ABSTRACT

Sports balls, including but not limited to, footballs, basketballs, soccer balls, and volleyballs, bisected such that the two sides of the sports ball separate yet are still attached at a specific point holding the bisected pieces together, causing an opening between the two sides, but not a complete separation. The bisected sports ball may maintain its original appearance on its outer surface, but will hold one concave mold in each side that has been fitted to the internal shape of each side, holding the shape of an inflated version of that specific sports ball. The fitted molds are covered with fabric that complements the outer color of the ball and the theme of the gifts that will be displayed within the sports ball. The entire sports ball display will attach to a flat-bottom base to ensure immobility and stability of the display unit.
SPORTS BALL GIFT DISPLAY (GIFT BALL)

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0001] FIG. 1 depicts a frontal view of a basketball sports ball as it could be used to form a basketball sports ball gift display.

[0002] FIG. 2 depicts a rear view of a basketball sports ball as it could be used to form a basketball sports ball gift display.

[0003] FIG. 3 depicts a side view of a basketball sports ball as it could be used to form a basketball sports ball gift display.

[0004] FIG. 4 depicts a side view of the interior of the basketball sports ball gift display including the thick gauge wire placed along the rear inner surface of the ball for the purpose of propping or holding the upper half of the ball in a raised or open position, the concave molds, the base of the device, and the positioning of the sports ball within the center of the base.

[0005] FIG. 5 depicts a frontal view of a soccer ball sports ball as it could be used to form a soccer ball gift display or gift ball bank for holding money with locking mechanism.

[0006] FIG. 6 depicts a frontal view of a football sports ball as it could be used to form a football gift display centerpiece with plastic bowl insert for the purpose of food service, i.e., dips, salsa, etc.

[0007] FIG. 7 depicts a frontal view of a baseball gift display (constructed from an inverted basketball and painted to resemble a baseball), as it could be used to form a baseball floral display including plastic bowl insert for moisture containment.

[0008] FIG. 8 depicts a frontal view of a Christmas ornament gift display (constructed from an inverted basketball which is painted and decorated with glitter), utilizing the protruding valve stem as the top portion of the ornament where the hanging hook or loop is typically attached.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0009] As shown in FIGS. 1, 2, 3 and 4, device 10 includes a sports ball corn only referred to as a basketball 12, comprised of an outer rubber cover 14, inner inflatable bladder 16, and valve stem 18. The basketball 12 as illustrated is bisected along a predetermined line around the circumference of the sphere, which is implemented and terminated within two inches on either side of the valve stem 18 mounted within the ball. The valve stem 18, remaining intact is utilized as a hinge holding the bisected sides of the ball 12 together, creating the necessary flexibility in order for the sides to be opened and closed for the purpose of displaying gift items inserted within the ball 12. Trim ribbon 20 is then adhered to each side of the ball 12 along the line of bisecion in order to restore a more polished appearance. Thin ribbon 20 may be comprised of any ribbon, material, fabric, etc., which is complementary to the device. Solid concave or “bowl shaped” molds 22, constructed from clay, paper mache, plastic or other hardened material are covered with fabric 24, and fitted to the interior of each side of the bisected sports ball 12 and adhered to each side with glue, rubber cement or any suitable adhesive compound. The covered molds 22 are of suitable size and shape as to reinforce the outer surface of the ball 14 giving the ball 12 an inflated appearance. A heavy gauge wire 26, such as the thickness of a wire coat hanger, may be contoured to follow the shape of the curvature of the interior of the ball 12 and inserted beneath the concave molds 22 against the inner surface of the ball 16 for the purpose of propping or holding the upper half of the ball 12 open for display. The ball 12 is attached to a circular, square or otherwise shaped base 28 which may be constructed from wood, plastic, Styrofoam and the like, with a flat bottom for stability and is hollow or indented in the center to provide stability for the round ball 12.

[0010] The ball 12 may be attached to the base 28 with glue, rubber cement, or any suitable adhesive compound. The base unit 28 may be covered with paint or decorative fabric 24 which complements the appearance of the ball 12 and interior fabric 24, or may be left in its original state without further embellishment. FIGS. 1, 2, 3 and 4, depict a basketball 12 illustration of a sports ball gift display for the purpose of illustration, but any sports ball, i.e., soccer ball 30, football 32, volleyball, etc., may be utilized in accordance with the invention.

[0011] FIG. 5 illustrates the device 10 in the form of a soccer ball 30 bank, wherein the process of manufacturing the device 10 is the same as in FIGS. 1, 2, 3, and 4, with the exception that the sports ball illustrated, commonly known as a soccer ball 30, is used to depict one of a variety of different forms of this invention. The coin bank version of the sports ball gift display shall be equipped with a small locking mechanism 36 which may be adhered to the outer surface 14 of the invention for security purposes. The coin bank version of this invention requires a coin slot 38 with dimensions of approximately one and one-quarter inches in length and one-quarter inch wide to be cut through both the outer cover of the ball 14 and the upper fitted mold 22 located within the device 10 which will allow coins and paper money to pass through into the bank. The coin slot 38 should be trimmed with ribbon 20 or fabric 24 which is adhered to the outer surface of the ball 14 to provide a finished appearance where the device 10 was altered. As previously stated, any sports ball, i.e., a basketball, football, volleyball, etc., may be used to create this coin bank in accordance with the invention.

[0012] FIG. 6 illustrates a sports ball, commonly referred to as a football 32, as it may be used to create a football gift display which may be used for food service to serve dips, salsas, etc., as well as a table centerpiece with or without the purpose of serving food. The football 32 gift display is manufactured in accordance with the same process described for FIG. 1 with the exception of the interior concave molds 22 which will be formed in an oval shape in order to resemble the shape of an inflated football 32 on the exterior. The base 28 used for the football 32 gift display may be of any size and shape, but a rectangular shaped base, covered in green material or fabric 24 and embellished with white lines and numbers resembling the markings commonly seen on a football field complements the theme of the football 32 gift display suitably. Included within the device 10 shall be a form fitted bowl, set of bowls or a specially designed tray 40 manufactured from “food safe” materials which shall serve as the containers for holding foods within the sports ball, i.e., chips, dips, salsas, sauces, and the like. The form fitted bowl or tray 40 shall fit within the confines of the interior mold. 22 which is placed within the lower half of the bisected sports ball and may or may not encompass a “lip” around the edge to protect the material 24 which is adhered to the mold 22 from becoming soiled during food service. Each sports ball device 10 utilized for the purpose of food service may have an inner
bowl, set of bowls or tray 40 having different dimensions, sizes and shapes in order to accommodate the different dimensions, sizes and shapes of the sports balls utilized therein. The specifications of any and all sports balls utilized in the manufacturing of this invention include, but are not limited to universally recognized standard versions or "regulation size" versions of the sports balls. Sports balls of any size, shape and dimensions may be utilized, including smaller versions of the sports balls and large or jumbo versions as well. Accordingly, any type of ball may be used in the manufacturing of this invention, even if it is not commonly referred to as a sports ball, i.e. a beach ball. FIG. 7 illustrates a basketball 12 which has been inverted so that the outer rubber cover 14 is on the inside of the sphere and the inner inflatable bladder 16 becomes the outside surface of the device W. The technique of inverting the sports ball, i.e. a basketball, produces a smooth, paintable outer surface for the ball so that the ball may be transformed into a larger version or a sports ball that is generally known to be more miniature in size, i.e. a baseball, softball, tennis ball golf ball, etc., allowing it enough area within to hold and display gifts and sundries. FIG. 7 depicts the technique of inverting a basketball 12 and painting the rubber bladder 16 white to resemble a large version of a sports ball commonly referred to as a basketball. The bladder may then be added using paint, yarn or other materials that will create the appearance of real stitching on the painted surface of the ball in a formation customary to the stitching commonly found on a regulation basketball. The stitching may also be designed to resemble the stitching commonly found on a regulation softball to create a softball gift/display set. FIG. 7 illustrates an inverted basketball 12, but any sports ball incorporated into this invention, i.e. a soccer ball or volleyball, may be inverted to create a larger version of a smaller ball so long as the inner inflatable bladder 16 of the ball being inverted has a smooth and paintable surface. The device 10 in FIG. 7 is then manufactured according to the same process described in FIG. 1, with the exception that the ball must be bisected around the circumference while keeping the ball in the position of having the valve stem 18 at the bottom or underside of the ball. The ball in an inverted state will allow the internal valve stem 18 to protrude on the outer surface which detracts from the appearance of the device 10 unless the valve stem 18 is hidden on the underside of the ball inside the base 28. Because this version of the device 10 does not allow for the use of the valve stem 18 as a hinge, there must be an area of approximately 3 inches of the outer rubber cover 14 which remains uncut and intact along the circumference line which serves as the hinge for this particular design. Preformed inserts made of plastic or other suitable materials may then be placed into the fabric 24 covered mold 22 located in the bottom half of the device 10 to allow for the insertion of floral arrangements within the device 10.

[0013] Another version of the gift display, may include small hooks attached to the concave molds 22 in the interior of the device 10 which provide for the hanging of necklaces, bracelets and jewelry, allowing the sports ball gift set/display to be utilized for jewelry display and storage. With respect to the description above, it should be acknowledged that there are multiple variations of each version of this invention; including but not limited to size, shape, and mode of operation, which may optimize the functionality of the invention and will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art. As modifications to this invention may prove optimal to its function, the construction of this device 10 should not be limited to the exact description expressed in this document. Suitable modifications may be applied to enhance the functionality of the invention, so long as modifications are within the scope of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A gift display (or gift ball) comprised of:
   a sports ball, including but not limited to, a basketball, football, soccer ball, volleyball, beach ball, kick ball, and the like, having an outer cover and an inner bladder that can be inflated with air in order to cause the outer cover of the ball to stiffen and stabilize to hold the sports ball’s intended shape when manufactured; either in it’s manufactured state or inverted with the internal bladder side out for the purposes of painting and decorating the surface of the sports ball; which has been cut open into two pieces along nearly the entire circumference of the sports ball, with the exception of an area of approximately one to two inches along the bisector, which serves as a “hinge” holding the bisected parts together with each side of the bisected sports ball being hollow and having a cavity wherein a molded piece of material, for example, hard plastic, paper mache, ceramic, plaster forms, etc., having the same “bowl-like” or concave shape as each half of the sports ball can be inserted to hold the form of the sports ball in its inflated state so that the sports balls does not collapse in on itself when bisected.

2. A gift display (or gift ball) according to claim 1, wherein said bisected sports ball containing fitted molds in each side of the ball is mounted on a flat-bottom base to offer stability and hold the sports ball in place with mounting device or medium consisting of a piece of wire, glue, rubber cement, or the like.

3. A gift display (or gift ball) according to claim 2, wherein said fitted molds in each side of the bisected ball and the base are covered with decorative materials or fabrics to enhance and embellish the interior surface of the gift display (or gift ball).

4. A gift display (or gift ball) according to claim 3, wherein said ball is “propped” open or held open for purposes of displaying the items inside by the use of a heavy wire, such as that of a wire hanger, where the wire can be manipulated and shaped in such a way as to hold open the top half portion of the ball so that the interior may be seen and may be hidden under the “bowl-shaped” molds on each side of the base under the interior fabric so as not to detract from the appealing appearance of the display gift.

5. A gift display (or gift ball) according to claim 4, wherein said sports ball has a “slot” cut out from its surface with an area of approximately one and one half inches across by one quarter of an inch wide that will allow coins to pass through the surface of the ball to the interior allowing the gift display (or gift ball) to be utilized as a hank with a latch or locking mechanism closure for security.

6. A gift display (or gift ball) according to claim 4, wherein said sports ball has a plastic bowl that is “food safe” inserted into the lower half of the display ball, allowing for the service of foods such as dips, chips, pretzels and snacks, rendering the display ball for use as a table centerpiece for parties and gatherings (i.e. the football gift display holding chips and salsa for tailgating.)

7. A gift display (or gift ball) according to claim 4, wherein said sports ball has a floral form such as Styrofoam or other
substance inserted within the bottom half of the sports ball, allowing for the display of flowers within the sports ball, rendering the display ball for use as a floral gift for a sports fan.

8. A gift display (or gift ball) according to claim 4, wherein the cavity section of said sports ball has different bowls, forms, plastic molds, etc., inserted within to allow for the packaging or housing of gifts and novelty items that would otherwise be placed inside a gift basket. Cavity insertions within said sports ball may include, but are not limited to the aforementioned items.

9. A gift display (or gift ball) according to claim 4, wherein the cavity of the sports ball is able to store and display gifts and novelty items.

10. A gift display (or gift ball) according to claim 4, wherein both the inside cavities of the ball and the outside surface of the ball may be dyed, painted, covered with fabric, and/or otherwise decorated, in order to create unique gift displays appropriate for all occasions of gift giving.