



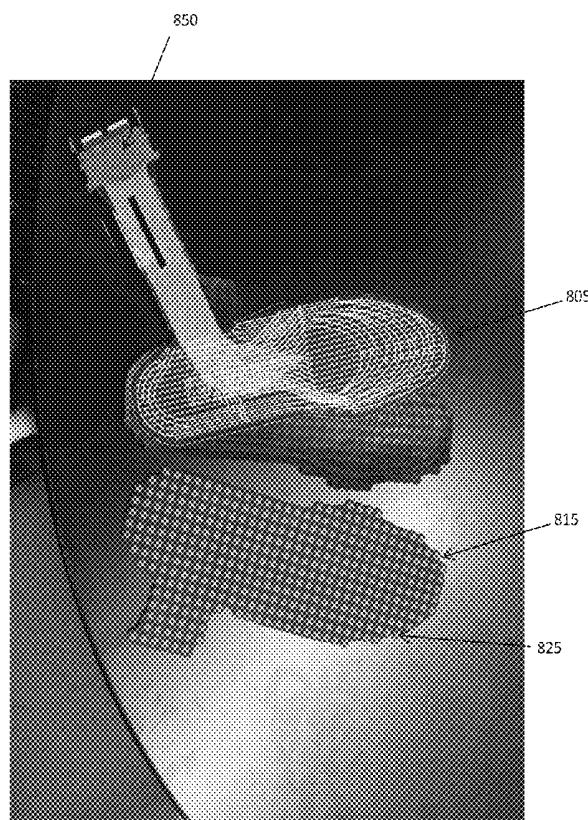
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(19) **United States**(12) **Patent Application Publication**
Fitzgerald et al.(10) **Pub. No.: US 2016/0287937 A1**(43) **Pub. Date: Oct. 6, 2016**(54) **SYSTEMS AND METHODS FOR
MONITORING ATHLETIC AND
PHYSIOLOGICAL PERFORMANCE****Publication Classification**(51) **Int. Cl.***A63B 24/00* (2006.01)*G09B 5/02* (2006.01)*A61B 5/00* (2006.01)*A61B 5/103* (2006.01)*A61B 5/0402* (2006.01)*G09B 19/00* (2006.01)*A61B 5/0205* (2006.01)(52) **U.S. Cl.**CPC *A63B 24/0062* (2013.01); *G09B 19/003*(2013.01); *G09B 5/02* (2013.01); *A61B**5/02055* (2013.01); *A61B 5/1038* (2013.01);*A61B 5/0402* (2013.01); *A61B 5/6807*(2013.01); *A61B 5/486* (2013.01); *A61B**5/0002* (2013.01); *A61B 2562/0219* (2013.01);*A61B 5/02438* (2013.01)(71) Applicant: **New Balance Athletics, Inc.**, Boston,
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Somerville, MA (US)(21) Appl. No.: **15/065,516**(22) Filed: **Mar. 9, 2016****Related U.S. Application Data**(63) Continuation-in-part of application No. 13/368,084,
filed on Feb. 7, 2012.(60) Provisional application No. 62/130,494, filed on Mar.
9, 2015, provisional application No. 61/440,243, filed
on Feb. 7, 2011.

(57)

ABSTRACT

The invention relates to systems and methods for monitoring one or more athletic performance characteristic and physiological characteristic of a user. An exemplary system includes a first sensing unit adapted to monitor at least one performance characteristic of a user, a second sensing unit adapted to monitor at least one physiological characteristic of the user, and a transmitter for transmitting the at least one performance characteristic and at least one physiological characteristic to a remote receiver that is adapted to identify a relationship between the at least one performance characteristic and the at least one physiological characteristic.



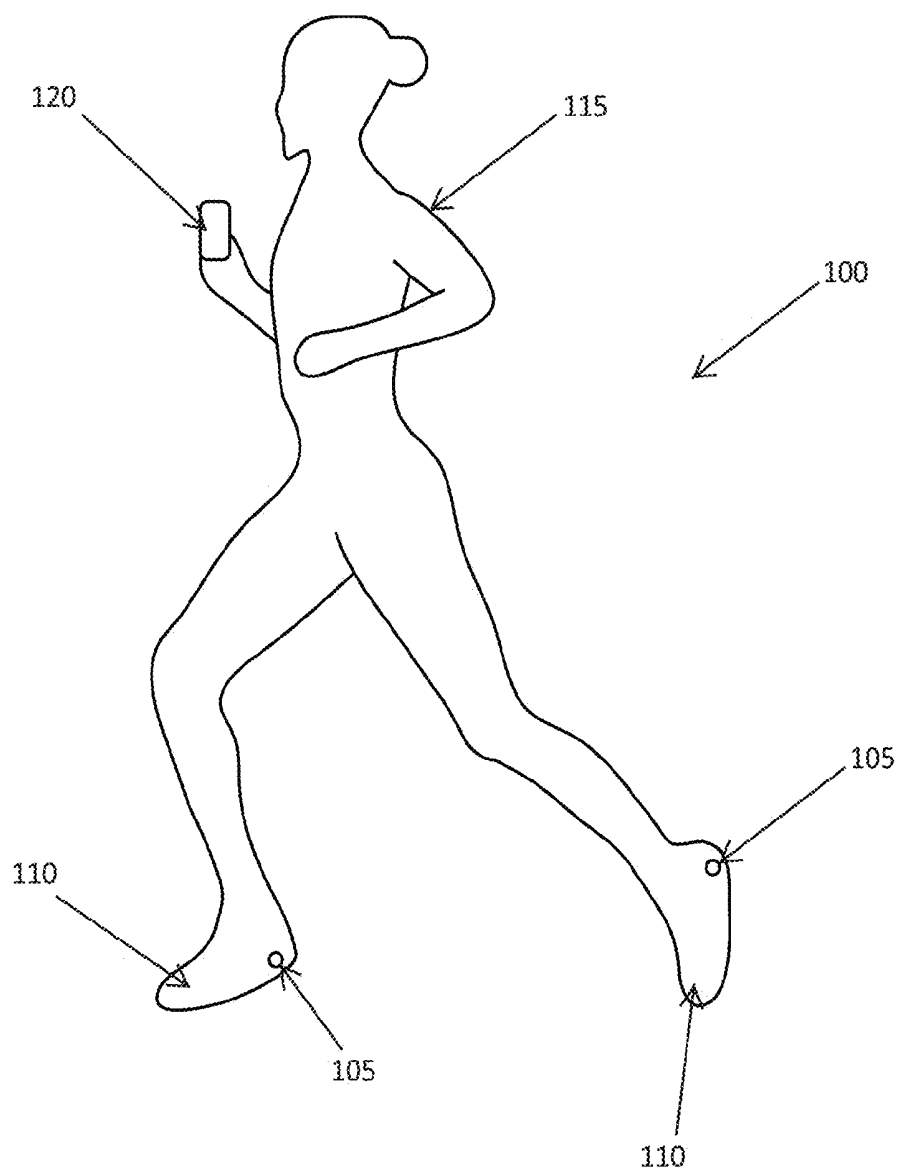
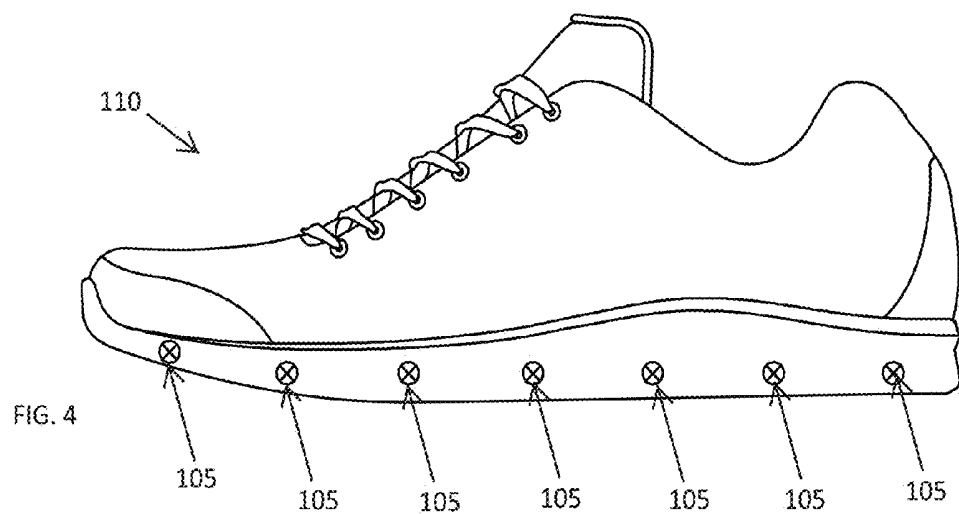
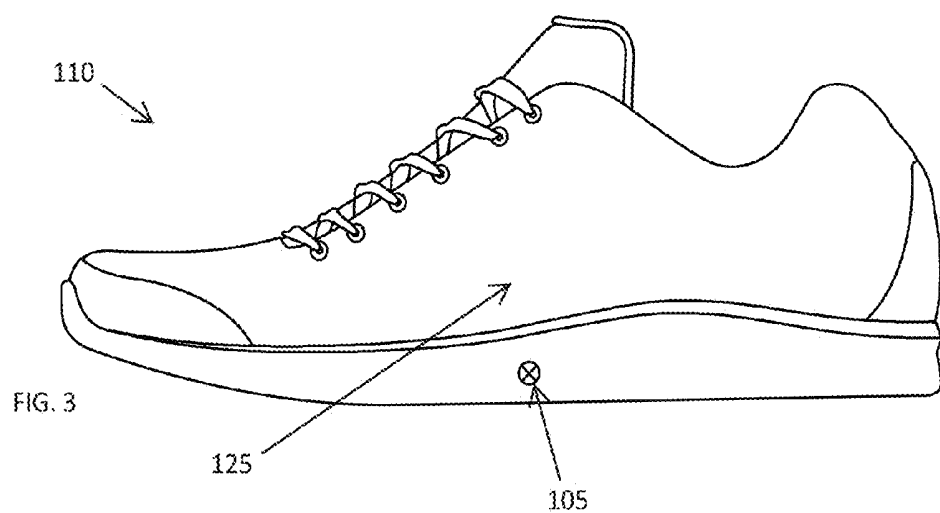
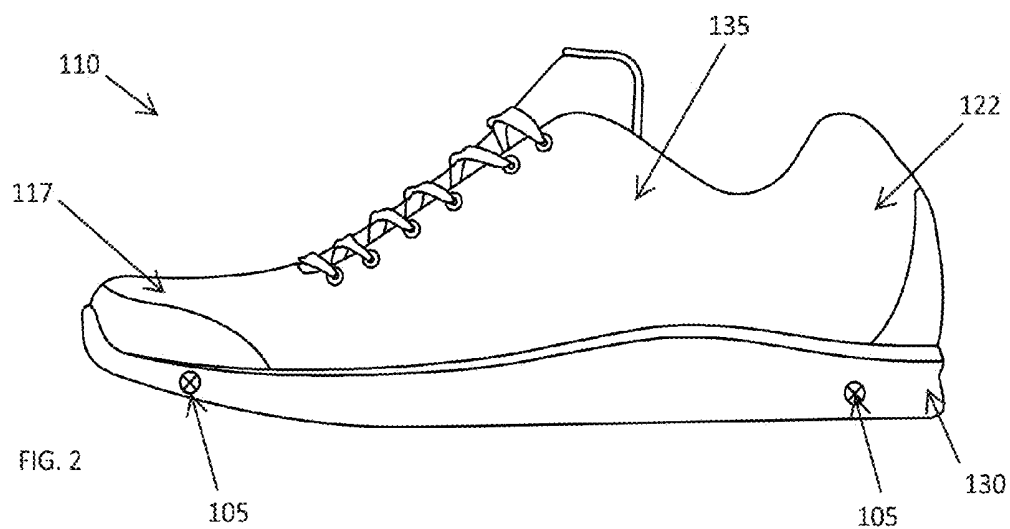


FIG. 1



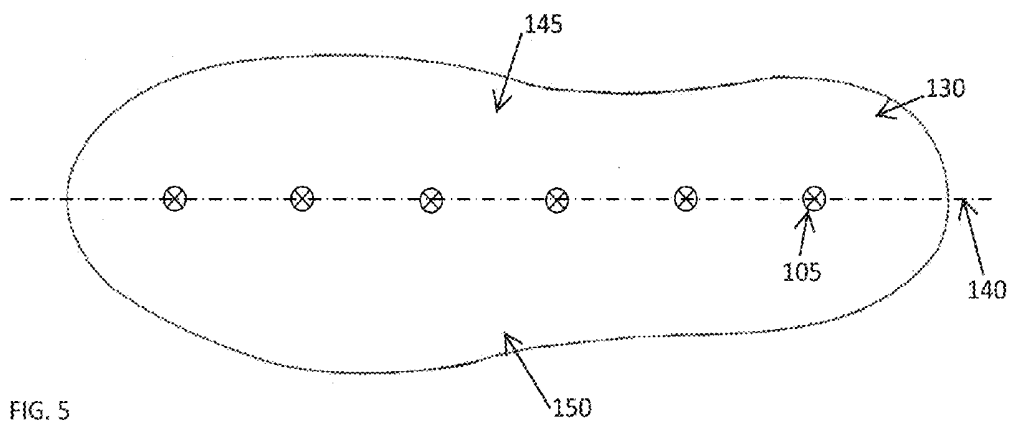


FIG. 5

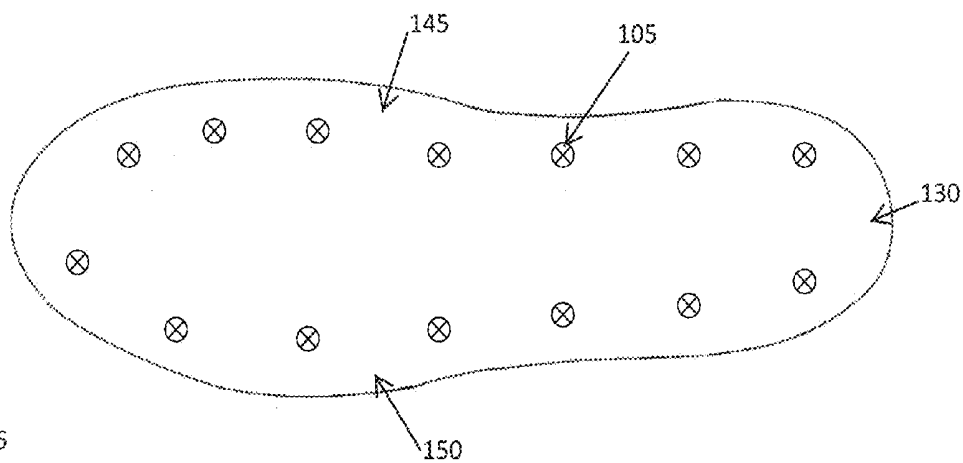


FIG. 6

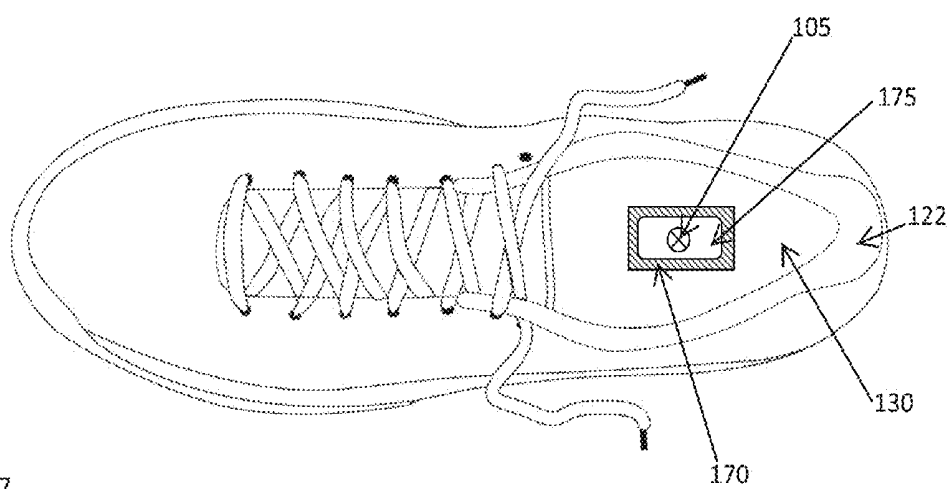
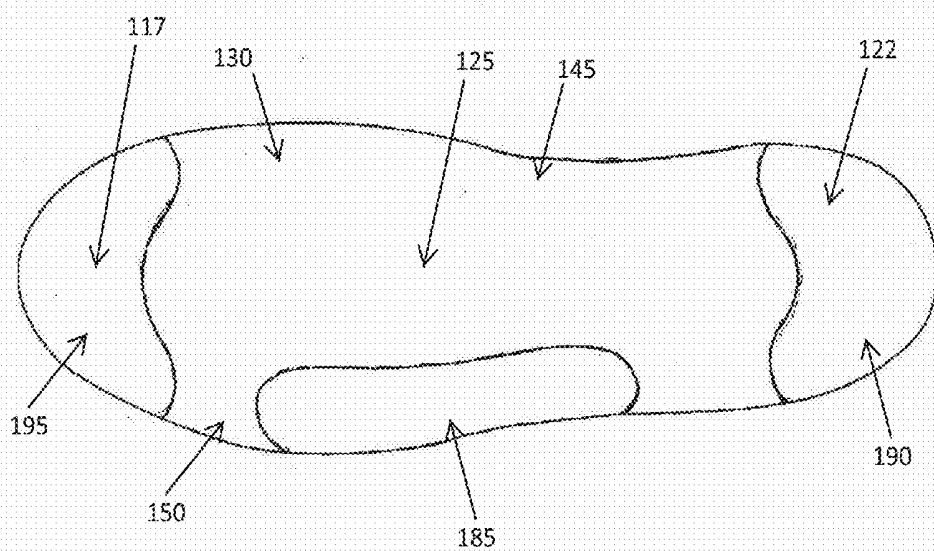
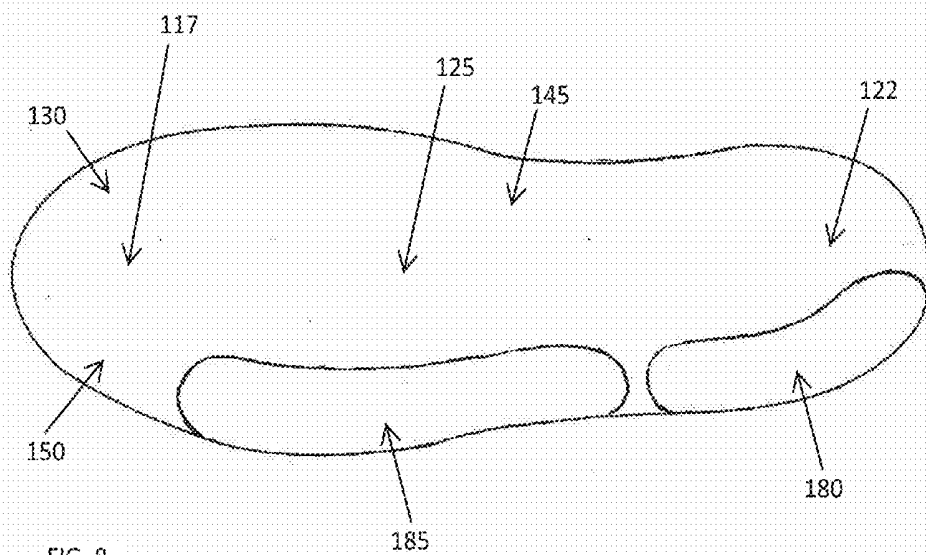


FIG. 7



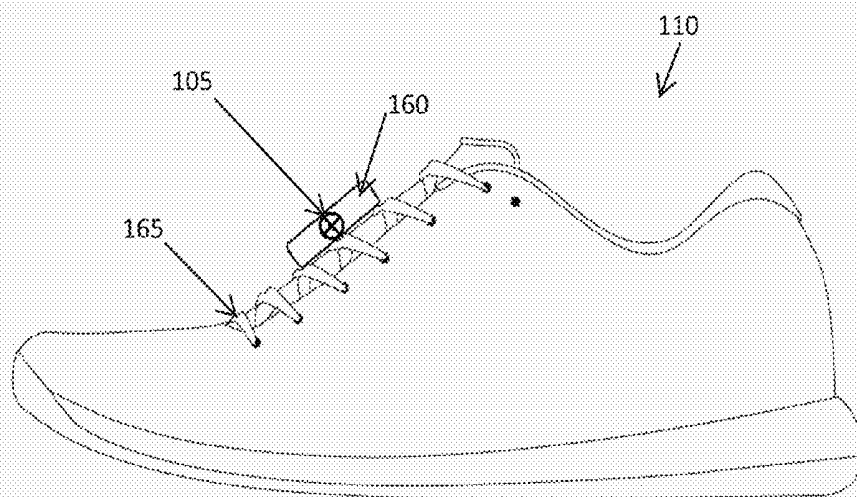


FIG. 10

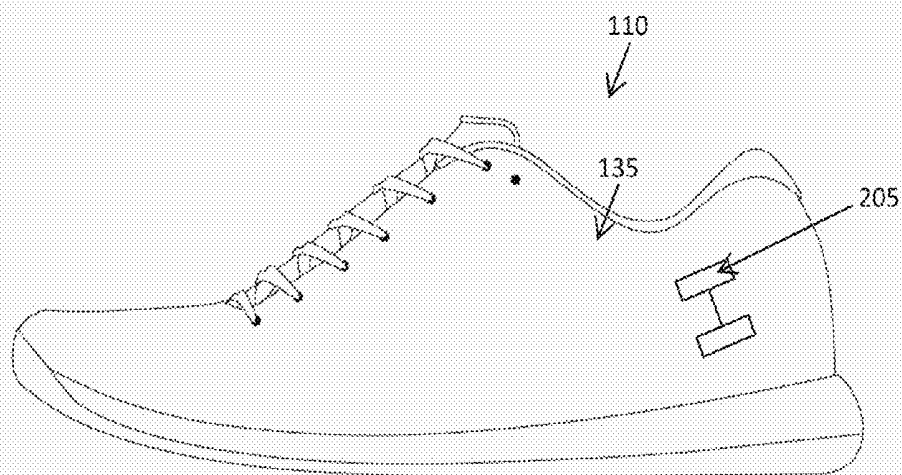


FIG. 11

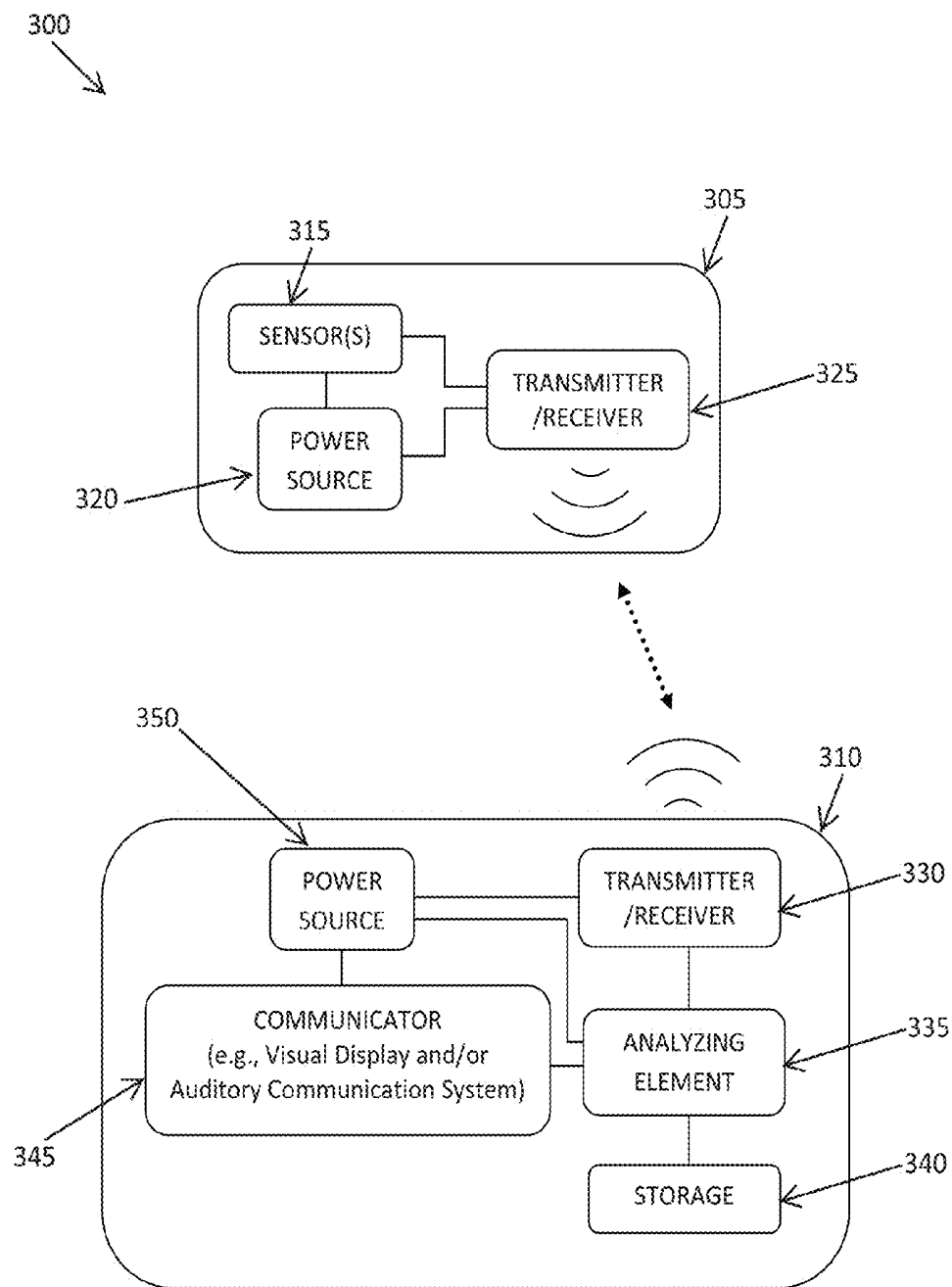
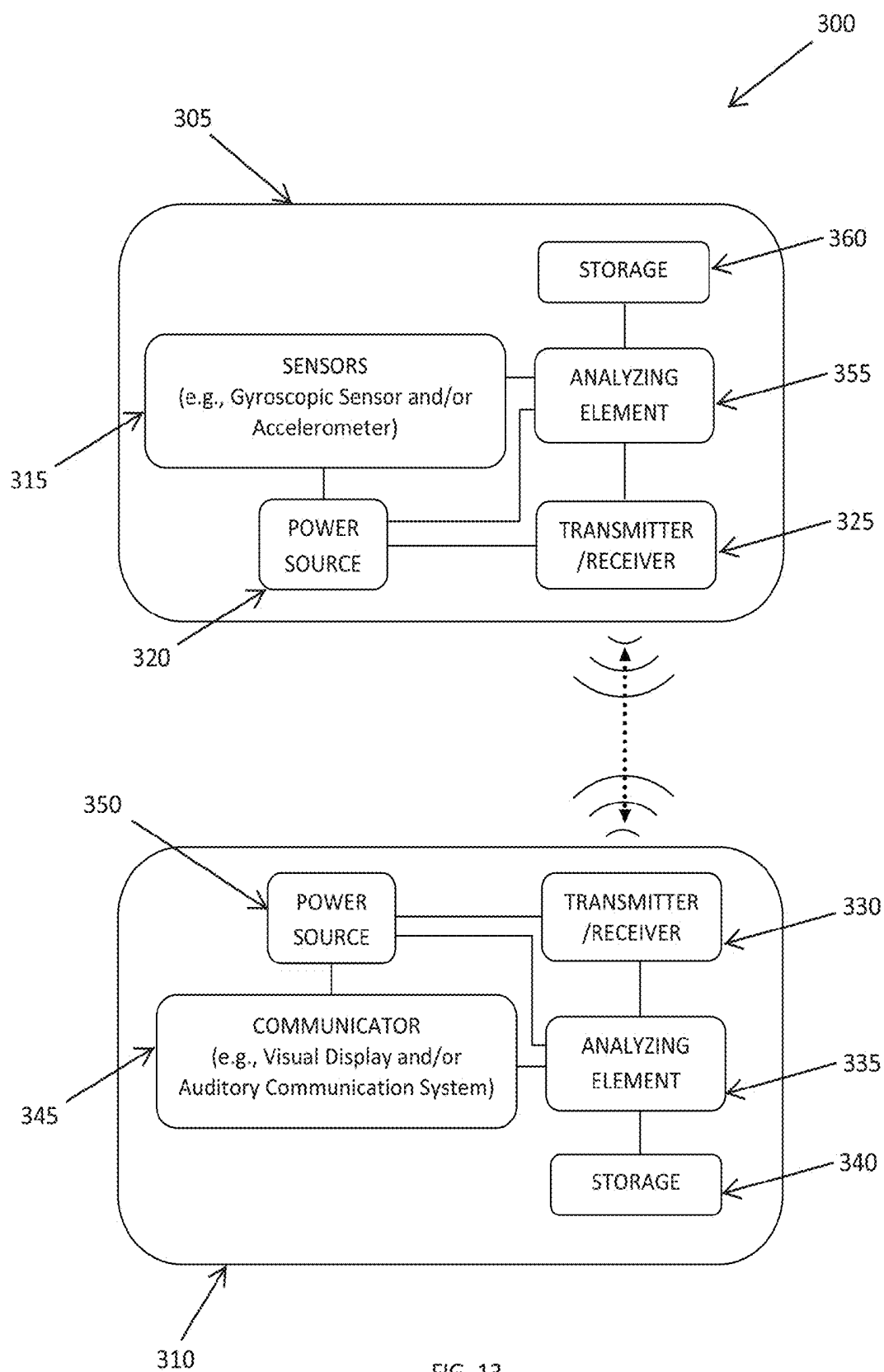


FIG. 12



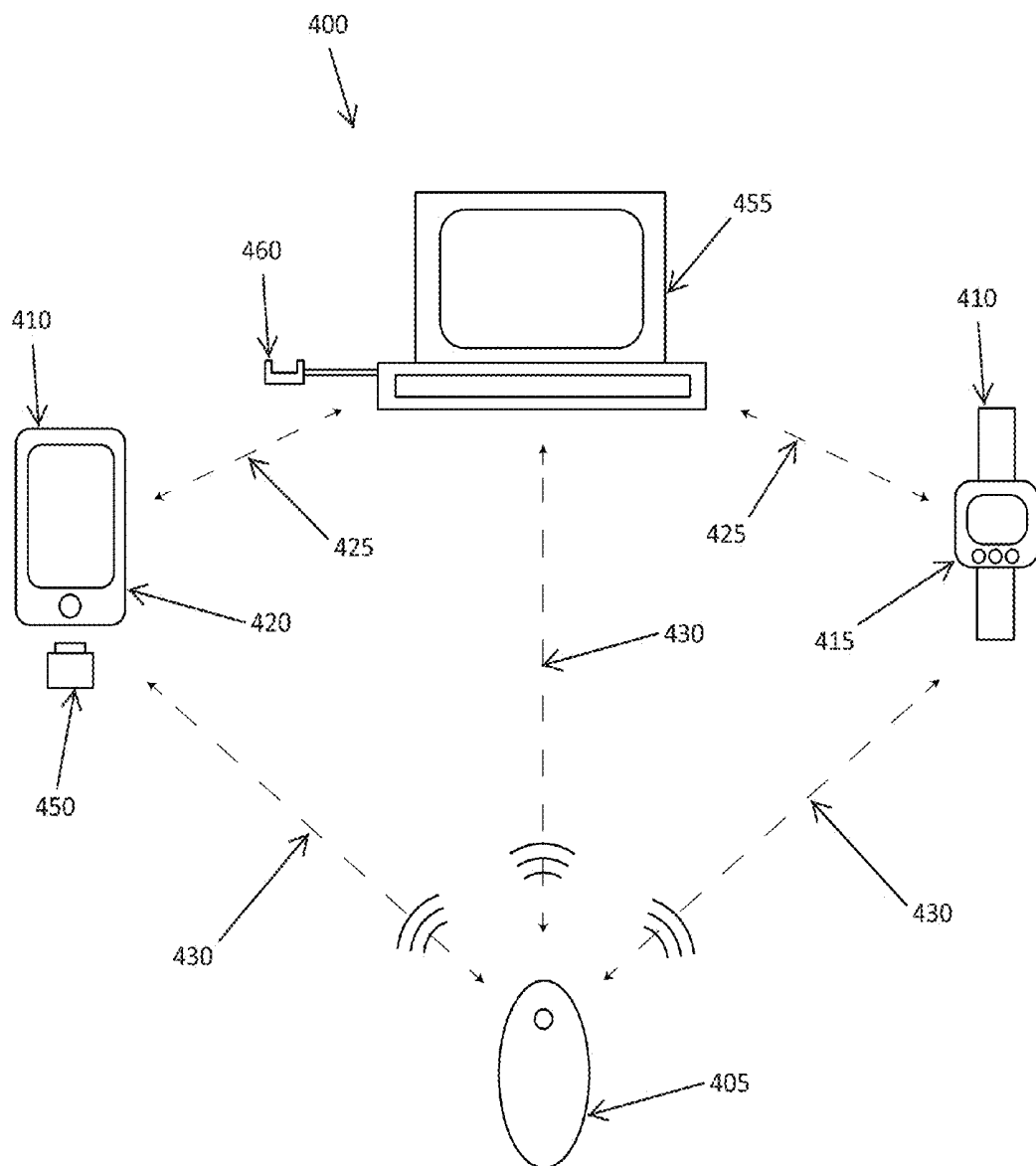


FIG. 14

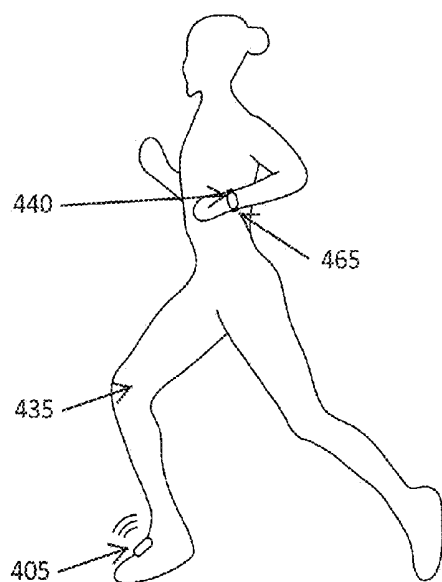


FIG. 15

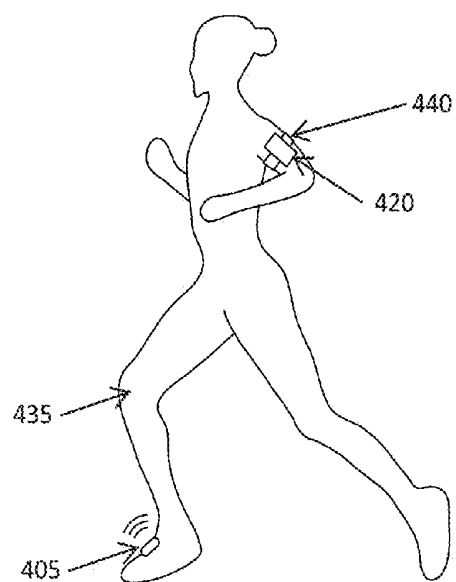


FIG. 16

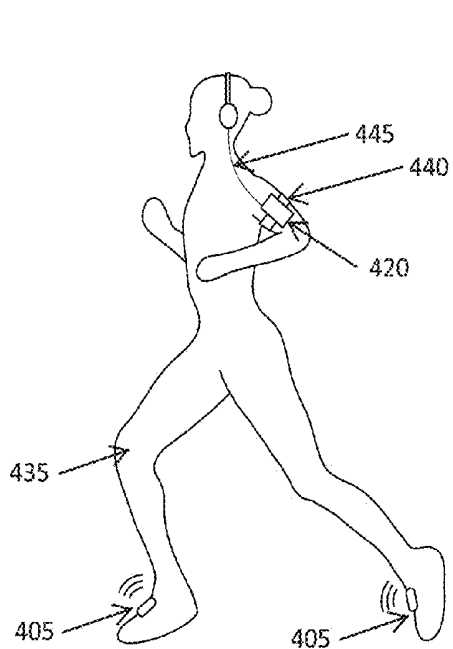


FIG. 17

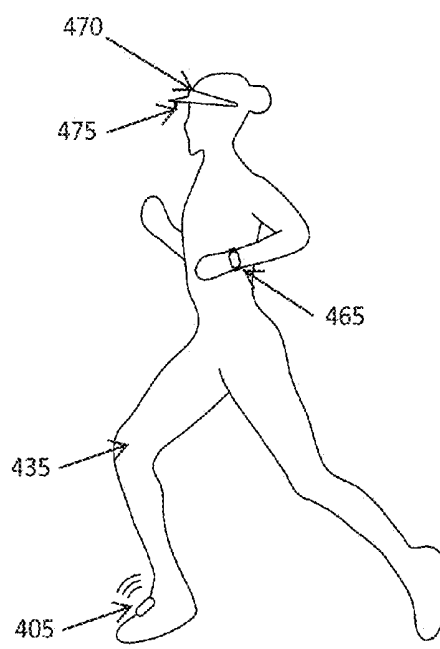


FIG. 18

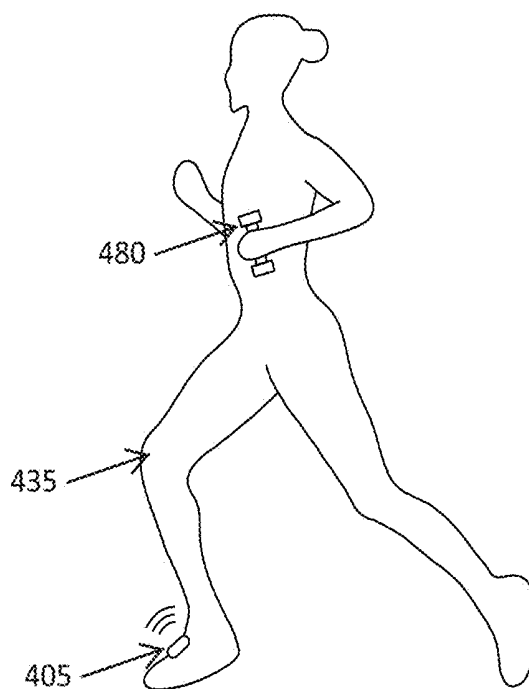


FIG. 19

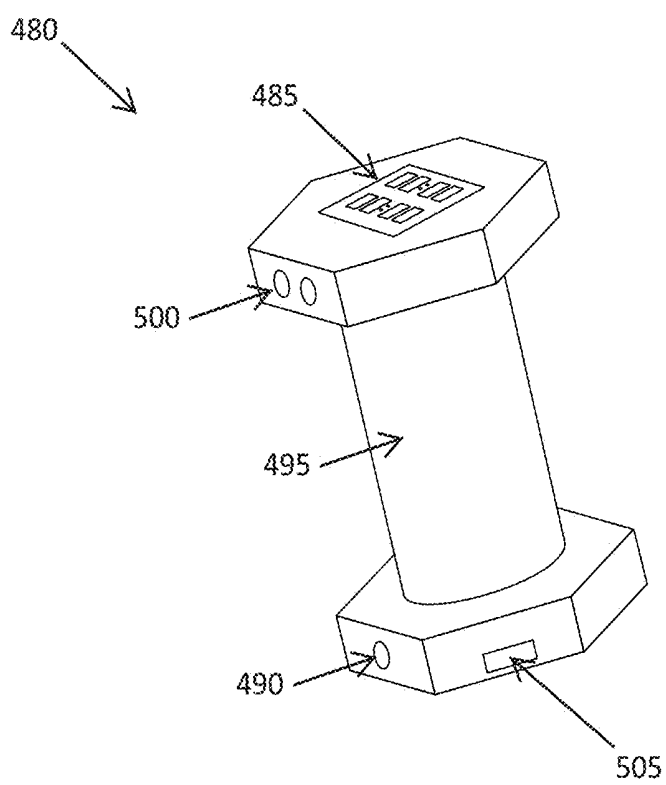
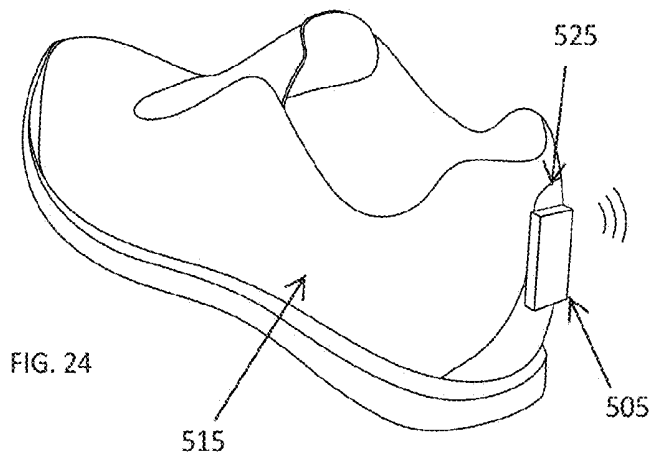
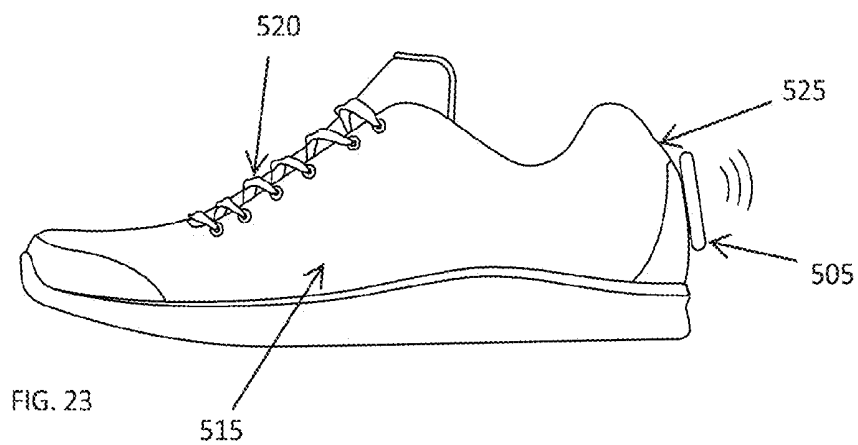
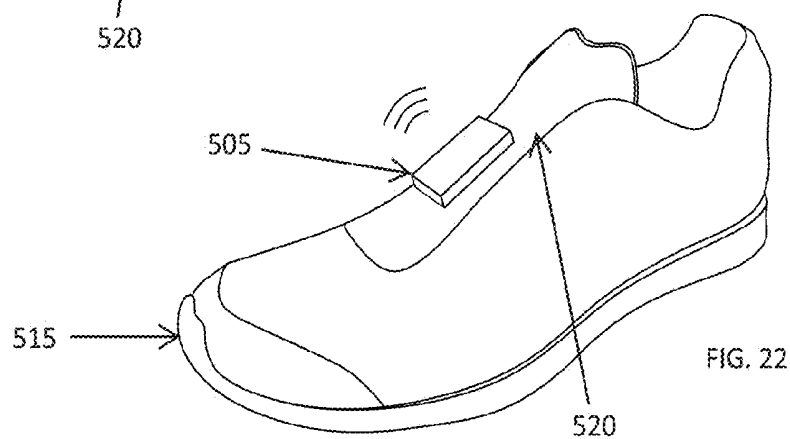
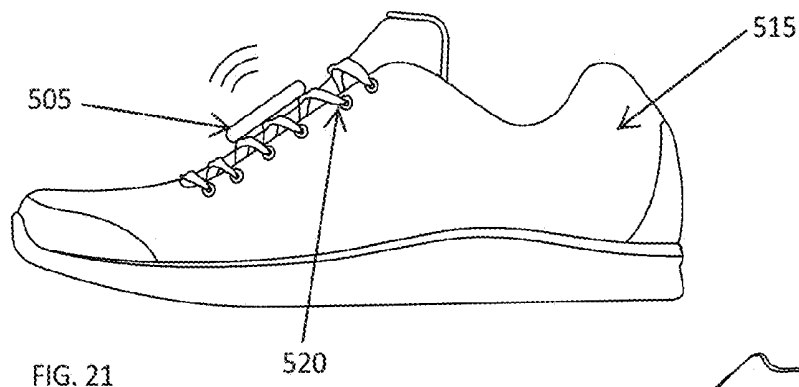


FIG. 20



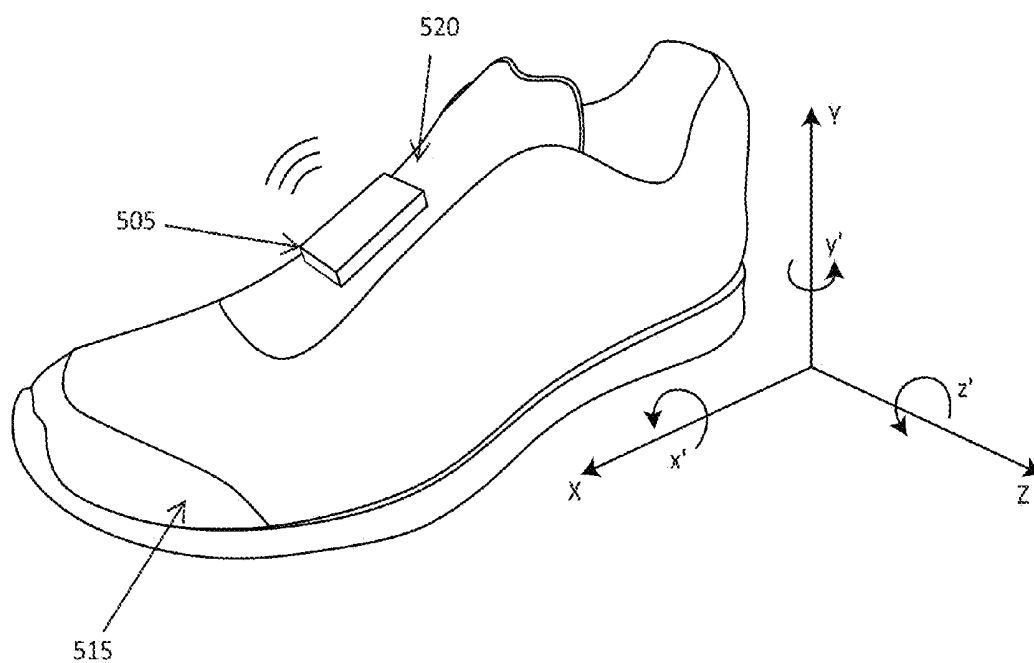


FIG. 25

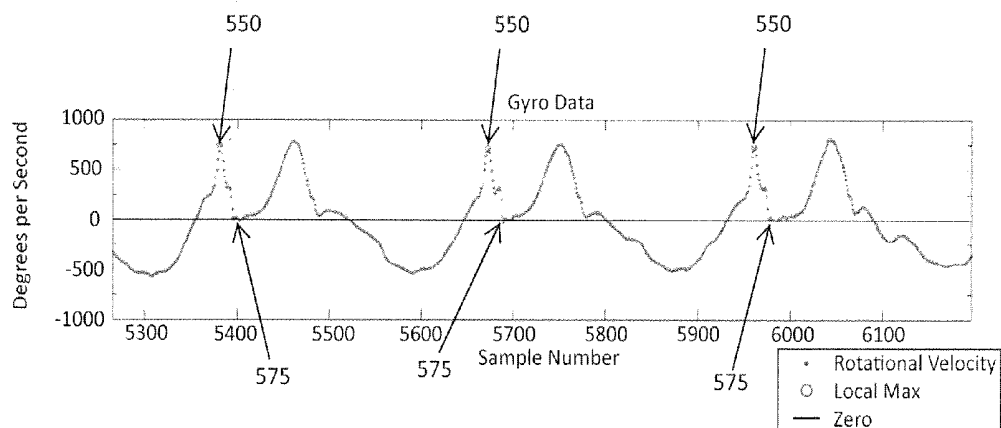


FIG. 26

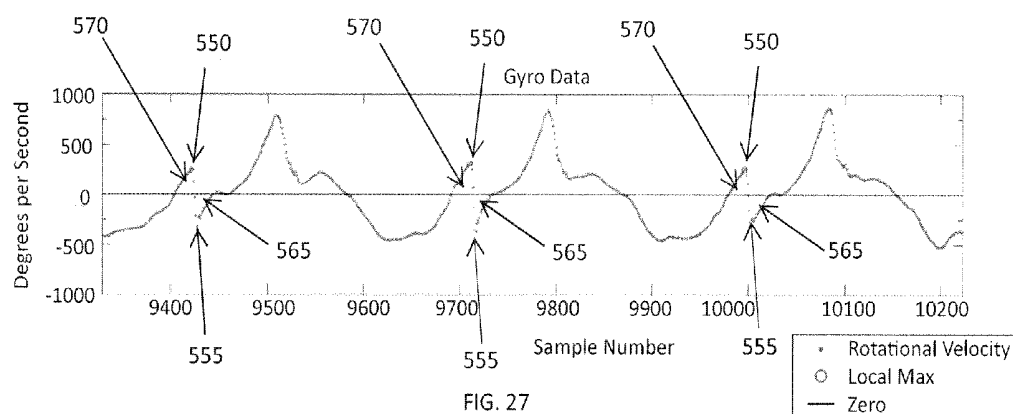


FIG. 27

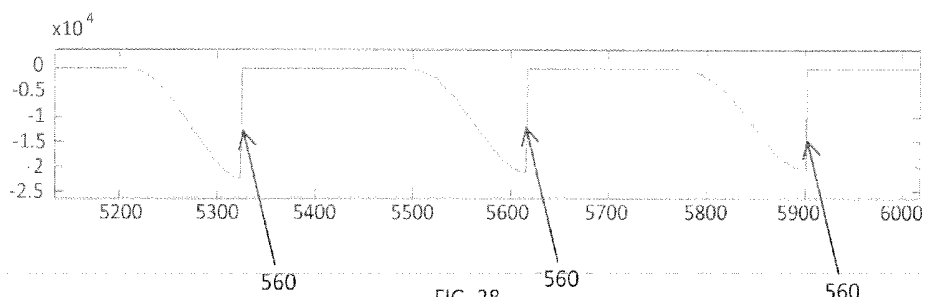


FIG. 28

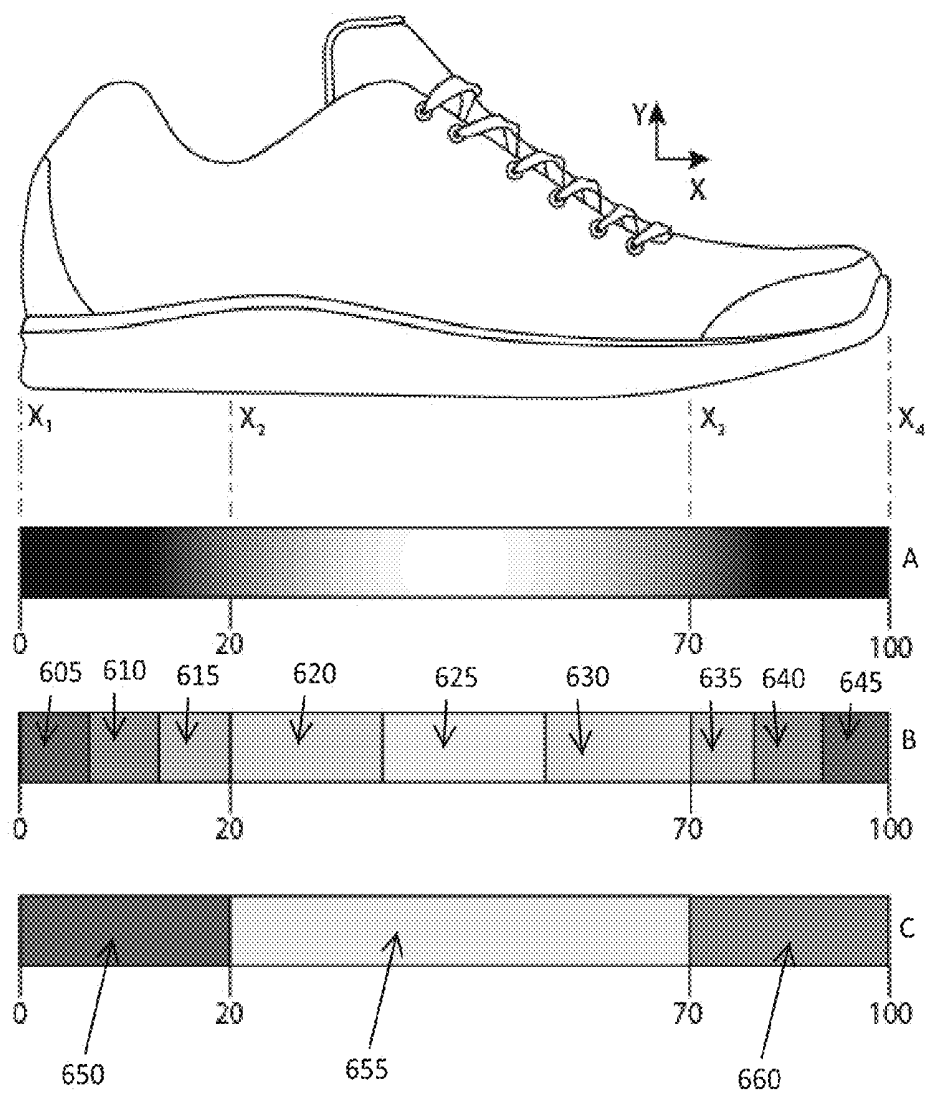
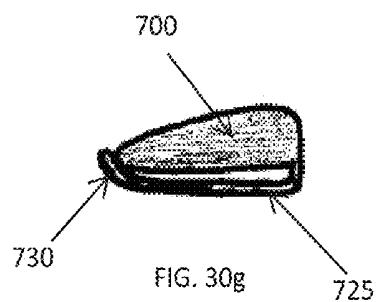
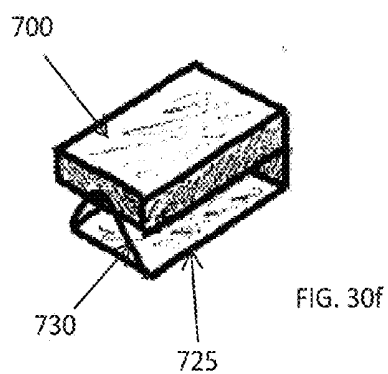
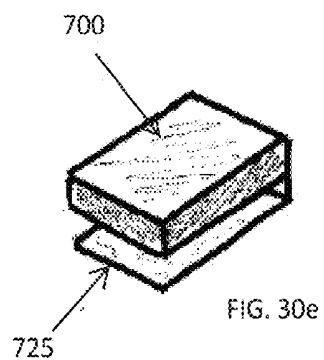
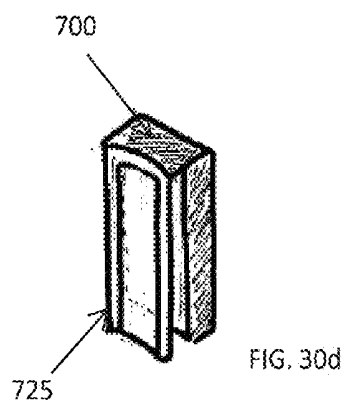
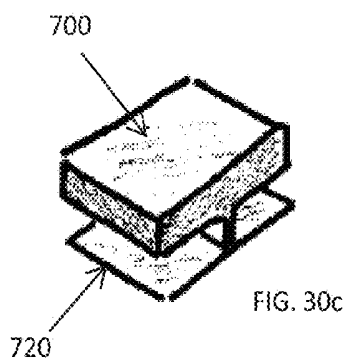
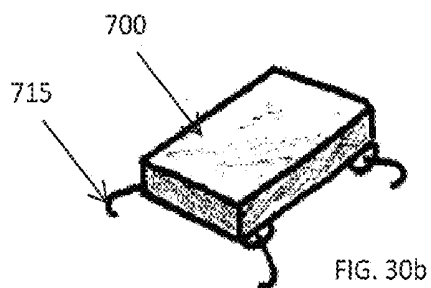
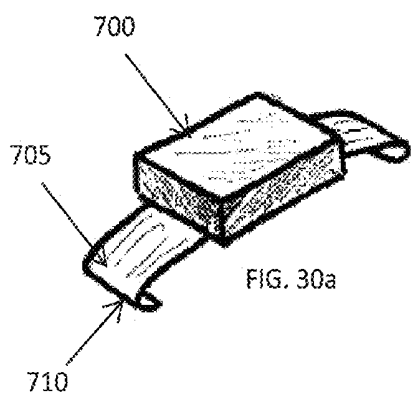
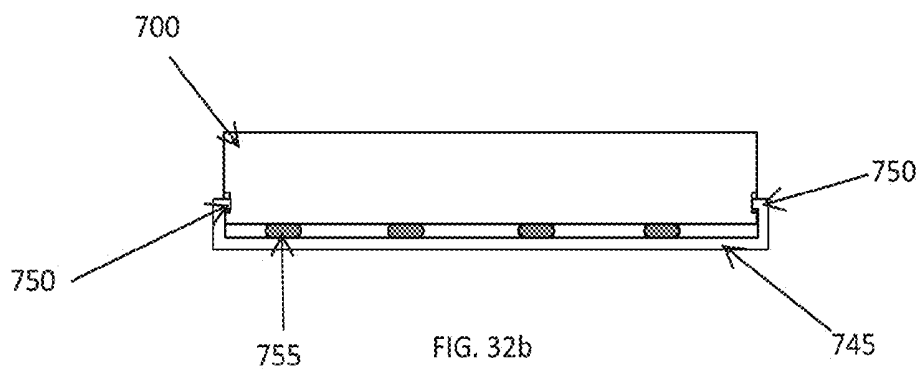
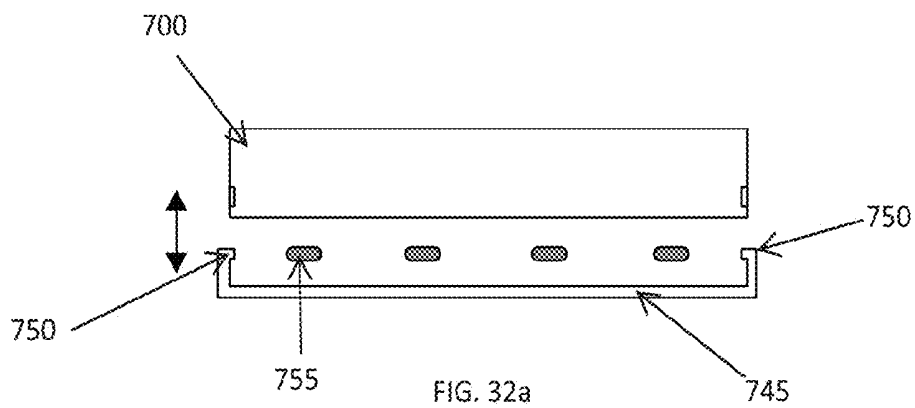
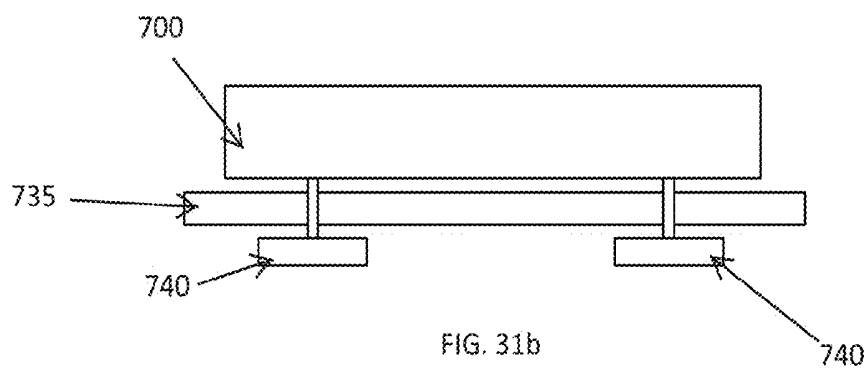
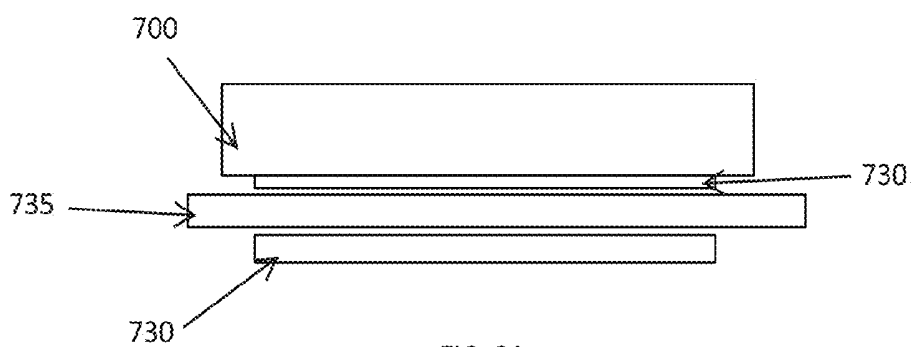
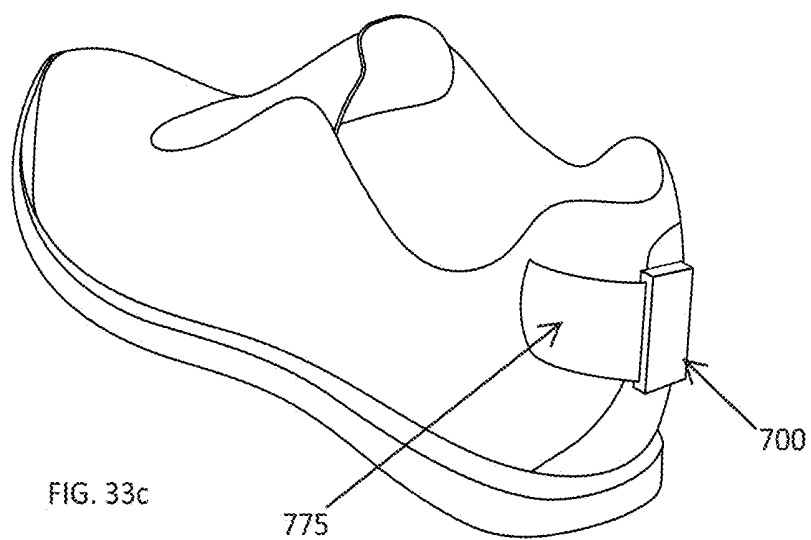
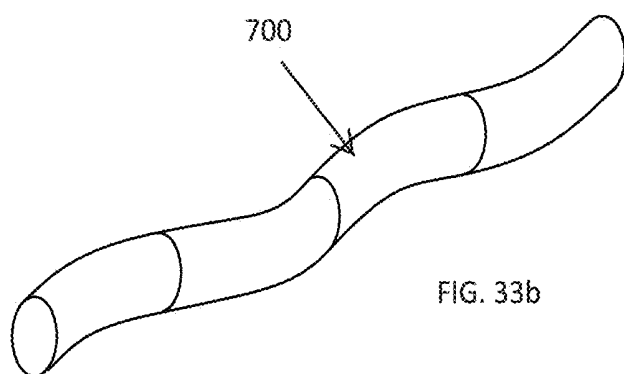
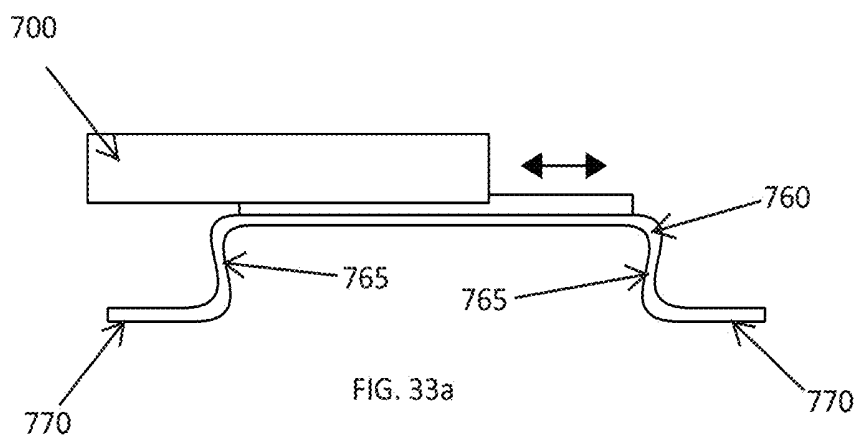


FIG. 29







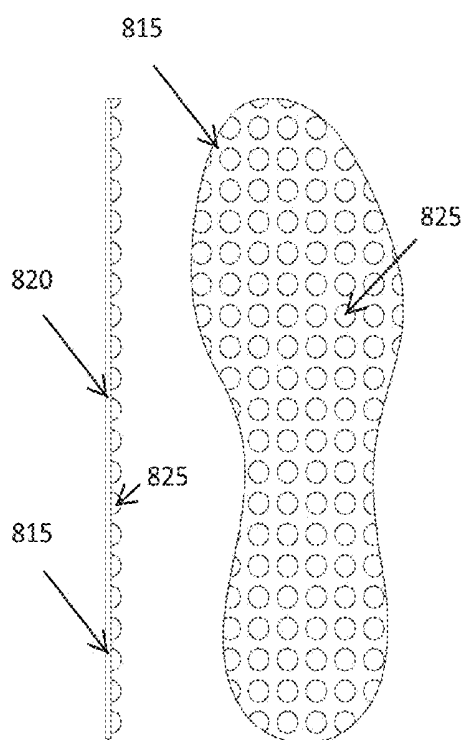


FIG. 34a

FIG. 34b

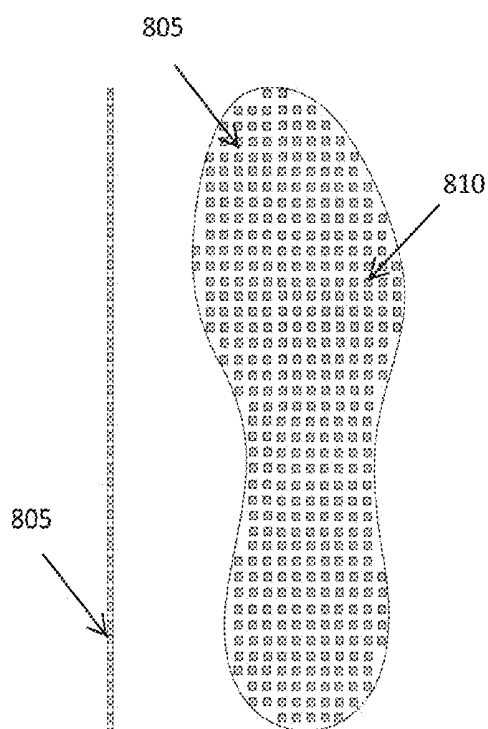


FIG. 35a

FIG. 35b

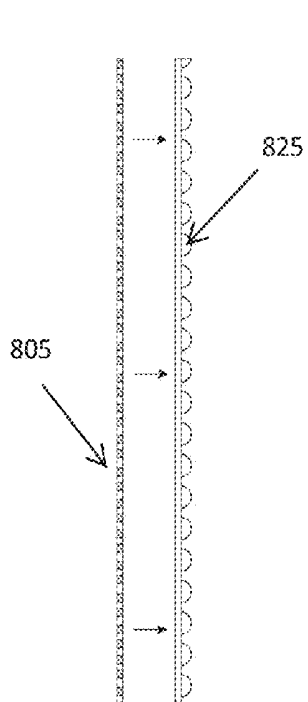


FIG. 36

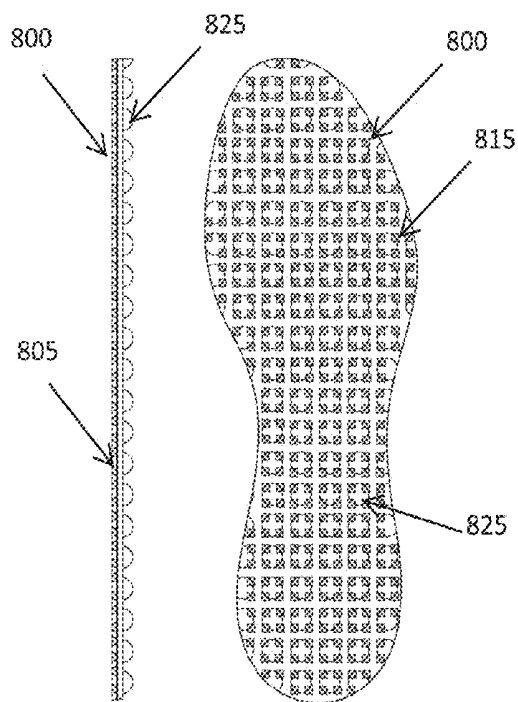
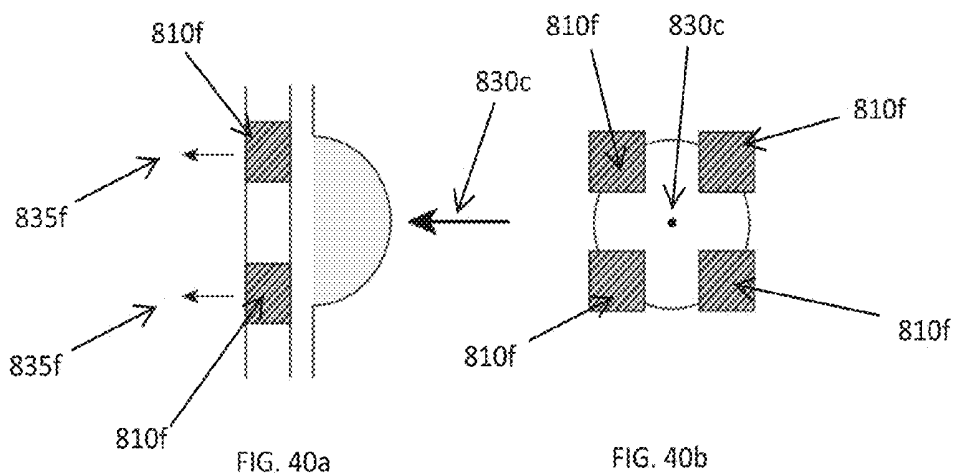
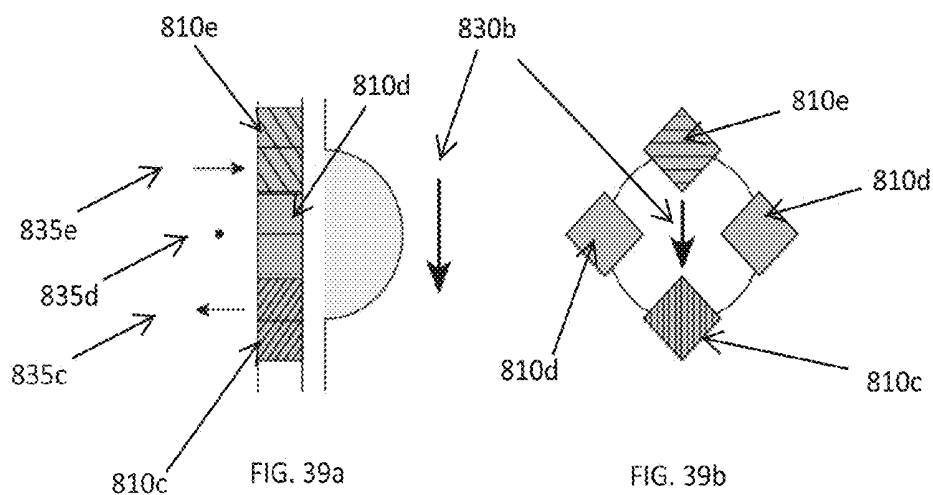
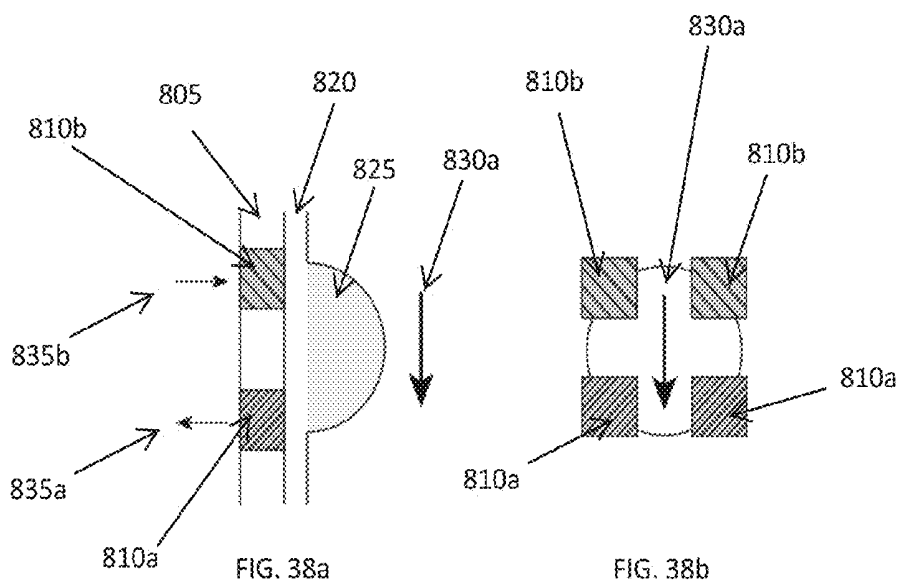


FIG. 37a

FIG. 37b



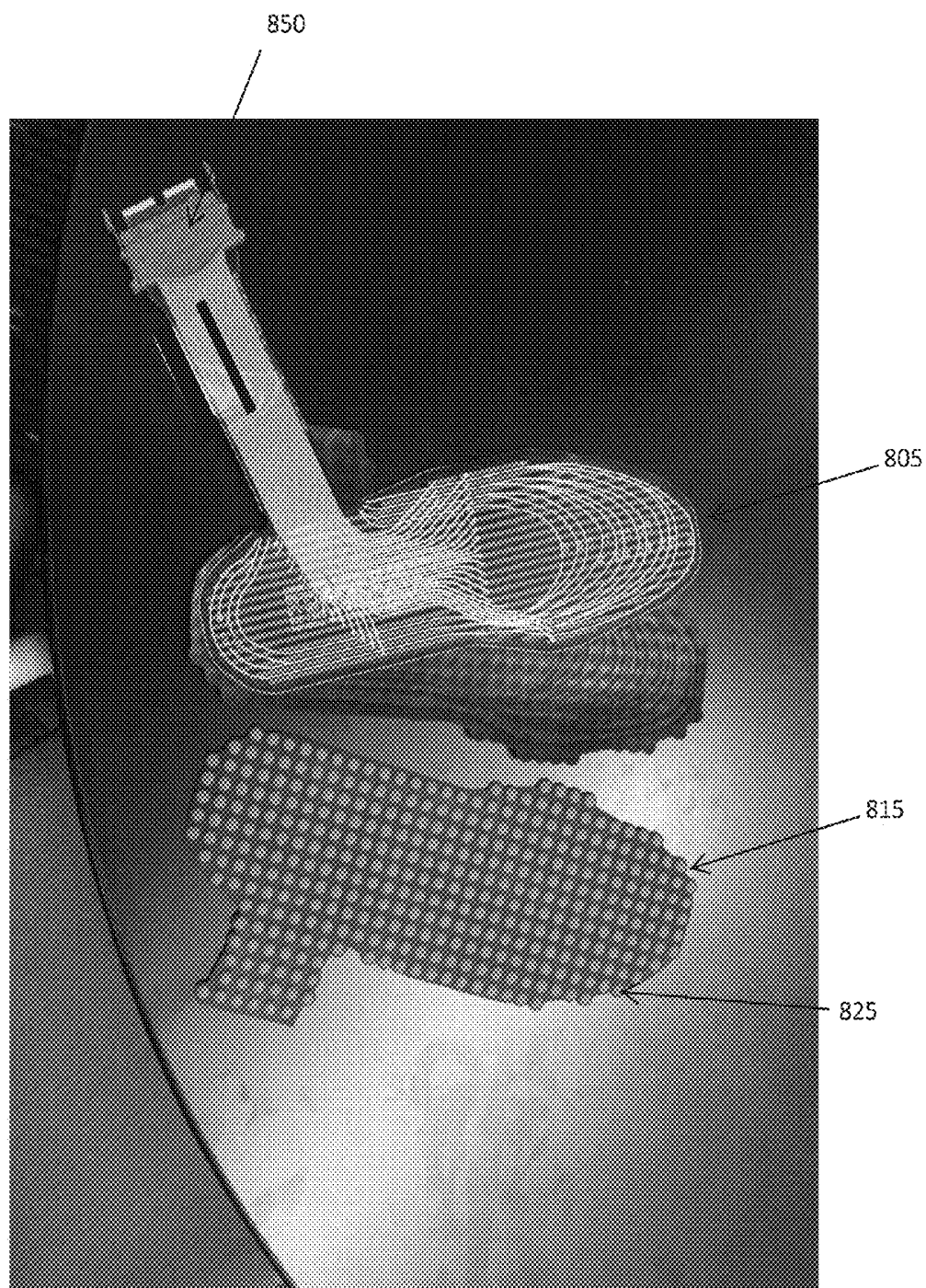


FIG. 41

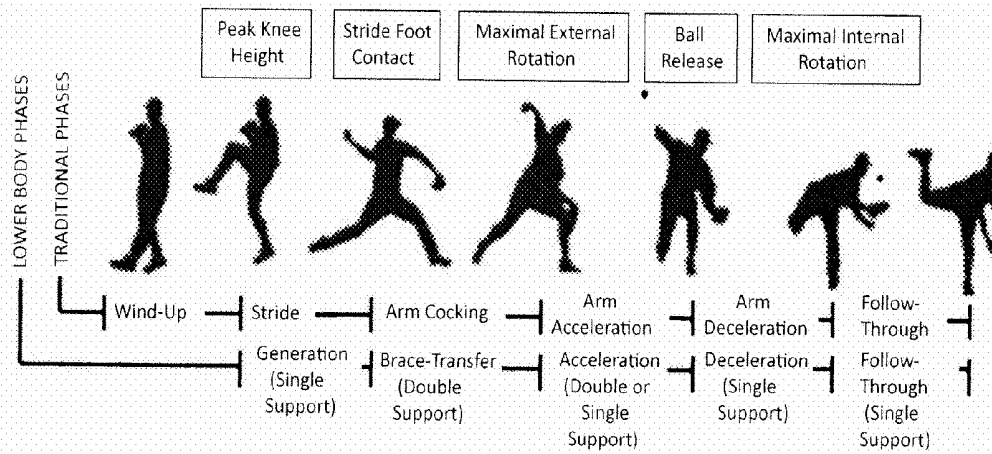


FIG. 42

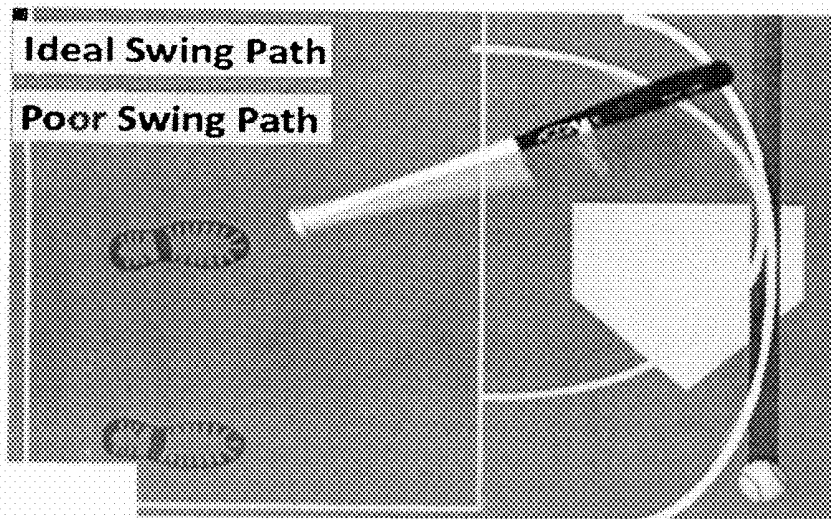


FIG. 43

SYSTEMS AND METHODS FOR MONITORING ATHLETIC AND PHYSIOLOGICAL PERFORMANCE

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is related and claims priority to the following U.S. patent applications, which are incorporated herein by reference in their entirety. The application is a continuation-in-part of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/368,084, filed Feb. 7, 2012 and published as U.S. Patent Publication No. US 2013-0041617 A1, which claims priority to U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 61/440,243, filed Feb. 7, 2011. The application also claims priority to U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 62/130,494, filed Mar. 9, 2015.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates generally to the field of athletic equipment and, more particularly, to systems and methods for providing training information to a runner.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] A number of devices exist for providing a runner with basic training information. For example, systems for measuring and recording the heart rate, speed, distance, and/or stride rate of a runner using a sensor that may be clipped, for example, to workout apparel has been manufactured by adidas AG of Herzogenaurach, Germany. Similarly, Nike Inc., of Beaverton, Oreg., has produced devices that measure and record the distance and pace of a walk or run. Such devices often consist of small accelerometers attached to or embedded in a shoe, which communicate with a receiving device (e.g., a sportband or a receiver plugged into or embedded within a mobile phone). The device and receiver allow a user to track the distance, time, and pace of a training run, with the information provided to a user through audio feedback during the training run and/or recorded for later analysis. Systems also exist for measuring and recording training information such as distance, time, and pace of a training run through utilization of a mobile phone or GPS ("Global Positioning System") device without the need for a sensor in a shoe.

[0004] However, these systems only provide basic training information related, for example, to the speed and distance travelled by a runner, and cannot provide any detailed biofeedback information that may be used to improve the actual running form and technique of the runner. As a result, there still exists a need for a system and method capable of providing detailed training information to an athlete during and after a training session to assist in improving his/her running form.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] The present invention is directed towards novel systems, methods and devices for monitoring one or more athletic performance characteristic of a user and/or providing biofeedback information to the user to assist in training the user to run with better form and, for example, with an improved foot strike.

[0006] One aspect of the invention includes an apparatus for monitoring one or more athletic performance characteristic of a user, the apparatus including a sensing unit adapted

to be attachable to a shoe of a user. The sensing unit includes a first sensor, such as a gyroscopic sensor, that is adapted to monitor a movement of a foot of the user while the user is in motion, a processor for determining a first performance characteristic of the user, such as a foot strike location of a foot of the user upon striking a ground surface, and a transmitter for transmitting a data package representative of the performance characteristic to a remote receiver. The gyroscopic sensor may be adapted to measure an angular velocity of the foot of the user. The processor for determining a performance characteristic of the user may include a microprocessor.

[0007] In one embodiment the apparatus also includes a receiver for receiving the data package transmitted from the sensing unit and communicating information representative of the performance characteristic to the user. The information communication protocol may include, or consist essentially of, at least one of a visual signal, an auditory signal, and/or a tactile signal (e.g., a vibration). The information may be communicated to the user in substantially real-time and/or be stored, for example within the sensing unit and/or the receiver, for communicating to the user at a later time and/or for further analysis.

[0008] The receiver may include one or more remote user feedback devices, such as, but not limited to, a watch, a detachable strap, a mobile phone, an earpiece, a hand-held feedback device, a laptop computer, head-mounted feedback device (e.g., a visor or hat), and/or a desktop personal computer. Alternatively, or in addition, the receiver may include a software application and/or hardware (e.g., a dongle) for controlling at least one function of a remote user feedback device, such as a mobile phone.

[0009] In one embodiment, the sensing unit includes a housing unit adapted to house the first sensor, the processor, and the transmitter. The housing unit may be adapted to be releasably attachable to a sole and/or upper of the shoe of the user, or be fixedly attached to, or embedded within, an upper and/or sole of the shoe. In one embodiment the housing unit is releasably attachable to at least one of a fastening portion (e.g., the lacing portion) of a shoe or a heel portion of the shoe.

[0010] The apparatus may be adapted for determining at least one second performance characteristic of the user, which can be based upon an output from the first sensor and/or be based upon an output from one or more second sensor(s). The second sensor(s) may include, or consist essentially of, one or more accelerometers, pressure sensors, force sensors, temperature sensors, chemical sensors, global positioning system sensors, piezoelectric sensors, rotary position sensors, gyroscopic sensors, heart-rate sensors, and/or goniometers. Other sensors, such as, but not limited to, electrocardiograph sensors (i.e., a sensor for measuring electrical and muscular functions of the heart), electrodermograph sensors, electroencephalograph sensors, electromyography sensors, feedback thermometer sensors, photoplethysmograph sensors, and/or pneumograph sensors (i.e., a sensor for measuring velocity and force of chest movements during respiration), galvanic skin response (GSR) sensors (also known as electrodermal response (EDR) or psychogalvanic reflex (PGR) sensors, and adapted to measure a change in the electrical resistance of the skin) may also be utilized in various embodiments of the invention. The at least one second performance characteristic may include, or consist

essentially of, at least one of a cadence, a posture, a lean, a speed, a distance travelled, and/or a heart rate of the user.

[0011] In one embodiment, the processor includes a comparison of a localized maximum angular velocity measurement and a localized minimum angular velocity measurement during a foot strike event (e.g., during a brief period immediately before, at, and/or after initial contact between a foot and the ground). For example, processing the measured data may include, or consist essentially of, dividing the localized minimum angular velocity measurement during a foot strike event by the localized maximum angular velocity measurement during a foot strike event, and comparing the resulting calculated value with at least one predetermined comparison value to determine whether a heel strike, a midfoot strike, or a forefoot strike has occurred. Alternatively, or in addition, the processor may include integration of measured angular velocity data during a foot strike event and comparison of the integrated positive angular velocity results and the integrated negative angular velocity results during a foot strike event.

[0012] Another aspect of the invention includes a method for monitoring one or more athletic performance characteristic of a user, the method including providing a sensing unit adapted to be attachable to a shoe of the user. The sensing unit may include a first sensor, such as a gyroscopic sensor, that is adapted to monitor a movement of a foot of the user while the user is in motion, a processor for determining a first performance characteristic of the user, such as a foot strike location of a foot of the user upon striking a ground surface, and a transmitter for transmitting a data package representative of the performance characteristic to a remote receiver. The method further includes providing a receiver for receiving a data package transmitted from the sensing unit and communicating information representative of the performance characteristic to the user. In one embodiment, the method allows for the communication of the information to the user in substantially real-time.

[0013] Another aspect of the invention includes a system for monitoring athletic performance and physiological characteristics of a user. The system includes a first sensing unit adapted to monitor at least one performance characteristic of the user and adapted to be attachable to a shoe of the user. The first sensing unit including at least one motion sensor adapted to gather motion data relating to a movement of a foot of the user, a processor for processing the motion data to determine at least one performance characteristic of the user, and a transmitter for transmitting a first data package representative of the at least one performance characteristic to a remote receiver. The system further including a second sensing unit adapted to monitor a plurality of physiological metrics of the user and adapted to be incorporated into an item of apparel of the user or attached to a portion of the user. The second sensing unit includes a first physiological sensor adapted to gather first physiological data relating to at least one function of the heart of the user, a second physiological sensor adapted to gather second physiological data relating to at least one of a temperature and a perspiration level of the user, a processor for processing the first physiological data and second physiological data to determine at least one physiological characteristic of the user, and a transmitter for transmitting a second data package representative of the at least one physiological characteristic to the remote receiver, wherein the remote receiver is adapted

to identify a relationship between the at least one performance characteristic and the at least one physiological characteristic.

[0014] In one embodiment the motion sensor includes a gyroscopic sensor for measuring angular velocity data for the foot of the user. The processor may be adapted to process the angular velocity data from the motion sensor to determine a processed value indicative of the performance characteristic of the user, the performance characteristic including a foot strike location of a foot of the user upon striking a ground surface, and compare the processed value to a range of predetermined comparison values to determine the performance characteristic relating to the processed value, the range of comparison values including a first range of values indicative of a heel strike, a second range of values indicative of a midfoot strike, and a third range of values indicative of a forefoot strike. The first data package may include an indication of whether a heel strike, a midfoot strike, or a forefoot strike has occurred. The first sensing unit may further include a periodic trigger adapted to initiate and terminate processing of angular velocity data by the processor during a window of time corresponding to a portion of a foot strike event.

[0015] In one embodiment the motion sensor includes an accelerometer for measuring an acceleration of the foot of the user, where the accelerometer may include a multi-axis accelerometer. The processor may be adapted to process the acceleration data from the accelerometer to determine a cadence of the user.

[0016] The second sensing unit may be embedded within or releasably attachable to the item of apparel or attached to a portion of the user. The first physiological sensor may include, or consist essentially of, an electrocardiograph sensor and/or a heart-rate monitor. The second sensing unit may further include a third physiological sensor adapted to monitor one or more function of the chest of the user, such as a pneumograph sensor and/or a breathing rate sensor.

[0017] In one embodiment, the remote receiver is adapted to communicate information representative of at least one of the at least one performance characteristic, the at least one physiological characteristic, and the relationship between the at least one performance characteristic and the at least one physiological characteristic to the user. The remote receiver may include at least one remote user feedback device selected from the group consisting of: a watch, a detachable strap, a mobile phone, an earpiece, a hand-held feedback device, a laptop computer, a tablet computer, a head-mounted feedback device, and a desktop personal computer. The information may be communicated to the user in substantially real-time and/or be relayed to the user at a later time.

[0018] The remote receiver can be adapted to store data related to at least one of the at least one performance characteristic, the at least one physiological characteristic, and the relationship between the at least one performance characteristic and the at least one physiological characteristic. The relationship between the at least one performance characteristic and the at least one physiological characteristic may be indicative of a level of performance of the user, and the remote receiver can further be adapted to compare the measured level of performance to a predetermined optimal level of performance.

[0019] Another aspect of the invention includes a method for monitoring athletic performance and physiological char-

acteristics of a user. The method includes the steps of providing a first sensing unit adapted to monitor at least one performance characteristic of the user, providing a second sensing unit adapted to monitor a plurality of physiological metrics of the user, and identifying at the remote receiver a relationship between the at least one performance characteristic and the at least one physiological characteristic. In some implementations, monitoring performance characteristic of the user may include gathering, by a motion sensor, motion data relating to a movement of a foot of the user. Processing the motion data to determine a performance characteristic of the user may be performed by a processor. A transmitter may transmit a first data package representative of the performance characteristic to a remote receiver. In some variations, monitoring physiological metrics may include gathering, by a first physiological sensor, first physiological data relating to a function of the heart of the user and gathering, by a second physiological sensor, second physiological data relating to a temperature and a perspiration level of the user. Processing the first physiological data and second physiological data to determine a physiological characteristic of the user may be performed by a processor. A transmitter may transmit a second data package representative of the physiological characteristic to the remote receiver. The method can further include calculating a level of performance of the user based on the relationship between the at least one performance characteristic and the at least one physiological characteristic, and comparing the calculated level of performance to a predetermined optimal level of performance.

[0020] These and other objects, along with advantages and features of the present invention herein disclosed, will become more apparent through reference to the following description, the accompanying drawings, and the claims. Furthermore, it is to be understood that the features of the various embodiments described herein are not mutually exclusive and can exist in various combinations and permutations.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0021] In the drawings, like reference characters generally refer to the same parts throughout the different views. Also, the drawings are not necessarily to scale, emphasis instead generally being placed upon illustrating the principles of the invention. In the following description, various embodiments of the present invention are described with reference to the following drawings, in which:

[0022] FIG. 1 is a schematic view of a biofeedback system as worn by a runner, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

[0023] FIG. 2 is a schematic side view of a shoe with forefoot and heel sensors embedded therein, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

[0024] FIG. 3 is a schematic side view of a shoe with a midfoot sensor embedded therein, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

[0025] FIG. 4 is a schematic side view of a shoe with a plurality of sensors embedded therein, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

[0026] FIG. 5 is a schematic bottom view of a shoe with a linear array of sensors embedded therein, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

[0027] FIG. 6 is a schematic bottom view of another shoe with a perimeter array of sensors embedded therein, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

[0028] FIG. 7 is a schematic top view of a shoe with a sensor holding insert inserted within the sole, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

[0029] FIG. 8 is a schematic bottom view of a shoe sole having midfoot and heel sensor pads, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

[0030] FIG. 9 is a schematic bottom view of a shoe sole having forefoot, midfoot, and heel sensor pads, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

[0031] FIG. 10 is a schematic side view of a shoe with a sensor holding insert coupled to the shoe at a lacing portion, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

[0032] FIG. 11 is a schematic side view of a shoe with a sensor coupled to the upper, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

[0033] FIG. 12 is a schematic view of a system for providing biofeedback information for an athlete, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

[0034] FIG. 13 is a schematic view of another system for providing biofeedback information for an athlete, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

[0035] FIG. 14 is a schematic view of yet another system for providing biofeedback information for an athlete, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

[0036] FIGS. 15 to 19 are schematic views of various biofeedback systems as worn by a runner, in accordance with various embodiments of the invention;

[0037] FIG. 20 is a schematic perspective view of a hand held feedback device for a biofeedback system, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

[0038] FIG. 21 is a schematic side view of a sensor pod for a biofeedback system positioned on a lacing portion of a shoe, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

[0039] FIG. 22 is a perspective view of the pod of FIG. 21 on another shoe;

[0040] FIG. 23 is a schematic side view of a sensor pod for a biofeedback system positioned on a heel portion of a shoe, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

[0041] FIG. 24 is a perspective view of the pod of FIG. 23 on another shoe;

[0042] FIG. 25 is a schematic perspective view of axes of orientation for a gyroscopic sensor for a biofeedback system, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

[0043] FIG. 26 is a graph of angular velocity data from a gyroscopic sensor for a heel striking running style, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

[0044] FIG. 27 is a graph of angular velocity data from a gyroscopic sensor for a midfoot striking running style, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

[0045] FIG. 28 is a graph of data for a reset trigger for a gyroscopic sensor, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

[0046] FIG. 29 is a schematic representation of various data presentations for foot strike location of a runner, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

[0047] FIGS. 30a to 33c are schematic views of various attachment mechanisms for a sensor pod for a biofeedback system, in accordance with various embodiments of the invention;

[0048] FIG. 34a is a side view of a lug carrying layer of a multi-directional force sensor array for incorporation into an article of footwear, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

[0049] FIG. 34b is a bottom view of the lug carrying layer of FIG. 34a;

[0050] FIG. 35a is a side view of a sensor layer of a multi-directional force sensor array for incorporation into an article of footwear, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

[0051] FIG. 35b is a bottom view of the sensor layer of FIG. 35a;

[0052] FIG. 36 is a schematic representation of the assembly of a multi-directional force sensor array, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

[0053] FIG. 37a is a side view of a multi-directional force sensor array for incorporation into an article of footwear, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

[0054] FIG. 37b is a bottom view of the multi-directional force sensor array of FIG. 37a;

[0055] FIG. 38a is a schematic side view of a lug and sensor assembly for a multi-directional force sensor array under a first shear force, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

[0056] FIG. 38b is a top view of the lug and sensor assembly of FIG. 38a;

[0057] FIG. 39a is a schematic side view of a lug and sensor assembly for a multi-directional force sensor array under a second shear force, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

[0058] FIG. 39b is a top view of the lug and sensor assembly of FIG. 39a;

[0059] FIG. 40a is a schematic side view of a lug and sensor assembly for a multi-directional force sensor array under a normal force, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

[0060] FIG. 40b is a top view of the lug and sensor assembly of FIG. 40a;

[0061] FIG. 41 is an image of a sensor layer and lug carrying layer for a multi-directional force sensor array for incorporation into an article of footwear, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

[0062] FIG. 42 is a schematic representation of a baseball pitching motion, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention; and

[0063] FIG. 43 is a schematic representation of a baseball batting swing path, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0064] The invention described herein relates generally to improved biofeedback systems, and related methods, for use in training users (e.g., runners or other athletes) to run with an improved running form or technique. The invention may be utilized by runners or other athletes of all levels of skill from professional athletes through to beginners and occasional joggers. By placing one or more sensors on the body of a runner (e.g., on or in one or more shoe and/or piece of apparel), the systems and methods described herein may be used as a coaching tool to provide substantially instantaneous feedback and coaching during athletic activity, and also store information for evaluation and further processing after the run.

[0065] Promoting better running form may be beneficial to a runner for a number of reasons such as, but not limited to, improving running efficiency (thereby increasing performance) and reducing the risk of injury. In general, coaching can be an important way to promote proper running form and keep runners injury free. However, the majority of runners (including many collegiate and even some elite runners) have never been given any or significant training on how to run with proper form. As a result, many runners are unaware of problems with their running form (e.g., an improper foot strike position or a running style wherein a runner's right foot contacts the ground differently than his/her left foot) that may significantly affect his/her running efficiency and leave them more prone to injury.

[0066] The utilization of high-speed cameras during coaching may provide a runner with some feedback to assist in improving running form. However, not only do the majority of athletes not have sufficient access to professional coaching utilizing such technology to provide any substantive guidance to train them to run with an improved running form, but such coaching, even if available, can be expensive and time consuming. In addition, watching video of an athlete running does not provide instantaneous feedback that can be used by the athlete during a run. While technology has been utilized to provide some instantaneous feedback to a runner, such as the speed, distance travelled, heart rate, and calories burned during a run, the information provided by these systems does not produce biofeedback information that may be used to give a runner substantive training on proper running form. The inventions described herein address these and other issues by providing improved systems and related methods for measuring, transmitting, storing, analyzing, and/or communicating substantive biofeedback data that may be utilized instantaneously, or substantially instantaneously, to promote good running form in an athlete during and/or after a run.

[0067] Biofeedback information of use in training an athlete to run with proper running form includes, but is not limited to, foot strike position, cadence, posture, and lean information. Such information may be used to analyze a runner's technique and running traits and identify parameters that can be adjusted by a runner during training to improve one or more performance characteristic. Good running form for an athlete may include elements such as, but not limited to, quick strides, a midfoot foot strike location, and good posture. These elements may increase the efficiency and ease of running while reducing stresses on the runner that could result in strains and other injuries. In contrast, poor running form, which is common in untrained athletes, may include elements such as overstriding, aggressive heel-striking, and bad posture. These poor running elements may, for example, produce excessive stresses to the knee, potentially resulting in Runner's Knee/Petelofemoral Pain Syndrome or other injuries.

[0068] The posture of a runner relates to the carriage of the body of the runner during running. Good posture (generally an up-right posture) may be achieved, for example, by standing tall and running with your head up and with your gaze directed straight ahead.

[0069] The cadence of a runner (i.e., the number of foot strikes per minute) may be important in ensuring good running form. In one embodiment, a cadence of about 180 foot strikes per minute may be optimal to prevent overstriding and to ensure proper running form regardless of the

pace of the runner. In alternative embodiments, higher or lower cadences may be used depending, for example, on the specific physiology, age, and/or goals of the user.

[0070] The lean of a runner may be utilized to reduce the need for excessive muscle force by advantageously utilizing gravity to assist in forward motion. In one embodiment, improved lean may be achieved by utilizing a running style including a forward lean over the whole length of the body without bending at the waist and by flexing at the ankle to reduce unnecessary muscle strain caused by toeing-off.

[0071] The foot strike location (i.e., the location, on the sole of the foot, of initial impact with a ground surface during each step) can be extremely important in promoting a good running form. Runners with a midfoot striking gait distribute pressure across the foot during a running gait cycle differently than runners with a heel striking gait. In addition, the mechanical work performed by the lower extremity of a runner with a midfoot striking gait is distributed across the joints differently than a runner with a heel striking gait. Runners with a midfoot striking gait primarily have pressure distributed in the lateral midfoot and forefoot regions of the foot at initial impact and exhibit more ankle flexion (dorsiflexion) subsequent to the initial impact. Runners with a heel striking gait primarily have pressure distributed in the lateral heel at initial impact and generally do not exhibit as much ankle flexion after impact. As a result, heel strikers tend to have larger stresses placed on his/her knee which can lead to injuries such as Runner's Knee/Patellofemoral Pain Syndrome. Consequently, rearfoot/heel strikers potentially have a less efficient running gait than midfoot strikers, with heel striking and overstriding often causing braking. An exemplary shoe conducive to a midfoot striking gait is described in U.S. Patent Publication No. 2009-0145005, the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety. In addition, a midfoot striking gait may provide a superior running form than a pronounced forefoot running gait (which may, for example, cause calf-strain and Achilles strain). One embodiment of the invention may include the use of one or more sensors to determine the location, on the sole of the foot, of initial impact with a ground surface during each step, and/or determine the angle of the foot with respect to the ground surface at initial impact (which may be used to determine foot strike location).

[0072] One embodiment of the invention includes a system **100** for providing biofeedback information to a runner **115** for use in improving running form. The system **100**, as shown in FIG. 1, includes one or more sensors **105** attached to (e.g., embedded within, fixedly coupled to, or releasably coupled to) a portion of a shoe **110** of a runner **115** to measure one or more data conditions/performance characteristics during athletic activity (e.g., a run). The system **100** also includes one or more remote receiving systems **120** for receiving data from the sensor(s) **105** and communicating information to the runner based on an analysis of the gathered data. The analysis of the gathered data may be carried out in a processor located in the shoe **110**, the remote receiving system **120**, and/or a separate analyzing unit (e.g., a personal computer). One or more sensors **105** can be placed in each shoe **110** of the runner **115**, or in only a single shoe **110** of the runner **115**.

[0073] The sensor(s) may be integrally embedded within the shoe and, for example, within one or more portions of a sole (e.g., an outsole, midsole, or insole) of a shoe. One or

more sensors may also be integrally embedded within one or more portions of an upper of a shoe. In another embodiment, one or more sensors may be releasably attachable to a portion of the sole and/or upper of a shoe. For example, a sensor unit may be adapted to clip to a portion of an upper of a shoe (e.g., an outer mesh layer of the shoe or a lacing section of the shoe), and/or be releasably attached to a portion of a sole of the shoe. The sensor(s) may be releasably attached through any appropriate attaching elements including, but not limited to, a hook and loop fastening (e.g., Velcro®), a clip, a pin, lacing, magnetic elements, and/or an adhesive.

[0074] Various sensors may be utilized to measure one or more data conditions during athletic activity. Exemplary sensors include, but are not limited to, mechanical feedback devices (e.g., retractable pins that retract upon contact with the ground to measure and indicate a ground contact and/or a force associated therewith or pins or other structures that provide a tactile sensation to a user during foot strike), accelerometers, piezoelectric sensors, rotary position sensors, gyroscopic sensors, temperature sensors, chemical sensors (e.g., sensors for measuring oxygen levels), GPS devices, pressure sensors (e.g., pressure transducers), force sensors (e.g., load cells, force transducers, or stress/strain sensors), and/or goniometers. Exemplary pressure/force sensors include, but are not limited to, resistive, capacitive, impedance based, and/or piezoelectric sensors. The sensors may measure data conditions at a localized position or be strips or pads adapted to measure data conditions (e.g., pressure and/or force) over an extended area. In various embodiments other electromagnetic, mechanical, and/or optical sensors may be used in addition to, or in place of, the sensors listed above.

[0075] One or more sensors may be placed at any appropriate location on the shoe and, for example, within a forefoot portion, a midfoot portion, and/or a heel portion of a shoe sole and/or upper. In one embodiment, as shown in FIG. 2, a shoe **110** includes a forefoot sensor **105** located in a forefoot portion **117** of the shoe **110**, and a heel sensor **105** located within a heel portion **122** of the shoe **110**. Sensors may be placed at other locations on the shoe **110** in addition to, or in place of, the forefoot portion **117** and heel portion **122**. For example, one or more midfoot sensors **105** may be located at a midfoot portion **125** of a shoe **110**, as shown in FIG. 3. The various sensors **105** may be positioned within or above a sole **130** of the shoe **110** (e.g., within a cavity in the midsole of the shoe or in an insole place within the shoe) and/or be positioned within or on an upper **135** of a shoe **110**.

[0076] In one embodiment, a plurality of sensors **105** (i.e., a sensor array) is positioned at various locations along a length of the shoe **110**, or a portion thereof, as shown in FIG. 4. These sensors **105** may be positioned at a number of locations substantially along a central axis **140** of the sole **130**, as shown in FIG. 5, or at a number of locations along a medial side **145** and/or a lateral side **150** of the sole **130**, as shown in FIG. 6. Any appropriate number of sensors **105** may be positioned at any appropriate locations over the length and width of the sole **130** of the shoe **110**, with the sensors **105** embedded within, or releasably attached to, an outsole, a midsole, and/or an insole of the sole **130**, depending upon the specific data and running traits being measured. In one embodiment, one or more of the sensors **105** may be

exposed on an outer surface of the sole 130. Alternatively, or in addition, one or more of the sensors 105 may be embedded within the sole 130.

[0077] In one embodiment, one or more sensors 105 may be placed in a removable insert that may be positioned inside a shoe, for example, as a removable insole or as an insert adapted to fit within a cavity or pocket formed within a portion of the shoe sole or upper (e.g., in a heel pocket or tongue pocket). For example, a shoe 110 may be formed with a sole portion 130 having a cavity 170 adapted to releasably receive an insert 175 holding one or more sensors 105 therein, as shown in FIG. 7. The cavity may include a covering portion adapted to cover and protect the insert during operation. The cavity 170, or cavities, may be placed at any location within the forefoot portion 117, midfoot portion 125, and/or heel portion 122 of the shoe 110. In various embodiments the cavity 170 may be accessed from the interior of the shoe, as shown in FIG. 7, or through an opening in an outer surface of the outsole 130 of the shoe 110.

[0078] In one embodiment, one or more sensor pads or strips may be affixed to, or embedded in, a sole 130 of a shoe 110. For example, FIG. 8 shows a sole 130 having a heel sensor pad 180 located at a heel portion 122 along a lateral side 150 of the sole 130, with a midfoot sensor pad 185 located at a midfoot portion 125 along the lateral side 150 of the sole 130. Sensor pads or strips can be positioned along a medial side, lateral side, and/or central portion of the sole, or span across a width of the shoe, or a portion thereof. For example, FIG. 9 shows a sole 130 having a midfoot sensor pad 185 located at a midfoot portion 125 along the lateral side 150 of the sole 130, but also having a heel sensor pad 190 spanning across the width of the heel portion 122 and a forefoot sensor pad 195 spanning across the width of forefoot portion 117.

[0079] In various embodiments sensor pads and/or strips may be positioned on any portion of the shoe sole. The sensor pads or strips can be embedded within an outsole, midsole, and/or insole, or be positioned between adjoining layers of the sole. Alternatively, the sensor pads or strips can be located in a removable insert (e.g., a removable insole) that can be placed into the shoe, or attached to an exterior, ground contacting, surface of the sole.

[0080] Alternatively, one or more sensors 105 may be placed within an insert 160 that may be releasably attached to the shoe 110 at a lacing portion 165, as shown in FIG. 10, or on one or more portions of an upper 135 of the shoe 110, as shown in FIG. 11.

[0081] The sensors 105 may be used to measure the location and distribution of each foot strike of each foot on the ground during running and/or the force and/or pressure applied to various portions of the foot during running. The measured data may be processed to produce biofeedback information that may be used to train a runner to run with a more efficient and safer foot strike location, such as with a midfoot strike. The data may be processed and communicated to a runner instantaneously, or substantially instantaneously, to give the runner immediate feedback during a run. The data may also be stored and used to generate both mean and time dependent results after the run is completed, thereby providing a runner and/or a coach with a full analysis of the runner's performance over the course of the run.

[0082] The sensors 105 may also be used to measure the cadence of the runner during a run, in addition to, or instead of, the foot strike information, by recording the time between each foot strike. Again, the measured data may be processed and communicated to a runner instantaneously, or substantially instantaneously, to give the runner immediate feedback during a run and/or be stored and used to generate both mean and time dependent results after the run is completed.

[0083] In one exemplary embodiment, a shoe 110 may include a sensor 105 comprising a mechanical feedback device (e.g., a pin) located in a sole of a shoe 110 and, for example at the heel portion. Data measured and transmitted from the sensor 105 can be used to determine when a runner's heel is in contact with the ground, thereby producing information that can be used to provide the runner with a better awareness of his/her gait.

[0084] One embodiment of the invention includes one or more sensors 205 positioned either in or on the upper 135 or sole 130 of a shoe 110 (as described hereinabove for the sensors 105) to measure data that can be utilized to determine a runner's posture and/or lean during a run. For example, one or more sensors 205 (e.g., goniometers) can be fixedly embedded or releasably attached to an upper 135 of a shoe 110 to measure data that can be processed to provide biofeedback information related to a runner's posture and/or lean, as shown in FIG. 11. The sensors 205 may operate independently from, or in concert with, sensors 105 for measuring foot strike and/or cadence. In one embodiment, the sensors 205 can communicate data to a remote receiver using the same transmitter as utilized by the sensors 105. Alternatively, the sensors 205 may utilize a separate transmitter. In an alternative embodiment, sensors for measuring the posture and/or lean of the user may be positioned at other locations on a body of a user (e.g., on an ankle, leg, waist, arm, or chest of the user).

[0085] In one embodiment, one or more sensors can be embedded within, or releasably attachable to, an item of apparel wearable by a runner. Alternatively, or in addition, one or more sensors can be mounted on a strap that may be worn by a runner, or removably affixed to a portion of a runner by a skin sensitive adhesive or tape. These sensors can be used in addition to, or in place of, sensors on a shoe to provide biofeedback information related to a performance characteristic of a runner.

[0086] In addition to providing biofeedback information related to a runner's proper running form (e.g., foot strike, cadence, posture, and/or lean information), the systems described herein may include sensors for measuring other parameters related to a runner's performance including, but not limited to, distance, pace, time, calories burned, heart rate, breaths per minute, blood lactate level, and/or muscle activity (EMG). For example, measuring blood lactate levels may be of use in determining lactate threshold data in long-distance runners and other athletes.

[0087] In various embodiments, the sensors 105, 205 may be powered by one or more battery elements coupled to the sensors 105, 205. The batteries may be single use, replaceable batteries or be rechargeable batteries. The rechargeable batteries may be recharged by any appropriate method. Alternatively, the sensors 105, 205 may utilize the biomechanical action of a runner for power.

[0088] The sensors 105, 205 may be coupled to one or more transmitters for transmitting measured data to a remote

receiver. The transmitter may include, or consist essentially of, a wireless transmitter and, more particularly, a radio frequency transmitter and/or an infrared transmitter. For example, the transmitter may be a radio transmitter adapted to transmit short wavelength radio transmissions via Bluetooth®, Bluetooth® Low Energy, and/or ANT or ANT+ protocols. In one embodiment the system may include a transmitting system capable of transmitting over a plurality of transmission protocols, thereby allowing the device to communicate with multiple different receiving systems. The transmitter may also, in one embodiment, be capable of receiving information transmitted from a remote source. This information may be utilized, for example, to turn on/off the sensors, calibrate the sensors, and/or control one or more function of the sensing system.

[0089] The data measured by the sensors in or on the shoe(s) can be transmitted to a remote receiving system for recording and/or analysis. An exemplary system **300** for providing biofeedback information including both a sensing unit **305** and a receiving/analyzing unit **310** is shown in FIG. **12**. The sensing unit **305** can include elements such as, but not limited to, one or more sensors **315**, a power source **320**, and a transmitting/receiving element **325**. The sensing unit **305** can be positioned in or on a shoe and/or piece of apparel (as described herein). The remote receiving unit **310** can include elements such as, but not limited to, a transmitting/receiving element **330** for receiving the transmitted data from the sensing unit **305**, a remote user feedback element **335** for receiving the data, a storage unit **340** for storing raw and/or analyzed data, a communication element **345** (e.g., a visual display such as a graphical user interface (GUI), an auditory communication element, and/or a tactile user interface) for communicating biofeedback information determined from the analyzed data to an athlete, and a power source **350**. The transmitting/receiving element **330** can also be used to communicate with a remote database, such as an online database for an online running/coaching community, thereby allowing biofeedback information to be transmitted to the remote database and allowing biofeedback information, training instructions, software updates, or other digital information to be transmitted from the remote database to the receiving/analyzing unit **310**.

[0090] Another exemplary system **300** for providing biofeedback information is shown in FIG. **13**. In this embodiment, the sensing unit **305** additionally includes an analyzing element **355** and a storage unit **360**. Including an analyzing element **355** and a storage unit **360** in the sensing unit **305** allows for initial processing of the raw data from the one or more sensors **315** to be carried out in the sensing unit **305**, with the raw and/or analyzed data stored in the storage **360** within the sensing unit **305**. As a result, only the processed data, or a small package of information representative of the processed data, need be transmitted from the sensing unit **305** to the remote user feedback element **335**, thereby reducing the quantity of information that needs to be transmitted between devices in order to provide real-time feedback to a user. This in turn reduces the drain on the power sources **320**, **350**, thereby extending the run-time and efficiency of the system **300**. In addition, storing raw and/or processed data within the sensing unit **305** allows the data to be downloaded into an analyzing device (e.g., a computer) for further processing after the run is completed, regardless of whether the data were received by a remote user feedback element **335** during the run.

[0091] The remote receiving unit **310** may, for example, be a watch, a portable media player (such as, but not limited to, an Apple Inc. iPod®), a customized receiving unit adapted to be worn by the user (e.g., attached to a detachable strap or adapted to fit in a pocket of the user's garments), a mobile phone or smart phone (such as, but not limited to, an Apple Inc. iPhone® or a Research In Motion Ltd. BlackBerry®), a portable GPS device, an earpiece, and/or an item of headgear (e.g., a hat, visor, sunglasses, etc.). Alternatively, or in addition, the remote receiver may be a laptop computer, a tablet computer, a desktop personal computer, and/or an athletic training system (e.g., a treadmill). In one embodiment the transmitting/receiving element **330** can be a separate unit (for example, a dongle, i.e., a hardware or software "key" allowing two remote devices to communicate) that is adapted to plug into a smart phone or computer to allow communication between the sensing unit **305** and receiving/analyzing unit **310**.

[0092] The biofeedback information could be communicated to the runner through an auditory, optical, and/or tactile (e.g., vibratory) signal. Auditory signals can, for example, be communicated through a speaker (e.g., a small speaker within the shoe, the sensing unit, and/or receiving device) and/or in an earpiece or headphones worn by the athlete. Optical signals can, for example, be communicated through a visual display on a receiving device (e.g., a visual display on a smart phone screen) or through one or more optical transmitters such as, but not limited to, a light-emitting diode (LED) light source, coupled to the runners shoe and/or to an optical transmitter attached to a piece of apparel or strap worn by the runner. Vibratory signals may be communicated to the runner through a vibration inducing element within the receiver and/or within or attached to the shoe.

[0093] The biofeedback information generated through analysis of the measured data from the sensor(s) can be relayed back to the athlete either in any appropriate auditory form such as, but not limited to, a voice command and/or a warning signal. For example, the information may be communicated via a software generated spoken communication providing information and/or instructions to a runner (e.g., "You are now running on your heel"; "Your cadence is too low"; etc.). Alternatively, or in addition, the auditory signal may include a click, beep, or other simple signal that can provide a runner with a warning if his/her running form does not meet a certain requirement and/or provide a positive signal if his/her running form does meet the required parameters. Such simple auditory signals can also be used to provide timing information (similar to a metronome) to give a runner a target cadence during a run. In addition, or alternatively, the auditory signal may include a change in a pitch, or speed of a musical composition being played to a user depending upon the actual cadence of a user with respect to a target cadence). By providing this practically real-time feedback, the athlete is able to make quick adjustments to his/her gait during the run.

[0094] In various embodiments the biofeedback information may be automatically communicated to the athlete, be communicated upon prompting from the runner (e.g., by initiating a communication command in the receiver), and/or be communicated as a summarized report at set periods. For example, at the end of a set distance or period covered, the athlete could receive summarized biofeedback information relating to his/her performance over the last mile covered

and/or the entire distance covered—e.g., “You spent 20% of your time on your heel over the last mile”).

[0095] One embodiment of the invention can include a system having one or more sensors that are placed inside a shoe of a runner to record foot strike. This information is converted to an auditory signal that is made through a small speaker embedded within, or attached to, the shoe of the runner. As a result, in this embodiment a separate receiving/communicating unit would not be needed to provide feedback to the runner.

[0096] In addition to, or instead of, providing real-time biofeedback information, the information may be stored by the system for later analysis by the athlete and/or a coach. This information may be used, for example, to provide an athlete with a history of his/her runs and his/her performance during each run. In one embodiment the biofeedback system merely stores data from the sensor(s) as simple raw data, with the processing and analysis of the data being performed by a processing unit upon completion of the run by downloading the raw data to the processing unit. This may be advantageous, for example, in minimizing the size, weight, and/or cost of the actual biofeedback system being carried by the athlete during a run, while still allowing for detailed analysis of the data to be communicated to the athlete and/or coach upon completion of the run.

[0097] The processed data may also be uploaded to a shared computer drive or a storage drive (e.g., a cloud computing system) for an online community, thereby allowing the information, or portions thereof, to be reviewed remotely by a coach and/or fellow athlete. In one embodiment, processing and analysis of the data transmitted from the sensors can be carried out by one or more application software programs (“Apps”) that may be downloaded onto a smart phone or other electronic device. Such Apps can be programmed to analyze data and present biofeedback information in any appropriate way, depending upon the specific training requirements of an athlete.

[0098] An exemplary system **400** for monitoring one or more athletic performance characteristic of a user, providing real-time biofeedback information relating to the performance characteristic(s), and/or downloading data associated with the performance characteristic to a computer **455** is shown in FIG. 14. In this embodiment, a sensing unit **405** is adapted to be releasably or fixedly attached to a body portion of a user and, for example, a shoe of a user. The sensing unit **405** can include one or more sensing elements (e.g., a gyroscopic sensor, an accelerometer, etc.) for monitoring one or more athletic performance characteristics of the user during an athletic activity such as running. The sensing unit **405** can also include elements such as, but not limited to, one or more power sources (e.g., a rechargeable or replaceable battery), a processing/analyzing unit (e.g., a microprocessor), a memory, an RF transmitting and/or receiving unit, and/or one or more dock contacts **460** for allowing the sensing unit **405** to dock with another device. Docking with another device may, for example, allow for the transferring of measured data (raw and/or processed) from the sensing unit **405** to an analyzing device (e.g., a computer), the transmission of software applications, instructions, upgrades, or settings (e.g., firmware pushes) to the sensing unit **405** from the analyzing device, and/or the recharging of the power source of the sensing unit **405**. The dock contacts

460 may include a USB port or other appropriate port for connecting the sensing unit **405** to a receiving/analyzing device.

[0099] Data related to the one or more performance characteristics can be transmitted **430** from the sensing unit **405** to one or more remote real-time feedback (RTF) receiving devices **410** and/or to a remote analyzing and storing device **455** (e.g., a computer) for later analysis and long-term storage. The RTF unit **410** may be any of the devices described herein. FIG. 14 shows a system wherein a smart phone **420** and/or a watch **415** can be used to provide real-time feedback to the user. The data associated with the performance characteristic(s) of the user can be transmitted through any appropriate RF signal such as, but not limited to, Bluetooth®, Bluetooth® Low Energy, and/or ANT or ANT+ protocols. In one embodiment the RTF **410** (e.g., the smart phone **420**) can communicate directly with the sensing unit **405** without the need for any additional hardware or software. In an alternative embodiment, a dongle **450** may be used to facilitate communication between the RTF **410** and the sensing unit **405**.

[0100] In one embodiment, the RTF **410** can receive and analyze information from one or more sensing unit **405** and receive and analyze data from other sensors or sources in addition to the sensing unit **405** (e.g., one or more sensors embedded within or directly attached to the RTF **410** and/or one or more additional remote sensor units communicating wirelessly with the RTF **410**), thereby allowing for the simultaneous processing of information associated with multiple performance characteristics of the user. For example, the RTF **410** can include, or can communicate with, performance measuring devices such as heart-rate monitors, GPS monitors, speed/distance/time monitors, oxygen level monitors, breathing rate monitors, energy usage monitors, etc.

[0101] In various embodiments the RTF **410** can communicate remotely with a computer **455** or other processing/storage device (e.g., a cloud computing system) through a wireless connection **425**, and/or dock with a docking port **460** on the processing/storage device to allow for direct communication therebetween after a run is complete. The RTF **410** may, for example, be adapted to allow for either one- or two-way wireless or direct “docked” connection between the RTF **410** and the sensing unit **405**, thereby allowing the RTF **410** to download software application, instructions, upgrades, or settings to the sensing unit **405** and/or upload raw and/or processed data from the sensing unit **405** after a run is complete. For example, the sensing unit **405** can send small data packages representative of the performance characteristic (e.g., a foot strike location of a user) to the RTF **410** wirelessly during a run, with the raw data being stored on the sensing unit **405** and downloaded to the RTF **410** and/or to a remote analyzing receiving device **455** through a physical wired connection for further processing after the user’s run is complete. The raw and/or processed data can then be stored in the RTF **410** and/or communicated **425** to an analyzing/storage device **455** or facility from the RTF **410**.

[0102] In one embodiment, an App can be provided to an RTF **410** (e.g., a smart phone **420**) to control various functions of the RTF **410** and facilitate the receiving of performance characteristic information from the sensing unit **405** and the communication of the associate performance information to the user.

[0103] The RTF 410 device (e.g., the smart phone 420 or the watch 415) can communicate information to the user in a variety of ways including, but not limited to, through a visual display screen, through audio signals emitted directly from the RTF 410 or communicated to the user through a wired or wireless (e.g., Bluetooth®) headphone connection, and/or through a vibration emitted by the RTF 410. Such information can be communicated constantly in real-time or at selected intervals. In one embodiment foot strike location information (e.g., a heel strike, a midfoot strike, or a forefoot strike) is communicated to the user, while additional performance characteristics information (e.g., cadence, heart rate, speed, distance travelled, time, etc.) can be communicated at the same time, or substantially at the same time, as the foot strike information, or be communicated independently from the foot strike information.

[0104] The sensing unit 405 and RTF 410 may be attached to the user in various manners, depending upon the particular performance characteristics being monitored, the particular RTF 410 being used, and the particular real-time feedback being provided to the user. For example, one or more RTFs 410 can be mounted to a wrist, arm, waist, hip, shoulder, head, chest, or leg of a user 435, or be placed in a pocket of a garment of the user 435 or in a bag carried by the user 435. Exemplary configurations of sensing unit 405 and RTF 410 can be seen in FIGS. 15-19. In FIGS. 15-19, the sensing unit 405 is mounted on a fastening portion of the shoe (e.g., releasably attached to the laces of a laced shoe). The biofeedback system 400 may utilize a single sensing unit 405 attached to only one foot of a user, as shown in FIGS. 15-16 and 18-19, or utilize sensing units 405 attached to both feet of the user, as shown in FIG. 17.

[0105] Using a sensing unit 405 on both feet allows the system 400 to accurately monitor performance characteristics such as foot strike location on both feet during a run. However, as running gait is often reasonably symmetric (i.e., it is rare for a runner to heel-strike with one foot while midfoot striking with the other foot), valuable training information and biofeedback can be obtained from the use of only one sensing unit 405, with the user able to switch the foot on which the sensing unit 405 is mounted between runs (or even during a break in a run) to ensure that feedback relating to the foot strike location on both feet can be provided over time. In addition, additional performance characteristics such as cadence can be obtained through use of only a single sensing unit 405 (as the cadence will be related to twice the number of foot strikes recorded by the sensing unit 405 on only one foot).

[0106] In the embodiment of FIG. 15, the RTF 410 is a wrist-based device 465 (e.g., a watch 415 or other appropriate RTF device such as a custom device specifically adapted to receiving information from the sensing unit 405 and communicating that information to a user) strapped to a wrist of the user 435 by a releasable strap or band 440. The wrist-based device 465 can include a visual display to provide a visual indication of the information, include a tactile device to provide a tactile sensation (e.g., a vibration) to the wrist if an event (e.g., a heel strike) occurs, and/or include a speaker to provide an auditory signal if an event (e.g., a heel strike) occurs.

[0107] The embodiment of FIG. 16 uses a smart phone 420 including a software application for controlling functionality of the smart phone 420 to allow it to act as an RTF 410. The smart phone 420 is releasably attached to the upper

arm of the user 435 by a strap or band 440. As with the watch 415, the smart phone 420 can communicate information to the user 435 through a visual display, a vibration, and/or an auditory signal. For example, the smart phone 420 may output an auditory signal that may be communicated to the user 435 through a pair of headphones 445, as shown in FIG. 17. Utilizing an RTF 410 having two-way communication functionality (such as, but not limited to, a smart phone 420) allows the RTF 410 to both receive information from the sensing unit 405 and transmit information to another remote device (e.g., a computer 455) and/or back to the sensing unit 405.

[0108] In various embodiments other devices or garments may be used as an RTF 410 for receiving information from the sensing unit 405 and communicating information to the user 435. In the embodiment of FIG. 18, for example, a user 435 may wear a visor 470 that has a receiving element embedded therein or attached thereto. The receiving element may then process the data, if necessary, and communicate information to the user 435 through a visual display element 475 mounted to the visor 470. The visor can also include an auditory feedback element (e.g., a speaker or a headphone connection) and/or a vibratory feedback element in addition to, or instead of, the visual display 475.

[0109] In the embodiment of FIG. 19, the RTF 410 may include, or consist essentially of, a hand-held device 480, which can be held in a hand of a user 435 during a run. An exemplary hand-held device 480 is shown in FIG. 20. As with other RTFs 410, the hand-held device 480 can include a variety of features such as, but not limited to, user communication elements, controls, and communication ports. As shown in FIG. 20, the hand-held device 480 can include a visual display screen 485 to provide visual information to the user 435, a headphone jack 490 to allow for auditory signals to be sent to the user 435, and a handle 495 having a vibration element held therein to provide tactile feedback to the user 435. Alternatively, or in addition, the hand-held device 480 can include one or more speakers to communicate an auditory signal to the user 435 without the need for headphones. The hand-held device 480 can also include control buttons 500 to allow the user to control one or more function of the hand-held device 480 and one or more communication ports 505 (e.g., a USB port) to allow for the downloading and uploading of information between the hand-held device 480 and another device (e.g., a computer 455), and to provide a charging port for the hand-held device 480.

[0110] In one embodiment the sensing unit 405 includes a gyroscopic sensor that is adapted to measure an angular velocity of the shoe during athletic activity. Analysis of this angular velocity data can then be used to determine foot strike information relating to the user's running style, thereby allowing the user to be informed of whether a particular foot strike was a heel strike, a midfoot strike, or a forefoot strike. This information can be communicated to the user in real-time, at set intervals, and/or be stored in the sensing unit 405 for later analysis and processing. In addition, data from a gyroscopic sensor can be used to determine when a foot strike occurs, thereby allowing for the measurement of cadence (i.e., number of foot strikes per minute) information for the user. For example, foot strike location information (e.g., a heel strike, a midfoot strike, or a forefoot strike), cadence information, and/or other performance characteristic information can be communicated to the user upon

every foot strike. Alternatively, or in addition, compiled and/or averaged performance characteristic information can be communicated to the user upon the completion of a preset or user selected number of foot strikes, upon the completion of a preset or user selected distance travelled or time travelled, upon request from the user, and/or at the end of a run.

[0111] In one embodiment, a sensing unit including a gyroscopic sensor can be releasably mounted to an upper of a shoe at a fastening portion (such as a lacing portion or hook-and-loop fastening portion) located centrally, or substantially centrally, on the top of the shoe. An exemplary gyroscopic sensor unit 505 mounted to the lacing portion 520 of a shoe 515 is shown in FIGS. 21 and 22. Alternatively, the gyroscopic sensor unit 505 can be mounted to a heel portion 525 of a shoe 515, as shown in FIGS. 23 and 24, or to any other appropriate location on the upper or sole of the shoe 515, depending upon the shoe, the specific mounting arrangement required, and/or the measurement and calibration requirements of the sensor.

[0112] The gyroscopic sensor may be a one-axis sensor, a two-axis sensor, or even a three-axis sensor, allowing for the measurement of angular velocity (x' , y' , z') about any axis (X, Y, Z), as shown in FIG. 25, and thereby allowing for the measurement of a variety of performance parameters associated with a foot strike. For example, careful analysis of an angular velocity measurement z' about the Z -axis allows for the identification of a foot strike location (i.e., a heel strike, a midfoot strike, or a forefoot strike) of a user during a stride, and thereby also provides information as to whether a user's foot is dorsiflexed (heel strike), plantarflexed (forefoot strike), or neutral (midfoot strike) upon impact with a ground surface. Similarly, careful analysis of an angular velocity measurement x' about the X -axis allows the system to identify whether a user's foot is pronating (wherein the ankle caves inwards towards the other foot) or supinating (wherein the ankle caves outwards away from the other foot) at impact with a ground surface. In addition, analysis of an angular velocity measurement y' about the Y -axis allows the system to identify whether a user's foot is abducting (wherein the forefoot rotates outwards away from the other foot) or adducting (wherein the forefoot rotates inwards towards the other foot) at impact with a ground surface.

[0113] In general, the goal of an algorithm processing raw z' angular velocity data from the gyroscopic sensor(s) is to accurately detect the direction and speed of the foot's rotation at the moment of impact with a ground surface, and to determine from this the type of foot strike (i.e., forefoot, midfoot, or heel strike) and the severity of the foot strike (e.g., severe heel strike, intermediate heel strike, mild heel strike, midfoot strike at rear of midfoot, midfoot strike at center of midfoot, midfoot strike at front of midfoot, mild forefoot strike, intermediate forefoot strike, or severe forefoot strike). An exemplary method of calculating foot strike location information from a gyroscopic sensor reading is discussed below. In this embodiment, only data from one single-axis of a gyroscopic sensor are required to measure foot strike location and cadence.

[0114] The data recorded from the gyroscopic sensor may be considered to be periodic, with each gait cycle being one period. During a normal gait cycle, the foot often has a positive rotation just before the foot strike (see, for example, FIGS. 26 and 27). After the foot strike, during the stance phase of the gait, the foot is flat on the ground and is

relatively motionless. The foot strike occurs during a short time period (e.g., between about 10 ms to 50 ms and, for example, about 30 ms or so) between the end of the swing phase and the start of the stance phase, with the angular velocity data (z') about the Z -axis during that period providing information that can be analyzed to determine the type of foot strike.

[0115] During a heel striking event the heel touches the ground first, followed by a rapid rotation of the foot forwards until the sole is flat against the ground. As a result, a large positive rotational velocity during a foot strike event, accompanied by little or no negative rotational velocity, is measured for a heel strike. In contrast, midfoot striking is indicated by a smaller positive rotational velocity followed by a clearly defined negative rotational velocity, while a forefoot strike shows a larger negative velocity than that observed for a midfoot strike. Thus, there is a clear qualitative difference in the gyroscopic sensor data about the Z -axis between heel striking and forefoot/midfoot striking. It is often found that the maximum localized rotational velocity occurs close to, but slightly after, the initial impact during a foot strike event.

[0116] In one embodiment, raw data from the gyroscopic sensor can be analyzed to determine foot strike location for a foot strike event. In an alternative embodiment, pre-processing of the data (for example through amplification and/or low-pass, high-pass, band-pass, band-stop, and/or butterworth filtering) may be carried out prior to analyzing the data to determine foot strike information. The sample rate of the gyroscopic sensor can also be set at any appropriate rate to ensure that the sample rate is sufficient to obtain accurate information without sampling at a rate that would draw too much power and/or take up too much storage space. The sample rate may be set, for example, at between 500 to 5000 Hz or between 500 and 2000 Hz or, more particularly, between 800 and 1500 Hz and, for example, at about 900 Hz. In one embodiment, a sample rate of about 900 Hz may be set to ensure that at least about 300 samples are taken per stride.

[0117] Exemplary gyroscopic sensor data for a heel strike is shown in FIG. 26, while exemplary raw gyroscopic sensor data for a midfoot strike is shown in FIG. 27. Three foot strike events are shown in each graph. As shown, the midfoot strike exhibits a positive spike 550 followed by a negative spike 555, with the negative component showing that the foot is rotating "backwards" (i.e., the heel is coming down relative to the toe) after initial impact. Conversely, the heel strike has a positive spike 550 but does not have a negative component (i.e., the local minimum 575 is never less than zero), showing that the foot is rotating "forwards" (i.e., the toe is moving down relative to the heel). A forefoot strike is characterized by having a small positive peak 550 relative to the negative peak 555, showing that the foot is rotating backwards more severely than for a midfoot strike. Cadence can be determined simply by counting the number of foot strike events over a specified time.

[0118] In one embodiment, a microprocessor analyzes each angular velocity sample from the gyroscopic sensor and determines whether or not a foot strike has occurred. To find the moment of foot strike, the microprocessor first needs to distinguish one stride from another with a periodic trigger, as shown in FIG. 28. When the foot is swinging forward, the toe is moving up and the rotational velocity is negative. When the rotational velocity is negative, the microprocessor

adds each sample to a sum. When the sum reaches a preset level, a flag is set and the sum resets **560**. This happens once for each stride, just before the moment of the foot strike. After the flag is set, the microprocessor starts looking for a maximum value **550**. Once found, it finds the minimum value **555**, **575** within a set window. It is the ratio of this maximum and minimum value that determines the rating for the foot strike.

[0119] The window during which the maximum and minimum angular velocity measurements are taken for the foot strike location analysis may be set to any appropriate size and starting point to ensure that the required maximum and minimum peaks are captured without additional, non-relevant, data contaminating the calculation. For example, the window may be set to capture and analyze data starting at, and/or ending at, a particular identifying event during the periodic data cycle or a specific time period or specific number of samples prior to or after a particular identifying event during the periodic data cycle, and/or be set to cover a specific time period or a specific number or samples from a set starting point, as appropriate.

[0120] In one embodiment the window may begin from the moment of initial impact, or the moment of the first local maximum angular velocity after the initial impact, and continue until a point at or after a first local minimum angular velocity measurement is observed. Alternatively, the window may be set to review data captured within a specific time window (e.g., between 10 ms to 50 ms and, for example, about 30 ms) or sample size starting at the moment of initial impact, or at the moment of the first maximum rotational value peak after initial impact, or at any other appropriate time prior to, at, or after the instant of initial impact. In another embodiment, the window for analysis may open at the time at which the angular velocity is zero prior to initial impact, and close at the time at which the angular velocity transitions from negative to positive after the local minimum angular velocity is observed.

[0121] In one embodiment, a determination of the foot strike location can be calculated by comparing the maximum value with the minimum value within the sample window in accordance with the following equation:

$$\text{Foot strike Location Rating}(F) = (\text{Local Minimum value} * 100) / \text{Local Maximum Value}$$

The results of this calculation produce a non-dimensional value from F_{min} to F_{max} (for example, a value of between $F_{min}=0$ and $F_{max}=100$), with F_{min} indicating a severe heel strike, F_{max} indicating a severe forefoot strike, and values in the middle of the range indicating a midfoot strike. The specific values identifying each range may, for one exemplary user, be:

[0122] X_1 to X_2 =heel strike (with " X_1 " indicating a severe heel strike and values closer to X_2 indicating a more mild heel strike)

[0123] X_2 to X_3 =midfoot strike

[0124] X_3 to X_4 =forefoot strike (with " X_4 " indicating a severe forefoot strike and values closer to X_3 indicating a more mild forefoot strike)

[0125] The values for X_3 and X_4 may either be preset or be calibrated and/or selected to ensure accuracy for a specific user. Exemplary ranges for the values of X_2 may be about 15-40 or, more particularly, about 20-30 or 20-25 or, more particularly, about 20. Exemplary ranges for the values of X_3 may be about 60-80 or, more particularly, about 65-75 or 65-70 or, more particularly, about 70.

[0126] Additional processing may be carried out to provide accurate foot strike position information, if appropriate. For example, a Gaussian multiplier or other appropriate 2nd order multiplier may be applied to assist in analyzing the results. Additionally, or in the alternative, results outside a set results window (e.g., outside the ranges F_{min} to F_{max}) may be either discarded or shifted to a preset default value. For example, any result greater than F_{max} can either be shifted to indicate a value " F_{max} " or be discarded entirely.

[0127] In an alternative embodiment, a ratio of the integral of the negative portion of the curve **565** against the integral of the positive portion of the curve **570** (i.e., from calculations of the area under the negative portion of the curve **565** and the positive portion of the curve **570**) may be utilized to produce the foot strike location rating, rather than ratios of the absolute values of the minimum and maximum local peaks. The data to be integrated may be taken over any appropriate window size. Utilization of integrated results may be useful, for example, in producing accurate readings in situations where the sample rate of the gyroscopic sensor is insufficient to ensure that accurate local maximum and minimum peak values can be obtained. In addition, the integral of rotational velocity relates to a change in angle of the foot, which may produce valuable performance characteristic information relating to the foot strike of a user. Where beneficial, various other embodiments may utilize other appropriate algorithms for processing the data to determine the foot strike information.

[0128] In one embodiment, the sensor unit may be set to go into a "sleep-mode" (i.e., a reduced power consumption mode) during periods of inactivity. This sleep-mode may be set to turn on (when a sensor remains at rest for a given period) and off (when the sensor is moved) automatically. Alternatively, or in addition, the sensor unit may include a user interface (e.g., a hardware switch or a software "switch" initiated by a wireless signal from an RTF) allowing a user to turn the power to the sensor on and off manually.

[0129] In one embodiment, the gyroscopic sensor takes data continuously throughout an entire gait cycle. However, in an alternative embodiment, the gyroscopic sensor can be turned on and off during a gait cycle so that it only takes data during the foot strike event phase of the gait cycle. This may, for example, reduce power consumption by the sensor unit and/or reduce the amount of raw data being stored and/or processed by the sensor unit. For example, a separate sensor (e.g., an accelerometer) may be used in the sensor unit in addition to the gyroscopic sensor, with the accelerometer being used to indicate when a foot strike event is taking place and the gyroscopic sensor only capturing angular velocity data upon triggering by the system when the accelerometer data indicates that a foot strike event is occurring. Additionally, or alternatively, the accelerometer data may be used to calculate the cadence information (with the gyroscopic sensor data only being used for foot strike location calculations), and/or the accelerometer may be used to determine whether a user is standing still, walking, or running, with the gyroscopic sensor only being activated when the user is running. The accelerometer can, for example, determine whether a foot strike event is a walking foot strike or running foot strike based on the magnitude of the acceleration measured at impact (with, for example, a running foot strike indicated by a higher magnitude acceleration measurement).

[0130] The performance characteristic information (e.g., the foot strike location information) can be processed and communicated to the user in a number of ways. For example, in one embodiment, as shown in FIG. 29(A), the raw data can be processed to produce a foot strike location rating value of between F_{min} and F_{max} (e.g., between 0 and 100), with that value being stored and communicated to the user. In this example, the user would be provided with an accurate calculation of exactly where on the foot the center of the initial foot strike impact occurred, with a further indication of whether this value represented a heel strike, a midfoot strike, or a forefoot strike being calculated based on the set values for X_2 and X_3 .

[0131] In one embodiment, as shown in FIG. 29(B), the foot strike location rating value can be placed into one of a number of “bins”, with the system communicating to the user in which bin a particular foot strike (or an average foot strike) fell. In the embodiment of FIG. 29(B) the foot strike information is divided into nine bins (severe heel strike 605, intermediate heel strike 610, mild heel strike 615, midfoot strike at rear of midfoot 620, midfoot strike at center of midfoot 625, midfoot strike at front of midfoot 630, mild forefoot strike 635, intermediate forefoot strike 640, or severe forefoot strike 645), although a greater or lesser number of bins may be used where appropriate. In a further alternative embodiment, the foot strike location rating value can be used to merely indicate whether a heel strike 650, a midfoot strike 655, or a forefoot strike 660 has occurred, as shown in FIG. 29(C).

[0132] By performing the analysis described hereinabove with a microprocessor within the sensor unit the performance characteristic data transmitted to a receiving unit can be limited to merely a small package or data representing the foot strike location rating value or the appropriate “bin” into which a given value falls. The cadence information can also be transmitted along with the foot strike information, or may be determined inherently from the time at which each foot strike value is transmitted. Minimizing the data that need to be sent from the sensing unit to the RTF can reduce the power required by the system and thereby extend the running time of the system.

[0133] In various embodiments this information may be communicated to the user through a visual signal, an auditory signal, and/or a tactile signal. For example, an RTF could generate a sound (e.g., a buzz), cause a vibration, and/or flash a visual indicator only when a certain event occurs (e.g., a heel strike). Alternatively, different sounds, visual signals, and/or vibrations could be assigned to different events, thereby providing a different indicator to the user depending upon the event occurring. The severity of an event (e.g., a severe, intermediate, or mild heel strike) may be indicated, for example, by different sounds or by changes in the volume, pitch, tone, or other acoustic parameter of a given sound. Similarly, variations in the intensity or color and/or variations in the intensity of a vibration can be used to differentiate between different severities of a given foot strike event. In one embodiment the auditory, visual, and/or tactile signals associated with a specific foot strike position may be preset, or be selected by the user depending upon his/her particular preferences and the functionality of the RTF being used.

[0134] The sensing unit can, in one embodiment, include a housing unit adapted to house the sensor, a power source, a processor, and/or a transmitter. The housing unit may, for

example, provide a protective casing for the sensor and other electronics and/or provide a mount by which the sensor can be mounted to the shoe of the user. The housing unit may be adapted to be releasably attachable to a sole and/or upper of the shoe of the user, or be fixedly attached to, or embedded within an upper and/or sole of the shoe. In one embodiment the housing unit is releasably attachable to at least one of a fastening portion (e.g., the lacing portion or a hook-and-loop fastening portion) of a shoe or a heel portion of the shoe. The housing unit may have an integrated mounting element for mounting the device to a shoe. Alternatively, the housing unit and mounting unit may be separate, attachable, elements that can be coupled together to mount the sensor package to the shoe. Exemplary housing units 700 and mounting elements 705 are shown in FIGS. 30a to 33c.

[0135] The embodiment shown in FIG. 30a includes a housing unit 700 that is either fixedly or detachably attached to an elastic or inelastic mounting element 705 that includes hooked ends 710 for engaging the laces of a shoe. FIG. 30b includes a housing unit 700 having a plurality of elastic or inelastic hooks 715 extending from the housing unit 700 for engaging the laces or the eyelets of a shoe. FIG. 30c includes a housing unit 700 having a flexible or inflexible base unit 720 that can be placed under the laces of a shoe and be fixedly or detachably connected to the housing unit 700.

[0136] FIGS. 30d and 30e include a flexible or inflexible base unit 725 that can be slid over the heel of a shoe or slid into a pocket on the heel of the shoe (as shown in FIG. 30d), or slid under the laces of a shoe (as shown in FIG. 30e). The base unit 725 may include pins for pinning the base unit 725 into one or more layers of the upper of the shoe. Again, the base unit 725 can be fixedly or detachably attached to the housing unit 700. FIGS. 30f and 30g show a similar configuration but with a latching element 730 allowing the end of the base unit 725 to latch onto the housing unit 700 to lock it in place when mounted to the shoe.

[0137] In one embodiment, as shown in FIG. 31a, magnetic elements 730 can be used to releasably attach a housing unit 700 to the upper of a shoe 735, while in FIG. 31b pins 740 may be inserted through the upper of the shoe 735 to releasably or fixedly hold the housing unit 700 thereto. In another embodiment a detachable mounting unit 745 having a plurality of latching elements 750 can be placed below the laces 755 of a shoe, as shown in FIGS. 32a and 32b, thereby allowing the housing unit 700 to be detachably mounted to the lacing portion of the shoe.

[0138] In one embodiment, as shown in FIG. 33a, a housing unit 700 can be slideably connectable with a mounting unit 760. The mounting unit 760 may include flexible arms 765, that can be pinched in to allow the ends 770 of the arms 765 to be hooked under the laces of the shoe or the sides of the lacing portion of the upper of the shoe. The arms 765 may alternatively be fixedly mounted to the housing unit 700. In another embodiment, as shown in FIG. 33b, the housing unit 700 may be formed from a flexible elongate length of material with the sensor, a power source, a processor, and/or a transmitter held within. This flexible housing could, for example, be slid below the laces and held in place by the closing force applied by the laces to the shoe. In yet another embodiment, a housing unit 700 may be releasably or fixedly mounted to a clip 775 that can be clipped onto the upper of a shoe at a heel portion (as shown in FIG. 33c) or over a lacing portion of a shoe, or be attached to the upper of a shoe through an adhesive attachment, a

hook-and-loop attachment, a pinned attachment, or any other appropriate attachment structure.

[0139] In one embodiment data from a gyroscopic sensor coupled, for example, to an upper body of a user can be used to provide posture and/or lean information during a run. For example, a gyroscopic sensor in a smart phone or other RTF strapped to the upper body of the user (e.g., on the torso or upper arm of the user) can be used to measure posture and/or lean information that can be coupled with the foot strike and cadence information to provide the runner with a more complete analysis of his/her running form. The smart phone may then act as both a sensor unit and an RTF. In one embodiment, the user can calibrate the gyroscopic sensor within the smart phone or other RTF prior to use, for example, by simply strapping the smart phone to his/her person and then standing upright (e.g., against a wall) to “zero” the sensor prior to the run.

[0140] In one embodiment, the foot strike position information may be supported by GPS data, or other appropriate data, that can be used to determine the altitude, and more particularly the change in altitude, of the user for a particular foot strike. More particularly, the altitude data can be used to determine whether a runner was running on a flat or substantially flat stretch of ground, or was running uphill or downhill, for each foot strike. This may be beneficial in providing context for each foot strike to ensure that accurate data and instructions are communicated to the runner, as even runners with good running form will tend to heel strike when running down a substantial incline and forefoot strike when running up a substantial incline.

[0141] In one embodiment, a shoe may have one or more control elements embedded therein to adjust an element of the shoe. For example, control elements may be embedded in the sole of a shoe to adjust a stiffness, flexibility, and/or thickness of the sole in response to a signal received from a remote source. As such, a biofeedback system can be adapted to send biofeedback information measured by one or more sensors in a shoe to a remote receiver, analyze the data to determine one or more performance characteristic of the runner during a run, and send a control signal to control elements in the shoe to adjust a characteristic of the shoe to compensate for shortcomings in the runners technique and/or to assist in training the runner to run with proper form. In an alternative embodiment the analyzing and controlling steps may be carried out by a control element embedded within, or attached to, the shoe, without the need for a remote receiver.

[0142] Various measurement techniques and sensors, and apparatus for producing customized product based on the results of those measurement techniques and sensors, are described in U.S. patent application Ser. No. 14/134,948, filed Dec. 19, 2013 and published as US Patent Publication No. US 2014-0182170A1, the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

[0143] One embodiment of the invention includes a multi-axis force sensor array (e.g., an array of force sensing resistors (“FSR’s”) such as those provided by Tekscan, Inc. of Boston, Mass. or an array of capacitive piezo sensors) for placement in or on a shoe. This sensor can allow for the simultaneous measurement of the localized force or pressure between the foot and the ground at multiple locations on the sole of the foot and/or shoe and in multiple directions and, for example, in all three spatial directions. The sensor can be constructed as an insole for placement within the interior of

a shoe, an attachment for mounting to the outsole of the shoe, or a component for placement at any point within the sole of the shoe and, for example, above, within, or below a midsole of a shoe, or sewn into, above, or below a strobil board of the upper of a shoe.

[0144] The sensor can include an array of sensor elements adapted to capture multi-axis force measurements over at least a portion of the sole of the foot/shoe at sufficient frequency to allow for the analysis of the variation in direction and magnitude of the force between the foot/shoe and the ground throughout a footstrike event and to identify performance characteristics of the footwear and/or the athlete wearing the footwear throughout the performance of an athletic movement or motion. Utilizing an in-shoe force sensor allows for this in-depth analysis to be carried out in an in-game type situation without the need for external force plates or other separate non-worn sensors.

[0145] An exemplary multi-axis force sensor array **800** is shown in FIGS. **34a** through **37b**. The sensor **800** includes a first layer **805** (or sensor layer), as shown in FIGS. **35a** and **35b**, including a plurality of unidirectional force or pressure sensor elements **810** arranged in a regular pattern. The sensor elements **810** are adapted to measure the localized force or pressure applied perpendicular to the surface of the first layer **805**, with the data captured simultaneously at each of the plurality of sensors at any appropriate frequency. The multi-axis force sensor **800** further includes a second layer **815** (or lug carrying layer), as shown in FIGS. **34a** and **34b**, including or consisting essentially of a base portion **820** for affixing to the first layer **805** with a plurality of raised elements or lugs **825** extending therefrom. In an alternative embodiment the base portion **820** may not be required, with the lugs **825** instead being affixed directly to the first layer **805**. The second layer **815** may be affixed to the first layer **805** in any appropriate manner (as shown in FIGS. **36**—during assembly—and **37a** and **37b**—after assembly) and may, for example, be bonded to the first layer **805** by adhesive.

[0146] The lugs **825** are arranged such that a single lug **825** is positioned below a plurality of sensor elements **810** such that a force **830** applied to a single lug **825** produces a corresponding force **835** at each of the plurality of sensor elements **810** positioned above that lug **825**. By analyzing the relative forces **835** applied to each of the sensor elements **810** the magnitude and direction of the force **835** applied to the lug **825** can be calculated. In the embodiment of FIGS. **34a** through **37b** four sensor elements **810** are arranged in a square pattern above each lug **825**. In alternative embodiments three, four, five, or more sensor elements **810** may be arranged above a single lug **825**. The lugs **825** may be formed as a portion of a spheroid, as shown in FIGS. **38a** to **40b**, or as a portion of a cube or any other appropriate raised extension. In various embodiments one or more lugs **825** may form any discrete spheroidal extension (e.g., portions of oblate, prolate, or spherical spheroids) or portions of discrete polyhedral elements, depending upon the specific measurements required and/or the specific shoe shape and design. Exemplary polyhedral extensions may include polyhedron shapes such as, but not limited to, tetrahedrons (i.e., a polyhedron having four triangular faces), cubes, octahedrons, dodecahedrons, icosahedrons, etc. and, for example, three-dimensional shapes having triangular, square, rectangular, pentagonal, hexagonal or higher order cross-sections. The lugs **825** may be regular or irregular in shape and/or may be symmetrical or asymmetrical, as appro-

appropriate for the specific data required. The lugs **825** may be of consistent shape and size or may vary over portions of the force sensor **800**. In alternative embodiments the unidirectional force sensor elements **810** and lugs **825** can be arranged in any appropriate regular or irregular pattern.

[0147] The first layer **805** and second layer **815** may be formed of any appropriate material having the appropriate combination of strength, flexibility, and durability necessary for the purpose. The first layer **805** and/or second layer **815** may, for example, be made from a rubber, a polyurethane or another appropriate polymeric material. Exemplary materials include ethylene vinyl acetate (EVA), EVA copolymers, polyethylene (PE), chlorinated polyethylene (CPE), polyurethane (PU), thermoplastic polyurethane (TPU), DuPont™ Surlyn®, or rubber (such as, but not limited to, normal rubber, blown rubber, thermoplastic rubber (TPR), nitrile-butadiene rubber (NBR), nitrile rubber, butadiene rubber, or isoprene rubber).

[0148] Examples of a lug **825** and sensor element **810** assembly in use can be seen in FIGS. **38a** through **40b**. In FIGS. **38a** and **38b** a shear force **830a** is applied to the lug **825** resulting in a first vertical force **835a** being measured by two of the sensor elements **810a** and a second vertical force **835b** being measured by the other two sensor elements **810b**. The ratio and direction of the first vertical force **835a** and second vertical force **835b** can be used to calculate the direction and magnitude of the shear force **830a**. Similarly, FIGS. **39a** and **39b** show another shear force **830b** being applied to the lug **825**, this shear force **830b** resulting in a first vertical force **835c** being measured by first sensor element **810c**, a second vertical force **835d** being measured by two sensor elements **810d**, and a third vertical force **835e** being measured by the other sensor element **810e**. In contrast, FIGS. **40a** and **40b** show a perpendicular force **830c** being applied to a lug **825**, resulting in a first perpendicular force **835f** being measured by each of the sensor elements **810f**.

[0149] In general, analysis and comparison of the measured vertical forces at each of the plurality of sensor elements **810** identified with a lug **825** allows for the identification of the magnitude and direction (in three-dimensions) of any force applied as both a shear and/or perpendicular force to that particular lug **825**. An exemplary first layer **805** and second layer **810** is shown in FIG. **41**, with the sensor elements **810** connected to a connecting element **850** which can be used to connect to any appropriate device for recording and/or transmitting the captured data. This multi-directional force sensor may be of use, for example, in measuring data relevant to the creation of customized or optimized footwear as described in U.S. patent application Ser. No. 14/134,948 published as U.S. 2014-0182170 and incorporated herein.

[0150] In alternative embodiments of the invention, other force sensing arrays may be utilized with the systems and methods described herein. Exemplary sensor arrays are described, for example, in the following publications, the disclosures of which are incorporated herein by reference in their entireties: “A Shear and Plantar Pressure Sensor Based on Fiber-Optic Bend Loss,” by Wang et al, Journal of Rehabilitation Research & Development, Vol. 42, No. 3, pages 315-326, May/June 2005; “Insole-Type Simultaneous Measurement System of Plantar Pressure and Shear Force During Gait for Diabetic Patients,” Mori et al, Journal of Robotics and Mechatronics, Vol. 24, No. 5, 2012, pages

766-767; and “A Polymer-Based Capacitive Sensing Array for Normal and Shear Force Measurement,” Cheng et al, Sensors 2010, No. 10, pages 10211-10235, 2010.

[0151] One embodiment of the invention may be adapted for identifying and recording the emotional response or feelings of an athlete in real time (or substantially real time) during an athletic activity and analyzing the relationship between the athlete's emotional response and physical performance during an activity. For example at the same time as performance data are being obtained for an athlete the comfort or discomfort level of the athlete can also be recorded, thereby allowing an analysis of the relationship between peak performance and comfort level for a given athlete. For example, a system can include a device (either tactile—e.g., a button push—or oral—e.g., a voice recording) for an athlete to indicate when he/she feels comfortable and/or uncomfortable, when he/she feels he/she is performing well or poorly, a pain level, a confidence level, etc.

[0152] Sensors such as electroencephalogram (EEG) sensors (which can be used, for example, to measure brain waves or neural oscillations—e.g., alpha waves, beta waves, delta waves, theta waves, etc.—as an indicator of stress levels) or other sensors adapted to monitor stress levels (e.g., temperature sensors, blood pressure sensors, etc.) can be used instead of, or in addition to, conscious feedback from the athlete to monitor athlete comfort levels during activity. These data can then be compared to the measured performance data to provide information on whether an athlete performs at his/her best when feeling good or whether some level of “discomfort” is necessary for peak performance (and what level and type of “discomfort” are optimal). In one embodiment athlete comfort level data can be used to provide feedback to the athlete to identify when an athlete is working efficiently and is capable of pushing his/her limits of performance, or when the athlete is over-stressing his/her body and therefore should avoid pushing his/her athletic limits. In one embodiment positive feedback providing encouragement to an athlete can be optimized by utilizing the data obtained by the one or more sensors to customize the positive feedback to the specific monitored performance of the athlete at that time.

[0153] One embodiment of the invention includes the use of one or more sensors to, for example, simultaneously measure a plurality of different body parts and movements to allow for the identification and analysis of how the relationships between the relative movement and performance of different body parts relate to overall performance of an athlete. For example, sensor elements (and, for example, movement sensors incorporating multi-axis accelerometers and/or gyroscopic sensors and/or proximity sensors which triangulate locations based on signal strength—e.g., the iBeacon positioning system provided by Apple, Inc. of Cupertino, Calif.) can be mounted on some combination of positions on the torso, the limbs, and/or the joints of the body (e.g., on the wrist, forearm, elbow, upper arm, shoulder, back, chest, hips, neck, head, waist, upper leg, knee, lower leg, ankle, and/or foot) to measure relative motion of these body portions during the performance of an athletic movement. In addition, sensors may be used to identify a plurality of motions in a sequence of movements making up an athletic motion (e.g., the various phases of a baseball pitching motion) to identify whether the plurality of motions have been performed in the correct sequence and at the correct time.

[0154] For example, measurements relating arm swing to cadence can be utilized to analyze and provide feedback relating to the manner in which arm swing relates to performance during running. Vertical movement (or bounce) during running can also be measured (e.g., using one or more movement sensors on the waist, torso, and/or head) to analyze and provide feedback relating to the effect of vertical bounce during running on performance. In addition, ball-strike measurements can be taken both on-body and off-body to identify metrics relevant to a ball strike event (e.g., a baseball batter striking a ball, a soccer player kicking or heading a ball, a racquet sport player striking a ball, etc.). Temperature, hydration, perspiration, blood glucose level, lactate threshold, lactic acid level, glycogen level, muscle imbalances and inconsistencies, and/or other physiological metrics can be measured to monitor athlete health before, during, and after activity and be used to analyze and provide feedback relating the manner in which physiological indicators are indicative of changes in performance level and/or rate of recovery after athletic activity. In one embodiment, one or more biological sensors may be utilized to identify a change in an on-body metric or a parameter associated with the surrounding atmosphere. In one embodiment one or more sensors capable of monitoring properties of and/or changes in body microbiota/microbiome can be used to identify potential issues with the body before it can be sensed by traditional sensors.

[0155] On-body and/or off-body sensors may be used to enhance the natural senses to provide improved real-time feedback to an athlete. For example, sensors and/or sensory enhancement elements can be used to enhance an athlete's visual, auditory, olfactory, and/or tactile senses during performance to provide greater awareness of the surroundings and thereby potentially improve performance. For example, thermal sensors may be placed on the hands (and/or other extremities) to monitor any changes in the temperature of the hands and provide feedback to an athlete when he/she may be too focused on other things to notice the signals his/her body is giving. In one embodiment sensors may be utilized to measure muscle activation during athletic performance to identify when muscles are failing to perform correctly (e.g., when gluteal muscles are not firing correctly). In one embodiment one or more vibrating elements may be applied to a body portion to provide a vibratory stimulus to the nerves in that body portion (e.g., the nerves in the feet) to stimulate the nerves and thereby enhance his/her sensitivity.

[0156] In one embodiment sensors (and, for example, visual or acoustic sensors) can be mounted on an athlete to provide feedback relating to the athlete's surroundings. For example, proximity sensors and/or motion-tracking sensors may be mounted on a runner to identify when another athlete is approaching from behind in an overtaking maneuver (e.g., in running) or tackling maneuver (e.g., in soccer). The information captured by these sensors can be communicated to the athlete through any appropriate tactile, auditory, or visual signal (e.g., a flashing light and/or auditory beep that speeds up as another athlete approaches from behind). In one embodiment, other environmental sensors including, but not limited to, sensors to identify humidity, temperature, air pressure, pollution level, pollen level, mold level, wind and/or wind chill, light level, etc. may be utilized (either on-body or off-body) to provide additional information to

the athlete and to provide additional metrics for comparison between surrounding conditions and athletic performance.

[0157] In one embodiment, off-body sensors may be used to provide athletic monitoring and feedback in addition to, or instead of, on-body sensors. For example, infra-red thermometers, body motion-capture devices (e.g., mounted on stationary mounts or on airborne drones), motion magnification sensors, microphones, audio/visual devices, etc. may be mounted near the athlete (e.g., next to a track or field of play) to track performance aspects of the athlete and, in one embodiment, compare the performance of the athlete to other athletes competing at the same time. This may be important, for example, in providing a coach with the information necessary to provide enhanced analysis and coaching for an athlete, or group of athletes, during a group activity. For example, relative position and movement of a plurality of athletes (such as a soccer team or a subset of a soccer team—e.g., a team's defenders) can be monitored to identify performance characteristics relevant to the team's combined activity. In one embodiment biometric information can also be monitored to allow for the identification of individuals being monitored during athletic activity.

[0158] In one embodiment of the invention, on-body visual tracking sensors, such as directional sensors placed on the head and/or eye-tracking sensors to monitor the direction in which a wearer is looking at a particular time, can be used to monitor the performance of an athlete and identify, for example, whether the athlete is looking at the correct point or region in space to maximize performance. For example, the point at which a trail runner is looking in front of them on a trail can be monitored to identify whether the trail runner is focusing too far ahead, or not far enough ahead, to optimize performance and safety. Similarly, the point at which a hurdler is looking during a jump can be monitored to provide feedback on whether the hurdler is conforming to a predetermined "ideal". In one embodiment such sensors can be used in other sports, such as baseball, to provide feedback on where a pitcher, batter, or fielder is looking during his/her motion with, for example, an eye-tracking sensor being capable of tracking a batter's ability to follow a pitched ball from pitcher to bat. These data can be combined with any of the other sensor devices discussed herein to provide a broad range of information and feedback relating to the performance of an athlete during an activity. One embodiment of the invention may include eyewear onto which performance data, training information, or information relating to a desired performance metric can be projected.

[0159] In one embodiment, the systems and methods described herein can be utilized to compare an athlete's performance to a predetermined standard, thereby allowing the athlete to know how he/she performed compared to a set goal. For example, sensors can be utilized to capture data related to one or more performance parameter and compare that data to a pre-selected value or "ideal". This may, for example, allow a user to compare his/her performance to that of a specific athlete or group of athletes in real-time (e.g., allowing a runner to compare cadence, speed, and/or other performance metrics to that of an Olympic athlete; allowing a baseball batter to compare his/her swing speed, angle and/or other metrics to that of a selected professional player; etc.). In one embodiment an athlete or his/her coach can set a specific set of metrics values to which the athlete should compare himself/herself to and seek to emulate in

real-time during a training session or activity. In addition, these data can be compared with the data from other athletes to provide a direct comparison between various performance metrics of a plurality of individuals.

[0160] While many of the discussions herein relate to the use of sensors to measure and provide feedback relating to a runner's form during jogging or running, in many embodiments the systems and methods described herein may be used to measure one or more performance characteristics related to athletic activities other than running. For example, the systems and methods described herein may be useful for training purposes in sports that require an athlete to make rapid changes of direction (e.g., soccer, football, basketball, baseball, softball, tennis, squash, badminton, volleyball, lacrosse, field hockey, ultimate Frisbee, skiing, snowboarding, etc.), where analysis of the athlete's foot striking during a turn or "cut" may provide valuable performance information. Similarly, sports that require good jumping form when jumping (e.g., hurdling, basketball, volleyball, etc.) may also benefit from devices and methods that provide accurate information relating to the position of the athlete's foot during push off and/or landing. In addition, devices that provide accurate information about the position and rotation of the feet of a user may provide valuable training information for a golfer during a swing, for a bowler during a throwing action, for a baseball pitcher during a throw, or for other athletic motions requiring a high degree of repeatability.

[0161] One embodiment of the invention includes the use of one or more sensors to analyze and provide feedback relating to the mechanics of an athletic motion such as pitching or batting in baseball, with this feedback of value in improving the mechanics of the motion and/or protecting against injury. For example, motion sensors can be placed at various locations on the body of the athlete to measure the relative position, rotation, linear and/or angular acceleration, and/or speed, etc. of those body locations throughout the athletic motion, with these data being used by the athlete and/or his/her coach to identify and correct problems with the mechanics of the motion.

[0162] With regard to both pitching and batting, the location and movement of various portions of the arms (e.g., the hand, wrist, forearm, elbow, upper arm, and/or shoulder) the torso (e.g., the angle, rotation, and lean of the torso) and the legs and feet all contribute to the mechanics of a pitching motion. The full pitching motion for example includes a number of phases (See, for example, FIG. 42) including the wind-up, stride, arm cocking, arm acceleration, arm deceleration, and follow-through phases, with the athlete's body position and balance throughout each of these phases being vital to the success of the motion. Exemplary elements of importance to pitching that may be measured by the systems and methods described herein include, but are not limited to, the external shoulder rotation, the stride length, the elbow flexion, the hip rotation velocity, the foot contact (i.e., the groundstrike event), the knee angle, the internal shoulder rotation, the shoulder rotation velocity, and the upper trunk/torso rotation. In addition, sensors embedded within or on the ball (and/or external sensors monitoring the flight of the ball) can provide additional information relevant to the result of a specific pitching motion.

[0163] With regard to batting, elements of the batting motion that may be measured by the systems and methods described herein (either through on body sensors, on bat

sensors, and/or remote sensors) include, but are not limited to, the hand speed, the reaction time, the bat speed and acceleration, the bat lag, the angle of attack of the bat, the plane of motion of the bat (at both the hands and at the end of the bat—see, for example, FIG. 43), ball strike location, balance of the batter, leg motion, torso rotation, arm motion, kinetic chain, etc. In one embodiment, eye-tracking sensors can be utilized (either alone or in combination with other sensors) to identify reaction time and any problems therewith, with reaction time (including time associated with identification of pitch speed, location, and spin, time associated with decision making relating to processed pitch information, and time associated with acting on the decision) being vital to success in baseball batting. Other elements, such as identification of fielder location and on-base runner location at the time of a pitch may also be of importance.

[0164] It should be understood that alternative embodiments, and/or materials used in the construction of embodiments, or alternative embodiments, are applicable to all other embodiments described herein.

[0165] The invention may be embodied in other specific forms without departing from the spirit or essential characteristics thereof. The foregoing embodiments, therefore, are to be considered in all respects illustrative rather than limiting the invention described herein. Scope of the invention is thus indicated by the appended claims, rather than by the foregoing description, and all changes that come within the meaning and range of equivalency of the claims are intended to be embraced therein.

What is claimed is:

1. A system for monitoring athletic performance and physiological characteristics of a user, the system comprising:

(a) a first sensing unit adapted to monitor at least one performance characteristic of the user, the first sensing unit adapted to be attachable to a shoe of the user and comprising:

at least one motion sensor adapted to gather motion data relating to a movement of a foot of the user,

a processor for processing the motion data to determine the at least one performance characteristic of the user, and

a transmitter for transmitting a first data package representative of the at least one performance characteristic to a remote receiver; and

(b) a second sensing unit adapted to monitor a plurality of physiological metrics of the user, the second sensing unit adapted to be at least one of incorporated into an item of apparel of the user and attached to a portion of the user and comprising:

a first physiological sensor adapted to gather first physiological data relating to at least one function of a heart of the user,

a second physiological sensor adapted to gather second physiological data relating to at least one of a temperature and a perspiration level of the user,

a processor for processing the first physiological data and second physiological data to determine at least one physiological characteristic of the user, and

a transmitter for transmitting a second data package representative of the at least one physiological characteristic to the remote receiver;

wherein the remote receiver is adapted to identify a relationship between the at least one performance characteristic and the at least one physiological characteristic.

2. The system of claim 1, wherein the motion sensor comprises a gyroscopic sensor for measuring angular velocity data for the foot of the user.

3. The system of claim 2, wherein the processor is adapted to (a) process the angular velocity data from the motion sensor to determine a processed value indicative of a first performance characteristic of the user, the first performance characteristic comprising a foot strike location of the foot of the user upon striking a ground surface; (b) comparing the processed value to a range of predetermined comparison values, the range of comparison values comprising a first range of values indicative of a heel strike, a second range of values indicative of a midfoot strike, and a third range of values indicative of a forefoot strike; and (c) determining, based on the comparison, the first performance characteristic.

4. The system of claim 3, wherein the first data package comprises an indication of which of a heel strike, a midfoot strike, and a forefoot strike has occurred.

5. The system of claim 3, wherein the first sensing unit further comprises a periodic trigger adapted to initiate and terminate processing of angular velocity data by the processor during a window of time corresponding to a portion of a foot strike event.

5. The system of claim 1, wherein the motion sensor comprises an accelerometer for measuring an acceleration of the foot of the user.

6. The system of claim 5, wherein the accelerometer comprises a multi-axis accelerometer.

7. The system of claim 5, wherein the processor is adapted to process the acceleration data from the accelerometer to determine a cadence of the user.

8. The system of claim 1, wherein the second sensing unit is at least one of embedded within and releasably attachable to the item of apparel.

9. The system of claim 1, wherein the first physiological sensor comprises at least one of an electrocardiograph sensor and a heart-rate monitor.

10. The system of claim 1, wherein the second sensing unit further comprises a third physiological sensor adapted to monitor one or more function of a chest of the user.

11. The system of claim 10, wherein the third physiological sensor comprises at least one of a pneumograph sensor and a breathing rate sensor.

12. The system of claim 1, wherein the remote receiver is adapted to communicate information representative of at least one of the at least one performance characteristic, the at least one physiological characteristic, and the relationship between the at least one performance characteristic and the at least one physiological characteristic to the user.

13. The system of claim 12, wherein the remote receiver comprises at least one remote user feedback device selected from the group consisting of: a watch, a detachable strap, a mobile phone, an earpiece, a hand-held feedback device, a laptop computer, a tablet computer, a head-mounted feedback device, and a desktop personal computer.

14. The system of claim 12, wherein the information is communicated to the user in substantially real-time.

15. The system of claim 12, wherein the remote receiver is adapted to store data related to at least one of the at least one performance characteristic, the at least one physiological characteristic, and the relationship between the at least one performance characteristic and the at least one physiological characteristic.

16. The system of claim 1, wherein the relationship between the at least one performance characteristic and the at least one physiological characteristic is indicative of a level of performance of the user.

17. The system of claim 16, wherein the remote receiver is further adapted to compare the level of performance to a predetermined optimal level of performance.

18. A method for monitoring athletic performance and physiological characteristics of a user, the method comprising the steps of:

(a) providing a first sensing unit adapted to monitor at least one performance characteristic of the user, the first sensing unit adapted to be attachable to a shoe of the user, monitoring comprising:

gathering, by at least one motion sensor, motion data relating to a movement of a foot of the user,

processing, by a processor, the motion data to determine at least one performance characteristic of the user, and

transmitting, by a transmitter, a first data package representative of the at least one performance characteristic to a remote receiver, and

(b) providing a second sensing unit adapted to monitor a plurality of physiological metrics of the user, the second sensing unit adapted to be at least one of incorporated into an item of apparel of the user and attached to a portion of the user, monitoring comprising:

gathering, by a first physiological sensor, first physiological data relating to at least one function of the heart of the user,

gathering, by a second physiological sensor, second physiological data relating to at least one of a temperature and a perspiration level of the user,

processing, by a processor, the first physiological data and second physiological data to determine at least one physiological characteristic of the user, and

transmitting, by a transmitter, a second data package representative of the at least one physiological characteristic to the remote receiver; and

(c) identifying, at the remote receiver, a relationship between the at least one performance characteristic and the at least one physiological characteristic.

19. The method of claim 18, further comprising determining a level of performance of the user based on the relationship between the at least one performance characteristic and the at least one physiological characteristic.

20. The method of claim 19, further comprising comparing the determined level of performance to a predetermined optimal level of performance.

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摘要(译)

本发明涉及系统和方法监测一个或多个运动表现特性和用户的生理特征。一个示例性系统包括适于监控一个用户的至少一个性能特征的第一感测单元，第二传感单元适于监控所述用户的至少一个生理特性，和用于发送所述至少一个性能特征和至少一个发射机一个生理特性到远程接收器，其适于确定所述至少一个性能特性和至少一个生理特性之间的关系。

