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U.S. INVENTOR GRANTED PATENT FOR THROWABLE BALL CAMERA

Panoramic images and fly-by video captured from airborne point-of-view

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(Boston, MA — August 29, 2012) Boston-based inventor Steve Hollinger has been awarded U.S. Patent 8,237,787, “Ball with camera and trajectory control for reconnaissance or recreation.” Hollinger’s patent describes a throwable camera that employs an onboard position sensor to trigger image capture over the course of its airborne trajectory.

“A camera thrown into the sky, spinning and spiraling, has a stunning view of its subjects and the world around it,” stated Hollinger. “With a high-speed camera and position sensors, subjects visible over this panoramic scene can be captured in-flight and made comprehensible with extraordinary clarity.”

In operation, the position and orientation of a thrown ball camera over the arc of its trajectory can be used to determine the camera’s precise relationship to a subject of interest. Aware of its perspective, a ball camera can, for example, stitch together a stream of available image data to produce seamless fly-by video of the environment through which it passes. As an alternative to scanning along a scene as it passes by, a ball containing multiple cameras can maintain focus on a particular subject — a batter in a baseball game for example, to produce a smooth point-of-view video from the moment the ball leaves the pitcher’s hand.

Consumer and industrial applications for ball camera technology include outdoor recreation, active point-of-view sports, reconnaissance, search-and-rescue, panoramic fly-by video, linear trajectory (e.g. projectile POV) capture and spherical panoramic fly-through video capture.

Anticipating technology license and manufacture, Hollinger is developing “Squito,” a first-generation prototype ball camera. Resembling a tennis ball, Squito is designed to contain three cameras, an array of position sensors, a microcontroller and image processor. In operation, Squito will capture a spherical panoramic image at the apogee of its thrown trajectory and a slow-motion bird’s eye video of its pitcher, catcher and subjects along the trajectory.

Hollinger’s non-provisional patent application, filed in 2010, benefits from priority dates of three provisional patent applications for ball cameras filed by the inventor in 2009. Hollinger has filed a continuation application with priority to the filing dates of related provisional and non-provisional applications to describe additional ball camera inventions, now patent-pending at the U. S. Patent and Trademark Office. The Squito's multi-camera housing is described in a non-provisional design patent application filed at USPTO, also pending. Hollinger’s awarded and pending ball camera patents are prosecuted by Kurt Rauschenbach Ph. D., www.rauschenbach.com.

Image Description

Prototype of “Squito,” a first-generation throwable ball camera. Squito is being developed to capture a spherical panoramic image at the apogee of its trajectory and a slow-motion bird’s eye video of the pitcher, catcher and subjects along the trajectory.

Background

Steve Hollinger is a Boston-based artist and inventor. His company, S. H. Pierce & Co., licenses technology and manufactures patented and patent-pending products including PosterWorks® large-format production software, FlipBook® video software, Kayalite® kayak lights and Mildont® drain valves. Prior to founding S. H. Pierce & Co. in 1989, Hollinger developed imaging applications for Wang Laboratories (Lowell, MA), Telex Computer Products (Raleigh, NC) and Avalon Development Group (Cambridge, MA) and contributed industrial image processing software reviews for Electronic Systems Design Magazine. A profile of Hollinger by author Susan Orlean was published in New Yorker magazine in 2008.

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