

- 1 -

APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR THE VERTICAL CASTING OF A METALBAR

This invention relates to a generally vertical caster which produces metallic bar from molten metal. The invention also includes a method of producing metallic bar from molten metal and an associated metallic bar product.

Continuous casting of metallic bar is a well known process. One example of such a process is casting aluminum bar using a wheel-type caster. The aluminum bar is used as a starting product for producing aluminum rod and aluminum wire. The advantage of a continuous casting process over the conventional process of producing aluminum rod and wire from extruded, large (fifteen inches in diameter) billets is that the continuous casting process collapses certain manufacturing process steps resulting in the elimination of certain equipment and work stations. This, in turn, significantly reduces capital, labor, maintenance and energy consumption.

The known wheel-type continuous bar caster involves providing a revolving wheel having a trapezoidal groove in which molten aluminum is cast. The groove is covered by a steel or copper belt as the wheel and the cast

- 2 -

molten aluminum revolve. The groove and the belt form a mold for casting the aluminum bar. The molten aluminum solidifies in the groove and then exits the wheel of the caster. The solidification process is accomplished by introducing a coolant on the back side of the belt and on the sides of the mold. After solidification, the aluminum bar is introduced into a shape rolling mill where the bar is shaped into aluminum rod. The aluminum rod is then quenched, lubricated and wound onto a coil.

As is well known to those skilled in the art, the quality of the continuously cast aluminum bar mainly depends on the thermal conditions during the solidification process. The rate of heat extraction has to be controlled in order to resist (i) surface liquation; (ii) build-up of residual stresses during solidification which can cause side bar cracking and bar break-up during casting or subsequent processing; and (iii) centerline segregation of alloying elements. Although many process improvements have been made to the wheel-type caster, the above problems are present, especially in casting certain alloys, such as 2XXX, 5XXX, 6XXX and 7XXX aluminum alloys.

Surface liquations are caused by the formation of an air gap between the solidifying aluminum bar and the mold which causes remelting of the bar shell surface. This problem can be solved by maintaining contact between the mold and the solidifying aluminum bar throughout the length of the casting process. However, as the wheel-type caster has a rigid mold on three sides, it is difficult, if not impossible, to maintain mold/bar contact throughout the solidification process. In addition, the mold

- 3 -

and belt will distort unpredictably thus also making it difficult to maintain mold/bar contact. Thus, there is a need for a bar casting process and apparatus that provides good mold/bar contact to resist surface liquation and to improve general surface quality of the cast product.

The partially solidified bar bending in the round wheel mold causes side bar cracking and bar break-up during casting and rolling. Different alloys exhibit different propensities for build-up of residual stresses. This problem is related to heat transfer rates over the length of the solidification zone and can be controlled by careful manipulation of coolant application at strategic locations in the casting process. This requires a casting process with flexibility to vary heat transfer rates over the solidification zone, so that different alloys can be successfully cast. Although improvements in manipulating the coolant application in the wheel-type caster have been made, there is still needed a bar casting process and apparatus that provides flexibility to vary heat transfer rates over the length of the solidification zone.

In addition, for longer freezing range alloys (i.e., 2XXX, 4XXX, 6XXX and 7XXX) there must be a very efficient coolant application apparatus in order to quickly extract heat from the solidified metal. The wheel-type caster does not provide the type of high cooling rates that are needed to efficiently solidify the cast bar. The inefficient cooling causes centerline segregation of the alloying elements which is a universally undesirable result. Thus, there is still needed a bar caster having a cooling

- 4 -

system which efficiently removes heat from the cast molten metal in order to form high quality aluminum bar.

The bar caster of the invention has met the above mentioned needs as well as others. The generally vertical caster for casting molten metal into metallic bar comprises a pair of movable opposed belts, each of the belts having a casting surface and a cooling surface opposite the casting surface and a pair of movable opposed dam block means, the dam block means including a plurality of dam blocks having one end mounted to an orbiting support and a casting surface opposite the mounted end. The casting surfaces of the dam blocks define a bar casting zone for solidifying the molten metal into metallic bar. The caster further comprises cooling bar means for cooling the belts while they pass through the bar casting zoned.

A method of casting molten metal into metallic bar is also provided. The method comprises providing a generally vertical bar caster as described above having a pair of movable belts, a pair of dam block means and cooling bar means for cooling the belts. The method further comprises solidifying the molten metal in a bar casting zone defined by the casting surfaces of the belts and the casting surfaces of the dam blocks to form the metallic bar.

A metallic bar made by the method of the invention is also provided.

A full understanding of the invention can be gained from the following description of the preferred embodiment when read in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which:

- 5 -

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a generally vertical bar caster which embodies the invention.

Figure 2 is a view taken along line 2-2 of Figure 1.

Figure 3 is a view taken along line 3-3 of Figure 1.

Figure 4 is a view taken along line 4-4 of Figure 3.

Figure 5 is a cross-sectional view taken along line 5-5 of Figure 4.

Figure 6 is a horizontal section through the bar casting zone.

Figure 7 is a partially schematic vertical section of the bar casting zone showing the belts and a solidifying bar.

Figure 7A is a cross-sectional view taken along line 7A-7A of Figure 7.

Figure 7B is a cross-sectional view taken along line 7B-7B of Figure 7.

Figure 7C is a cross-sectional view taken along line 7C-7C of Figure 7.

Figure 7D is a cross-sectional view taken along line 7D-7D of Figure 7.

Figure 8 is a front elevational view of one of the bar cooling means.

Figure 9 is a cross-sectional view taken along line 9-9 of Figure 8 and also showing the belt as it is positioned relative to the cooling bar means.

Figure 10 is detailed elevated-cross-sectional view of the nozzles at the upper portion of the cooling bar means.

Figure 11 is a detailed enlarged cross-sectional view of the nozzles at the mid portion of the cooling bar means.

Figure 12 is a detailed enlarged

- 6 -

cross-sectional view of the nozzles at the lower portion of the cooling bar means.

Referring now to Figures 1-3, an embodiment of a generally vertical bar caster 10 is shown. In general, the caster 10 consists of a pair of movable opposed belts 12 and 14 which are driven and supported by rolls 20, 22 and 24, 26 respectively. It is preferred that rolls 20 and 24 are the idler rolls and rolls 22, 26 are the driver rolls, although it will be appreciated that, less preferably, this arrangement can be reversed, and rolls 22, 26 can be the driver rolls and rolls 20, 24 can be the idler rolls. The rolls are conventional in construction and are preferably from about twenty to fifty inches in diameter, depending on the belt thickness.

The rolls are mounted in a frame (not shown) and are adapted to move the belts at a rate of at least forty feet per minute. The belts 12 and 14 are preferably endless belts, although belts such as shown in United States Patent No. 4,823,860, which is hereby expressly incorporated by reference herein, can be used. The belts 12 and 14 can be made of copper or steel and are approximately twelve to eighteen inches wide and about .010 to .050 inches thick. The belts 12 and 14 provide excellent heat transfer mediums for the cooling molten metal.

Belt 12 has a casting surface 12a and a cooling surface 12b and belt 14 has a casting surface 14a and a cooling surface 14b. It will be appreciated that the casting surfaces 12a, 14a contact the freezing molten metal and the cooling surfaces 12b, 14b are cooled by coolant from the cooling bar means as will be explained below in further detail.

- 7 -

Also provided are a pair of movable opposed dam block means 30, 32, each including a plurality of dam blocks, such as dam block 34 on dam block means 30 and dam block 36 on dam block means 32. Each of the dam blocks are mounted on respective orbiting means which consists of chains 43, 44 to which the dam blocks are mounted and frame members 45, 46 respectively relative to which the chains 43, 44 move. The chains 43, 44 are orbited by a motor (not shown) so that the dam block means 30 and 32 are self powered. The dam block means 30, 32 are supported by support members (not shown) which extend from frame members 45, 46 the support members being in contact with the floor of the building containing the caster 10. The dam blocks are preferably made of copper and each have a casting surface, such as casting surface 34a on dam block 34 and casting surface 36a on dam block 36. It will be appreciated that the casting surfaces 34a and 36a of the dam blocks will contact the freezing molten metal in the caster 10 as will be explained in detail hereinbelow.

Although self powered movable dam block means 30, 32 are shown, it will be appreciated that other arrangements for the side dams can be used. For example, stationary side dams can be used which are supported by the caster frame and positioned to form the bar casting zone. Another embodiment involves mounting a plurality of side dams on both edges of one of the orbiting belts. The side dams are constructed and arranged such that when they are in the casting zone, they are linked together to form a continuous sidewall to confine the molten metal in the bar casting zone and when the side

- 8 -

dams exit the bar casting zone, the side dams, similar to a bicycle chain, become separated so that they may go around the drive pulley.

Referring now to Figures 4 and 5, it will be seen that the casting surface 34a of dam block 34 includes a pair of slits 34b, 34c which are oriented generally perpendicularly to each other. The slits 34b, 34c have a depth, D, shown in Figure 5. The objective of this arrangement is to maintain a flat block surface while at the same time facilitating thermal expansion and contraction of the dam block 34 when it is used in the casting operation. Care must be taken in the configuration of the slits 34b, 34c, however, in order to resist molten metal from entering the slits 34b, 34c. This is done by limiting the thickness of the slits to avoid metal penetration.

The bar caster 10 further includes a tundish 60 for introducing molten metal 64, such as molten aluminum, into the caster 10. The molten metal 64 is supplied from a trough (not shown) leading from a holding furnace (also not shown) and can be treated or fluxed before reaching the tundish 60. The molten metal 64 then passes through the tundish and into the nozzle 66 for delivery into the bar casting zone (described in detail below).

A pair of cooling bar means 70 and 72, (cooling bar means 70 only is shown in Figure 1), are disposed behind belts 12 and 14 respectively. The cooling bar means 70 and 72 are mounted in the frames (not shown) which support the rolls and belts. The cooling bar means supply coolant, such as water, from a coolant source through a manifold, such as manifold 74 for cooling bar means 70 (Figure 1),

- 9 -

which is directed at the cooling surface 12b of the belt 12 as will be explained in detail in Figures 7-10 below. Multiple manifolds, such as manifolds 74a and 74b can be provided in the
5 cooling bar means 70.

As can best be seen in Figure 2, spring loaded belt seal 80 for belt 12 and spring loaded belt seal 82 for belt 14 are provided. These belts seals 80 and 82 help to
10 resist the escape of molten metal from the bar casting zone and also maintain intimate belt/mold contact. The belt seals can be similar in design and operation as those shown in United States Patent No. 4,785,873, which is
15 expressly incorporated by reference herein.

As also can best be seen in Figure 2, belt support shoes 90, 91 for belt 12 and 92, 93 for belt 14 are also provided. The belt support shoes increase the spacing of the rolls from
20 each other and thus in turn create a larger space between the belts. This allows for adjustment of the head pressure from the tundish 60 because a larger range of vertical positions for the tundish 60 is possible. Furthermore,
25 this allows the cooling bar means 70 and 72 to be placed closer to the nozzle 66 so that cooling of the belts 12 and 14 can begin as soon as molten metal is in contact with the belts 12 and 14. Finally, the extra space can be used to
30 fit induction heaters 94 and 95 close to the point where the molten metal contacts the belts 12 and 14. It will be appreciated that belt shoes 91 and 93 can be eliminated and the diameter of rolls 22 and 26 can be increased to
35 accommodate the use of belt shoes 90 and 92.

Referring now to Figure 6, a horizontal section of the bar caster 10 showing

- 10 -

a cross-section of the bar casting zone 100 is shown. The bar casting zone 100 is defined by the casting surfaces 34a, 36a of the dam blocks 34, 36 and the casting surfaces 12a, 14a of belts 12 and 14. The belts 12 and 14 have a width that is greater than the width of the casting zone 100, as can be seen in Figure 6 in order for the dam block means 30 and 32 to form a mold for the casting of the metallic bar.

The bar casting zone is generally in the form of a rectangle and the typical dimensions of the cross-sectional area of the bar casting zone 100 shown in Figure 6 can be two inches by three inches (2" x 3"); two inches by four inches (2" x 4"); three inches by four inches (3" x 4"); or three inches by three inches (3" x 3"). The bar casting zone preferably has contoured corners as is shown in Figure 6 which are formed by the complementary shaped dam blocks 34 and 36. Contoured corners for the as-cast bar facilitate lower stress during rolling and avoid slivers and cracking of the bar. More generally, and as used herein, the bar casting zone 100 is defined as having a cross-sectional shape generally in the form of a rectangle comprising a first dimension F1 and a second dimension F2 that is about 50% to 400% of the first dimension.

Figure 7 and Figures 7A, 7B, 7C and 7D show the solidification of the molten metal 64 into a cast bar. The molten metal 64 is introduced into the bar casting zone 100 through tundish 60 and nozzle 66. Upon entering the bar casting zone 100, the molten metal 64 is completely molten but quickly a shell 102 solidifies on the outside edges of the molten metal to start to form the metallic bar. Heat

- 11 -

is transferred from the solidifying molten metal through the belts 12 and 14, which are cooled by cooling bars 70 and 72. As that occurs, the molten metal solidifies from the outside in to form a solid shell portion 102, a mushy zone 104 and a molten center zone 106. As the bar moves through the bar casting zone 100, heat is continued to be removed from the molten metal, and the bar continues to solidify. The characteristic V-shape (or sump) is formed in the bar casting zone by the boundaries between the solid shell portion 102, the mushy zone 104 and the liquid center zone 106. The bar becomes completely solid and then exits the bar caster 10 for further processing, such as shape rolling or cutting into straight pieces. The exit temperature is preferably in the range of 800° to 1000°F.

Molten aluminum can be cast into aluminum bar by using the caster of the invention. Although any aluminum alloy can be cast, the most likely alloys for bar casters come from the following Aluminum Association designations: 2XXX, 3XXX, 4XXX, 5XXX, 6XXX and 7XXX. The bar caster 10 is especially effective for the so-called "hard alloys" (2XXX, 4XXX, 6XXX and 7XXX alloys) which simply could not be cast using prior art continuous bar casting apparatus and methods because of their long freezing range. The generally vertical bar caster provides a metal head that facilitates excellent molten metal to belt contact and excellent molten metal feed over the entire cross-section during initial solidification. This facilitates a short mushy zone. The generally vertical bar caster inherently has equal solidification of all sides. Furthermore,

- 12 -

due to the design of the cooling nozzles,
excellent belt to bar contact is maintained.
These all lead to an excellent cast bar product
which minimizes the problems associated with
5 other cast bar products, such as surface
liquations and centerline segregation.

In proper forming of the bar there are
several critical elements which must be
controlled. First, the belts must be resisted
10 from distorting upon first coming into contact
with the molten metal from the nozzle 66. If
waves or other distortions (known in the art as
"buckling") of the belts occur, this can
adversely affect surface quality. Secondly, as
15 the bar solidifies, the belt must maintain
intimate contact therewith in order to resist
air gaps from being created between the belt and
the bar. This will prevent remelting of the
partially solidified shell. This remelting
20 causes a defect called surface liquations.
Also, there must be efficient heat transfer from
the solidifying bar through the belt. This will
enhance the metallurgical qualities of the bar
and minimize such things such as centerline
25 segregation.

The design of the cooling bar 70, 72
resists distortion of the belts 12, 14 when the
molten metal enters the bar casting zone 100 and
also maintains intimate contact on the
30 solidifying bar. Referring to Figures 8 and 9,
cooling bar means 70 (which is similar to
cooling bar means 72 so only one will be
explained in detail) is a hollow structure
having a cooling wall 200 which faces the
35 cooling surface 12b of belt 12. Coolant (such
as water) is introduced from a coolant source
(not shown) into manifold 74. The manifold 72

- 13 -

is shown positioned centrally in the cooling bar means 70 although it will be appreciated that it can be placed in different positions. Coolant is supplied at about 40-60 psi and fills the hollow cavity 208 formed by the walls of the cooling bar means 70.

The cooling wall 200 has a plurality of generally circular nozzles such as nozzle 218, as can best be seen in Figure 8. As can be seen in Figure 9, the nozzles each define a passageway 223 located centrally therein and terminating at an orifice 223a which produces a jet of water directed at the cooling surface 12b of the belt 12.

The coolant exits the cooling bar means by going into channels 230 (Figures 8 and 9) defined by the nozzles and then being drawn off by gravity and also by the aid of the vacuum means 240 shown in Figure 9. The vacuum means 240 consists of a housing mounted to the back side of the cooling bar means 70. A vacuum from a vacuum supply source (not shown) draws the coolant away from the cooling bar means 70 through outlet pipes 242, 244 by creating a vacuum inside the vacuum means 240 through outlet pipes 242 and 244.

In order to resist belt distortion near the upper portion of the bar casting zone 100, the nozzles in the upper portion are configured as shown in Figure 10. The nozzles have a concave guiding surface 250 and a flat rim 252. The distance between the flat rim 252 and the cooling surface of the belt 12b must be less than the distance between the orifice 223a and the cooling surface of the belt 12b. The preferred distance between the rim 252 and the cooling side of the belt 12b is one sixteenth of

- 14 -

an inch (1/16") or less. A jet of water 254 travels through the passageway 223 and exits the orifice 223a and swirls as shown in Figure 10 to create a liquid film 260 upon which the belt 12 moves. It will be appreciated that coolant must also be maintained in area above the nozzle 250 shown in Figure 10 in order to have the vacuum V created by nozzle 250. Because of the depth of the concave guiding surface, the diameter of the orifice 250, the distance between the rim of the rim 252 and the cooling surface 12b of the belt and the water level maintained around the nozzles, a vacuum is created between the belt and the nozzle 250 so as to draw the belt towards the nozzle as shown by arrow V. The vacuum pressure holds the belt in a planar position, so that belt distortion is minimized. The vacuum arrow V is also shown in Figure 7A.

As the bar moves through the casting zone, less vacuum pressure is needed, thus the concave guiding surfaces are not as deep. This can be shown in Figure 11 which shows the nozzles at a mid-portion of the cooling bar means. The reference numbers in Figure 11 point to similar features as are shown in Figure 10 only with an "a" subscript. Just before the metal totally solidifies in the bar casting zone, the vacuum is not needed at all, and in fact, a positive pressure is needed to maintain belt contact on the solidifying bar in order to maintain contact with the bar because it is contracting in size as it solidifies. Thus, as shown in Figure 12, (in which similar features as are shown in Figure 10 are indicated by a "b" subscript) which shows the nozzles at a lower portion of the cooling bar means, the guiding surfaces are generally flat, and thus a positive

- 15 -

pressure P from the jet of water is exerted on the cooling surface of the belt in order to move the belt into contact with solid bar. The diameter of the orifice, although shown
5 unchanged from the orifice diameter in the upper section, can also be decreased to create a greater pressure. The pressure arrow P is also shown in Figure 7D.

It will be appreciated that by
10 changing the depth of the guiding surfaces and the diameter of the orifices, the vacuum and pressure forces on the belts can be altered. Thus, the vertical bar caster 10 can be used successfully to cast different alloys having
15 different solidification rates. Also, the heat transfer in the caster can be more effectively controlled thus leading to higher quality cast bar.

The method of the invention comprises
20 providing a vertical bar caster as shown in Figures 1-12 and solidifying the molten metal supplied in the bar caster in a bar casting zone defined by the casting surfaces of the belts and the dam blocks.

25 The generally vertical bar caster provides several benefits over prior art continuous bar casting machines. Because the casting process is vertical, metallostatic head is used. The metal head provides an excellent
30 molten metal to belt contact pressure and excellent molten metal feed during initial solidification. This aids in making the mushy zone length as short as possible (see Figure 7). The bar solidifies equally on both sides and due
35 to the cooling bar design, excellent metal to belt contact is maintained throughout the bar casting zone. This makes for an excellent cast

- 16 -

product in which surface liquations and centerline segregation are minimized. The belts provide an excellent heat transfer mechanism and do not need to be coated, preheated or
5 lubricated.

It will be appreciated that although emphasis throughout the specification has focussed on casting molten aluminum, other molten metals such as, for example, copper,
10 zinc, steel and lead, could be cast using the bar caster of the invention and the method of the invention. The invention also contemplates a cast metal bar made by the method of the invention and a cast aluminum bar made by the
15 method of the invention.

It will be appreciated that a vertical bar caster and an associated method have been provided wherein the vertical bar caster produces metallic bar from molten metal and an
20 associated metallic bar product.

While specific embodiments of the invention have been disclosed, it will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that various modifications and alterations to those
25 details could be developed in light of the overall teachings of the disclosure. Accordingly, the particular arrangements disclosed are meant to be illustrative only and not limiting as to the scope of the invention
30 which is to be given the full breadth of the appended claims and any and all equivalents thereof.

- 17 -

C L A I M S

1. A generally vertical caster (10) for casting molten metal (64) into metallic bar (110), said caster comprising:
- 5 a pair of movable opposed belts (12, 14), each of said belts having a casting surface (12a, 14a) and a cooling surface (12b, 14b) opposite said casting surface;
- 10 a pair of movable opposed dam block means (30, 32), said dam block means including a plurality of dam blocks (34, 36) having one end mounted to an orbiting support (43, 44) and a casting surface (34a, 36a) opposite said mounted end;
- 15 said casting surfaces of said belts and said casting surfaces of said dam blocks defining a bar casting zone (100) for solidifying said molten metal into said metallic bar; and
- 20 cooling bar means (70, 72) for cooling said belts while said belts pass through said bar casting zone, whereby said molten metal is solidified into said metallic bar in said bar casting zone.
- 25 2. The caster of claim 1, wherein said cooling bar means includes a cooling wall (200) which faces said cooling surface of said belts, said cooling wall having a plurality of nozzles (218), each of said
- 30 nozzles defining a passageway (223) terminating in an orifice (223a) which produces a jet (254) of said coolant directed at said cooling surface of said belt.
- 35 3. The caster of claim 2, wherein said bar casting zone has an upper portion and a lower portion;
- said cooling wall has an upper section



- 18 -

disposed adjacent said upper portion of said bar casting zone and a lower section disposed adjacent said lower portion of said bar casting zone; and

5 said nozzles disposed in said upper section of said cooling wall are constructed and arranged so that said jet of coolant creates a vacuum (V) to pull said belt toward said cooling wall such that belt distortion is resisted and
10 said nozzles disposed in said lower section of said cooling wall are constructed and arranged so that said jet of coolant creates a pressure (P) to push said belt away from said cooling wall such that intimate surface-to-surface
15 contact between said casting surfaces of said belt and said solidifying molten metal is maintained throughout said bar casting zone.

4. The caster of claim 3, wherein
 said nozzles are spaced apart from
20 each other so as to define channels (230) for said coolant to be drained from said cooling wall; and

 said drained coolant is removed from said bar caster by vacuum means (240).

25 5. The caster of claim 4, wherein
 at least some of said nozzles have a concave guiding surface (250) which face said cooling surface of said belt, said passageway being disposed generally centrally in said
30 guiding surface, whereby said coolant forms a liquid film (260) on which said belt travels while said belt moves through said bar casting zone.

6. The caster of claim 5, wherein
35 said guiding surface includes a rim (252) having a generally planar surface, said planar surface being generally parallel to said



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cooling surface of said belt.

7. The caster of claim 1, wherein
said bar casting zone is generally
rectangular in cross-section having a first
5 dimension (F1) and a second dimension, said
second dimension (F2) being between about 50% to
400% of said first dimension.

8. The caster of claim 7, wherein
said bar casting zone is formed by a
10 portion of said casting surface of said belt and
said dam block; and

the dimension of said bar casting zone
formed by said portion of said casting surface
of said belt is greater than the dimension of
15 said bar casting zone formed by said dam block.

9. The caster of claim 1, wherein
said casting surface of said dam
blocks has at least one slit (34b, 34c) for
accommodating thermal expansion of said dam
20 block.

10. The caster of claim 1, including
said bar casting zone having an upper
portion and a lower portion; and
molten metal supply means disposed
25 above said upper portion of said bar casting
zone, said molten metal supply means including a
tundish (60) for holding said molten metal which
is to be delivered to said bar casting zone.

11. The caster of claim 10, including
30 separate means for moving each of said
belts into said bar casting zone, each of said
moving means comprising:

a first roll (20, 24) disposed
above said bar casting zone;
35 a second roll (22, 26) disposed
below said bar casting zone;
a belt support shoe (90, 92) for



guiding and supporting said belt after said belt travels over said first roll but before said belt reaches said upper portion of said bar casting zone, said belt support shoe defining a space created above said bar casting zone which is greater than the distance between said belts so that (i) molten metal head pressure for said molten metal which is delivered into said bar casting zone can be adjusted; (ii) ancillary apparatus (94, 95) can fit in said space; and (iii) said cooling bar means can be positioned more nearly adjacent the point where said molten metal first enters said bar casting zone.

12. The caster of claim 11, wherein said belts are endless belts.

13. The caster of claim 11, wherein said ancillary apparatus includes induction heating means (94, 95) disposed in said space for heating said belts before said belts enter said bar casting zone.

14. The caster of claim 10, wherein said tundish includes a feeding tip (66) for feeding molten metal into said bar casting zone, said feeding tip having a portion disposed in said bar casting zone; and spring biased sealing means (80, 81, 82, 83) for biasing said belt into intimate surface-to-surface contact with said feeding tip so that said molten metal is resisted from leaking from said bar casting zone.

15. The caster of claim 1, wherein each of said dam block means comprises (i) a frame (45, 46); (ii) an endless chain adapted to orbit said frame (43, 44); (iii) dam blocks (34, 36) mounted on said endless chain; and (iv) motor means to orbit said chain, whereby said dam block means are self powered.



16. The caster of claim 1, wherein
each of said dam block means comprises
a plurality of dam blocks mounted on one of said
belts, whereby said dam blocks travel with said
5 belt to form said bar casting zone.

17. A method of casting molten metal into
metallic bar, said method comprising:

providing a generally vertical bar
caster (10) including (i) a pair of movable
10 belts (12, 14), each of said belts having a
casting surface (12a, 14a) and a cooling surface
(12b, 14b) opposite said casting surface; (ii) a
pair of movable dam block means (30, 32), said
dam block means including a plurality of dam
15 blocks (34, 36) having an end mounted to an
orbiting support (43, 44, 45, 46), said dam
blocks having a casting surface (34a, 36a)
opposite said mounted end; and (iii) cooling bar
means (70, 72) for cooling said belts; and
20 solidifying said molten metal in a bar
casting zone (100) defined by said casting
surfaces of said belts and said casting surfaces
of said dam blocks to form said metallic bar.

18. The method of claim 17, including
25 employing aluminum as said molten
metal.

19. The method of claim 18, including
employing molten aluminum selected
from the group consisting of 2XXX, 3XXX, 4XXX,
30 5XXX, 6XXX and 7XXX aluminum alloys.

20. The method of claim 18, including
heating said belts before said belts
enter said bar casting zone.

21. A metallic bar made by the method of
35 claim 18.

22. An aluminum bar made by the method of
claim 19.



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