

LIQUID COOLED BRAKE WITH SUPPORT COLUMNS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

[0001] This invention relates to liquid cooled brakes and, more particularly, to a liquid cooled brake in which support columns are used to provide a lightweight yet strong supporting housing.

2. Disclosure of Related Art

[0002] A conventional liquid cooled disc brake includes a stationary housing disposed about a rotating shaft. A plurality of friction plates are coupled to the housing and fixed against rotation relative to the housing, but axially moveable relative to the housing. These friction plates define fluid jackets through which cooling liquids are circulated. Another plurality of friction plates are coupled to the shaft for rotation therewith and are axially movable relative to the shaft. The plates coupled to the shaft are interleaved with the plates coupled to the housing. A brake actuator is disposed at one axial end of the brake and applies a force in an axial direction to bring the plates into contact with one another.

[0003] The housing for conventional liquid cooled brakes typically includes one or more rings encircling the friction plates. These rings are generally solid, relatively heavy and must be customized to the diameter of the brake. Other conventional liquid cooled brakes have eliminated the rings and have instead used a plurality of pins extending between end plates of the brake. This arrangement is disadvantageous, however, because the pins are required to provide both structural support to the brake and absorb braking forces during operation of the brake creating undue strain on the pins.

[0004] The inventors herein have recognized a need for brake that will minimize and/or eliminate one or more of the above-identified deficiencies.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] The present invention provides a liquid cooled brake having an improved structural support.

[0006] A brake in accordance with the present invention includes first and second end plates disposed about a driven shaft. The driven shaft rotates about a rotational axis and the first and second end plates are axially spaced from one another. A plurality of axially extending pins connect the first and second end plates. A first friction plate is coupled to the driven shaft for rotation therewith and is axially movable relative to the driven shaft. A second friction plate is coupled to the plurality of pins. The second friction plate is fixed against rotation relative to the plurality of pins, but is axially movable relative to the plurality of pins. The second friction plate defines a fluid jacket configured for passage of a fluid. A pressure plate is configured for selective movement in a first axial direction towards the first and second friction plates. A first support column is disposed radially outwardly of a first pin of the plurality of pins and is fixed at first and second ends to the first and second end plates, respectively. Additional support columns may be disposed radially outwardly of additional corresponding pins of the plurality of pins and fixed to the first and second end plates.

[0007] A brake in accordance with the present invention represents a significant improvement relative to conventional liquid cooled brakes. In particular, the use of support columns between the end plates of the inventive brake reduces strain on the pins and provides a housing with improved structural support that is strong, yet lightweight and scalable.

[0008] These and other advantages of this invention will become apparent to one skilled in the art from the following detailed description and the accompanying drawings illustrating features of this invention by way of example.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009] Figure 1 is a perspective view of a brake in accordance with the present invention.

[0010] Figure 2 is a cross-sectional view of the brake of Figure 1 taken along lines 2-2.

[0011] Figure 3 is an exploded perspective view of the brake of Figure 1.

[0012] Figure 4 is a perspective view of a portion of the brake of Figure 1.

[0013] Figure 5 is a cross-sectional view of a support column of the brake of Figure 1.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION

[0014] Referring now to the drawings wherein like reference numerals are used to identify identical components in the various views, Figure 1 illustrates a brake 10 in accordance with the present invention. Brake 10 may be provided for heavy duty industrial use (e.g., on oil drilling equipment). Referring to Figures 2-3, brake 10 includes end cap assemblies 12, 14, pins 16, and two sets of friction plates 18A-B, 20A-D. Referring to Figures 1 and 3, in accordance with the invention brake 10 also includes support columns 22 and guards 24.

[0015] Referring to Figure 2, end cap assembly 12 encloses one end of brake 10 and includes an end plate 26. Plate 26 may be made from conventional metals and metal alloys. Plate 26 is annular and is disposed about a rotational axis 28 of a drive shaft (not shown). Plate 26 may include a plurality of stepped diameter bores 30 each configured to receive a corresponding pin 16. Plate 26 may also define a plurality of bores 32 configured to receive fasteners (not shown) used to mount brake 10 to another object.

[0016] End cap assembly 14 encloses an opposite axial end of brake 10 relative to end cap assembly 12 and provides support for a brake actuator. Assembly 14 includes an end plate 34, an expandable bladder 36 and a pressure plate 38.

[0017] End plate 34 is annular in construction and disposed about axis 28. Plate 34 may be made from conventional metal and metal alloys. Plate 34 includes a plurality of bores 40 aligned with bores 30 in plate 26 and configured to receive pins 16. Referring to Figures 1 and 3, plate 34 may also define bores 42 on either side of each bore 40 that are aligned with corresponding bores (not

shown) in plate 26 for a purpose described hereinbelow. Referring again to Figure 2, plate 34 also defines an annular recess 44 configured to receive bladder 36 and one or more axial bores 46 through which pneumatic or hydraulic fluid is provided to bladder 36 via a hose (not shown).

[0018] Bladder 36 bears against plate 38 to move plate 38 in an axial direction (to the left in Figure 2). Bladder 36 is conventional in the art and is disposed within recess 44 of end plate 34. When fluid is supplied to bladder 36, bladder 36 expands and urges pressure plate 38 in an axial direction to compress, and cause engagement of, friction plates 18A-B, 20A-D. When fluid pressure is removed from bladder 36, springs 48 disposed about pins 16 bias friction plates 20A-B and 20C-D away from both one another and friction plates 18A-B towards their original position.

[0019] Pressure plate 38 engages friction plate 20D and, when fluid is supplied to bladder 36, urges friction plate 20D in an axial direction (to the left in Figure 2) to compress friction plates 18A-B, 20A-D. Plate 38 may be made from conventional metals and metal alloys. Plate 38 is annular and disposed about axis 26. Plate 38 is configured to receive pins 16 such that plate 38 is capable of axial movement relative to pins 16, but is prevented from rotating relative to pins 16. In particular, and with reference to Figure 3, plate 38 may include radially outwardly extending flanges 39 defining semicircular recesses configured to receive pins 16 to prevent rotation of plate 38.

[0020] Referring again to Figure 2, pins 16 provide a mounting structure for friction plates 20A-D and structural support for brake 10. Pins 16 are conventional in the art. Pins 16 extend axially from end plate 26 to end plate 34 to connect end plates 26, 34. Each pin 16 may include a head 50 at one end that abuts against a shoulder formed in a corresponding bore 30 of end plate 26. Each pin 16 further includes a shank 52 that terminates in a threaded end 54. The shank 52 of each pin 16 is configured to be received within aligned apertures in friction plates 20A-D and also supports springs 48 between friction plates 20A-B and between friction plates 20C-D. Nuts 56 and washers 58 may be disposed about the end 54 of each pin

16 to establish an initial axial position of end plate assemblies 12, 14 and friction plates 18A-B, 20A-D. In the illustrated embodiment, four pins 16 are provided. It should be understood, however, that the number of pins 16 may vary depending on the specific requirements for the brake.

[0021] Friction plates 18A-B are provided to transfer braking torque from friction plates 20A-D to the driven shaft (not shown). Friction plates 18A-B may be made from conventional metals and metal alloys such as iron and copper. Plates 18A-B are coupled to a hub 60 fixed to the driven shaft (or directly to the shaft) through the use of spline teeth on a radially inner surface of plates 18A-B and a radially outer surface of hub 60 (or the shaft), respectively. Plates 18A-B may include a conventional friction material 62 connected to each side of plates 18A-B by fasteners (not shown) such as bolts or screws. Although only two plates 18A-B are shown in the illustrated embodiment, it should be understood that additional plates 18 could be interleaved with additional plates 20 to increase braking torque.

[0022] Friction plates 20A-D are provided to transmit a braking torque to friction plates 18A-B and the driven shaft upon engagement of plates 18A-B, 20A-D. Referring to Figure 3, friction plates 20A-D have a plurality of circumferentially spaced radially outwardly projecting tabs 64 with apertures 66 configured to receive pins 16. In this manner, plates 20A-D are fixed against rotation relative to pins 16, but are axially movable relative to pins 16. Referring again to Figure 2, each of friction plates 20A-D includes one or more cover plates 68 and a fluid jacket 70. Plates 68 are conventional in the art and may be made from a variety of conventional metals and metal alloys including iron or copper. Plates 68 close fluid passages defined in fluid jacket 70 and may be connected to fluid jacket 70 using fasteners (not shown) such as bolts or screws or pins. Fluid jackets 70 are provided to allow for circulation of a cooling liquid such as water or another conventional liquid within brake 10 to allow for transfer of frictional heat generated within brake 10. Jackets 70 are conventional in the art and include an annular body that defines a

fluid manifold through which liquid circulates. Jackets 70 may define a plurality of concentric flow passages 72 and radial flow passages 74 that place concentric passages 72 in fluid communication with fluid inlets 76 and outlets (not shown). In the illustrate embodiment, friction plate 20A is disposed at one axial end of brake 10, friction plate 20D is disposed at an opposite axial end of brake 10 and friction plates 20B-C are arranged back to back intermediate plates 20A,D. In accordance with one aspect of the present invention, friction plates 20A-D are identical in construction allowing ease of assembly and manufacture. Although four friction plates 20A-D are shown in the illustrated embodiment, it should be readily understood that additional plates 20 could be interleaved with plates 18 and used to provide increased braking torque.

[0023] Referring again to Figures 1 and 3, support columns 22 provide structural support to brake 10 and provide a means for absorbing braking forces during operation of brake 10. A column 22 may be disposed radially outwardly of each pin 16 and extends between end plates 26, 34. Although columns 22 are circumferentially spaced around brake 10 radially outwardly of corresponding pins 16, columns 22 are not necessarily rounded or curved. As shown in Figure 4, in the illustrated embodiment, columns 22 are substantially rectangular in shape with radially inner and outer surfaces 78, 80 that are substantially flat. Columns 22 may be unitary (i.e., one piece) structures. The radially inner surface 80 of each column 22 defines a recess 82 configured to receive a corresponding pin 16, tabs 64 on friction plates 20A-D and springs 48. Columns 22 further include axially extending grooves 84, 86 at each circumferential end between surfaces 78, 80. Grooves 84, 86 are configured to receive corresponding circumferential ends of guards 24. Referring to Figure 5, each column 22 may further defines axially extending closed bores 88, 90, 92, 94 formed in each axial end of column 22. Bores 88, 90, 92 94 are configured to receive fasteners such as bolts, screws, or pins used to fix column 22 to end plates 26, 34. Bores 88, 90, 92, 94, may be disposed circumferentially between recess 82 and a corresponding groove 84, 86. Bores 88, 92 and 90,

94, respectively, may be axially aligned. Although bolts or similar fasteners are used to secure columns 22 to end plates 26, 34 in the illustrated embodiment, it should be understood that other fasteners (e.g., welds) might be used and that columns 22 may be connected to end plates 26, 34, in a variety of ways. It should also be understood that columns 22 could be constructed and oriented so as to be disposed radially outwardly of more than one pin 16. The illustrated arrangement provides potentially greater reductions in weight, but larger columns could be used without departing from the spirit of the present invention.

[0024] Referring again to Figure 4, guards 24 limit access to moving components of brake 10 to prevent damage to brake 10 from foreign objects or injuries to users. Guards 24 may be made from metals or metal alloys including steel. Guards 24 are spaced circumferentially around brake 10 between columns 22. Each circumferential end of a guard 24 is received within a corresponding groove 84, 86 of a column 22 and are slid into grooves 84, 86 from one axial end of brake 10. Guards 24 may be ventilated to allow dissipation of heat and reduce weight. In particular, each guard 24 may include a plurality of vents 96 extend longitudinally in a circumferential direction. It should be understood, however, that the number, size and shape of vents 96 may vary. Referring again to Figures 1 and 3, one or more guards 24 may also include apertures 98 sized to receive hoses and connectors through which fluid is provided to the inlets 76 and removed through the outlets of fluid jackets 70.

[0025] A brake in accordance with the present invention represents a significant improvement relative to conventional liquid cooled brakes. Columns 22 provide structural support and absorb braking forces during operation of brake 10 thereby removing undue strain on pins 16. In this manner, brake 10 is able to remove undue stress on pins 16 without the excessive weight resulting from the use of solid rings. Further, the columns can be used on brakes of varying diameters providing a scalable solution.

[0026] While the invention has been shown and described with reference to one or more particular embodiments thereof, it will be

understood by those of skill in the art that various changes and modifications can be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

CLAIMS

1. A brake (10), comprising:

first and second end plates (26, 34) disposed about a driven shaft, said driven shaft rotating about a rotational axis (28) and said first and second end plates (26, 34) axially spaced from one another

a plurality of axially extending pins (16) connecting said first and second end plates (26, 34);

a first friction plate (18) coupled to said driven shaft for rotation therewith and axially movable relative to said driven shaft;

a second friction plate (20) coupled to said plurality of pins (16) and fixed against rotation relative to said plurality of pins (16), but axially movable relative to said plurality of pins (16), said second friction plate (20) defining a fluid jacket (70) configured for passage of a fluid;

a pressure plate (38) configured for selective movement in a first axial direction towards said first and second friction plates (18, 20); and,

characterized by:

a first support column (22) disposed radially outwardly of a first pin of said plurality of pins (16) and said second friction plate (20) and fixed at first and second ends to said first and second end plates (26, 34), respectively.

2. The brake (10) of claim 1 wherein said first support column (22) is disposed radially outwardly of less than all of said plurality of pins (16).

3. The brake (10) of claim 1, further comprising a second support column (22) disposed radially outwardly of a second pin of said plurality of pins (16) and said second friction plate (20) and fixed at first and second ends to said first and second end plates (26, 34), respectively.

4. The brake (10) of claim 3, further comprising a first guard (24) connected to said first and second support columns (22), said first guard (24) disposed circumferentially between said first and second support columns (22).

5. The brake (10) of claim 4 wherein each of said first and second support columns (22) includes an axially extending groove (84, 86) at one circumferential end, said axially extending grooves (84, 86) of said first and second support columns (22) opening towards one another and configured to receive opposite circumferential ends of said first guard (24).

6. The brake (10) of claim 4 wherein said first guard (24) is ventilated.

7. The brake (10) of claim 3 wherein said second support column (22) is circumferentially spaced from said first support column (22).

8. The brake (10) of claim 1 wherein said first support column (22) is a unitary structure.

9. The brake (10) of claim 1 wherein said first support column (22) defines a recess (82) on a radially inward side of said first support column (22) configured to receive said first pin (16) and said second friction plate (20).

10. The brake (10) of claim 1 wherein said first support column (22) defines first and second axially extending bores (88, 92) configured to receive fasteners fixing said first and second ends of said first support column (22) to said first and second end plates (26, 34).

11. The brake (10) of claim 1 further comprising third and fourth friction plates (20) coupled to said plurality of pins (16) and fixed against rotation relative to said plurality of pins (16), but axially movable relative to said plurality of pins (16), said third and fourth friction plates (20) defining fluid jackets (70) configured for passage of said fluid

wherein said second friction plate (20) is disposed proximate one axial end of said brake (10), said third friction plate (20) is disposed proximate another axial end of said brake (10) and said fourth friction plate (20) is disposed intermediate said second and third friction plates (20), said second, third and fourth friction plates (20) identical in construction.

12. The brake (10) of claim 1, further comprising one or more further support columns which with the first support column form a plurality of support columns, each support column of said plurality support columns (22) disposed radially outwardly of a corresponding pin of said plurality of pins (16) and said second friction plate (2) and fixed at first and second ends to said first and second end plates (26, 34), respectively.

13. The brake (10) of claim 12, further comprising a plurality of guards (24), each guard (24) disposed circumferentially between, and connected to, two support columns (22) of said plurality of support columns.

14. The brake (10) of claim 13 wherein each support column (22) of said plurality of support columns includes first and second axially extending grooves (84, 86) located at opposite circumferential ends of said support column (22), said first axially extending groove (84) configured to receive a circumferential end of one of said plurality of guards and said second axially extending groove (86) configured to receive a circumferential end of another of said plurality of guards.

15. The brake (10) of claim 12 wherein each support column of said plurality of support columns (22) defines a recess (82) on a radially inward side of said support column configured to receive a corresponding pin of said plurality of pins (16) and said second friction plate (20).