

THREADED TUBULAR END PROTECTOR

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] The present application is a continuation-in-part application of U.S. Patent Application having U.S. Serial No. 17/360,641, filed June 28, 2021, which is a conversion of U.S. Provisional Application having U.S. Serial No. 63/045,317, filed June 29, 2020, which claims the benefit under 35 U.S.C. 119(e). The disclosure of which is hereby expressly incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE DISCLOSURE

1. Field of the Disclosure

[0002] The present disclosure relates to a thread protector for a threaded end of a unit of casing or tubing that can be quickly attached to and removed from the unit of casing or tubing. The present disclosure also relates to a method of attaching or removing the thread protectors from the pin end of the units of casing or tubing.

2. Description of the Related Art

[0003] Casing and/or tubing have a pin end and a box end. The box end includes threads inside, which are naturally protected by being disposed inside the tubing or casing. The pin end has threads on the outside of the tubing or casing that are exposed and can be damaged. Currently, there are protective devices for the pin end threads of the tubing or casing but they take a considerable amount of time to put on the tubing or casing and remove from the tubing or casing. When you multiply the time it takes

to put on or remove a typical protector device from the pin end threads of multiple units of tubing or casing, it results in a large amount of time. This large amount of time is taken directly from production time of an oil or gas well.

[0004] Accordingly, there is a need for a thread protector for the threads of the pin end of the tubing or casing that can be more quickly placed on and/or removed from the pin end of the tubing or casing, but still protects all the threads of the pin end of the tubing or casing.

SUMMARY OF THE DISCLOSURE

[0005] The present disclosure is directed toward a thread protector that has an external sleeve having threads disposed on an inner side to engage with pin threads disposed on a pin end of a tubular member. The thread protector also has a flange disposed on a first end of the external sleeve to engage with the pin end of the tubular member, the threads on the inner side of the external sleeve are disposed axially adjacent to the flange and radially adjacent to the end of the pin end of the tubular member.

[0006] The present disclosure is also directed toward a method of protecting pin threads of pin ends of tubular members. The method includes screwing the thread protector on pin threads of a pin end of a tubular member.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0007] FIG. 1 is a cross-sectional view of a thread protector constructed in accordance with the present disclosure.

[0008] FIG. 2 is a cross-sectional view of another embodiment of the thread protector constructed in accordance with the present disclosure.

[0009] FIG. 3A is a cross-sectional view of yet another embodiment of the thread protector constructed in accordance with the present disclosure.

[0010] FIG. 3B is a cross-sectional view of a further embodiment of the thread protector constructed in accordance with the present disclosure.

[0011] FIG. 4 is a perspective view of a portion of another embodiment of a thread protector constructed in accordance with the present disclosure.

[0012] FIG. 5 is a cross-sectional view of the thread protector shown in FIG. 4 and constructed in accordance with the present disclosure.

[0013] FIG. 6 is a perspective view of a portion of yet another embodiment of a thread protector constructed in accordance with the present disclosure.

[0014] FIG. 7A is a perspective view of a portion of yet another embodiment of a thread protector constructed in accordance with the present disclosure.

[0015] FIG. 7B is a perspective view of the embodiment of the thread protector shown in FIG. 7A constructed in accordance with the present disclosure.

[0016] FIG. 8A is a perspective view of another embodiment of a thread protector constructed in accordance with the present disclosure.

[0017] FIG. 8B is a cross-sectional view of the embodiment of the thread protector shown in FIG. 8A constructed in accordance with the present disclosure.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DISCLOSURE

[0018] The present disclosure is directed to a thread protector 10 to guard or protect threads 12 on a pin end 14 of a tubular member 16. The tubular member 16 can be casing or tubing used in an oil and gas operation. The tubular member 16 also includes a box end 18 opposite the pin end 14, an internal side 20 and an external side 22. The box end 18 of the tubular member 16 includes internal threads 24 disposed therein on the internal side 20 of the tubular member 16. The threads 12 disposed on the external side 22 of the pin end 18 of the tubular member 16 can be a certain number of threads or extend along a certain length of the tubular member 16.

[0019] The thread protector 10 includes an external sleeve 26 that is sized to fit around the external side 22 of the tubular member 16 and have a length that is at least as long as the length of the threads 12 disposed on the pin end 14 of the tubular member 14. The external sleeve 26 can have an inner side 28, an outer side 30, a first end 32, and a second end 34. The inner side 28 of the external sleeve 26 can include at least one thread 36 to engage with the threads 12 disposed on the pin end 14 of the tubular member 16.

[0020] In one embodiment of the present disclosure, the thread protector 10 can also include a flange 38 inwardly directed in a radial direction from the first end 32 of the thread protector 10. The flange 38 is

positioned so that the pin end 14 of the tubular member 16 can engage the flange 38 to maintain the thread protector 10 in a protective position with respect to the threads 12 on the pin end 14 of the tubular member 16. In another embodiment, an internal sleeve 40 can extend from an inner diameter 42 of the flange 38 in the same direction of the external sleeve 26 of the thread protector 10. The internal sleeve 40 is sized to extend back into the inside of the tubular member 16 to provide additional structural support for the thread protector 10. In another embodiment, a plate 44 can be attached to the first end 32 of the external sleeve 26 instead of the flange 38 to prevent debris from getting inside the tubular member 16 when the tubular member 16 is not in use.

[0021] The inner side 28 of the external sleeve 26 of the thread protector 10 can have any number of consecutive threads such that the thread protector 10 can be quickly removed and/or replaced from the tubular member 16. The threads 12 disposed on the inner side 28 of the external sleeve 26 of the thread protector 10 are positioned close to the flange 38 of the thread protector 10 so that when the thread protector 10 engages with the threads 12 of the pin end 14, the threads 12 of the thread protector 10 only engage with the threads 12 at the end of the pin end 14 of the tubular member 16. If a limited number of the threads on the tubular member 16 are engaged to secure the thread protector 10 thereto, then the reduction in time it would take to remove the thread protector 10 from the tubular member 16, and the time it would take to secure the thread

protector 10 to the tubular member 16, when combined for numerous tubular members, would be significant.

[0022] In one embodiment, the number of threads 12 on the inner side 28 of the external sleeve 26 of the thread protector 10 can be less than ten threads. In another embodiment, the number of threads 12 on the inner side 28 of the external sleeve 26 of the thread protector 10 can be less than eight threads. In a further embodiment, the number of threads 12 on the inner side 28 of the external sleeve 26 of the thread protector 10 can be less than 6 threads. In yet another embodiment, the number of threads 12 on the inner side 28 of the external sleeve 26 of the thread protector 10 can be less than 4 threads. In another embodiment, the number of threads 12 on the inner side 28 of the external sleeve 26 of the thread protector 10 can be less than 3 threads. In a further embodiment, the number of threads 12 on the inner side 28 of the external sleeve 26 of the thread protector 10 can be less than 2 threads.

[0023] The threads 12 on the pin end 14 of the tubular member 16 can extend along a certain length of the tubular member 16. The engaged threads (threads extending from the end of the pin end of the tubular member that are engaged by the threads of the thread protector) extend a certain percentage of the length of all the threads 12 on the pin end 14 of the tubular member 16. In one embodiment, the length of the engaged threads are less than about 40 percent of the total length of all the threads 12 on the pin end 14 of the tubular member 16. In another embodiment, the length of the engaged threads are less than about 30

percent of the total length of all the threads 12 on the pin end 14 of the tubular member 16. In a further embodiment, the length of the engaged threads are less than about 25 percent of the total length of all the threads 12 on the pin end 14 of the tubular member 16. In yet another embodiment, the length of the engaged threads are less than about 20 percent of the total length of all the threads 12 on the pin end 14 of the tubular member 16. In an even further embodiment, the length of the engaged threads are less than about 10 percent of the total length of all the threads 12 on the pin end 14 of the tubular member 16. In another embodiment, the length of the engaged threads are less than about 5 percent of the total length of all the threads 12 on the pin end 14 of the tubular member 16.

[0024] Referring now to FIGS. 4-6, shown therein is a thread protector 10 that has a securing apparatus 46 that can extend inside the tubular member 16 from the flange 38. The securing apparatus 46 can engage with the inside of the tubular member 16 to maintain position of the thread protector 10 relative to the threads 12 of the pin end 14 of the tubular member 16. The securing apparatus 46 can have any size and shape such that it maintains the thread protector 10 in place on the tubular member 16. In one embodiment, the securing apparatus 46 can include a plurality of fins 48 that extend from a central member 50. The fins 48 have outer portions 52 that can engage with the inner side of the tubular member 16. The fins 48 have terminal ends 54 on the opposite ends from the flange 38. The outer portion 52 at the terminal ends 54 of the fins 48

can be tapered so that insertion of the securing apparatus 46 of the thread protector 10 is easier to extend down into the tubular member 16. The length, width and height of the fins 48 can be varied such that the thread protector 10 functions as intended. The securing apparatus 46 can also have any number of fins 48 such that the thread protector 10 functions as intended. In various embodiments, the securing apparatus 46 can have more than two fins 48, more than three fins 48, more than four fins 48 or five or more fins 48.

[0025] In another embodiment shown in more detail in FIG. 6, the securing apparatus 46 can have a first spoke end 58 that is attached to the flange 38, a second spoke end 60 that is separated from the first spoke end 58 via a rod member 62. The first and second spoke ends 58 and 60 engage the inside of the tubular member 16 to hold the thread protector 10 securely in place. The first spoke end 58 can have any desired number of spokes 64 so that the thread protector 10 operates as intended. Similarly, the second spoke end 60 can have any desired number of spokes 66 so that the thread protector 10 operates as intended. A portion of the outer surfaces 68 of the spokes 66 can be tapered to facilitate insertion of the securing apparatus 46 into the tubular member 16. The securing apparatus 46 can be used with or without the at least one thread 36 on the inner side 28 of the external sleeve 26 of the thread protector 10. The spoke and fin designs of the securing apparatus 46 allow for visual inspection of the inner part of the tubular member 16 and cleaning of the inside part of the tubular member 16.

[0026] In yet another embodiment, the thread protector 10 can have a ridge or lip 70 disposed on an outer surface 72 of the external sleeve 26 close to a terminal end 74 of the external sleeve. The ridge 70 allows for engagement by a band that can extend to the tubular member 16 to help hold the thread protector 10 in position, such as during transportation of the tubular members 16 to and from job sites or while the tubular members 16 are being stored. The band that can be used can extend around the entire circumference of the thread protector 10 and the tubular member. Primarily, ridge 70 prevents the band from sliding off of the thread protector 10 and the band prevents the thread protector 10 from rotating off of the tubular member 16.

[0027] Referring now to FIGS. 7A and 7B, shown therein is another embodiment of a thread protector 10 that has a securing apparatus 46 that can extend inside the tubular member 16 from the flange 38. The securing apparatus 46 can engage with the inside of the tubular member 16 to maintain position of the thread protector 10 relative to the threads 12 of the pin end 14 of the tubular member 16. The securing apparatus 46 can have any size and shape such that it maintains the thread protector 10 in place on the tubular member 16. In one embodiment, the securing apparatus 46 can include a plurality of bowed fingers 80 that extend from the flange 38. The bowed fingers 80 are bowed outward towards the inner side 28 of the external sleeve 26 of the thread protector 10.

[0028] In another embodiment, the bowed fingers 80 can extend from the plate 44 that can be attached to the first end 32 of the external

sleeve 26. When the plate 44 is used, the plate 44 can have weakened sections 82 that permit removable parts 84 of the plate 44 to be removed if desired to expose the inside of the tubular member 16. Terminal ends 86 of the bowed fingers 80 can have angled portions 90 that angle inwards away from the inner side 28 of the external sleeve 26 of the thread protector 10. The angled portions 90 of the bowed fingers 80 allow the thread protector 10 to more easily permit the pin end 14 of the tubular member 16 to slide between the bowed fingers 80 and the external sleeve 26. As the securing apparatus 46 is forced down into the tubular member, the bowed fingers 80 frictionally engage the inner side 28 of the tubular member 16. The engagement of the bowed fingers 80 with the inner side 28 of the tubular member 16 causes the bowed fingers 80 to straighten, which permits more surface area of outer sides 92 of the bowed fingers 80 to contact the inner side 28 of the tubular member 16.

[0029] In a further embodiment of the present disclosure, the thread protector 10 can include a debris barrier 88 that is disposed around the inner side 28 of the external sleeve 26 of the thread protector 10 to prevent debris or fluid away from the threads 12 on the pin end 14 of the tubular member 16. The debris barrier 88 can be disposed on the inner side 28 of the external sleeve 26 close to the terminal end 34 or immediately adjacent to the terminal end 34 of the external sleeve 26. When the thread protector 10 is in use, the debris barrier 88 extends from the inner side 28 of the external sleeve 26 of the thread protector 10 to the external side 22, or very close to the external side 22, of the tubular member 16. The debris

barrier 88 can be made of any material that prevents debris from passing between itself and the tubular member 16. The debris barrier can be made of a polymeric material that is rigid, flexible or semi-flexible.

[0030] The thread protector 10 can also include an opening 94 disposed in the external sleeve 26 for receiving a securing pin 96. In one embodiment, the securing pin 96 can be tapered to permit a narrower end to be stuck through the opening 94 and contact the tubular member 16 to increase the secureness of the thread protector 10 on the tubular member 16. When the tapered securing pin 96 is used, the size of the securing pin 96 is such that the securing pin 96 is securely lodged in the opening 94 when the securing pin 96 is securely positioned against the tubular member 16. In another embodiment, the opening 94 and the securing pin 96 can be threaded wherein the securing pin 96 can be screwed into and through the opening 94 and securely against the tubular member 16 to further secure the thread protector 10 to the tubular member 16. The securing pin 96 can be constructed of a material that is strong enough to engage the tubular member 16 and help secure the thread protector 10 to the tubular member 16. However, if the securing pin 96 is going to engage the threads 12 on the tubular member 16, the securing pin 96 can be constructed of a material that is softer than the material used to construct the tubular member 16. Examples of material for the securing pin 96 include, but are not limited to, a polymeric material (i.e., plastic, rubber, nylon, etc.) and a soft metal.

[0031] Referring now to FIGS. 8A and 8B, shown therein is another embodiment of a thread protector 10 that has a securing apparatus 46 that can extend inside the tubular member 16 from the flange 38. In this embodiment, the securing apparatus 46 can include a plurality of bowed fingers 100 that extend from the flange 38 to an insertion ring 102. The bowed fingers 100 are bowed outward towards the inner side 28 of the external sleeve 26 of the thread protector 10. In another embodiment, the bowed fingers 100 can extend from the plate 44 that can be attached to the first end 32 of the external sleeve 26 and extend to the insertion ring 102. When the plate 44 is used, the plate 44 can have weakened sections 104 that permit removable parts 106 of the plate 44 to be removed if desired to expose the inside of the tubular member 16.

[0032] The insertion ring 102 can have a tapered portion 108 that angle inwards away from the inner side 28 of the external sleeve 26 of the thread protector 10. The tapered portion 108 can extend around the entire insertion ring 102. The tapered portion 108 of the insertion ring 102 allows the thread protector 10 to more easily permit the pin end 14 of the tubular member 16 to slide between the insertion ring 102 (and the bowed fingers 100) and the external sleeve 26. As the securing apparatus 46 is forced down into the tubular member, the bowed fingers 100 frictionally engage the inner side 28 of the tubular member 16. The engagement of the bowed fingers 100 with the inner side 28 of the tubular member 16 causes the bowed fingers 100 to straighten, which permits more surface area of outer sides 110 of the bowed fingers 100 to contact the inner

side 20 of the tubular member 16. In a further embodiment, the securing apparatus 46 can also include a structural ring that exists between the flange 38 or plate 44 and the bowed fingers 100 to provide additional structural support for the securing apparatus 46.

[0033] Referring now to FIGS. 9A and 9B, shown therein is another embodiment of a thread protector 10 that has a securing apparatus 46 that can extend inside the tubular member 16 from the flange 38. In this embodiment, the securing apparatus 46 can include a plurality of U-shaped fingers 112 that have a first leg 114 that extends from the flange 38 and a second leg 116 that extends from a base portion 118 that also extends from flange 38. The first leg 114 of each U-shaped finger 112 moves further from the internal side 20 of the tubular member 16 as the first leg 114 moves from the flange 38 to a bottom 120 of each U-shaped finger 112. The base portion 118 of the securing apparatus 46 can have any shape desirable such that proper structural support is provided to the plurality of U-shaped fingers 112. The base portion 118 can extend down into the tubular member 16, or the base portion could be a plate that extends within the flange 38.

[0034] A pin end 14 of the tubular member 16 can be forced into the thread protector 10 such that a sidewall 122 of the tubular member 16 ends up being positioned between the external sleeve 26 of the thread protector 10 and each U-shaped finger 112. The tapering relationship between the first leg 114 of each U-shaped finger 112 creates a situation where, depending on the thickness of the sidewall 122, the sidewall 122 of

the tubular member 16 gets securely wedged between the first leg 114 of each U-shaped finger 112. The tapering relationship and the U-shape of each finger 112 creates a larger distance between the bottom 120 of each U-shaped finger 112 and the inner side 28 of the external sleeve 26, which permits easier initial engagement with the tubular member 16. As the pin end 14 of the tubular member 16 is forced into engagement with the securing apparatus 46 of the thread protector 10, outer surfaces 124 of the first legs 114 of each U-shaped finger are flattened so that more surface area of the outer surfaces 124 can contact the internal side 20 of the tubular member 16 to better secure the thread protector 10 to the tubular member 16.

[0035] Referring now to FIGS. 10A-10C, shown therein is a thread protector 10 that has a securing apparatus 46 that can extend inside the tubular member 16 from the flange 38 or the plate 44. The securing apparatus 46 can engage with the inside of the tubular member 16 to maintain position of the thread protector 10 relative to the threads 12 of the pin end 14 of the tubular member 16. In this embodiment, the securing apparatus 46 can include a plurality of fins 130 that extend radially from a central member 132. The fins 130 have outer portions 134 that can engage with the inner side of the tubular member 16. The length, width and height of the fins 130 can be varied such that the thread protector 10 functions as intended. The securing apparatus 46 can also have any number of fins 130 such that the thread protector 10 functions as intended. In one embodiment, the securing apparatus 46 can have multiple levels 136 of

fins 130 wherein each level 136 of fins 130 can have varied lengths of fins 130. Each fin 130 can also have a varied stiffness. The varied lengths of fins 130 at each level 136 provides engagement capabilities with tubular members 16 of varying sized inner diameters. For example, a wider tubular member 16 with a wider inner diameter would engage with the longer fins 130 of the securing apparatus 46 to secure the thread protector 10 on the tubular member 16. Conversely, a tubular member 16 with a narrower inner diameter would engage with the shorter fins 130 of the securing apparatus 46 to secure the thread protector 10 on the tubular member 16. The thread protector 10 can also include a handle 138 that can be attached in any manner known in the art for helping put on and remove the thread protector 10 on the tubular member 16. In one embodiment, the handle 138 can be attached to the flange 38.

[0036] The present disclosure is also directed toward a method of removing the thread protectors 10 from the tubular members 16 and using the tubular members 16 in various oil and gas operations. The method is also directed towards securing the thread protectors 10 to the tubular members 16 that are being used in the oil and gas operations.

[0037] From the above description, it is clear that the present disclosure is well-adapted to carry out the objectives and to attain the advantages mentioned herein as well as those inherent in the disclosure. While present embodiments have been described herein, it will be understood that numerous changes may be made which will readily suggest themselves to those skilled in the art and which are accomplished within

the spirit of the disclosure and claims. Any elements of any embodiments disclosed herein can be combined with any of the other embodiments disclosed herein.

What is claimed is:

1. A thread protector, the thread protector comprising:
 - an external sleeve to protect pin threads disposed on a pin end of a tubular member;
 - a flange disposed on a first end of the external sleeve to be engageable with the pin end of the tubular member; and
 - a securing apparatus extending from the flange to frictionally engage an inner side of the tubular member to maintain the thread protector's engagement with the tubular member.
2. The thread protector of claim 1 wherein the securing apparatus includes a plurality of bowed fingers extending from the flange in an axial direction and inside the external sleeve wherein the bowed fingers can straighten when the thread protector is engaged with the tubular member to allow more of an outer side of the bowed fingers to engage with the inner side of the tubular member.
3. The thread protector of claim 2 wherein the bowed fingers include an angled end as you approach a terminal end of the bowed fingers wherein the terminal ends are angled inward in a radial direction which permits for easier engagement of the thread protector with the tubular member.
4. The thread protector of claim 2 wherein the bowed fingers can have an insertion ring disposed around terminal ends of the bowed fingers.

5. The thread protector of claim 4 wherein the insertion ring can include a tapered portion disposed an outer edge of the insertion ring to make engagement with the tubular member easier.
6. The thread protector of claim 1 further includes a radial directed opening disposed in the external sleeve and a securing pin that can extend through the radial directed opening to engage the tubular member to further secure the thread protector on the tubular member.
7. The thread protector of claim 1 further comprising a debris barrier disposed around an inner side of the external sleeve and adjacent to a terminal end of the external sleeve to prevent liquid and debris from damaging the pin threads on the tubular member.
8. The thread protector of claim 1 further comprising a plate that can extend radially inward from the flange wherein the plate has weakened portions that can be easily broken to remove removable parts to allow access to inside the tubular member.
9. The thread protector of claim 1 wherein the securing apparatus further includes a plurality of U-shaped fingers to engage the inner side of the tubular member, each U-shaped finger having a first leg extending from the flange to a bottom of the U-shaped finger and a second leg extending from the bottom of the U-shaped finger to a base portion that is supported by the flange.

10. The thread protector of claim 9 wherein the first leg of each U-shaped finger tapers away from an internal side of the external sleeve as the first leg extends from the flange to the bottom of the U-shaped finger.

11. The thread protector of claim 1 wherein the securing apparatus further includes a plurality of fins that extend radially outward from a central member to engage with the inner side of the tubular member.

12. The thread protector of claim 11 wherein the securing apparatus can have multiple levels the plurality of fins, the plurality of fins comprised of variable lengths of fins so as to be able to engage with various inner diameter sizes of tubular members.

13. A method of protecting pin threads of pin ends of tubular members, the method comprising:

forcing a thread protector on a pin end of a tubular member to protect pin threads disposed on the pin end of the tubular member, the thread protector comprising:

an external sleeve to protect pin threads disposed on a pin end of a tubular member;

a flange disposed on a first end of the external sleeve to be engageable with the pin end of the tubular member; and

a securing apparatus extending from the flange to frictionally engage an inner side of the tubular

member to maintain the thread protector's engagement with the tubular member.

14. The method of claim 13 wherein the securing apparatus includes a plurality of bowed fingers extending from the flange in an axial direction and inside the external sleeve wherein the bowed fingers can straighten when the thread protector is engaged with the tubular member to allow more of an outer side of the bowed fingers to engage with the inner side of the tubular member.

15. The method of claim 14 wherein the bowed fingers include an angled end as you approach a terminal end of the bowed fingers wherein the terminal ends are angled inward in a radial direction which permits for easier engagement of the thread protector with the tubular member.

16. The method of claim 14 wherein the bowed fingers can have an insertion ring disposed around terminal ends of the bowed fingers.

17. The method of claim 13 wherein the securing apparatus further includes a plurality of U-shaped fingers to engage the inner side of the tubular member, each U-shaped finger having a first leg extending from the flange to a bottom of the U-shaped finger and a second leg extending from the bottom of the U-shaped finger to a base portion that is supported by the flange.

18. The method of claim 17 wherein the first leg of each U-shaped finger tapers away from an internal side of the external sleeve as the first leg extends from the flange to the bottom of the U-shaped finger.

19. The method of claim 13 wherein the securing apparatus further includes a plurality of fins that extend radially outward from a central member to engage with the inner side of the tubular member.

20. The method of claim 19 wherein the securing apparatus can have multiple levels the plurality of fins, the plurality of fins comprised of variable lengths of fins so as to be able to engage with various inner diameter sizes of tubular members.