(54) Titre : JEU DE GRANDE ROUE AMELIORE
(54) Title: ENHANCED BIG WHEEL GAME

(57) Abrégé/Abstract:
A method of operating a Big Wheel game is provided. Primary player wagers on potential game outcomes are initially received from participating players. One or more potential game outcomes comprise a bonus feature. Additional player wagers on the game outcome comprising the bonus feature are received from at least one of the participating players. After the game outcome is determined, any player winning on their primary wager is credited their winnings. If the game outcome comprises the bonus feature, then any players who placed an additional wager are provided with the bonus feature. A gaming system for providing the Big Wheel game is also provided.
ABSTRACT

A method of operating a Big Wheel game is provided. Primary player wagers on potential game outcomes are initially received from participating players. One or more potential game outcomes comprise a bonus feature. Additional player wagers on the game outcome comprising the bonus feature are received from at least one of the participating players. After the game outcome is determined, any player winning on their primary wager is credited their winnings. If the game outcome comprises the bonus feature, then any players who placed an additional wager are provided with the bonus feature. A gaming system for providing the Big Wheel game is also provided.
ENHANCED BIG WHEEL GAME

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention relates to enhancement of a Big Wheel gaming system and methods of operating Big Wheel games that have enhanced play.

BACKGROUND TO THE INVENTION

Casinos have a variety of gambling games all vying for the attention of gamblers. For first-time or novice players, this choice can be dazzling and daunting. In addition, each game has its own set of rules which often must be known before the game can be played properly. This may deter first-time or novice players.

The game of 'Big Wheel' (or 'Chocolate Wheel' as it is colloquially known) is regarded by all casino operators as the easiest game to play in Casinos throughout the world.

The Big Wheel is a communal game, in that a number of players can participate in a common determination of result. It is a rotatable wheel made up of a number of segments which typically have a number, or symbol on each segment, and an indicator. Players place a wager on one or more of the numbers or symbols. The wheel is spun and an indicator indicates the outcome of the game at the time the wheel comes to rest. If the indicator points to a number or symbol which has had a wager placed on it, the player who placed the wager on that number wins. The rate of return depends on the number of times the winning number or symbol appears on the wheel.

The game is attractive to novice players because of the simplicity of the game, and the potential for prizes of up to 50 times their wager. However, what is regarded as its biggest attributes can also be seen as its limitations. It is difficult to introduce variety into the game, due to the limited opportunities for betting. There is also no potential to offer larger prizes, due to constraints on the size of the wheel and number of prize pieces of the wheel. These factors lead to short periods of play by players, who often move to other games before too long.

It is an object of the present invention to provide a gaming system and a method of operating a gaming system to enhance the attractiveness of Big Wheel to players and encourage them to play for a longer time.
SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In a broad form, a Big Wheel game according to the present invention comprises an optional player bet, in addition to the normal wager, that makes players eligible for a bonus feature.

In one aspect, the present invention provides a method of operating a Big Wheel game, comprising the steps of:

receiving primary player wagers on potential game outcomes from participating players, one or more of said potential game outcomes comprising a bonus feature;

receiving additional player wagers on the game outcome comprising said bonus feature from at least one of said participating players;

determining the game outcome;

crediting any primary player wager winnings resulting from the determined game outcome; and

if the determined game outcome comprises the bonus feature, then providing the bonus feature to players who made the additional wagers.

In preferred embodiments, the player wagers are received electronically, ideally via player terminals.

Preferably, the bonus feature provided is one or more features selected from the set comprising: one or more free game(s); a multiplier to be applied to any respective primary player wager winnings in a subsequent game or games; a multiplier applied to the amount of the respective player’s additional wager; a bonus game or other special game play feature; or a non-game related prize. In the case of a bonus game, the bonus game may comprise the steps of displaying bonus options on a respective terminal of each player that placed an additional wager; receiving a selected bonus option from the respective terminal; and awarding each player based upon their selected bonus option.

According to another aspect, the present invention provides a Big Wheel gaming system, comprising a plurality of electronic player terminals and a Big Wheel display, each terminal allowing a respective player to place primary wagers on potential game outcomes, wherein one or more of said potential game outcomes comprising a bonus feature, each terminal further allowing a respective
player to place an additional wager on the game outcome comprising said bonus feature; the gaming system having a primary mode, in which a game outcome is determined and displayed on said Big Wheel display and any primary wager winnings are credited to respective player terminals, and a bonus mode, which is instigated only when the game outcome of said primary mode comprises said bonus feature and there is at least one player that placed an additional wager, the bonus mode providing said bonus feature to respective terminals of additional wager winning players.

The present invention advantageously provides a player with the option of playing an enhanced Big wheel game by placing a wager, in addition to the regular wager, on the chance of winning a bonus feature, thereby providing variety and longer interest in the game.

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWING**

A preferred embodiment of the present invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawing, in which:

Fig. 1 illustrates a preferred form of a Big Wheel display.

**DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT**

The present invention will be described with reference to particular embodiments. However, it will be appreciated that it may be implemented using a variety of electronic and manual betting arrangements, and for simulated and physical apparatus.

Figure 1 shows the invention implemented on a physical Big Wheel 10. The Big Wheel 10 has a number of segments, in this case 52. All segments include a number or a symbol. In this case, the segments are labeled with a number and a letter from A to E. Different numbers and symbols appear on the wheel in different numbers. The more often a number appears on the wheel, the lower the return a bet on that number as it is more likely to be the outcome of the game. The less frequently a number or symbol appears on the wheel, the higher the return a bet on that number as it is less likely to be the outcome of the game.

The Big Wheel 10 can be spun by a human operator (dealer). Players of the game place wagers on what they believe the outcome of the game will be prior to the Big Wheel 10 being spun. When the Big Wheel 10 comes to rest, an
indicator 12 points to the segment which is determined to be the outcome of a game. This is the conventional game of Big Wheel.

According to this implementation of the present invention, in addition to their regular wagers, players can additionally place an optional additional bet on a bonus feature. The Big Wheel 10 includes one or more bonus feature symbol, in this case an X 14, on one of the segments. This symbol in no way influences the standard game prizes or chances of winning those prizes. It is an added symbol to any segment of the wheel. If the indicator 12 points to this bonus feature symbol (in this case X 14) after the dealer has spun the wheel 10, any player who has placed an additional wager on the outcome including the X symbol wins a bonus feature. The likelihood of the indicator pointing to this X symbol depends on the number of times the X symbol appears on the wheel 10. In the event that the wheel points to the designated symbol, the bonus feature is won and the bonus feature awarded.

On a physical wheel, the bonus feature winning symbol is fixed. On a simulated reel, it could be either a fixed position, or randomly determined after betting ceases and before the wheel is spun (in simulation), or during spinning, or after the wheel comes to rest.

It will be appreciated that in practice, the likelihood of the symbol being the winning segment will be related to the prize or feature to be awarded.

The bonus feature awarded may be the one or more free games, for example to the same value as the game when the bet was won. It could also be a multiplier applied to any wins of the subsequent game or games or to the amount of the additional wager. Alternatively it may be some other special game play feature. It could even be a free drink or meal at the casino. It may allow the player to participate in a special bonus game, in an electronic implementation.

The present invention could be implemented at a fully manual betting table. In this case, an additional bonus feature betting location for chips to be placed could be provided at one or more locations in the betting layout. The dealer could then pay the feature when it occurs. In this case, a feature which does not affect future games is preferred, so that the dealer can more readily control the game.
In a preferred form, the players are seated at player terminals which may be at close proximity to the Big Wheel 10 or at some distance from the Big Wheel 10. The inclusion of video cameras to stream vision to the player terminals is an option which allows players to see the game from any location. The terminals include a display, and input means allowing players to place their wagers. The input means may be in the form of a touch screen display. The terminals are all connected to a central controller for the game.

The rules relating to the amount of the additional wager may vary depending upon the bonus feature to be awarded. In one form, it is a fixed amount, so that all players who make the additional wager and are successful are awarded the same prize, or have the chance to play the same bonus feature. In another form, the additional wager is proportional to the player's total main game wager so that all prizes paid to players are linear, depending on the player's total wager.

Once the time for placing a wager and optional additional wager has passed, the dealer spins the Big Wheel 10 to begin the game. When the Big Wheel 10 comes to rest, the segment indicated by the indicator 12 is determined. This determination may take placed via a sensor which detects the game outcome and informs the central controller. Alternatively, the operator is provided with a terminal via which the game outcome is manually inputted and the central controller informed, although this is less preferred as an implementation as it is more prone to human error. In this arrangement, conventional winnings are preferably credited directed to the electronic terminal from which the wager was made.

When the game outcome is not such that the segment on the Big Wheel 10 is one indicating a bonus feature has been won, the central controller determines whether there are any winning players from wagers placed on the regular game and credits any calculated winnings to the respective terminals of winning players.

When the game outcome is such that the segment on the Big Wheel 10 is one indicating a bonus feature has been won, the players who have made an additional wager have the bonus feature (examples of which are described above) displayed on the respective terminals by the central controller.
The bonus feature provided could be such that the player winning on the bonus feature is presented with a set of bonus options from which the player must choose. In this case, the bonus options are displayed on the respective terminal of the player, they make their choice, usually in a set time or the choice is made for them, and the player then receives the bonus feature from the bonus option they chose.

The crediting of the winnings on wagers on the regular game may be before, after or during the determination of the bonus feature outcome.

Suitable player terminals may provide, for example, as similar interface to the applicant's Rapid Roulette product, which is commercially available, suitably modified for use with Big Wheel. Details of Rapid Roulette can be found at http://www.stargames.com.au/prod_rapid.html which is incorporated herein by way of reference. The player terminals preferably use a touch screen interface, which in general terms mimics the layout for betting provided at a conventional Big Wheel table game. Player select and drag icons, conveniently rendered as resembling gaming chips and with the respective value shown on the chip icon, onto the betting layout. An area of betting layout is reserved for the additional wager.

It will be appreciated that the present invention may be implemented with variations and additions, and under rules different to those discussed, without departing from the scope of the invention.
CLAIMS:

1. A method of operating a Big Wheel game, comprising the steps of:
   receiving primary player wagers on potential game outcomes from
   participating players, one or more of said potential game outcomes comprising a
   bonus feature;
   receiving additional player wagers on the game outcome comprising said
   bonus feature from at least one of said participating players;
   determining the game outcome;
   crediting any primary player wager winnings resulting from the determined
   game outcome; and
   if the determined game outcome comprises the bonus feature, then
   providing the bonus feature to players who made the additional wagers.

2. The method according to claim 1, wherein the player wagers are received
   electronically.

3. The method according to claim 1 or claim 2, wherein the game outcome is
   dealer determined using a physical wheel.

4. The method according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the bonus
   feature provided is one or more features selected from the set comprising: one or
   more free game(s); a multiplier to be applied to any respective primary player
   wager winnings in a subsequent game or games; a multiplier applied to the
   amount of the respective player's additional wager; a bonus game or other
   special game play feature; or a non-game related prize.

5. The method according to claim 4, wherein the bonus game provided
   comprises the steps of:
   displaying bonus options on a respective terminal of each player that
   placed an additional wager;
   receiving a selected bonus option from said respective terminal; and
   awarding each player based upon their selected bonus option.
6. A software product operatively adapted to program a gaming system to carry out the method of any one of claims 1 to 5.

7. A Big Wheel gaming system, comprising a plurality of electronic player terminals and a Big Wheel display, each terminal allowing a respective player to place primary wagers on potential game outcomes, wherein one or more of said potential game outcomes comprising a bonus feature, each terminal further allowing a respective player to place an additional wager on the game outcome comprising said bonus feature; the gaming system having a primary mode, in which a game outcome is determined and displayed on said Big Wheel display and any primary wager winnings are credited to respective player terminals, and a bonus mode, which is instigated only when the game outcome of said primary mode comprises said bonus feature and there is at least one player that placed an additional wager, the bonus mode providing said bonus feature to respective terminals of additional wager winning players.

8. The gaming system according to claim 7, wherein the Big wheel display is a physical Big Wheel.

9. The gaming system according to claim 7 or 8, wherein the bonus feature provided is one or more features selected from the set comprising: crediting one or more free game(s); a multiplier to be applied to any respective player primary wager winnings in a subsequent game or games; a multiplier applied to the amount of the respective player's additional wager; a bonus game or other special game play feature.

10. The gaming system according to claim 9, wherein said bonus game allows a player to select from a number of bonus options displayed at the player terminal.

11. The gaming system according to any one of claims 7 to 10, wherein the player terminals are physically located at the Big Wheel display.
12. The gaming system according to any one of claims 7 to 10, wherein one or more player terminals are located remote from the Big wheel display.

13. The gaming system according to claim 12, wherein said one or more player terminals comprise means to stream and display live images of said Big Wheel display.