

- 1 -

INTERNALLY COOLED TOOL PACKBACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION1. Field of the Invention:

5 The present invention relates generally to can manufacturing tool pack assemblies that have drawing and ironing dies for reforming a cup into a container body, and more specifically to such a tool pack assembly that is internally cooled.

2. Brief Description of the Related Art:

10 Can forming dies are used to form the bodies of metal cans or containers. The description herein is particularly concerned with forming two piece metal containers. A shallow metal cup is driven into the dies by a punch to form the body of the can. The dies generally are provided in tool packs in which a series of progressively narrower die nibs are arranged to progressively draw and iron the metal cup into a container of the desired shape and thickness. An example of a
15 conventional set of drawing and ironing dies in a tool pack is shown in U.S. Patent No. 4,173,882 issued to Lee, Jr. on November 13, 1979, the entire disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference. Each die is included in a respective die module.

20 Die tool packs used in commercial can manufacturing conventionally use cooling fluids applied to the exterior of the die pack to maintain or reduce operational temperatures of the dies. In certain can forming applications, however, it is desirable to avoid the use of external cooling fluids. For example, external cooling fluids may contaminate the container surfaces, which requires costly and environmentally undesirable post-formation cleaning processes.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention overcomes the disadvantages of the prior art, such as those noted above, by providing an internally cooled modular die tool pack assembly that does not require the use of cooling fluid applied to the exterior of the tool pack. Instead, the temperature of the tool pack is controlled by forcing a fluid, particularly a liquid, with desirable heat transfer properties around the die nibs through special die cavities and heat is transferred by conduction. The external temperature of each die nib can be monitored continuously at the respective die module, and the fluid medium temperature can be adjusted automatically to maintain acceptable die temperatures.

The fluid medium is supplied to the tool pack by a temperature control unit, and is delivered to the die modules by a series of pipes, fittings, and hoses. Fluid medium flows through porting in each module and its die where the fluid is directed circumferentially around the outer surface of the die nibs. Preferably, multiple porting in each die is circumferentially symmetrical, with alternating inlet and outlet ports to distribute the fluid medium uniformly around each die nib. The multiple fluid inlet and outlet design with symmetrical porting assures that all of the die nib temperatures remain substantially uniform, and also minimizes temperature gradients around the die. In a preferred embodiment, four inlet ports and four outlet ports are provided with inlet and outlet ports alternating at 45° apart. But the number and placements of ports can be altered to address specific temperature control requirements.

Other features and advantages of the present invention will become apparent from the following detailed description which refers to the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is an axial cross section of an internally cooled modular tool pack

assembly according to the present invention.

Fig. 2 is the axial cross section of Fig. 1 showing fluid cooling medium pathways flowing into the assembly.

Fig. 3 is the axial cross section of Fig. 1 showing fluid cooling medium pathways flowing out of the assembly.

Fig. 4 is a transverse cross section of a drawing and ironing die showing cooling fluid pathways in the die according to the present invention.

Fig. 5 is a cut away view of the drawing and ironing die taken along the line V-V of Fig. 4 .

10 DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF AN EMBODIMENT OF THE INVENTION

Fig. 1 shows an internally cooled modular die tool pack assembly 2 according to the present invention in an axial cross section. The assembly includes three annular die modules 4, 6, and 8 in sequence, with adjacent modules separated by spacers 10 and 12. The first die module 4 includes an annular redraw die nib 14 followed by a first annular ironing die nib 16. The next die module 6 includes a second annular ironing die nib 18. The final die module 8 includes annular die nibs 20 and 22. Die nibs 14, 16, 18, 20, and 22 are held in die cases 15, 17, 19, 21, and 23, respectively.

Referring also to Figs. 2-5, each of the die modules 4, 6, and 8 has at least one inlet port and at least one outlet port for cooling medium. When multiple inlet and outlet ports are utilized, the ports preferably are arranged alternately and symmetrically around each die module.

Referring more specifically to Fig. 2, the first die module 4 is provided with an inlet port 24, the second module 6 is provided with inlet port 26, and the third module 8 has inlet ports 28 and 30. Similarly, as shown in Fig. 3, die module 4 is provided with an outlet port 34, module 6 is provided with outlet port 36, and module 8 has outlet ports 38 and 40, from which cooling medium exits

- 4 -

the tool pack assembly.

Fluid cooling medium provided by a conventional temperature control unit 39 flows through conduits 43 (Fig. 1) into the die modules through the inlet ports as shown by the directional arrows 41 of Fig. 2. Passages machined into each die module and through the cases direct the cooling medium to channels 42, 44, 46, 48, and 50 formed in outer walls of die nibs 14, 16, 18, 20, and 22 respectively.

The temperature control unit 39 may control both the rate of flow to each conduit 43 and inlet port at 41 and the respective temperature at each conduit and inlet port independently of the other conduits and inlet ports to accommodate and control the temperatures at the various die modules, since each module may be subject to a different respective heat load. After circulating partially circumferentially around each die, the cooling medium flows out of the die modules as shown by the directional arrows 43 of Fig. 3.

Thus, cooling medium flows through the channels in direct contact with a radially outer surface of each of the die nibs, drawing off heat that is generated in the die nibs during can drawing and ironing. Generally, the cooling medium passing around the die nibs absorbs heat and cools the die nib to maintain a desired temperature in each die nib. The fluid may also be heated to warm the die nibs, for example at machine startup. This may be desirable to minimize thermal expansion effects and improve the drawing, ironing and can stripping processes.

Referring to Figs. 4 and 5, die nib 16 and die case 17 are shown to illustrate the symmetrically spaced inlets and outlets for providing cooling media to die nib 16. Cooling medium enters case inlets 52, 54, 56, and 58, flows radially in through case 17, and circumferentially along channel 44 formed around one quarter of the outer circumference of die 17. Cooling medium exits the die module through outlets 60, 62, 64, and 66. Plugs 68, 70, 72, and 74 seal off the machined outer ends of inlets 52, 54, 56, and 58, respectively. Only one

- 5 -

passage of cooling medium from inlet 52 circumferentially in both directions to outlets 60, 66 is illustrated. The other inlets and outlets for that die module are arranged in the same manner. As a result, an inlet and the adjacent outlet are 45° apart. Die nibs 14, 18, 20, and 22 are cooled by a similar arrangement of
5 symmetrically spaced inlets and outlets.

Advantageously, the symmetrical spacing of the case inlets and outlets provides for even cooling of the die nibs, thereby insuring that die nib temperatures remain uniform, and minimizing circumferential temperature gradients. The external temperature of each die nib can be monitored, either by
10 temperature measurement thermometers 80 at each module or by monitoring the temperature of the exiting cooling medium, and temperature adjustments can be made as necessary.

Although the present invention has been described in relation to a particular embodiment thereof, many other variations and modifications and other
15 uses will become apparent to those skilled in the art. It is preferred, therefore, that the present invention be limited not by the specific disclosure herein, but only by the appended claims.

- 6 -

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A die module for a drawing and ironing assembly, the module comprising:
 - a die nib having an inner side for contacting an object for drawing or ironing the object, and the nib having an outer side;
 - 5 a case surrounding the die nib;
 - a plurality of inlets spaced around the case around the nib, the inlets for supplying fluid cooling medium into the case;
 - a plurality of outlets for cooling medium flowing out of the case; and
 - 10 a respective fluid path between at least one of the inlets and at least one of the outlets and at the outer side of the nib for carrying the cooling medium in direct contact with the die nib.
2. The die module of claim 1, wherein the fluid path comprises a clearance between the case and the die nib.
3. The die module of claim 2, wherein the clearance is a circumferential channel formed on the outer side of the die nib.
4. The die module of claim 1, wherein the inlets are spaced symmetrically around the case.
5. The die module of claim 1, wherein the outlets are spaced symmetrically around the case.
6. The die module of claim 5, wherein the inlets are spaced symmetrically around the case.

- 7 -

7. The die module of claim 6, wherein each inlet is connected by the respective path with one outlet and each path extends over a respective part of the circumference of the nib.

8. A can forming die assembly including a plurality of the die modules of claim 1, wherein the modules are arrayed in a linear sequence for enabling a punch to pass through the respective dies in the modules in sequence.

9. The assembly of claim 8, wherein each fluid path comprises a clearance between the case and the respective die nib.

10. The assembly of claim 9, wherein the clearance is a circumferential channel formed on the outer side of the die nib.

11. The assembly of claim 8, wherein the inlets are spaced symmetrically around the case.

12. The assembly of claim 8, wherein the outlets are spaced symmetrically around the case.

13. The assembly of claim 12, wherein the inlets are spaced symmetrically around the case.

14. The assembly of claim 13, wherein each inlet is connected by the respective path with one outlet and each path extends over a respective part of the circumference of the nib.