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(54) **GAME AND BONUS GAME PLAY FOR SLOT MACHINES**

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(75) Inventor: **Kathleen Nylund Jackson**, Scituate, MA (US)

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Correspondence Address:
Mark A. Litman & Associates, P.A.
York Business Center
Suite 205
3209 West 76th St.
Edina, MN 55435 (US)

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A bonus game is initiated when a specific trigger is achieved in a main game. This bonus game may be virtual, mechanical/virtual or mechanical, and may replace the main game on the main screen, or appear in a separate screen or as a top box. Masked or non-masked cards, symbols or credit amounts are distributed into characteristic-specific pools, the aggregate card, symbols or credit amount in each pool having a relationship to each other. The amounts are compared, and specific predetermined relationships may provide wins, losses or termination criteria.

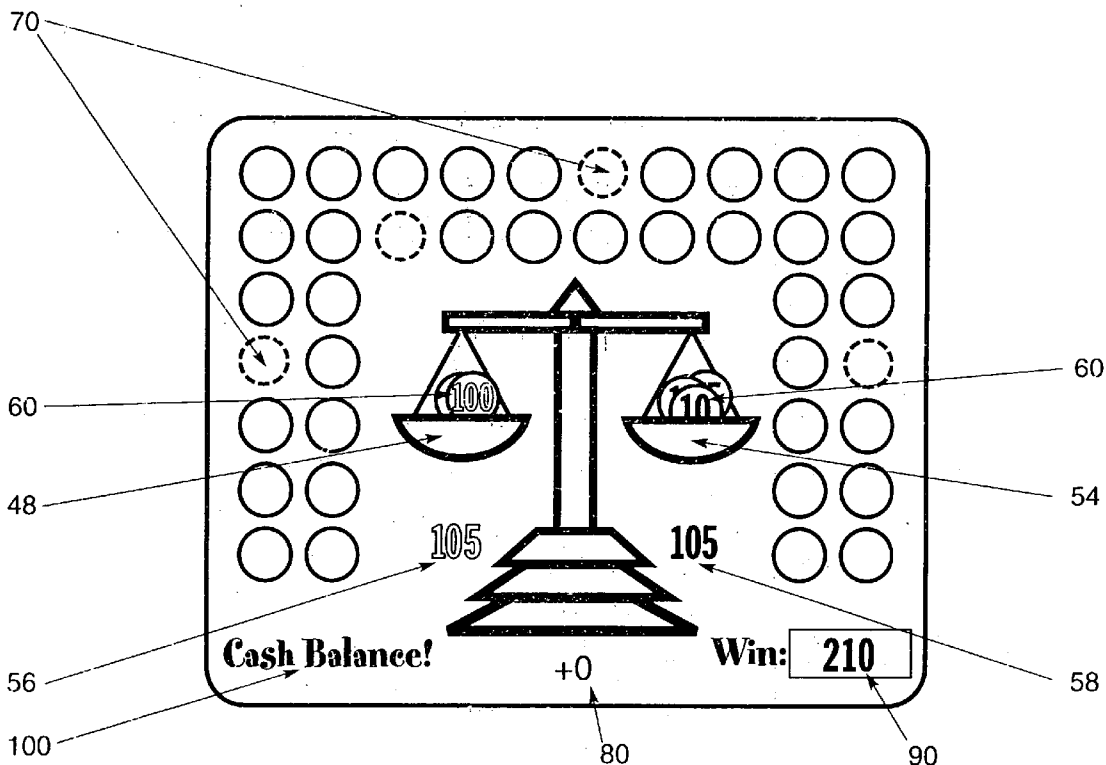
(73) Assignee: **Precedent Gaming, Inc.**

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Related U.S. Application Data

(60) Provisional application No. 60/693,819, filed on Jun. 24, 2005.



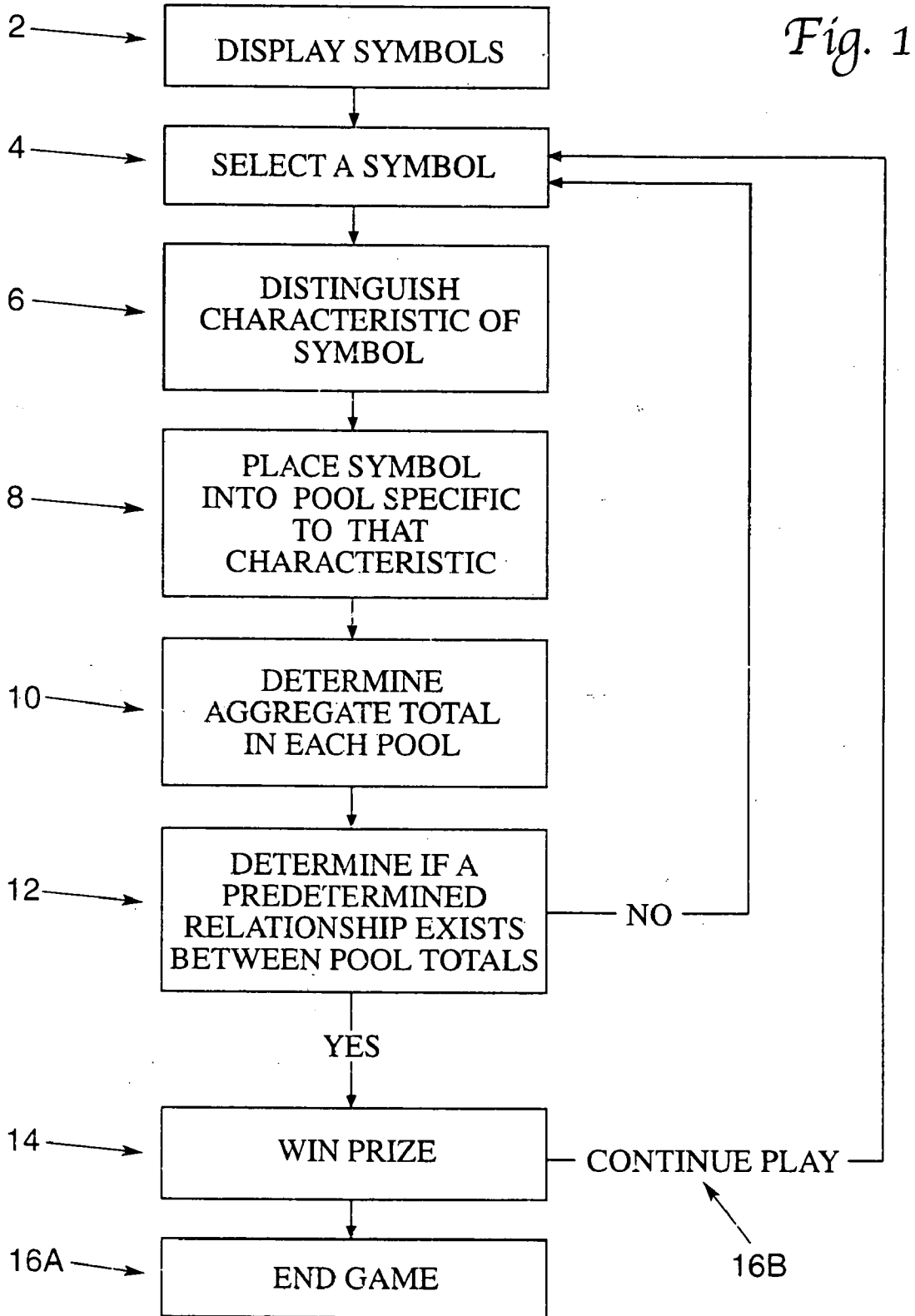
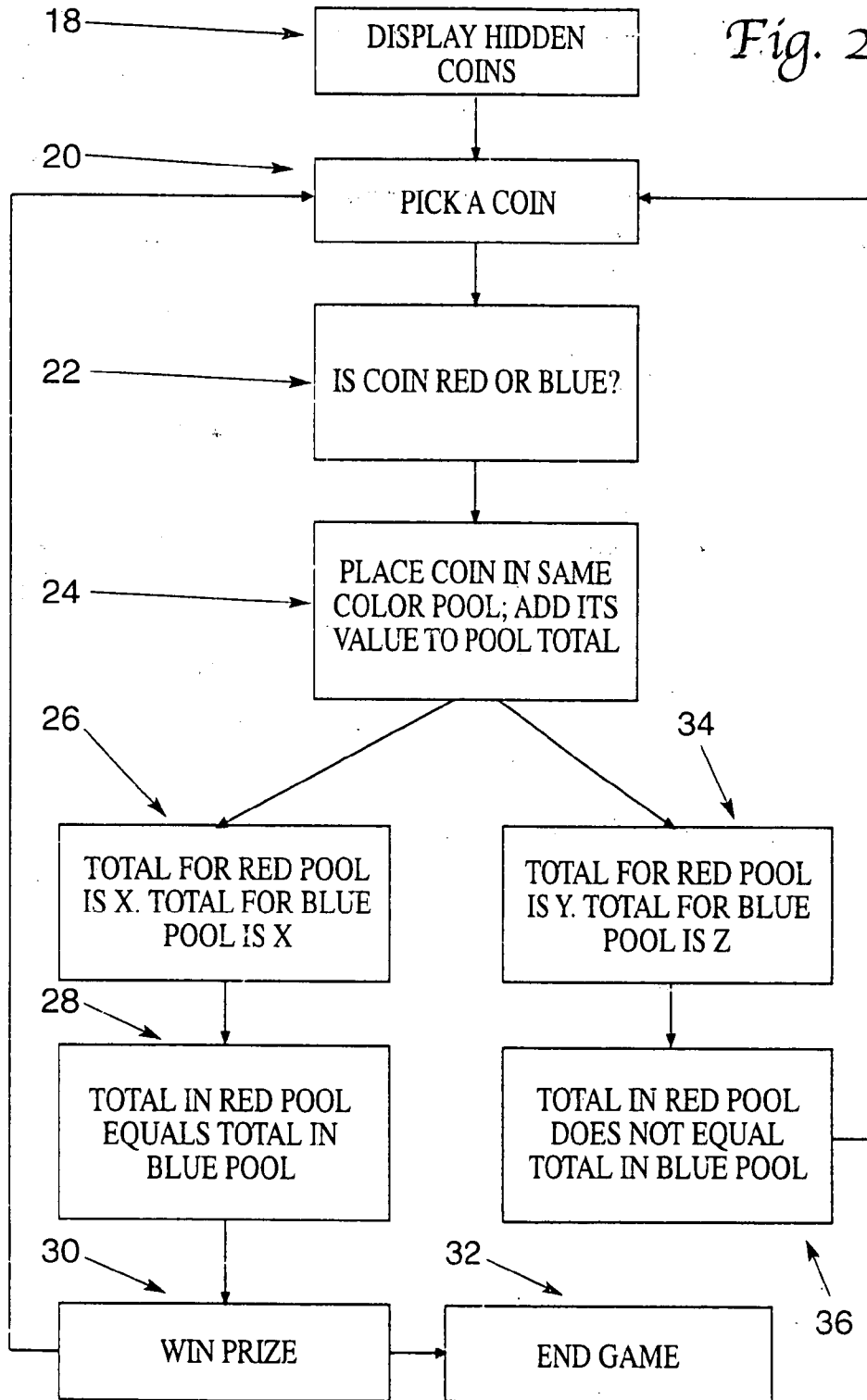


Fig. 2



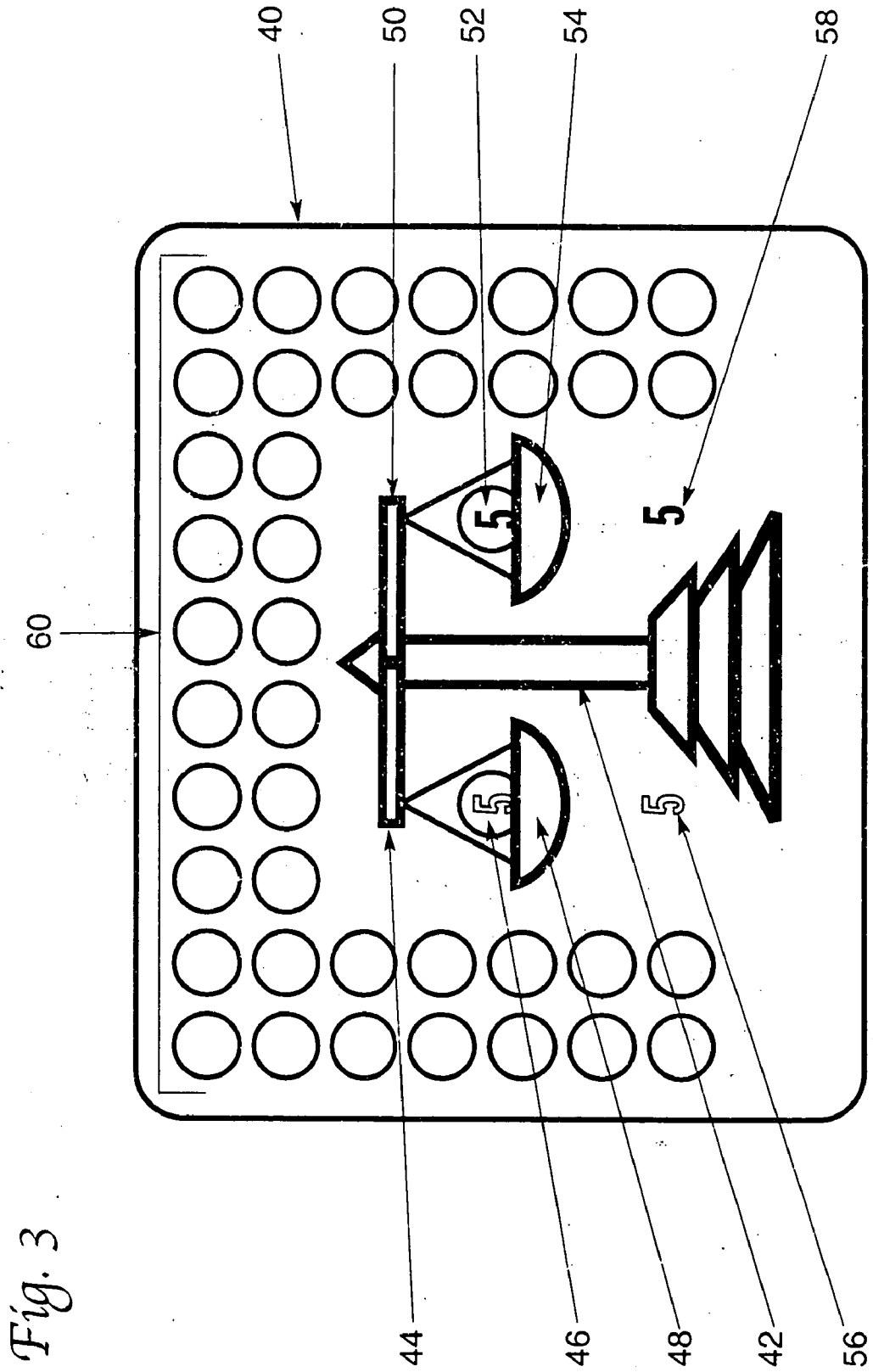


Fig. 3

Fig. 4

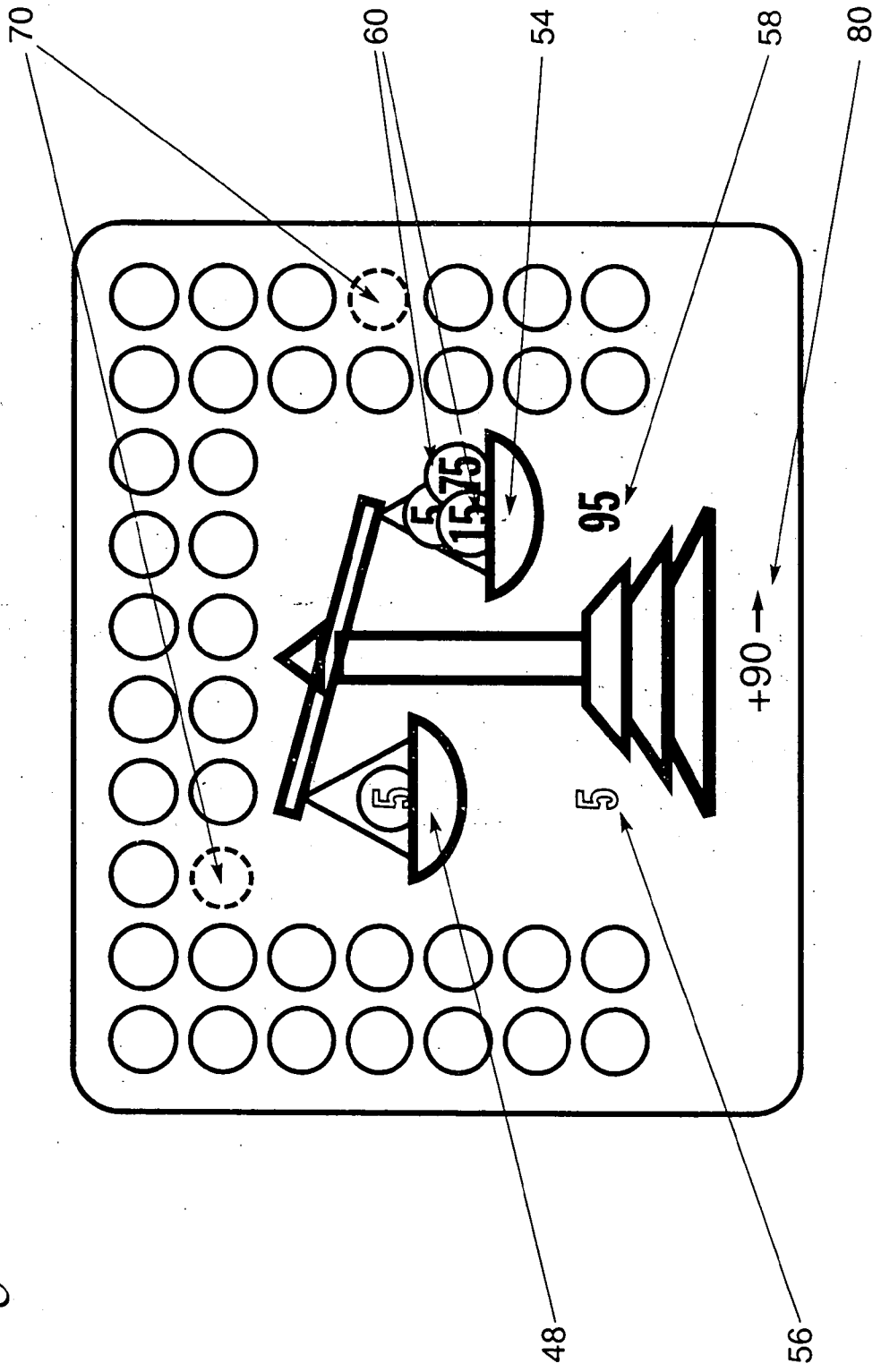
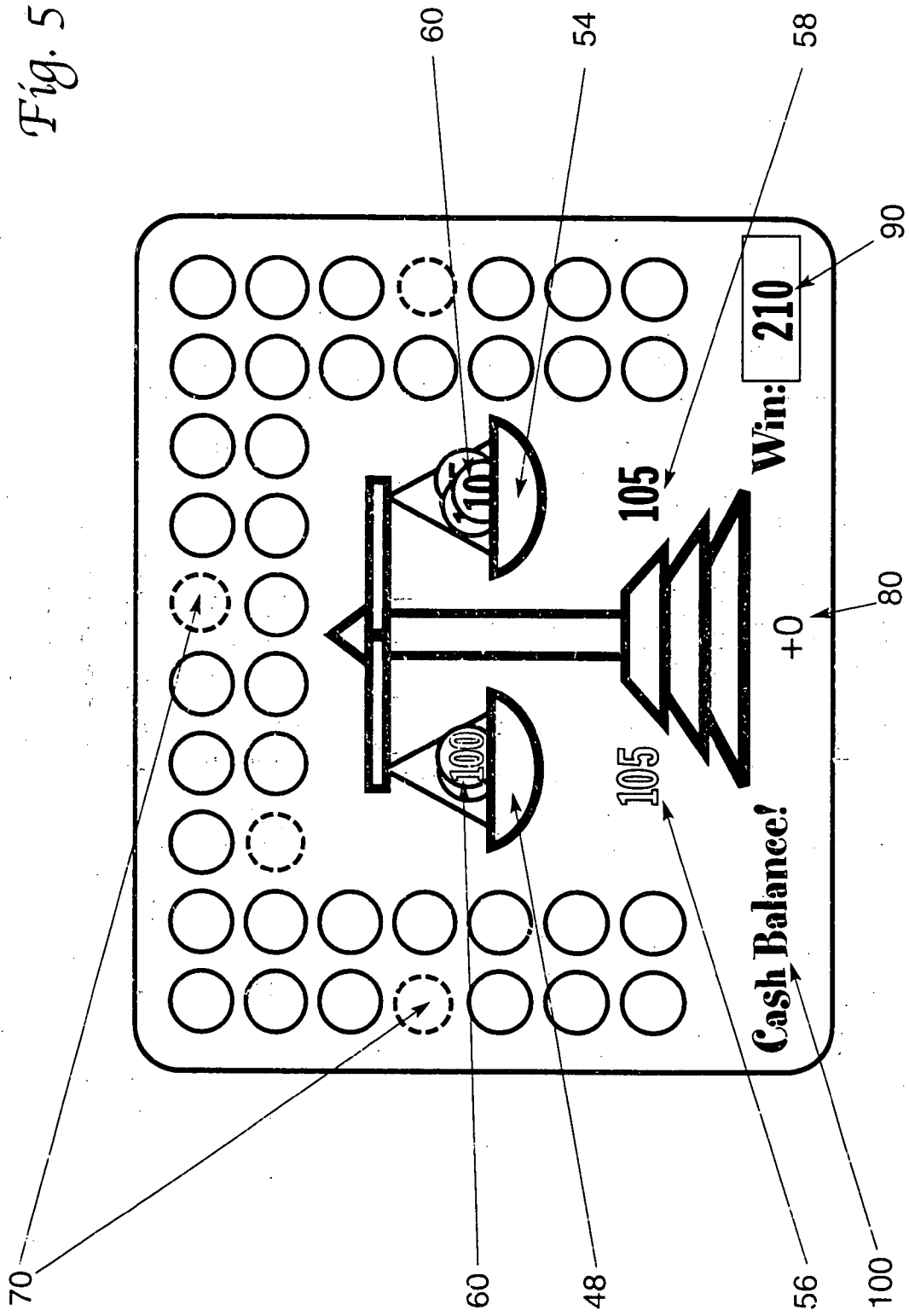


Fig. 5



GAME AND BONUS GAME PLAY FOR SLOT MACHINES

RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims priority from provisional U.S. application Ser. No. 60/693,819, filed Jun. 24, 2005.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] 1. Field of the Invention

[0003] The present invention relates to the field of mechanical, virtual/mechanical or video wagering games, and particularly physical or virtual bonus games associated with slot-type wagering games.

[0004] 2. Background of the Art

[0005] Competition in the gaming industry to attract a player and then retain the player's interest for protracted periods of time is an increasingly greater challenge. The environment in a casino is typically rich in stimulation, both auditory and visual. Consequently, it is an ongoing effort to attract a player to a given machine and then to subsequently encourage the player to stay at the machine based on the machine's entertainment value.

[0006] Slot machines have evolved from having three reels with a single horizontal pay line centrally disposed on the reels to having numerous reels with a plurality of pay lines. Regardless of the number of pay lines in the main game, the player may become bored with the monotony of playing the same main game over and over again. For this reason, most machines now also provide for the play of a entertaining bonus game if certain particular winning combinations are present in the main game. In addition, payouts in a bonus game are typically larger than the payouts in the main game, and therefore the player is encouraged to keep playing the main game until a bonus opportunity occurs.

[0007] It is a challenge to provide new specific bonus game play that would provide the player with enticing game play entertainment.

[0008] U.S. Pat. No. 6,814,664 titled METHOD OF OPERATING A GAMING DEVICE HAVING TERMINATION VARIABLES and U.S. Pat. No. 6,607,438 titled GAMING DEVICE HAVING TERMINATION SYMBOLS both describe a gaming machine that enables players to accumulate awards until there are no more awards or until one or more termination variables reaches a predetermined limit. The termination variables are defined by a plurality of units, and the termination limit may be reached by accumulating or losing the units.

[0009] U.S. Pat. No. 6,669,559 titled GAMING DEVICE WITH BONUS SCHEME PROVIDING INCREASED REWARD FOR SELECTING RELATED SYMBOLS describes a bonus scheme for a gaming device which presents a plurality of selections to a player. When a player chooses a selection, the game exhibits a non-terminating symbol or a terminating symbol. The player is faced with an array of selections with the aim of locating as many related non-terminating symbols as possible, before reaching a terminating symbol.

[0010] U.S. Pat. No. 6,632,139 titled GAMING DEVICE HAVING A BONUS SCHEME WITH SYMBOL GEN-

ERATOR AND SYMBOL TERMINATING CONDITION describes a gaming device with a bonus scheme which includes a symbol generator and a plurality of symbols. When two or more predetermined symbols are generated and displayed, the bonus round terminates. Depending upon which symbols the gaming device generates and displays, the bonus round may or may not terminate.

[0011] U.S. Pat. No. 6,595,854 titled GAMING DEVICE HAVING A BONUS SCHEME WITH MULTIPLE SELECTION GROUPS describes a game method whereby the player picks from first and last selection groups. The game ends when a predetermined amount of picks has been made from the last group.

[0012] U.S. Pat. No. 6,346,043 titled IMAGE MATCHING GAME METHOD AND APPARATUS describes a gaming device wherein a player picks from a number of player-selectable areas. Each pick is then displayed in a corresponding section. The first time a displayed section is filled with matching symbols, the player wins an award.

[0013] U.S. Pat. No. 6,309,300 titled GAMING BONUS APPARATUS AND METHOD WITH PLAYER INTERACTION describes a game play method in which the player picks a selection, an award associated with that selection is shown, and a total bonus prize is based on the prizes, multipliers or other items associated with the selectable items selected by the player.

[0014] U.S. Pat. No. 6,261,177 titled SLOT MACHINE GAME-HIDDEN OBJECT describes a game in which the player picks "zones" that may or may not contain awards.

[0015] U.S. Pat. No. 6,231,442 titled VIDEO SLOT MACHINE WITH MULTI-CHOICE SECOND BONUS and U.S. Pat. No. 6,186,894 titled REEL SLOT GAME describe a slot machine wherein bonus game plays are based on the number of paylines wagered in the base game, or alternately, the symbol arrangement(s) achieved in the base game.

[0016] U.S. Pat. No. 6,203,429 titled GAMING MACHINE WITH BONUS MODE describes a gameplay method whereby bonus picks are based on probability (i.e., one might have a 90% chance of winning, another 5%) and the player keeps picking until a losing pick is chosen.

[0017] U.S. Pat. No. 6,190,255 titled BONUS GAME FOR A GAMING MACHINE and Published U.S. Patent Applications 20040185930 titled BONUS GAME FOR A GAMING MACHINE and 20040072607 titled BONUS GAME FOR A GAMING MACHINE describe a gaming machine in which a bonus game allows players to keep picking from hidden awards, accumulating the awards until an end-game symbol appears. The player may be able to get a special symbol prior to unveiling the end-game symbol, which would negate the end-game symbol, and continue play.

[0018] U.S. Pat. No. 6,174,235 titled METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR DIRECTING A GAME WITH USER-SELECTED ELEMENTS describes a gaming machine wherein a player picks screen locations which have elements in them. The outcome of game depends on the elements selected, or the order of elements selected. Since the player selects the elements, he is provided with an illusion of control over the outcome of the game.

[0019] U.S. Pat. No. 6,159,098 titled DUAL-AWARD BONUS GAME FOR A GAMING MACHINE describes a gaming machine where a dual award bonus game is provided. The bonus game consists of the selection of various elements having assigned bonus game outcomes. Some of the selection elements have assigned values and a number of the elements have assigned end-bonus penalties. The selection of an element not associated with an end-bonus penalty defines a successful trial, causing the processor to continue the bonus game, whereas the selection of an element associated with an end-bonus penalty causes the processor to end the bonus game. The processor determines a value of the selected elements and awards a credit based on that value. The processor also determines the number of successful trials accomplished in the bonus game and awards a credit based on that number.

[0020] U.S. Pat. No. 6,089,976 titled GAMING APPARATUS AND METHOD INCLUDING A PLAYER INTERACTIVE BONUS GAME describes a game play that allows the player to continue picking symbols until a match is obtained.

[0021] U.S. Pat. No. 6,015,346 titled INDICIA SELECTION GAME describes a game wherein a player picks two symbols at once, and if the symbols match, or the value associated with the symbols match, the player wins.

[0022] Published U.S. Patent Application 20050059461 titled GAMING DEVICE HAVING A PLAYER SELECTION GAME describes a gaming device that includes a plurality of elements or symbols which are each in one or more of a plurality of element groups or sets. The gaming device also includes a plurality of player selectable selections. Each player selectable selection is associated with one of the plurality of element groups or sets. In one embodiment, the player is enabled to pick one of the selections and each element in the element group or set associated with the picked selection is flagged or marked. If a designated element or combination of elements are not flagged, the player is enabled to pick at another one of the selections, one at a time, until a designated element or combination of elements are flagged or marked. Once a designated element or combination of elements are flagged or marked, the player is provided an award based, at least in part, on the specific element or combination of elements which are flagged or marked.

[0023] Published U.S. Patent Application 20050037832 titled GAMING DEVICE HAVING GAME WITH SEQUENTIAL DISPLAY OF NUMBERS describes a gaming machine game wherein the player picks one or more numbers from a number pool. The gaming device or house draws randomly at least one number from the pool. An award is provided to the player based on an amount of matches between the player selected number(s) and the game drawn number(s).

[0024] Published U.S. Patent Application 20040242315 titled GAMING DEVICE HAVING A PLURALITY OF INTERACTIVE PLAYER-SELECTABLE SYMBOLS describes a gaming device that determines whether the player has won an award based upon the player's completed combination or combinations of symbols, the player having selected one or more interactive symbols from one or more offer sets to either form or complete a combination of symbols.

[0025] Published U.S. Patent Application 20040192432 titled METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR BOUNDING PLAY OF A GAMING DEVICE describes a game session of indeterminate duration; determining a game variable defining the game session; determining a terminating value associated with the game variable; determining a current value of the game variable; and terminating the game session based on the terminating value and the current value.

[0026] Published U.S. Patent Application 20030224851 titled GAMING MACHINE WITH BONUS DISPLAY describes a game where pays are based on a relationship between an award in the main game and an award in the bonus game.

[0027] Published U.S. Patent Application 20030211879 titled ACCUMULATION OF AWARD OPPORTUNITIES DURING SLOT GAME describes a game in which a player may win award opportunities in the main game, and use them in the bonus game.

[0028] Published U.S. Patent Application 20030144052 titled SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR FACILITATING PLAY OF A GAME WITH USER-SELECTED ELEMENTS describes a gaming method that starts with a set of elements, each element being associated with a location, the player picking a location, and receiving awards for elements in that location.

[0029] Published U.S. Patent Application 20020165019 titled BONUS GAME describes a game in which players pick items to accumulate and keep picking until choosing an item that has a quantity of zero. The total value of chosen items is calculated, and the player wins that award.

[0030] Published U.S. Patent Application 20020160830 titled VIDEO GAME SLOT MACHINE, APPARATUS AND METHOD describes a slot machine game in which players pick from a set of indicia, and if the player-selected indicia match randomly-selected indicia, the player wins.

[0031] Published U.S. Patent Application 20020155883 titled GAMING DEVICE HAVING OFFER/ACCEPTANCE ADVANCE THRESHOLD AND LIMIT BONUS SCHEME describes a gaming device method with an offer/acceptance theme wherein players pick offers, and if they go over a predetermined threshold, they can get an advance (preferably in the form of an additional bonus game).

[0032] Published U.S. Patent Application 20020151341 titled GAMING DEVICE HAVING A BONUS ROUND WITH A WIN, LOSE OR DRAW OUTCOME describes a gameplay wherein a player picks an item which can beat, tie or lose to an item picked by the machine.

[0033] Published U.S. Patent Application 20020142822 titled GAMING DEVICE HAVING OFFER ACCEPTANCE GAME WITH TERMINATION LIMITS describes an offer and acceptance bonus game wherein the game enables the player to obtain offers until the player accepts an offer, meets or exceeds a termination limit or runs out of offers.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0034] A bonus game is initiated when a specific trigger is achieved in a main game. This bonus game may be virtual, mechanical/virtual or mechanical, and may replace the main game on the main screen, or appear in a separate screen or

as a top box. Masked or non-masked cards, symbols or credit amounts are distributed into characteristic-specific pools, with the aggregate card, symbol or credit amount in each pool having a relationship to each other specific pool. The credit amounts between (two) or among (at least three) specific pools are compared and specific predetermined relationships may provide wins, losses or termination criteria. As an optimum game play, an indicia of direct comparison, such as a Balance Scale is preferably centrally located on the screen or top box. The Balance Scale incorporates a base and central structure to which a left arm and right arm are attached. Each arm has an adjoining scale or "dish" which can hold symbols or objects displaying credit amounts. Bonus wins may occur when the aggregate credit amounts in each "dish" are equal, thereby "balancing" the Scale. The game may be terminated when all credit amount symbols have been utilized, when a specific number have been utilized, or when the credit amounts in comparison exceed or are below a specific comparative value (in relative amounts or absolute amounts). Alternately, options may be given to the player, the options providing limits between the amounts on either arm. Exceeding the chosen limit may provide a termination to the bonus game. The game play may also be utilized in a base or main game, and may or may not require a wager or additional wager.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

[0035] FIG. 1 is a flow diagram that teaches the practice of this invention.

[0036] FIG. 2 is a flow diagram that illustrates a specific game play format using the teachings of this invention.

[0037] FIGS. 3 through 5 illustrate various stages in the play of a sample Balance Scale Bonus Game.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0038] The game play of the novel game described herein may be implemented on existing and commercial mechanical, virtual/mechanical or video gaming apparatus on any of the many available formats merely by insertion of a game card or game software effecting the selections and rules and payouts according to the present game. It may also be played on-line, through a network or through a thin client or other client customer relationship. The base game may also be implemented on a traditional stepper mechanical reel format. The game may be operated on-line, in a banked set of gaming machines or independent machines with independent processors. The game can be programmed onto MAC, PC, LINUX operating systems (as well as other or newer commercial systems) and can be displayed with standard CRT displays, plasma displays, LCD displays and the like. The games may be operated with ticket-in/ticket-out crediting, coins, tokens, currency, credit cards, or gaming accounts as well understood by one skilled in the art. The following is intended to offer a general description and example of the technology of the game play and offer insight into distinctions from existing commercial or disclosed game play.

[0039] One general description of the method of playing a bonus event on a mechanical, virtual/mechanical or video gaming apparatus as described herein is as follows. The game format of a Balance Scale (or other equilibrating

function, such as cups filling with liquid, balloons filling with air, and other volume changing or volume completing images) and Credit Amount symbols will be used in the description for consistency in the analogies of the play, but the game is of course not limited to that specific imagery. A predetermined trigger in the main game provides entry into a bonus game. As an example, the appearance of a triggering symbol or event or combination of symbols, such as a Balance Scale symbol on the third reel pay line of a traditional 3-reel slot machine may provide entry into the Balance Scale Bonus Game. In another example, five symbols appearing left to right on a wagered pay line of a 3-row×5-column reel configuration may trigger the bonus game: a symbol "10", a symbol "20", a Balance Scale symbol, a symbol "15", and a symbol "15" may qualify as a trigger because the sum of the number symbols on either side of the Balance Scale "balance" by each equaling 30.

[0040] In the bonus game or supplemental event, a two-arm Balance Scale (or other equilibrating imagery) is prominently shown, along with a plurality of hidden Balance Limit Amount symbols (or other image characteristics, such as volume, noise level, color density or the like) or values (100, 125, 150, 175 and 200, for example) and hidden Credit Amount symbols (5, 10, 15, up to 100, for example). First, the player is given the opportunity to choose one of the plurality of hidden Balance Limit Amount symbols. For example, the player may touch the screen or press a button, and choose an amount of 150. In this case, once the player starts picking from the hidden Credit Amount symbols, the difference between the amounts in one dish of the Balance Scale and the other dish of the Balance Scale may not exceed the chosen value of 150. The player then may begin selecting hidden Credits Amount symbols, one at a time. Half of the Credit Amount symbols are designated for the left dish (e.g., BLUE Credit Amounts, for example) and the other half of the Credit Amount symbols (in RED, for example) are designated for the right dish. Each group of designated symbols incorporates the same absolute value symbols, even though the values are designated towards opposite ends of the equivalency function. When the player selects a hidden Credit Amount or requests the selection or appearance of a hidden Credit Amount, that symbol selected or provided is displayed on the appropriate side of the Balance Scale. An indicator meter constantly updates the difference in the totals in each dish of the Balance Scale. For example, if the first Credit Amount symbol is a BLUE 40, the meter would indicate a +40 for the BLUE dish. The player continues to select symbols until the total of the Credit Amount symbols in one dish of the Balance Scale vs. the total of the Credit Amount symbols in the other dish is more than the Balance Limit Amount. This ends the bonus game, and the winner is paid according to predetermined payoff rules. At any time or times before the end of the bonus game, if the total in both dishes are exactly the same, or "balanced", the player wins an award; for example, the award may be the sum of the totals in both dishes, or an escalating award may be provided each time the totals balance. Selecting all of the Credit Amount symbols without exceeding the Balance Limit Amount may produce an additional jackpot bonus award.

[0041] A related game play would utilize the same elements as above, but eliminate the Balance Limit Amounts. Instead, the Random Number Generator (RNG) would always select a hidden credit amount for the side of the Balance Scale that has the lesser total. In the case of the two

sides having the same totals, the RNG would randomly pick a hidden credit amount for either one side or the other. At any time the two sides balance, a payout award would be provided as described above.

[0042] Other themes may include completing a business deal, with two or more sides agreeing on a price; an auction scenario whereby aggregate bid totals are compared, lower totals are rejected, and higher totals may allow the bidder to continue to bid on additional items; various vehicles carrying incrementing totals of passengers; any theme utilizing the teachings of the comparison of amounts or kinds that can be compared and can be equal or shown with relative differences according to the invention as understood by those skilled in the art.

[0043] The technology may be generally described as a method of playing a wagering game or bonus event on a mechanical, mechanical/video or video gaming apparatus. The method may comprise a player placing a wager to play in the game. There are at least two comparable groups having a distinguishable characteristic that are provided, the at least two comparable groups having a basis of comparison. For example, the at least two groups may be any elements of an image (as described above, with regard to scales, balances, balloons, cups, number of fish, weight of fish, etc.). A determined relation of comparison between the comparable groups provides a basis of award at some time to the player on the wager. As noted, awards may be made when weights or comparable basis are equivalent, remain within a range of comparison, exceed a range or parameter of relationship or meet some other determined relationship of parameters (e.g., exactly double the basis of comparison, exactly a multiple or dividend of the basis of comparison, etc). The game then randomly provides units of the basis of comparison to a single one of the comparable groups. This has been exemplified above, but may be done by selecting from among symbols with hidden values, randomly collecting a basis of units (e.g., throwing a fishing line into a pond and pulling out a fish of a value or weight; collecting coins from a basket; collecting balloons of different sizes that disweight a balance; volumes of gas into balloons; change in value of comparative stocks; and the like). The system (through hardware, software or combinations thereof) determines the relationship of the basis of comparison between the at least two comparable groups, such as the relative size, the relative weight, the relative value, the relative color density, or any other basis of comparison. The game provides an award when the relationship meets a predetermined standard, with many of these bases discussed above. The determination of the relationship for the purpose of providing an award may be made at a single or repeated intermediate stages of the game and/or made at the conclusion of a particular step of randomly providing units (e.g., the first time they are awarded, the fifth time they are awarded, the eighth time they are awarded, until such time as a special relationship has been established (e.g., equivalence or a specific multiple relationship between groups), etc. The method may have or require the existence of a specific relationship between the at least two comparable groups to determine the conclusion of randomly providing units, such as exceeding a specific degree of difference, being equivalent, having one basis of comparison disappear (e.g., become zero after once having attained a value greater than zero, etc.) The method may use units of comparison comprising numerical units. The distinguishable characteristic may be

displayed on a monitor in the form of relative weight. The relative weight may be displayed as a balance scale.

[0044] Another way of describing a method of playing a wagering game or bonus event on a mechanical, mechanical/video or video gaming apparatus comprises a player placing a wager to play in the game; providing a basis of comparing different groups; providing random quantities of units to one group at a time. After provision of random quantities of units to a group, comparing the groups according to the basis of comparison; and if the comparison shows a predetermined relationship between at least two groups, providing an award to the player. A specific difference, such as the specific weight difference, may be selected in each play of the game. The method may be practiced where there are exactly two groups compared; the basis of comparing different groups is a visual image representing weight; random quantities of units are provided to one group at a time; after provision of random quantities of units to one group, a comparison is made between the two groups according to the basis of comparison; and if the comparison shows a predetermined relationship between the two groups, providing an award to the player.

[0045] Reference to the Figures will assist in further understanding of the practice of the present invention.

[0046] FIG. 1 illustrates a generic flow chart illustrating the mechanics of the game play. After an initial wager, an initial display of symbols 2 is offered and made available for selection. Randomly a symbol is selected by the device or by the player 4, and a particular characteristic of that symbol is provided for comparison or determined 6. The symbol is placed into a pool with imagery designated specifically for that characteristic 8. Symbol values in each pool are totaled at this point 10, and the aggregate totals in each pool are compared to determine if a predetermined relationship exists between the two or more pools 12 such as equivalence, higher values in one pool or another, larger size or equivalence in one pool or another, etc. If a predetermined relationship is present, a prize is awarded 14. The game then may either end 16A or continue 16B by selecting another symbol 4 (e.g., which contains a hidden credit or comparison base amount), and following the same steps as previously described. If there is no specific relationship present between the comparison bases, another symbol is selected 4, and the same steps as previously described are repeated.

[0047] FIG. 2 shows a flow chart illustrating a specific example of the game play. An initial display of hidden coins 18, i.e., the face value and coin color of which are masked, is offered. Randomly a coin is selected by the player 20, and shown to be either a blue coin or a red coin 22. The coin is placed into a color-specific pool and its value is added to that pool's total 24. Symbol values in the red pool and the blue pool are totaled at this point 26 or 34. Upon comparison of the two pools, if the totals are equal to each other 28, a prize is awarded 30, and the game either ends 32 according to the rules of the game, or the game may continue with the selection of another coin 20, and the repetition of subsequent steps. If the totals 34 are unequal 36, another coin is selected 20, and steps 20, 22, 24 and 26, 28, 30, 32 or 34, 36 are repeated.

[0048] FIG. 3 shows the initial screen 40 of the video Balance Scale Bonus. A balance scale 42 is located in the screen center, with one arm 44 holding 5 initial outline

credits 46 in a dish 48, and the other arm 50 holding 5 initial solid credits 52 in a second dish 54. The credit totals for the left side 56 and the right side 58 are displayed underneath each dish. Forty touch screen symbol circle areas 60 are provided for the credit amount choices.

[0049] FIG. 4 shows the game at a further stage where the player has randomly chosen two solid credit amounts 60 that are displayed in the solid credit dish 54, and deleted from the symbol areas 70. The left side credit amount total 56 is shown and the right side credit amount total 58 is shown. The indicator meter 80 displays a difference of 90 credits between the two totals 48 and 54, respectively.

[0050] FIG. 5 shows the game at a further stage where additional credit amounts 60 have been chosen, displayed in the appropriate dishes 48 and 54, and deleted from the symbol areas 70. The left side credit amount total 56 is shown and the right side credit amount total 58 is shown. The indicator meter 80 displays a difference of 0 credits between the two dishes 48 and 54, respectively, indicating the credit amounts in both dishes are equal and balanced. This initiates the display of the Cash Balance indicia 100, and provides the player with a bonus win of both credit totals (105+105 credits 56 and 58), the 210 credits being displayed in the win box 90.

[0051] Another general summary of the practice of the technology described herein may be framed as a method of playing a wagering game or bonus event on a mechanical, mechanical/video or video gaming apparatus comprising:

- [0052] a player placing a wager to play in the game;
- [0053] at least two comparable groups having a distinguishable characteristic are provided, the at least two comparable groups having a basis of comparison;
- [0054] a determined relation of comparison between the comparable groups provides a basis of award to the player on the wager;
- [0055] randomly providing units of the basis of comparison to a single one of the comparable groups;
- [0056] determining the relationship of the basis of comparison between the at least two comparable groups; and
- [0057] providing an award when the relationship meets a predetermined standard.

The method may have the determination of the relationship for the purpose of providing an award is made at the conclusion of randomly providing units, and the existence of a specific relationship between the at least two comparable groups may determine the conclusion of randomly providing units. The preferred method uses units of comparison of numerical units. As noted the distinguishable characteristic may be displayed on a monitor in the form of relative weight, especially as a balance scale.

[0058] Another description of a method of playing a wagering game or bonus event on a mechanical, mechanical/video or video gaming apparatus according to the technology described herein comprises:

- [0059] a player placing a wager to play in the game;
- [0060] a basis of comparing different groups is provided;
- [0061] random quantities of units are provided to one group at a time;
- [0062] after provision of random quantities of units to a group, a comparison is made between the groups according to the basis of comparison;
- [0063] if the comparison shows a predetermined relationship between at least two groups, providing an award to the player.
- [0064] The method may use a predetermined relationship of equivalency, exceeding or equaling a specific weight difference, specially where the specific weight difference is selected in each separate play of the game. In this method, it is preferred that there are exactly two groups compared;
- [0065] the basis of comparing different groups is a visual image representing weight;
- [0066] random quantities of units are provided to one group at a time;
- [0067] after provision of random quantities of units to one group, a comparison is made between the two groups according to the basis of comparison; and
- [0068] if the comparison shows a predetermined relationship between the two groups, providing an award to the player. Groups of three or four or more may also be compared, for single comparison differences (e.g., one group is the basis of the comparison, or for total differences from a base, or for greatest difference by a single group, or again for equivalency among one or more groups.

[0069] Although specific examples and specific images have been provided in this discussion, these specifics are intended to be only support for the generic concepts of the invention and are not intended to be absolute limits in the scope of the technology discussed.

What is claimed:

1. A method of playing a wagering game or bonus event on a mechanical, mechanical/video or video gaming apparatus comprising:

- a player placing a wager to play in the game;
- at least two comparable groups having a distinguishable characteristic are provided, the at least two comparable groups having a basis of comparison;
- a determined relation of comparison between the comparable groups provides a basis of award to the player on the wager;
- randomly providing units of the basis of comparison to a single one of the comparable groups;
- determining the relationship of the basis of comparison between the at least two comparable groups; and
- providing an award when the relationship meets a predetermined standard.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the determination of the relationship for the purpose of providing an award is made at the conclusion of randomly providing units.

3. The method of claim 2 wherein existence of a specific relationship between the at least two comparable groups determines the conclusion of randomly providing units.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein the units of comparison are numerical units.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein the distinguishable characteristic is displayed on a monitor in the form of relative weight.

6. The method of claim 2 wherein the distinguishable characteristic is displayed on a monitor in the form of relative weight.

7. The method of claim 3 wherein the distinguishable characteristic is displayed on a monitor in the form of relative weight.

8. The method of claim 4 wherein the distinguishable characteristic is displayed on a monitor in the form of relative weight.

9. The method of claim 4 wherein the relative weight is displayed as a balance scale.

10. The method of claim 5 wherein the relative weight is displayed as a balance scale.

11. The method of claim 6 wherein the relative weight is displayed as a balance scale.

12. A method of playing a wagering game or bonus event on a mechanical, mechanical/video or video gaming apparatus comprising:

- a player placing a wager to play in the game;
- a basis of comparing different groups is provided;
- random quantities of units are provided to one group at a time;
- after provision of random quantities of units to a group, a comparison is made between the groups according to the basis of comparison;
- if the comparison shows a predetermined relationship between at least two groups, providing an award to the player.

13. The method of claim 12 wherein the units of comparison are numerical units.

14. The method of claim 12 wherein the distinguishable characteristic is displayed on a monitor in the form of relative weight.

15. The method of claim 13 wherein the distinguishable characteristic is displayed on a monitor in the form of relative weight.

16. The method of claim 14 wherein the relative weight is displayed as a balance scale.

17. The method of claim 16 wherein the predetermined relationship is equivalency.

18. The method of claim 16 wherein the predetermined relationship is exceeding or equaling a specific weight difference.

19. The method of claim 18 wherein the specific weight difference is selected in each play of the game.

20. The method of claim 12 wherein there are exactly two groups compared;

the basis of comparing different groups is a visual image representing weight;

random quantities of units are provided to one group at a time;

after provision of random quantities of units to one group, a comparison is made between the two groups according to the basis of comparison; and

if the comparison shows a predetermined relationship between the two groups, providing an award to the player.

21. The method of claim 20 wherein the predetermined relationship is equivalency.

22. The method of claim 20 wherein the predetermined relationship is exceeding or equaling a specific weight difference.

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