PIERCING POINTS ON A SPECIAL ARC

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ABSTRACT. We describe a cellular wild arc $A$ in $S^3$ that is the closure of the union of a null sequence of Alford arcs and show that if $S$ is an arbitrary 2-sphere containing $A$ and tame modulo $A$, then each point of $A$ is a piercing point of $S$.

In [1], Alford constructs a cellular arc $A_0$ in $S^3$ that is wild at all its points and that lies on a 2-sphere that is tame modulo $A_0$. We assume familiarity with the construction of this arc from "eyebolts." However, we give here a rough description of Alford's arc. It lies on the limit of a sequence of tame spheres; those spheres in the first three stages of construction of $A_0$ are drawn. In the $n$th stage of construction of $A_0$, the $n$th sphere is obtained from the $(n-1)$st sphere by running thirteen adjacent eyebolts around each of the larger $4(13)^{n-3}$ eyebolts (each with a slice removed) which had been attached to the $(n-2)$nd sphere to get the $(n-1)$st sphere. In this $n$th stage, each eyebolt, except the last one, loops the stem of the next eyebolt; the last eyebolt hangs freely. A slice is then removed from the loop of each small eyebolt to obtain a sphere. Each point of $A_0$ is the intersection of a nested null sequence of eyebolts. We call the endpoint $p_0$ of $A_0$ indicated in the figure the left endpoint of $A_0$.

Let $A_0, A_1, A_2, \ldots$ be a "nice" null sequence of Alford arcs in $S^3$ such that if (for $i = 0, 1, 2, \ldots$) $p_i$ denotes the left endpoint of $A_i$ and $q_i$ denotes the other endpoint of $A_i$, then $A_{i+1} \cap A_i = \{q_{i+1}\} = \{p_i\}$ and $A_j \cap A_i = \emptyset$ for $j \neq i - 1, i, i + 1$. The sequence $p_0, p_1, p_2, \ldots$ converges to a point $p$. Define an arc $A = \{p\} \cup (\bigcup_{i=0}^{\infty} A_i)$. When saying above that $A_0, A_1, A_2, \ldots$ is "nice", we mean that we can obtain $A$ another way by allowing $n-1$ extra eyebolts in the $n$th stage of Alford’s construction of $A_0$ each to dangle freely instead of looping around the stem of the next eyebolt.

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For each $n$, these dangling eyebolts are located roughly $1/2, 1/4, \ldots$, and $1/2^n$ of the distance from $p_0$ to $q_0$. The arc $A$ obtained this latter way lies on a 2-sphere $S_1$ that is tame modulo $A$, and $S_1$ has the property that each point of $A$ is a piercing point of $S_1$. We now show that every other sphere $S$ which is tame modulo $A$ also satisfies such a property. The author is grateful to the referee for improvements in the proofs.

Definitions can be found in [3]. We use the following notations: $N(p, \delta)$ = the $\delta$-neighborhood of $p$, $\text{Bd} = \text{boundary}$, $\text{Int} = \text{interior}$, $\text{Cl} = \text{closure}$, and $\delta$-set = a set whose diameter is less than $\delta$.

We need the following lemma about the above arc $A$.

Lemma 1. If $S$ is a 2-sphere in $S^3$ which contains $A$ and is tame modulo $A$ and if $B$ is a tame arc in $(S - A) \cup \{p\}$ with endpoint $p$, then there is a continuous function $g$ of $S^3$ onto itself such that $g(B) = B$ and $A = g^{-1}(p)$ is the only nondegenerate inverse set for $g$.

Proof. Since $B$ is tame in $S$, there is a tame 3-cell $C$ containing $B$ and missing $A - \{p\}$. Since $A$ is cellular in $S^3$, there is a continuous function $f$ of $S^3$ onto itself such that $A$ is the only nondegenerate inverse set for $f$ [2, Theorem 1]. Let $Q = \text{Cl}(S^3 - C)$. Now, $f(C)$ is a 3-cell; we show that $f(Q)$ is a 3-cell, too. The 2-sphere $f(\text{Bd} Q)$ is locally tame modulo $f(p)$. The arc $f(B)$ is locally tame modulo $f(p)$ and is locally peripherally unknotted at $f(p)$ by the construction of $A$. Thus $f(B)$ is tame [8, Theorem VI], and it follows from either parts (1) or (3) of [3, Theorem 8.2.4] that $f(\text{Bd} Q)$ is tame. Therefore $f(Q)$ is a 3-cell.

Now there is a homeomorphism $k$ of $S^3$ onto itself such that $k = f^{-1}$ on $f(C)$. Then $g = kf$ is the desired function.

The next lemma easily follows from [6, Theorem 5].

Lemma 2. If $B$ and $F$ are arcs on a 2-sphere in $S^3$ which have a common endpoint $p$ and which are tame modulo $p$, then $B$ and $F$ are equivalently imbedded in $S^3$.

Theorem. If $S$ is an arbitrary 2-sphere in $S^3$ which contains $A$ and is tame modulo $A$, then each point of $A$ is a piercing point of $S$.

Proof. From the construction of $A$, it follows that there is a decreasing sequence $C_1, C_2, C_3, \ldots$ of 3-cells whose intersection is $A$ and which has the property that for each $\epsilon_k > 0$ there is a $\delta > 0$ and an integer $N$ such that for all $i > N$, $N(p, \delta) \cap \text{Bd}(C_i)$ is contained in an $\epsilon_k/2$-disk in $\text{Bd}(C_i)$. Let $C$ be the closure of either component of $S^3 - S$. Since $A$ is cellular in $S^3$,
it follows from [4, Theorem 1] that $\text{Int}(C)$ is an open 3-cell.

To show that the endpoint $p$ of $A$ is a piercing point of $S$, it suffices to show that $\text{Int}(C)$ is $1-\text{LC}$ in $C - \{p\}$ at $p$ [9, Theorem 1]. Let $\epsilon > 0$ be so small that the other endpoint $q$ of $A$ is not in $N(p, \epsilon)$. Choose $\epsilon_1$ such that $0 < \epsilon_1 < \epsilon/2$, and let $\delta$ and $N$ be as given by the property in the previous paragraph such that we also have $\delta < \epsilon_1/2$ and $S \cap N(p, \epsilon_1)$ is contained in an $\epsilon/2$-disk in $S$.

Let $f$ be a continuous function from the boundary of a disk $E$ onto a subset $J$ of $N(p, \delta) \cap \text{Int}(C)$. Since $N(p, \delta) - \{p\}$ is simply connected, $f$ can be extended to a continuous function $f^*$ of $E$ onto a set $D$ in $N(p, \delta) - \{p\}$. Choose an $i > N$ such that $J \cap C_i = \emptyset$. Let $K$ be the component of $D - \text{Bd}(C_i)$ that contains $J$. Therefore $K \subset S^3 - C_i$. Since $D \cap \text{Bd}(C_i)$ is a subset of $N(p, \delta) \cap \text{Bd}(C_i)$, it is contained in an $\epsilon_1/2$-disk $G$ in $\text{Bd}(C_i)$. By the Tietze extension theorem, there is a continuous function $g: D \to K \cup G$ such that $g(D - K) \subset G$ and $g$ is the identity on $C^1(K)$. (Cf. [3, Theorem 4.2.2].)

Since $S \cap g(D)$ is a subset of $S \cap N(p, \epsilon_1)$, it is contained in an $\epsilon/2$-disk $H$ in $S$ with $p \in \text{Int}(H)$. $A$ misses $S \cap g(D)$ because $S \cap g(D) \subset \text{Cl}(S^3 - C_i)$.

Let $r$ be the first point of $A$ (as one goes from $p$ to $q$) that belongs to $\text{Bd}(H)$, and let $pr$ be the subarc of $A$ with endpoints $p$ and $r$. Since $S \cap g(D) \subset H - pr$, there is a subdisk $H_1$ of $H$ that contains $S \cap g(D)$ but not $p$.

Let $L$ be the component of $g(D) - S$ that contains $J$. Therefore $L \subset \text{Int}(C)$. By the Tietze extension theorem, there is a continuous function $h: g(D) \to L \cup H_1$ such that $h(g(D) - L) \subset H_1$ and $h$ is the identity on $\text{Cl}(L)$. Since $h(gf^*)^{-1}: E \to N(p, \epsilon) \cap (C - \{p\})$ is a continuous extension of $f^*$, $\text{Int}(C)$ is $1-\text{LC}$ in $C - \{p\}$ at $p$. This shows $p$ is a piercing point of $S$.

Now let $y$ be an arbitrary point of $A$ different from $p$. We show that $y$ is a piercing point of $S$. Suppose otherwise. Let $\beta$ be a homeomorphism of $S^3$ onto itself such that $C$ and $\beta(C)$ are disjoint, and for each set or point $X$ in $C$, let $X' = \beta(X)$. Let $h: S \to S'$ be a homeomorphism such that $h(q) = p'$ and $h(A) \cap A' = \{p'\}$, and let $C \cup_b C'$ be the space obtained by identifying $x$ with $h(x)$. Let $\pi: C \cup C' \to C \cup_b C'$ be the usual projection map.

Since $p$ is a piercing point of $S$, there is in $S^3$ a tame arc on $S$ with endpoint $p$ [7, Theorem 6]. Let $B$ be an arc in $(S - A) \cup \{p\}$ which is tame modulo its endpoint $p$. By Lemma 2, $B$ is tame; and by Lemma 1, there is a continuous function $g$ of $S^3$ onto itself such that $g(B) = B$ and $A = g^{-1}(p)$ is the only nondegenerate inverse set for $g$. Since $g(S)$ is a 2-sphere that is tame modulo the tame arc $g(B)$, $g(S)$ is tame [6, Theorem 2]. Therefore $g(C)$ is a 3-cell. But $g(C)$ and $C/A$, the decomposition space obtained by
collapsing $A$ to a point, are the same, and it follows that $C/A$ is a 3-cell. If $L$ denotes the arc $h^{-1} \beta(A)$, a similar argument shows that $C/(A \cup L)$ ($= C/A/L$) is a 3-cell. Then $(C \cup_h C')/\pi(A \cup L)$ is $S^3$ because it can be obtained by sewing together the 3-cells $C/(A \cup L)$ and $C'/(h(A) \cup A')$.

Since $C \cup_h C'$ is $S^3$ [5, Theorem 5.7], it follows that the arc $\pi(A \cup L)$ is cellular. However, the two nonpiercing points $\pi(y)$ and $\pi(y')$ of $\pi(S)$ cannot lie in the same cellular set [10, Theorem 2]. Thus $y$ is a piercing point of $S$ and the result follows.

**Remark.** Two 2-spheres containing $A$ and tame modulo $A$ need not be equivalently embedded in $S^3$.

**Questions.** Will the theorem be true if we replace $A$ by Alford’s arc $A_0$? If two 2-spheres contain $A_0$ and are tame modulo $A_0$, then are the spheres equivalently embedded in $S^3$?
REFERENCES


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