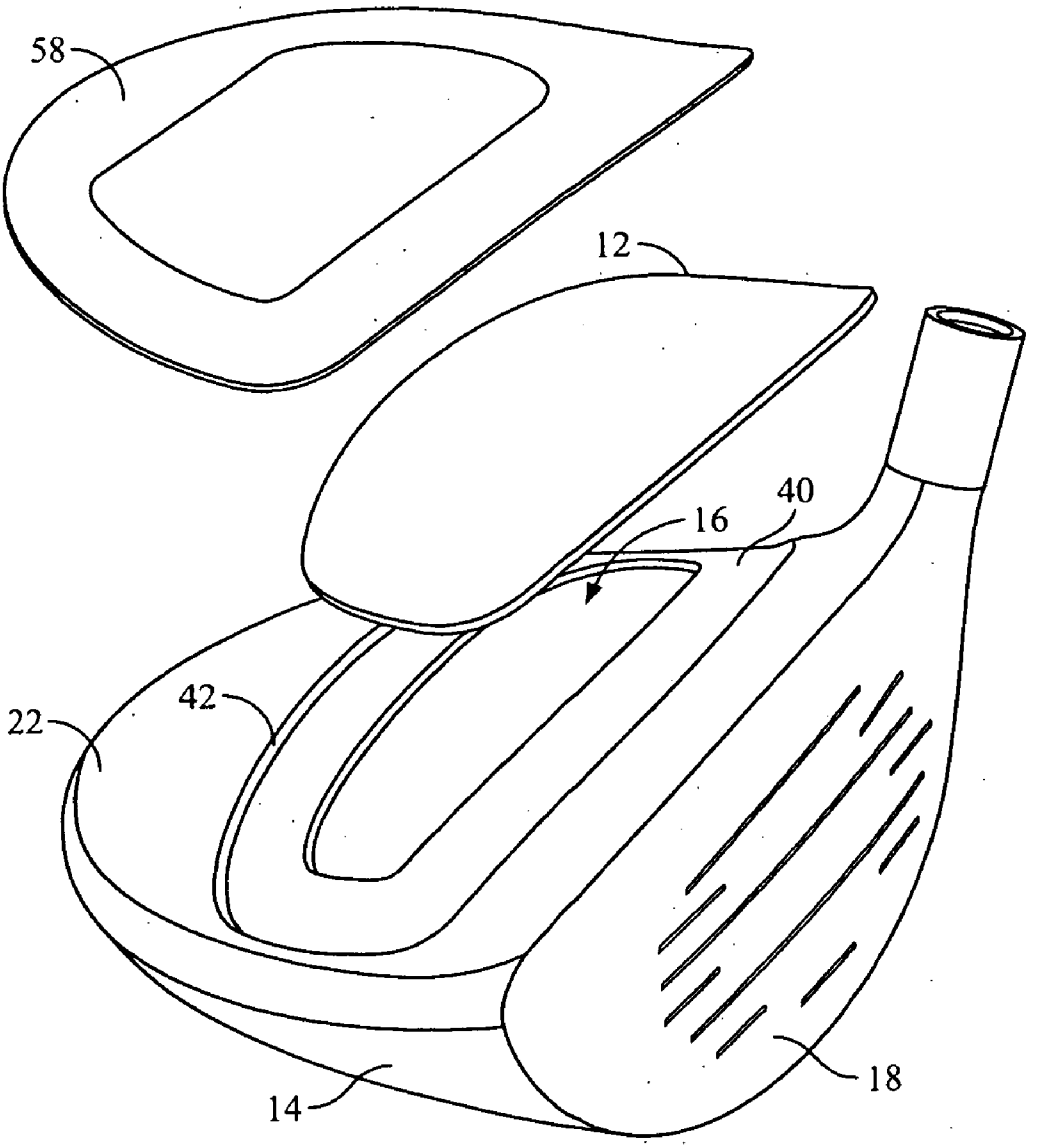


FIG. 9

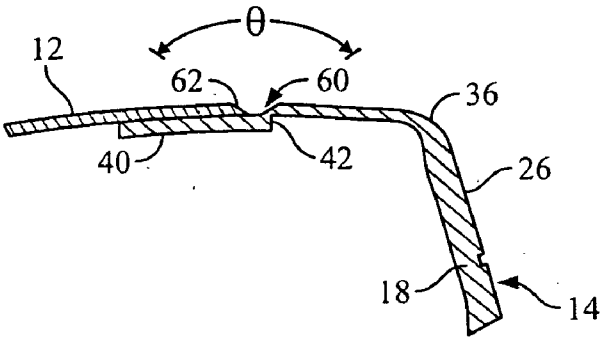


FIG. 10A

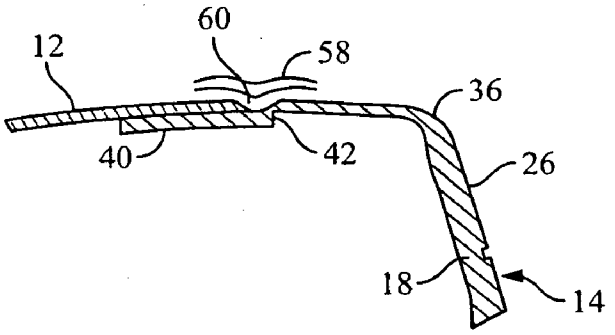


FIG. 10B

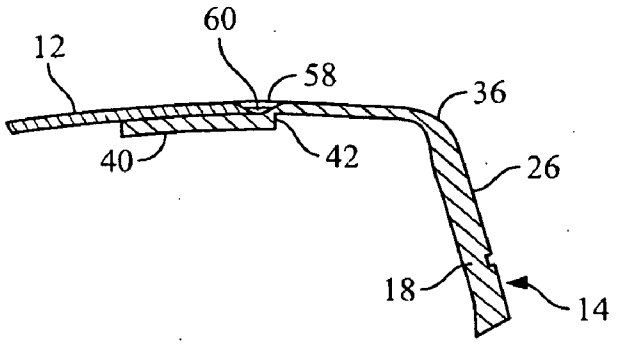


FIG. 10C

GOLF CLUB HEAD

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

[0001] This application is a continuation-in-part of application Ser. No. 10/316,453, filed Dec. 11, 2002, now U.S. Pat. No. _____, which is herein incorporated by reference for all purposes.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The invention relates generally to a wood-type golf club head and, more particularly, to a golf club head having a lightweight crown.

[0003] A wood-type golf club head includes a load-bearing outer shell with an integral or attached strike plate. Today's club head is typically formed of metal material and has a hollow cavity. The metal body may comprise several portions welded together or may include a cast body with a separate sole plate or strike plate that is welded in the appropriate location.

[0004] Most club heads today are made of a strong, yet lightweight metal material such as, for example, a titanium, steel or aluminum alloy. There have also been heads formed of carbon fiber composite material. The use of these materials is advantageous for the larger club heads now sought by golfers, i.e., at least 300 cc and up to about 500 cc in volume. The larger sized, yet conventionally weighted, club heads strive to provide larger "sweet spots" on the striking face and club moments of inertia that, for some golfers, make it easier to get a golf ball up in the air and with greater accuracy.

[0005] Various attempts have been made to attain an improved coefficient-of-restitution ("COR") for golf club heads, with much attention paid to the design of face plates having variable thickness. However, the durability of very thin portions of the face plate continues to be a problem. Such face plate designs are limited by the high impact loads to which these club heads are subject, in particular at the junctions of the face plate with the crown and sole of the club head.

[0006] Titanium alloys are particularly favored in club head designs for their combination of strength and light weight. However, the material can be quite costly. Steel alloys are more economical; however, since the density of steel alloys is greater than for titanium alloys, steel club heads are limited in size in order to remain within conventional head weights while maintaining durability.

[0007] Composite club heads, such as a carbon fiber reinforced epoxy or carbon fiber reinforced polymer, for example, are an alternative to metal club heads. A notable advantage is the relatively light weight compared to stainless steel alloys. However, these club heads have suffered from durability and performance qualities associated with composite materials. These include higher labor costs in manufacture, undesirable acoustic properties of the composite material, shearing and separation of the layers of composite plies used to form the striking surface of the club head and relatively low COR for composite faces.

[0008] The areas of the club head that are subject to the greatest wear, the face and sole, have been reinforced in some instances by providing a metal plate in one or both regions. Integrated face and hosel constructions have also been done. However, durability at the junctions of the composite and metal materials continues to be a problem. Further, when the majority of the body of the club head is of composite material, there may still remain the problem of adequately fixing one or more weighting elements within the head body. The mere increase in volume of the club head may not provide the proper location of the center of gravity of the club head for greater forgiveness in off-center hits.

[0009] With regard to hybrid metal-composite club heads, U.S. Pat. Nos. 5,328,176, 5,410,798, and 5,624,331 to Kun-Nan Lo disclose composite-metal golf club heads having a metal casing with an inner member or core of composite material. The inner member reinforces the thin walls of the metal casing in U.S. Pat. Nos. 5,410,798 and 5,624,331. The crown comprises one or two carbon fiber composite portions. The single composite crown portion of U.S. Pat. No. 5,410,798 is attached to the upper ends of the composite member during the heating portion of the manufacturing process. The double composite crown portions of U.S. Pat. No. 5,624,331 are separated by a reinforcing central rib of the metal casing. U.S. Pat. No. 5,328,176 discloses a metal reinforcing plate that is fixed to the front face and wraps around the composite head from front to back.

[0010] Published U.S. Patent Application No. 2002/0049310 to Cheng et al. discloses a metal golf club head having a carbon-fiber cover that incorporates the entirety of the upper wall and a majority of the side walls at the toe, rear and heel ends of the head body. The position of the center of gravity of the head is accomplished by the size and placement of weight plugs in the sole and rear side wall. The attachment of the carbon-fiber cover is accomplished by insertion of a bladder through the hole for the plug in the sole and application of aluminum oxide sand where the carbon-fiber cover contacts the metal base and face of the head. The bladder is inflated, and the aluminum-oxide sand adhesively attaches the cover to the rest of the club head during a heating process.

[0011] Published Japanese Application No. 05-317465 discloses a golf club head having a hole cut into the crown part. The hole may be closed with a plate of a transparent and lightweight resin. This device allows the weight of the replaced metal material to be substantially distributed to the sole, lowering the center of gravity. An initial speed of a ball is increased and an amount of spin can be decreased, whereby distance can be increased.

[0012] Metal, composite and hybrid metal-composite club heads have long suffered from poor acoustic properties. That is, golfers are accustomed to—and desire—a particular range in pitch tone generated by the golf ball impacting the striking face. Some prior club heads have used a foam filling in order to alter the sound while attempting to minimize any adverse impact on performance. While metal club heads have become better matched to golfers' acoustic preferences, composite club heads generally lack acoustic appeal.

[0013] It should, therefore, be appreciated, there is a need for a golf club head having a high COR and improved durability and acoustic qualities, which is cost effective and simple to manufacture. The present invention fulfills this need and others.

accordance with the invention, depicting a crown, including a surface veil covering a junction between the crown and body portion, separated from a body portion.

[0032] **FIGS. 10A-10C** are cross-sectional views of a junction of the crown and the body portion of the club head of **FIG. 9**, depicting exemplary steps for applying the surface veil.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0033] With reference to the illustrative drawings, and particularly **FIG. 1**, there is shown a golf club head **10** having a crown **12** formed of composite material not yet attached to a body **14** of a golf club head, to enclose an opening **16**. The body is formed of any metal, such as an aluminum, steel or titanium alloy, for example. The body may be cast to form a front **18**, a sole **20**, a top portion **22** and a side portion **24**. At the front, a striking plate **26** is separately formed and attached to the front of the body in any manner known to those skilled in the art (see **FIGS. 4 and 5**). The striking plate may be formed of a different alloy or grade of the same metal as the body, or the plate may be a different metal or a composite material, as desired. If metallic, the striking plate is welded to the front **18**; if made of a composite material, the striking plate may be adhesively bonded to the front **18**.

[0034] In alternative embodiments, the metal body may comprise three or more portions welded together, where the portions are forged, cast or stamped pieces or any mix thereof. Or, the body may be cast except for a separate sole plate that is attached in the appropriate location. The body may also include one or more attached members; such as weighting elements, that may comprise a metal or other material having a different density than the material of the rest of the main body.

[0035] The side portion **24** extends rearwardly of the front **18** and has a toe region **28**, a rear region **30** and a heel region **32** formed above the sole **20**. A hosel **34** is provided at the heel end of the body for attachment of a shaft (not shown). The top portion **22** of the body **14** extends rearwardly from an upper edge **36** of the front **18** of the club head, above the side portion **24**. Thus, the sole **20**, top portion **22**, front **18** and side portion combine with the crown **12** to form a hollow body having a volume of at least 150 cubic centimeters (cc) and up to 500 cc.

[0036] As more clearly shown in **FIG. 2**, the cast body **14** includes an annular rim **38** at the opening **16** in the top portion **22** that includes a ledge **40** that acts as a support member for the crown **12**. Alternatively, the support member may comprise a plurality of tabs. The size and shape of the support member is preferably chosen to minimize the required overlap with the crown or the mating surface area of the crown and top portion.

[0037] Referring to **FIG. 3**, the rim **38** extends a distance D_1 of at least 7 mm rearward from the upper edge **36** of the front **18**, with a shoulder **42** defining the ledge **40** which preferably extends an additional distance D_2 of at least 7 mm. The rim preferably extends between 8 mm and 12 mm, and more preferably about 10 mm, from the upper edge **36** while providing advantages of the present invention. Similarly, the ledge preferably extends between 8 mm and 12 mm. Preferably, an adhesive such as Hysol® two part epoxy 9460 or, alternatively, 3M® DP460NS, is used to attach the crown **12** onto the ledge **40**, abutting the shoulder **42**.

[0038] The opening **16** in a central section **44** of the top portion **22** comprises at least 25% (see **FIG. 6**), and preferably comprises at least 60%, of the total area of the top portion **22**. More preferably, the opening is at least 75% of the total area of the top portion. Thus, there is a significant weight savings afforded by replacing a similarly sized metal crown with the crown **12** described herein. The difference in weight between the metal and composite materials may be redistributed in the club head **10** to manipulate the center of gravity of the club head, such as by providing a weight pad **46** on an interior surface **48** of the sole as shown in **FIG. 4**. Such a weight pad is preferably formed of material having a higher density (e.g., tungsten) than the material of the body **14** of the club head and is attached to the sole **20**; although, a weight pad may alternatively be cast as a thickened portion of the sole.

[0039] Tables I and II show exemplary materials for the body **14** of the club head and the crown **12**, respectively. The body **14** preferably has a thin-wall construction, wherein the thicknesses of the sole **20** and side portion **24** is in the range of 0.8 mm to 2 mm and the top portion thickness is in the range of 0.7 mm to 2 mm. The thickness of the front portion **26** is preferably in the range of 1.5 mm to 4 mm. The crown is also of a thin construction, having a thickness T_c of no more than about 2 mm, preferably less than 1.5 mm, and more preferably about 1 mm. In the preferred embodiment of **FIGS. 1-3**, the thickness of the top portion **22**, including the ledge **40**, is approximately 1 mm so that the shoulder **42** extends about 2 mm from an outer surface **50** of the top portion to an inner surface **52** of the ledge.

TABLE I

EXAMPLES OF METALS FOR THE BODY OF A CLUB HEAD

Material Type	Density (g/cc)	Ult. Tens. Str. (MPa)	Mod. of Elast. (GPa)	Hardness
Mg AZ81A-T4	1.8	275	45	Brinell 55
Al 1201 Alloy	2.85	430	72	—
Ti 6Al-4V	4.43	950	113.8	Brinell 334 Rockwell C 36
Ti 15-3-3-3	4.76	790	82	Rockwell B 95
Carpenter Custom 455 ®	7.76	1100	200	Brinell 318 Rockwell C 34

[0040]

TABLE II

EXAMPLES OF COMPOSITE MATERIALS FOR A CLUB HEAD CROWN

Composite Fiber Material	Density (g/cc)	Ult. Tens. Str. (MPa)	Modulus of Elasticity (GPa)
Carbon Filled Nylon	1.4	103	13
DuPont Kevlar ® 49 Fiber, diam 11.9 um	1.44–1.45	2760	120–125
Thornel ® VCB-20 Carbon Cloth	1.88	1380	138

[0041] A graphite-epoxy composite material, for example, with a 50% to 70% fiber volume ratio would have a density between about 1.4 g/cc and 1.65 g/cc.

[0042] A golf club head constructed in this manner advantageously improves durability since the junction of the striking plate **26** with the top portion **22** is subject to a lesser force at impact with a golf ball. The use of the crown **12** on the metal body **14** also increases COR. Further, the golf club head having a crown on a metal body advantageously provides acoustic qualities judged more appealing to golfers.

[0043] In one club head tested by the inventors, a 300 cc hollow body was formed of a stainless steel alloy. A large area, 1 mm thick crown was formed of five plies including four plies of a uni-tape of standard modulus graphite and one ply of a woven graphite cloth. The four plies of uni-tape were assembled at 0, 45, −45 and 90 degrees and had a fiber areal weight (FAW) of about 140 grams per meter squared (g/m^2). The standard modulus is approximately 33 Mpsi for the fiber with about 600 Kpsi tensile strength. In comparison, an alternative, and more expensive, ultrahigh modulus fiber (satellite grade) comprises about 57 Mpsi. FAW may range from about 20 to 200 g/m^2, and preferably the composite plies for the crown are in the range of 70 to 180 g/m^2. More preferably, the composite plies for the crown are in the range of 120 to 160 g/m^2.

[0044] The resultant mass of the crown **12** is about 10 grams. This is about a 50% reduction in the mass compared to a crown formed of the steel material of the rest of the club head. The calculations of the weight savings must take into account the presence of the ledge **40** with the crown, as well as the adhesive. Generally, the weight savings is at least 20% compared to an all metal body. The weight pad **46** may then be added to achieve a total mass approximately equivalent to an all metal body.

[0045] The crown **12** may alternatively be formed of more or less plies, and instead of the top ply being a woven graphite cloth, the top ply may be another uni-tape that is painted to achieve the desired aesthetic look of the club head. The top ply is preferably oriented at 0 or 90 degrees. The molding of the crown may be performed using methods known to those skilled in the art and preferably comprises a matched mold to achieve a net shape that requires little finishing and flash removal prior to its attachment to the body **14** of the club head.

[0046] Another club head tested by the inventors utilized a titanium alloy body for the club head, with a crown **12** formed of a thermoplastic material. Preferably, the crown is an injection-molded nylon or polyphenylene sulfide (PPS) material, using 3M® DP460NS adhesive for attachment to the metal body. The nylon may be used with or without glass or carbon fiber and preferably has a density between 1 g/cc and 1.7 g/cc. Alternatively, the PPS material maybe used with or without glass or carbon fiber and preferably has a density between 1.3 g/cc and 2.0 g/cc. Replacing the crown of the titanium alloy club head results in about 35% savings in weight. In general, the weight savings is at least 15% compared to an all metal body.

[0047] The replacement of the crown of a metal club head provides the advantage of weight savings and/or redistribution of mass to the sole, for example. A weight pad on the sole, or elsewhere on the body, may be integrally formed or be a separately formed and attached mass, the resulting weight being comparable to an all metal club head of the same volume.

[0048] Because of the access afforded by the opening in the top of the club head, a rear of the striking face **54** is accessible during manufacture for the addition of a face reinforcing member **56** formed of metal or composite material and securely attached behind the sweet spot, as shown in **FIG. 7**. Thus, a thin titanium alloy striking face can be strengthened or otherwise enhanced in performance. Similarly, any number of additional members may be attached elsewhere on any inner surface of the club head.

[0049] The use of the aforementioned materials, composite or plastic, for the crown **12** allows the use of a lighter weight material that may result in the top of the club head having a stiffness similar to the heavier, metal sole. This stiffness matching may be advantageous for high COR golf club heads.

[0050] The golf club head **10** can be assembled with the aid of adhesive bonding. In a preferred method of manufacture, the striking face **22** is securely attached to the body **14**, enclosing a front opening. While partially assembled, final weighting and/or other attachment of other members to the inner surface of the club head can be preformed, as desired. Next, the crown is secured in place, forming the top section of the club head. Preferably, the crown **12** is of a material having a density less than 2 g/cc has a thickness no greater than 2 mm. At least one of the crown and the striking plate is attached by adhesive bonding to the opening in the body. In one embodiment, the mating surfaces of the crown and ledge **40** may be prepared by sandblasting to enhance bonding. Other steps may be performed in order to prepare and/or finish the final club head, as known to those skilled in the art.

[0051] With reference now to **FIGS. 8 and 9**, the golf club head may further include a surface veil **58** sized to cover the junction between the crown portion **12** and the body portion **14**. The surface veil can include plies of composite material. As shown in **FIG. 8**, the surface veil can be sized to entirely cover the junction between the crown and body portion and the outer surface the crown. Alternatively, as shown in **FIG. 9**, the surface veil can be configured to be disposed about the crown to cover the junction between the crown and the body portion. The surface veil aids in preventing cracking and peeling of the club head's surface. In the exemplary embodiments, the surface veil is formed of two additional plies of the material used with the crown portion, as discussed above. In other preferred embodiments, the crown portion is formed of a first lightweight material, as discussed above, e.g., carbon fiber plies, and the surface veil is formed of a second lightweight material, such as discussed above, e.g., a glass composite.

[0052] With reference now to **FIGS. 10A-10C**, an exemplary method of attaching the surface veil **58** is depicted. As shown in **FIG. 10A**, an obtuse depression **60** is provided at the junction between the crown portion **12** and the body portion **14**. The depression is preferably formed by providing a taper to at least one of the side edge **62** of the crown portion and the shoulder **42** of the body portion. In the exemplary method, both the side edge and the shoulder are tapered, defining an angle θ, which is preferably greater than 90 degrees and less than 180 degrees. The surface veil is

attached above the junction such that it at least partially fills the depression **(FIG. 10B)**. Once in place, the outer surface of the club head undergoes additional treatment, e.g., grinding and/or sanding, to provide a smooth, finished surface **(FIG. 10C)**.

[0053] It should be appreciated from the foregoing the present invention provides a golf club head having a high COR that is durable and has desirable acoustic qualities. The club head includes a body portion, a striking face and a crown forming a hollow cavity of at least 150 cc in volume. The body portion defines a front opening and an upper opening, and it includes a sole and a side section that extends rearward of the front opening. The striking plate is secured to the body portion, enclosing the front opening. While partially assembled, final weighting and/or other attachment of other members to the inner surface of the club head can be preformed, as desired. The crown is secured to the body portion, enclosing the upper opening. A surface veil may also be provided about a junction of the crown and body. The crown has a maximum thickness no greater than about 2 mm. The density of the crown is less than the density of the body portion. Beneficially, the golf club head has a coefficient of restitution of at least 0.80.

[0054] Although the invention has been disclosed in detail with reference only to the preferred embodiments, those skilled in the art will appreciate that additional golf club heads can be made without departing from the scope of the invention. Accordingly, the invention is defined only by the claims set forth below.

We claim:

1. A golf club head, comprising:

a body portion defining an upper opening and a front opening and having a sole and a side section, the side section extending rearward of the front opening and having toe, rear and heel regions, the body portion having a density of at least about 4 g/cc;

a striking plate securely attached to the body portion, enclosing the front opening; and

a crown secured to the body portion thereby enclosing the upper opening, the crown incorporating composite material and having a density between 1 g/cc and 2 g/cc, the crown having a maximum thickness no greater than about 2 mm, the golf club head having a maximum coefficient of restitution of at least 0.80 and a volume of at least 150 cc.

2. A golf club head as defined in claim 1, the body portion including a recessed support extended from a shoulder and positioned adjacent to the upper opening to support the crown.

3. A golf club head as defined in claim 2, wherein the recessed support is an annular lip surrounding the upper opening.

4. A golf club head as defined in claim 2, the crown having a first portion sized to sit on the recessed support of the body portion such that a side edge of the first portion is proximate to the shoulder of the body portion, thereby forming a junction between the first portion of the crown and the body portion, the crown further having a surface veil secured atop the junction.

5. A golf club head as defined in claim 4, wherein at least one of the side edge of the first portion and the shoulder of body portion has a tapered profile thereby forming a depression about the junction, wherein the surface veil at least partially fills the depression.

6. A golf club head as defined in claim 4, wherein the surface veil entirely covers an upper surface of the first portion of the crown.

7. A golf club head as defined in claim 4, wherein the volume is at least 350 cc.

8. A golf club head, comprising:

a body portion defining an upper opening and a front opening and having a sole and a side section, the side section extending rearward of the front opening and having toe, rear and heel regions, the body portion including a recessed support extended from a shoulder and positioned adjacent to the upper opening, the body portion having a density of at least about 4 g/cc;

a striking plate securely attached to the body portion, enclosing the front opening; and

a crown securely attached to the body portion enclosing the upper opening, the crown including plies of composite material having a fiber areal weight of between 20 g/m^2 and 200 g/m^2 and having a maximum thickness no greater than about 2 mm, the weight of the crown being less than the weight of a similar sized piece formed of the material of the body portion; wherein at least one of the striking plate and the crown is attached to the body portion by adhesive bonding, the golf club head having a maximum coefficient of restitution of at least 0.80 and a volume of at least 150 cc.

9. A golf club head as defined in claim 8, wherein the recessed support is an annular lip surrounding the upper opening.

10. A golf club head as defined in claim 8, the crown having a first portion sized to sit on the recessed support of the body portion such that a side edge of the first portion is proximate to the shoulder of the body portion, thereby forming a junction between the first portion of the crown and the body portion, the crown further having a surface veil secured atop the junction.

11. A golf club head as defined in claim 10, wherein at least one of the side edge of the first portion and the shoulder of body portion has a tapered profile thereby forming a depression about the junction, wherein the surface veil at least partially fills the depression.

12. A golf club head as defined in claim 10, wherein the surface veil entirely covers an upper surface of the first portion of the crown.

13. A golf club head as defined in claim 10, wherein the plies of composite material include a fabric ply and at least one layer of at least four plies of uni-tape standard modulus composite.

14. A method of manufacturing a hollow golf club head having a volume of at least 150 cc, comprising:

forming a body of a metal material, the body having walls forming a front that defines a front opening, a side section, a sole and a top section that defines an upper opening, the body including a recessed support extended from a shoulder and positioned adjacent to the upper opening;

forming a striking plate adapted to be secured to the body and enclose the front opening;

securely attaching the striking plate to the body, enclosing the front opening;

forming a crown of a material having a density less than 2 g/cc, the crown having a maximum thickness no greater than 2 mm, the crown adapted to be secured to the body, enclosing the upper opening; and

securely attaching the crown to the body, enclosing the upper opening; wherein at least one of the crown and the striking plate is attached by adhesive bonding to the opening in the body, the golf club head having a maximum coefficient of restitution of at least 0.80.

15. A method as defined in claim 14, wherein forming the body comprises casting a metal material, the front and upper openings are formed in the casting step.

16. A method as defined in claim 14, wherein forming the striking plate comprises cold-forming a metal material to the desired thickness, shape and size, and the step of attaching the striking plate comprises welding.

17. A method as defined in claim 14, wherein:

forming the crown comprises forming a first portion sized to sit on the recessed support of the body such that a side edge of the first portion is proximate to the shoulder of the body portion, thereby forming a junction between the first portion of the crown and the body portion; and

attaching the crown comprising securing a surface veil atop the junction.

18. A method as defined in claim 17, further comprising:

providing a tapered profile to at least one of the side edge of the first portion and the shoulder of body portion has a tapered profile thereby forming a depression about the junction, wherein the surface veil at least partially fills the depression.

19. A method as defined in claim 17, wherein the surface veil entirely covers an upper surface of the first portion of the crown.

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