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(54) **DOMINO BLACKJACK**

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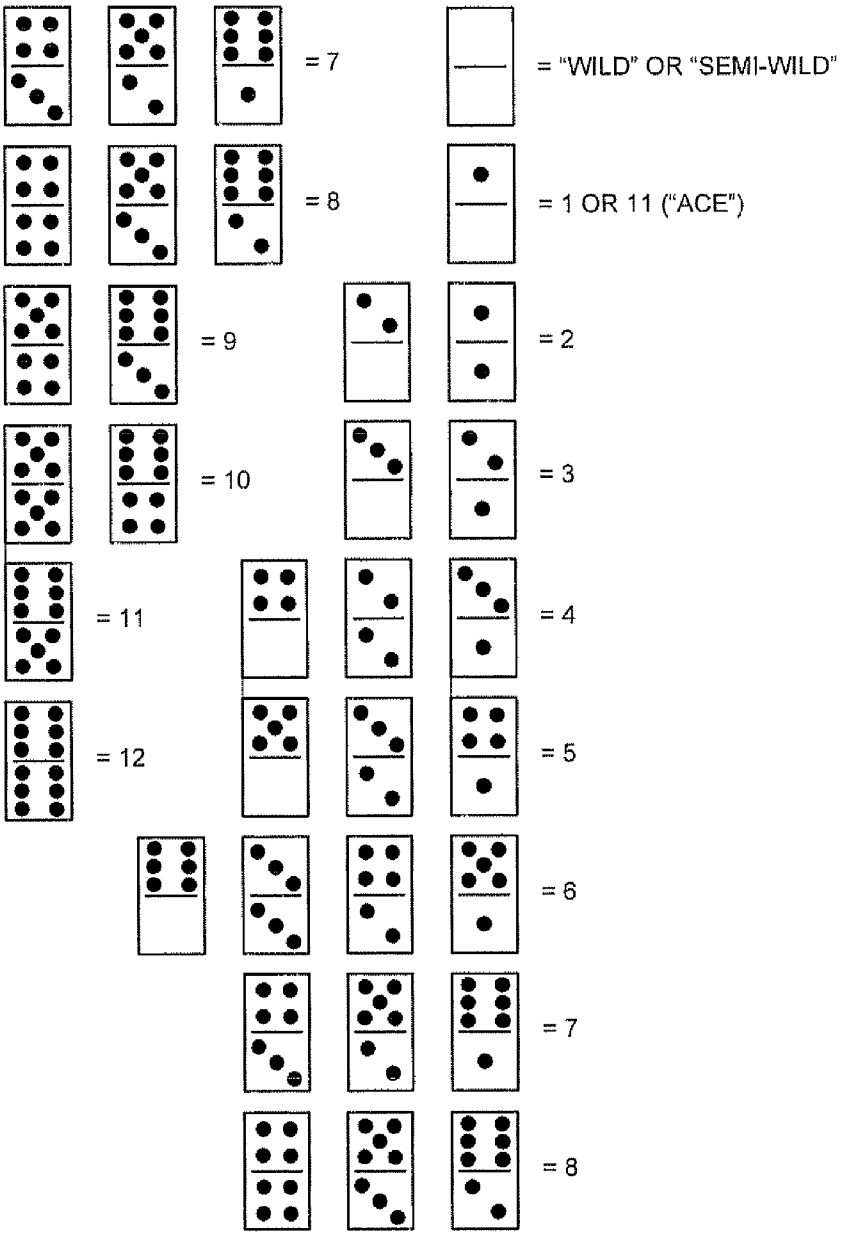
(52) **U.S. Cl.** ..... **273/292**

(57) **ABSTRACT**

Domino wagering games are disclosed in which a player or players play the conventional game of blackjack with domino tiles instead of playing cards. The domino tiles can be dealt to the players by a dealer, or can be selected by the players themselves. Both land based and electronic formats of the domino blackjack games are provided.



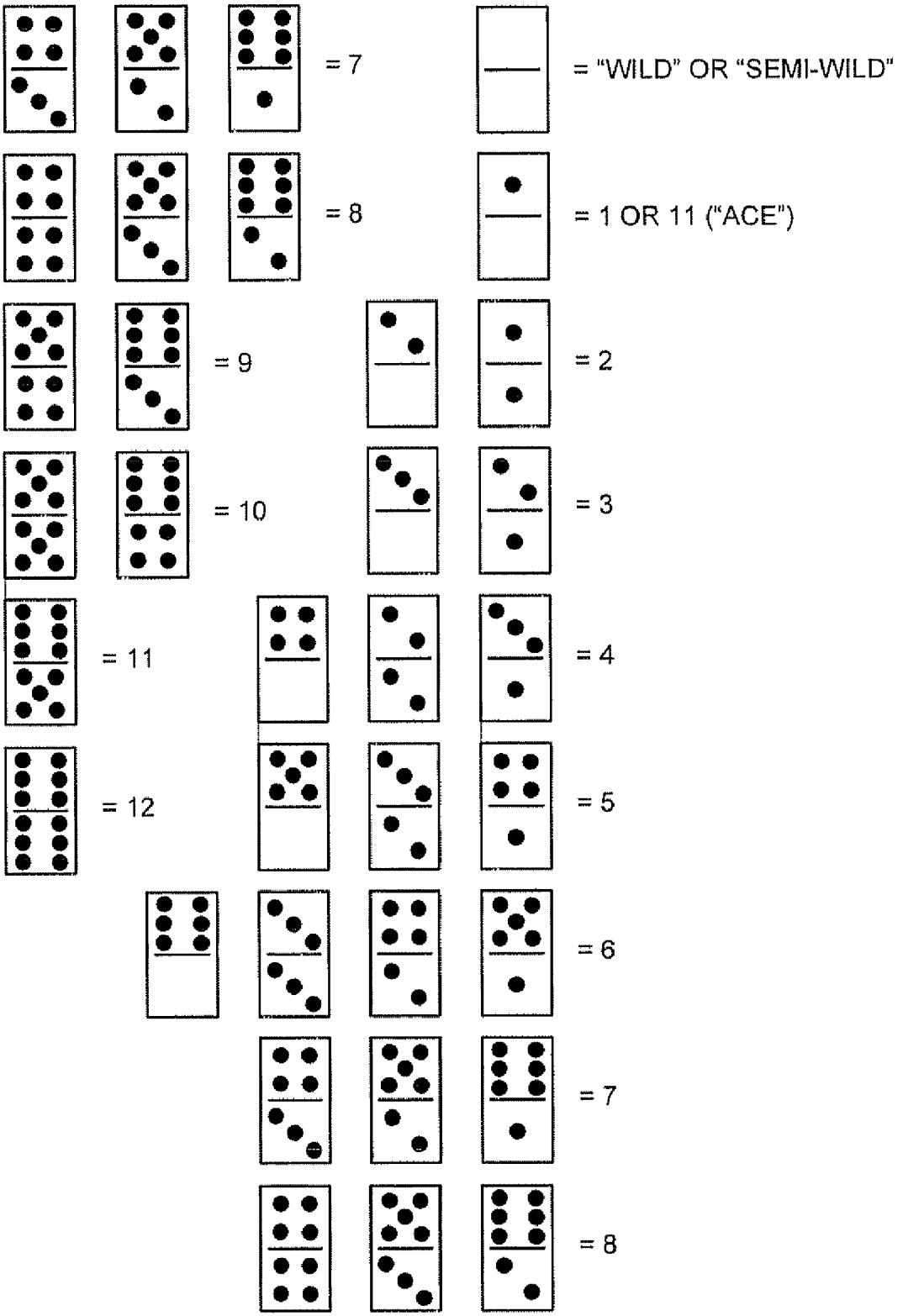



Fig. 1

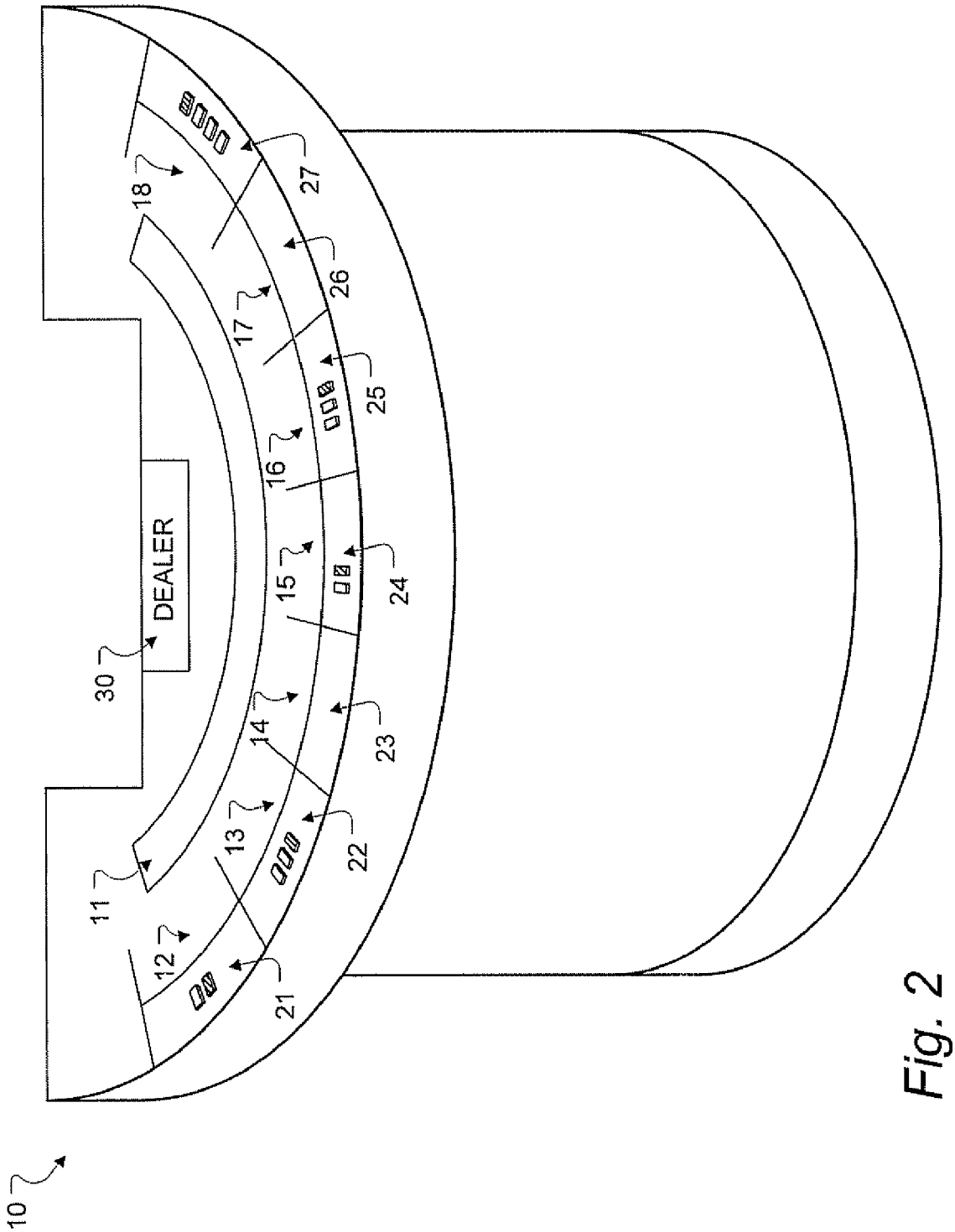



Fig. 2

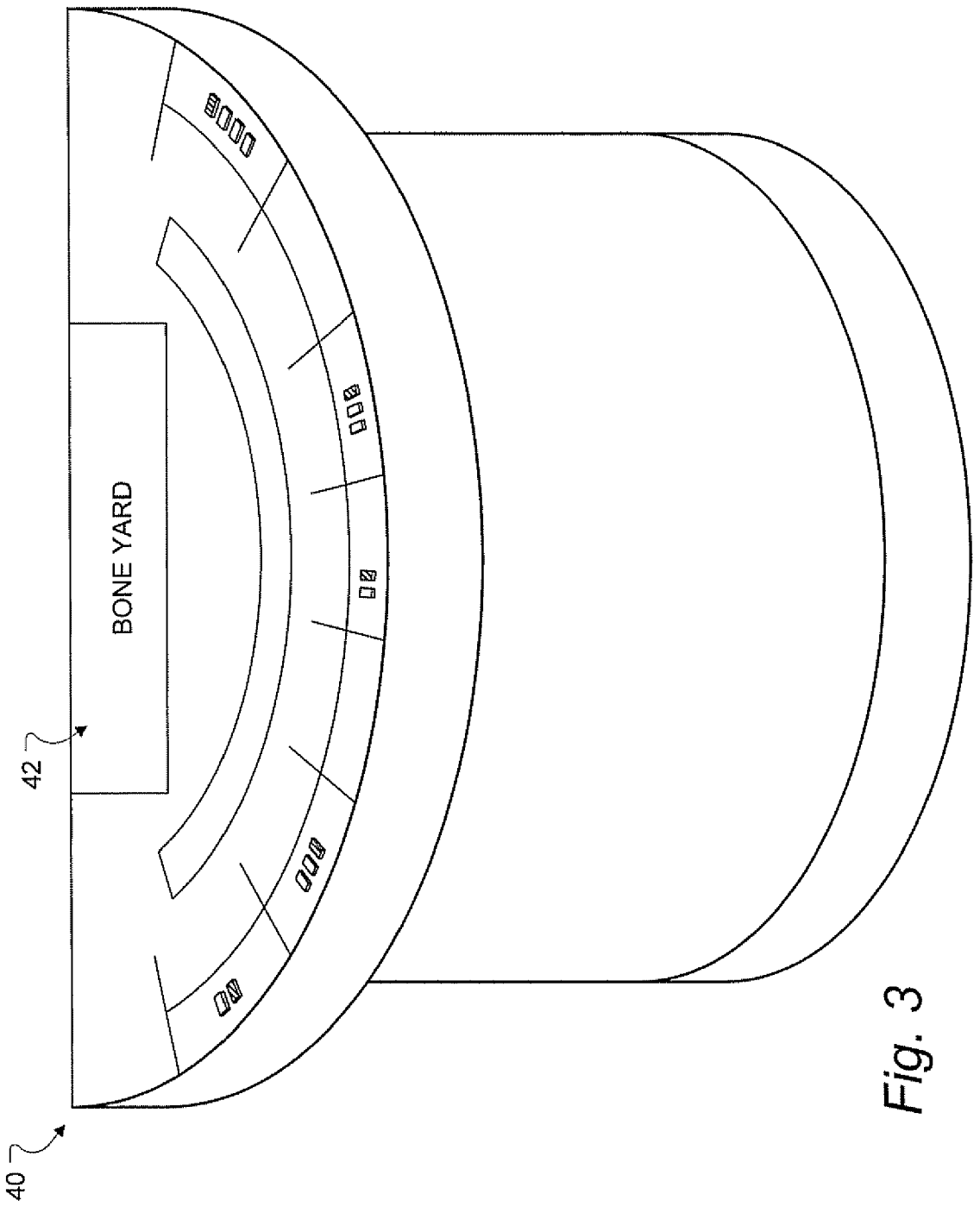



Fig. 3

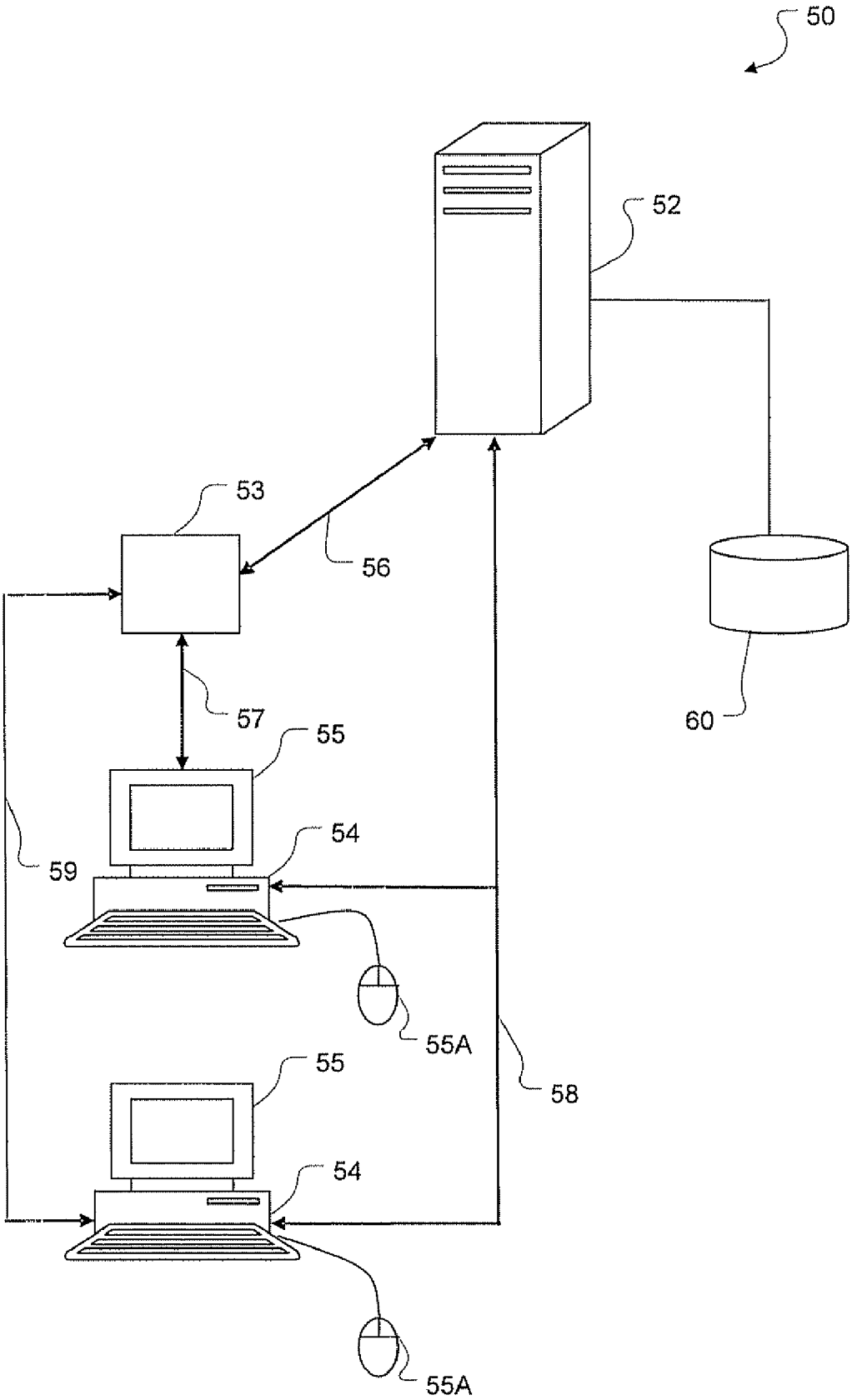



Fig. 4

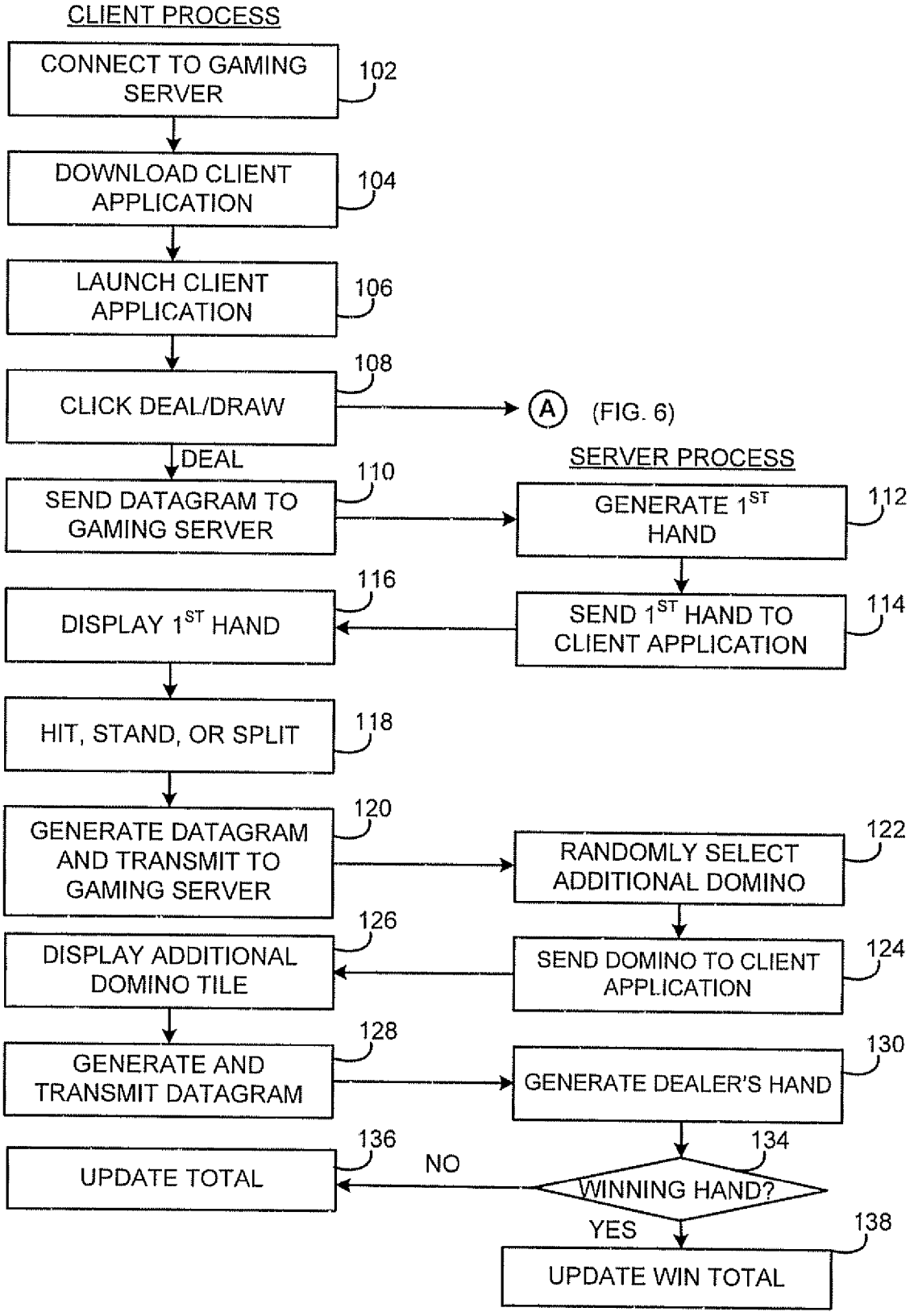

CLIENT PROCESS
CONNECT TO GAMING SERVER
102
DOWNLOAD CLIENT APPLICATION
104
LAUNCH CLIENT APPLICATION
106
CLICK DEAL/DRAW
108
A
(FIG. 6)
DEAL
SERVER PROCESS
SEND DATAGRAM TO GAMING SERVER
110
GENERATE 1ST HAND
112
DISPLAY 1ST HAND
116
SEND 1ST HAND TO CLIENT APPLICATION
114
HIT, STAND, OR SPLIT
118
GENERATE DATAGRAM AND TRANSMIT TO GAMING SERVER
120
RANDOMLY SELECT ADDITIONAL DOMINO
122
DISPLAY ADDITIONAL DOMINO TILE
126
SEND DOMINO TO CLIENT APPLICATION
124
GENERATE AND TRANSMIT DATAGRAM
128
GENERATE DEALER'S HAND
130
UPDATE TOTAL
136
NO
WINNING HAND?
134
YES
UPDATE WIN TOTAL
138

*Fig. 5*

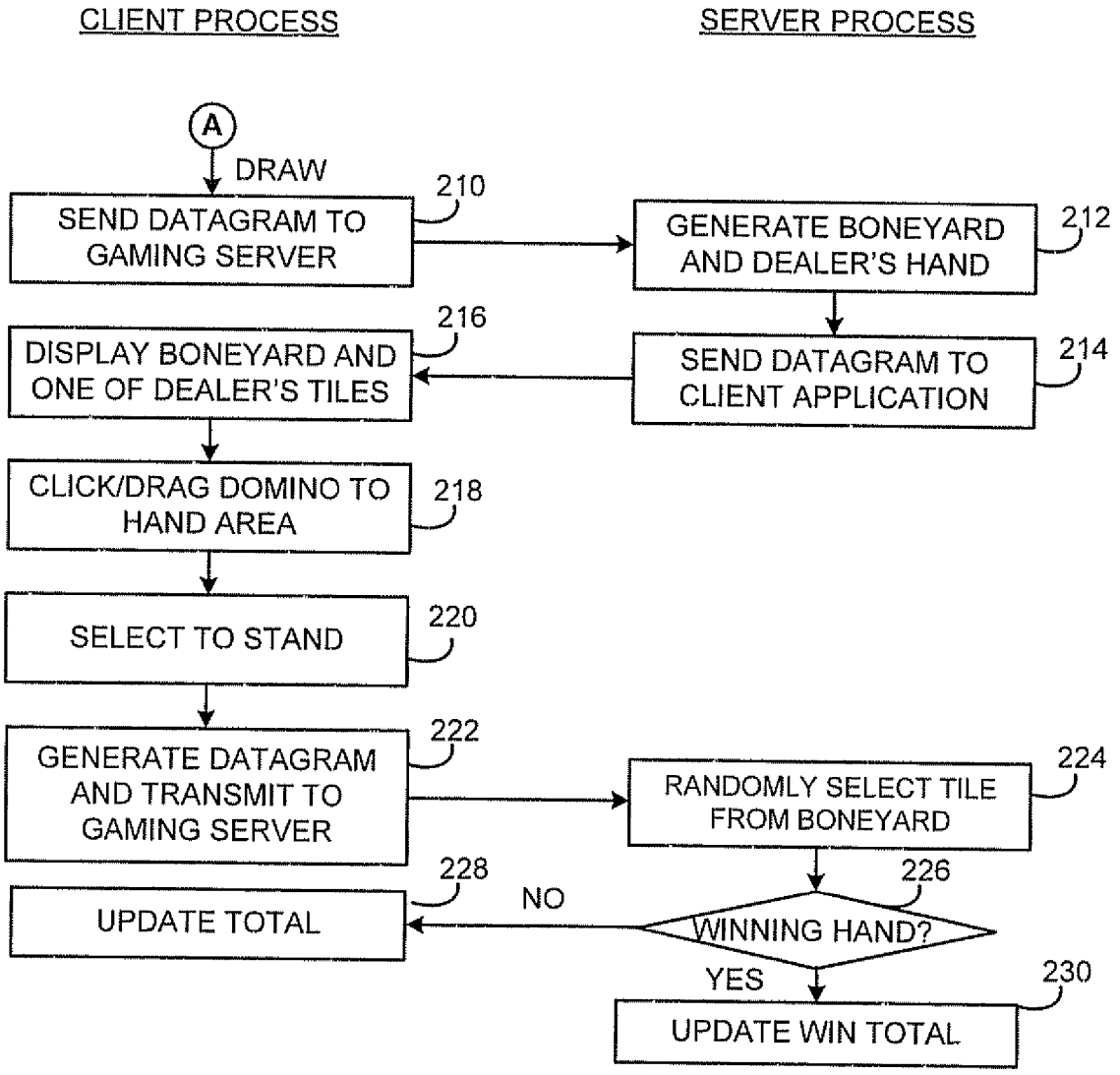

CLIENT PROCESS
SERVER PROCESS
A
DRAW
SEND DATAGRAM TO GAMING SERVER
210
GENERATE BONEYARD AND DEALER'S HAND
212
DISPLAY BONEYARD AND ONE OF DEALER'S TILES
216
SEND DATAGRAM TO CLIENT APPLICATION
214
CLICK/DRAG DOMINO TO HAND AREA
218
SELECT TO STAND
220
GENERATE DATAGRAM AND TRANSMIT TO GAMING SERVER
222
RANDOMLY SELECT TILE FROM BONEYARD
224
226
WINNING HAND?
NO
228
UPDATE TOTAL
YES
230
UPDATE WIN TOTAL

*Fig. 6*

# DOMINO BLACKJACK

## CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

**[0001]** Not applicable.

## STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH OR DEVELOPMENT

**[0002]** Not applicable.

## FIELD OF TECHNOLOGY

**[0003]** The present invention relates to the wagering game of blackjack, wherein the game is played with domino tiles.

## BACKGROUND

**[0004]** Several types of domino games exist, including single player solitaires and multi-player games. Domino games are played for fun and for money. Generally, domino games begin with the dominos spread out face-down on a table. The dominos are manually moved around to shuffle them, and a particular number of dominos are drawn by each player to form a hand. The object of most domino games is to be the first to get rid of all the dominos in the player's hand. Some popular domino games include the Draw Game, the Block Game, Muggings, Matador, Bergen, Mexican Train, Chickenfoot, and Forty-Two.

**[0005]** The game of blackjack is a common and popular card game in casinos and home settings. Also referred to as 21, blackjack is played with the object of getting a hand that has a score as close to 21 as possible without going over 21. When played in a casino, a player plays his hand against the dealer's hand. In conventional blackjack, the dealer deals the player two cards and himself two cards. One of the dealer's cards is placed face up so the player can see its value, while the other card is placed face down (referred to as the "hole" card). The player decides whether or not to hit (i.e. take an additional card) or stand (i.e. not take any more cards). A player's score is calculated by adding together the value of the cards in his hand (the face cards traditionally have a value of 10 and the Ace can be either a 1 or an 11 at the player's discretion). If a player's score exceeds 21 he loses. If a player decides to stand before his score exceeds 21, the dealer turns over his hole card. In most casino games, the dealer must hit if the score of his hand is 16 or less. Where a player's hand is closer to 21 than the dealer's hand without exceeding 21, the player wins, except where the player's hand and the dealer's hand have equal scores, in which case the dealer wins.

## SUMMARY

**[0006]** Disclosed herein are embodiments of domino versions of the conventional game of blackjack. The domino blackjack games can be played in accordance with the conventional rules of blackjack or any variation on the conventional rules of blackjack. In certain aspects, domino tiles used in the domino blackjack games are ascribed a point value (or, equivalently, a card in a standard deck of playing cards) depending on the number of dots on the domino; hence dominos may be used to play the game of blackjack as a substitute for playing cards in accordance with this disclosure.

**[0007]** The games can be land based (e.g. played on a gaming table) or played in an electronic gaming format (e.g. on a personal computer). In certain aspects, the domino blackjack game can be played in "deal mode" or "draw mode." In "deal mode," the dealer deals the domino tiles to each player in the game. In "draw mode," the players can select the domino tiles for their hands, for example, from a "boneyard" as described herein.

**[0008]** In one aspect of the disclosure, the invention is in the form of a game for play by a player and a dealer, wherein the game is played with domino tiles whereby the player and the dealer each receive a plurality of domino tiles, each domino tile is ascribed a point value or a playing card value depending on the number of dots on the domino tile as described herein. The point value of the domino tiles held by the player and the dealer are summed to determine a score for the player and the dealer, respectively. The outcome of the game is determined, at least in part, by comparison of the score of the player and the score of the dealer. In one embodiment, the game comprises blackjack or variation thereof.

**[0009]** The invention also provides a method of playing a domino blackjack game including at least one player and a dealer, the method comprising: receiving from each player a wager; each player receiving two domino tiles; the dealer receiving one or two domino tiles, one of which is displayed face-up; each player having an option to take another domino tile; the dealer having an option to take another domino tile when each player has chosen not to take another domino tile; and comparing the total value of the domino tiles in each player's hand with the total value of the domino tiles in the dealer's hand. In certain aspects, each player wins the domino game where the total value of the player's hand is closer to 21 than the total value of the dealer's hand, so long as the total value of the player's hand does not exceed 21 and is not equal to the total value of the dealer's hand. The player can receive the domino tiles either by drawing them from a "boneyard," which comprises a plurality of domino tiles randomly provided in a face down manner (so that the dots cannot be viewed), or from a dealer. The dealer deals the dominos from a "shoe" containing two or more standard domino sets, i.e. double-six domino sets, alternatively, the shoe contains nonstandard domino sets, e.g. double-seven, double-eight, double-nine, double-ten, double eleven, or double twelve domino sets, etc., or a combination of standard and non-standard domino sets.

**[0010]** In other aspects, the domino blackjack games can be played as a table game, a video game, a combined table and video game (such as where certain players are playing at a table while others are playing at video games, all in the same game), or on an electronic gaming device (such as a personal computer, hand held device, or electronic gaming machine). An electronic gaming device can be connected through a network to several other electronic gaming devices, for example in a casino whereby the electronic gaming devices are electronic gaining machines, or over the internet whereby the electronic gaming devices are personal computers or wireless hand held devices.

**[0011]** The invention further provides a central gaming system for playing a domino game, the system comprising: one or more processing units and machine readable storage media comprising a set of instructions, said instructions including instructions for providing the central gaming system to perform certain functions for each of the distrib-

uted gaming workstations. The functions include providing a plurality of dominos, wherein a first portion of the dominos is distributed to a first player and a second portion of the dominos is distributed to a second player, and wherein the first portion of dominos is distributed to the player according to a process that comprises receiving from the first player a wager; the first player receiving at least one domino, and comparing a value associated with the first portion of dominos to a value associated with the second portion of dominos to determine the outcome of play. The functions also include generating one or more datagrams containing data comprising the outcome of play, the outcome of play either being a winning result or not a winning result. In addition, the functions include transmitting the one or more datagram to the gaming workstation whereby the workstation may display the outcome of play at the first level and the second level. In one aspect, the distributed gaming workstations are general-purpose computing devices communicating with the central gaming system via the Internet. In another aspect, the distributed gaming systems comprise video gaming terminals. In yet another aspect, the distributed gaming workstations are distributed in a gaming casino.

**[0012]** In another aspect, the invention can be implemented by a machine readable storage medium comprising a set of instructions for execution by a gaming workstation having a display, the gaming workstation placed in communication with a gaming server over a network, such as the Internet. In one aspect, the storage medium comprises instructions for presenting on the display a wager game comprising domino tiles, a dealer, and at least one player. The storage medium also comprises instructions for facilitating play by the player, play comprising a plurality of dominos, wherein a first portion of the dominos is distributed to a first player and a second portion of the dominos is distributed to a second player, and wherein the first portion of dominos is distributed to the player according to a process that comprises receiving from the first player a wager, the first player receiving at least one domino, and comparing a value associated with the first portion of dominos to a value associated with the second portion of dominos to determine the outcome of play. In addition, the storage medium comprises instructions for the gaming server determining an outcome of play, the outcome of play either being a winning result or not a winning result. In one aspect, the gaming workstation comprises a general purpose computer. In another aspect, the gaming workstation comprises a video gaming terminal. In yet another aspect, the gaming workstation is installed in a casino.

**[0013]** Other aspects of the present invention will become apparent from the following detailed description, taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, which illustrate, by way of example, certain principles of the embodiments.

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

**[0014]** FIG. **1** is an illustration showing domino tiles along with values (or, equivalently, cards from a standard deck of playing cards) that may be ascribed to the domino tiles;

**[0015]** FIG. **2** is a diagram of a domino blackjack table;

**[0016]** FIG. **3** is a diagram of a domino blackjack table that includes a boneyard;

**[0017]** FIG. **4** is a functional diagram of a gaming system in which distributed gaming workstations communicate with a central gaming server;

**[0018]** FIG. **5** is a flow chart showing a sequence of operations performed by a client process executing in one of the distributed gaming workstations and a server process executing in the central gaming server in the system of FIG. **4** by which a domino blackjack game (played in a "deal mode") is played on the workstation in accordance with one representative embodiment;

**[0019]** FIG. **6** is a flow chart showing a sequence of operations performed by a client process executing in one of the distributed gaming workstations and a server process executing in the central gaming server in the system of FIG. **4** by which a domino blackjack game (played in a "draw mode") is played on the workstation in accordance with one representative embodiment.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

**[0020]** Domino games are provided that may be played as a wagered table game, a video game, a combined table and video game, or as a practice wagering game on a personal computer. The games of this disclosure include two categories of domino games, referred to herein as "deal mode domino blackjack" and "draw mode domino blackjack." In "deal mode," the dealer deals the domino tiles to each player in the game. In "draw mode," the players can select the domino tiles for their hands, for example, from a boneyard as described herein. The term "boneyard" is generally used in common domino games to refer to a group of leftover dominos (i.e. dominos not in a player's hand), which are placed face down on a surface, from which the players can draw additional dominos as a game progresses.

**[0021]** As used herein, the terms "domino" and "dominos" include conventional dominos. Such dominos may take the form of dominos tiles, but they can also be provided in other forms, such as chips, or paper cards or dice. The dominos typically include marking indicia (commonly referred to as "dots" or "pips") and two halves defined by a separating line. The dots can be inset on the face of the domino, or painted or otherwise placed on a face of the domino tile or chip. The dominos can also of course take the form of electronic chips or tiles with marking indicia.

**[0022]** In one embodiment, the domino games are domino versions of the conventional game of blackjack as described herein.

**[0023]** In one embodiment, the objective of the domino blackjack game is to achieve a target score that is as close to 21 as possible without going over 21. Alternatively, other target scores can be used in a domino blackjack game, for example a score from 15 to 25. In conventional blackjack, a score of 21 can be achieved with numerous combinations of cards that have values collectively equaling 21. For example, a playing card with an 8, a playing card with a 3, and a playing card with a 10 would comprise a hand that equals 21.

**[0024]** In conventional blackjack, a "natural" occurs when a player has a two-card hand that equals 21 (i.e. one Ace card and one card with a value of 10). In one embodiment of a domino blackjack game, the 0/1 domino tile is equivalent to the Ace playing card in conventional blackjack, and can have a value of either 1 or 11 at the player's discretion. Thus, in domino blackjack games, a "natural" can occur when a player has a 0/1 domino and a domino that has a value of 10 (i.e. one of the 4/6 or 5/5 dominos). In certain embodiments, the 0/0 domino can be designated as a "semi-wild" tile that can be used as if it had a value of a 0/1, 4/6, or 5/5 domino

tile. Therefore, a "natural" can occur when a player has the 0/0 and 0/1 domino tiles, the 0/0 and 4/6 domino tiles, or the 0/0 and 5/5 domino tiles. In other embodiments, a "natural" can occur when a player has any two domino tiles that equal 21 (e.g. 6/6 and the 5/4, or 6/6 and the 6/3, the 5/6 and the 5/5, 7/7 and 1/6, 8/8 and 2/3, or any other combination of tiles that give a score of 21). Alternatively, the 0/0 domino tile can be a "wild" for use as if it had the value of any domino tile in the set being used in the game.

**[0025]** In certain embodiments, two or more standard 28 domino sets (i.e. double-six domino set) are used in the domino blackjack games. A domino blackjack game can also be played with non-standard domino sets. For example, one or more sets of double-seven up to double-eighteen domino tile sets can be used. Thus, a score of 21 is achievable in many different ways, depending on the sets of dominos used in the game and on other scoring factors described below. Where non-standard domino sets are used, in which certain domino tiles may have a total point value of 21 (e.g. a 10/11 in a set of double-elevens, or a 9/12 in a set of double-twelves), a "natural" can occur in a one domino tile hand.

**[0026]** In certain embodiments, a player's score can be determined by adding together the number of dots on a player's domino tiles. For example, where a player has one 5/6 domino tile (i.e. having the numbers 5 and 6) and one 3/6 domino tile (i.e. having the numbers 3 and 6), the player's score would be 20 (i.e. the 5/6=11 and the 3/6=9 for a total of 20). The point values of the domino tiles in a standard 28 domino set are shown in Table 1 and are illustrated in FIG. **1**. The set of dominos shown in FIG. **1** includes dominos having pairs of numbers from zero to six. The dominos shown in FIG. **1** are commonly referred to as a double-six domino set. Table 1 also shows the number of each value tile in two standard 28 domino sets, as well as the number of tiles corresponding to the value that are present in two standard 28 domino sets.

TABLE 1

| Tile | Value | # of Tiles in Two Standard Domino Sets |
|---|---|---|
| 0/0 | 0 or "wild" or "semi-wild" | 2 |
| 0/1 | 1 or 11 | 2 |
| 0/2 or 1/1 | 2 | 4 |
| 0/3 or 1/2 | 3 | 4 |
| 0/4 or 1/3/ or 2/2 | 4 | 6 |
| 0/5, 1/4, or 2/3 | 5 | 6 |
| 0/6, 1/5, 2/4, or 3/3 | 6 | 8 |
| 1/6, 2/5, or 3/4 | 7 | 6 |
| 2/6, 3/5, or 4/4 | 8 | 6 |
| 3/6 or 4/5 | 9 | 4 |
| 4/6 or 5/5 | 10 | 4 |
| 5/6 | 11 | 2 |
| 6/6 | 12 | 2 |

**[0027]** In other embodiments, a player can choose the point value from one half of a domino to play in his hand. (As used herein, the term "hand" refers to the domino tiles that a player is using to determine his score.) For example, if a player has a 5/6 domino tile, the player can choose to play either the 5 or the 6. The player can then choose another point value from the other domino tiles in his hand. Thus, for instance, a player with a 5/6 domino tile, a 3/6 domino tile, and a 2/6 domino tile could have a score of 17 (5+6+6) or 18 (6+6+6) or 10 (5+3+2) or 14 (5+3+6) or 13 (5+6+2) or 14 (6+6+2) or 15 (6+3+6) or 11 (6+3+2) depending on which numbers the player selected to play. The player may be asked to choose a point value for each domino tile as it is dealt or drawn. For example, a player who is dealt or draws a 5/6 may be asked to choose a point value before being dealt or drawing a second domino tile, and may be asked to choose a point value from the second domino tile before being dealt or drawing a third domino tile.

**[0028]** In certain embodiments, the player may select "domino full" (i.e. the point value of a hand is equal to the total number of dots on the domino tiles) or "domino half" (i.e. the point value of a hand is equal to the dots on one half of each domino tile in the player's hand). "Domino full" or "domino half" can be selected prior to play (i.e. before any domino tiles are dealt or drawn) or during play (e.g. after one or more domino tiles have been dealt or drawn). "Domino full" and "domino half" can be played with standard or non-standard domino sets, wherein the domino tiles have numbers higher than six, such as sets with double-seven, double-eight, double-nine, double-ten, double-eleven, double-twelve, double-thirteen, double-fourteen, double-fifteen, double-sixteen, double-seventeen, double-eighteen, etc.

**[0029]** In other embodiments, before or during play, the players may select "domino high half" or "domino low half" In "domino high half," the player must play the highest number on each domino tile in his hand. For example, if a player has a 2/6 domino tile, a 3/6 domino tile, and a 4/5 domino tile, the player's hand would have a score of 17 (6+6+5). In "domino low half," the player must play the lowest number on each domino tile in his hand. For example, if a player has a 2/6 domino tile, a 3/6 domino tile, and a 4/5 domino tile, the player's hand would have a score of 9 (2+3+4), "High half" and "low half" can be played with standard or non-standard domino sets, wherein the domino tiles have numbers higher than six, such as sets with double-seven, double-eight, double-nine, double-ten, double-eleven, double-twelve, double-thirteen, double-fourteen, double-fifteen, double-sixteen, double-seventeen, double-eighteen, etc.

**[0030]** The values for "domino full," "domino half," "domino high half," and "domino low half" for a standard double-six domino set are exemplified in Table 2,

TABLE 2

| Tile | "Domino Full" Value | "Domino Half" Values | "Domino high half" Values | "Domino low half" Values |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0/0 | 0 or "wild" or "semi-wild" | 0 or "wild" or "semi-wild" | 0 or "wild" or "semi-wild" | 0 or "wild" or "semi-wild" |
| 0/1 | 1 or 11 | 0 or 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 0/2 | 2 | 0 or 2 | 2 | 0 |
| 1/1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 0/3 | 3 | 0 or 3 | 3 | 0 |
| 1/2 | 3 | 1 or 2 | 2 | 1 |
| 0/4 | 4 | 0 or 4 | 4 | 0 |
| 1/3 | 4 | 1 or 3 | 3 | 1 |
| 2/2 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| 0/5 | 5 | 0 or 5 | 5 | 0 |
| 1/4 | 5 | 1 or 4 | 4 | 1 |
| 2/3 | 5 | 2 or 3 | 3 | 2 |
| 0/6 | 6 | 8 | 6 | 0 |
| 1/5 | 6 | 1 or 5 | 5 | 1 |
| 2/4 | 6 | 2 or 4 | 4 | 2 |
| 3/3 | 6 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| 1/6 | 7 | 1 or 6 | 6 | 1 |

TABLE 2-continued

| Tile | "Domino Full" Value | "Domino Half" Values | "Domino high half" Values | "Domino low half" Values |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2/5 | 7 | 2 or 5 | 5 | 2 |
| 3/4 | 7 | 3 or 4 | 4 | 3 |
| 2/6 | 8 | 2 or 6 | 6 | 2 |
| 3/5 | 8 | 3 or 5 | 5 | 3 |
| 4/4 | 8 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| 3/6 | 9 | 3 or 6 | 6 | 3 |
| 4/5 | 9 | 4 or 5 | 5 | 4 |
| 4/6 | 10 | 4 or 6 | 6 | 4 |
| 5/5 | 10 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| 5/6 | 11 | 5 or 6 | 6 | 5 |
| 6/6 | 12 | 6 | 6 | 6 |

**[0031]** In one embodiment, domino blackjack can comprise a player "splitting" the point values on a domino tile and playing multiple hands. For example, if a double-twelve domino set is being used and a player has a 7/12 domino tile, the player could choose to play the 7 in one hand and the 12 in a separate hand. The subsequently dealt or drawn domino tiles could be scored as described above either with the full point value or by choosing the value of one half of the subsequently dealt or drawn domino tiles.

**[0032]** It should be understood that the above-described forms of scoring a hand are exemplary and not limiting, and also can be applied to scoring the dealer's hand as well as the player's hand.

**[0033]** The domino blackjack games are preferably but not necessarily played using the rules of conventional blackjack, and can be played in "deal mode" or "draw mode." Conventional rules of blackjack are described, for example, by Wong, 1992, BASIC BLACKJACK, Pi Yee Press, and Humble, 1987, THE WORLD'S GREATEST BLACKJACK BOOK, Main Street Books, both of which are incorporated by reference. In "deal mode," for example, after players make initial wagers, a dealer deals at least one domino tile to each player, including himself. The domino tiles can be dealt from a shoe containing two or more standard domino sets (i.e. double-six domino set) or non-standard domino sets (e.g. double-seven, double-eight, double-nine, double-ten, double eleven, or double twelve domino sets), or a combination of standard and non-standard domino sets. The blackjack hands can be scored by the total point value of the domino tiles as discussed above. In certain embodiments, where the dealer initially receives two domino tiles, one of the dealer's domino tiles is placed face-up so that all players can see its value, while the other domino tile is face-down (referred to as a "hole" domino tile). In other embodiments, the dealer is initially dealt only one domino tile, which may be placed face-up so that the players can see its value.

**[0034]** The object of the game is to have a better hand than the dealer (i.e. a hand that is closer to 21 than the dealer's hand, so long as the hand does not exceed 21). If a player's hand exceeds 21 (referred to as a "bust"), he loses automatically, even if the dealer's hand also exceeds 21. Typically, if the player and dealer have the same total point value, neither the player nor the dealer wins. In that case, a casino often keeps the wager, so the player effectively loses when his hand ties the dealer's hand.

**[0035]** Each player has several options for playing his hand, including, but not limited to, taking another domino tile (i.e. a "hit"), taking no more domino tiles (i.e. a "stand"), increasing the amount of wager and taking another domino tile (for example, a player can "double down" by doubling the wager, taking one more domino tile, and then standing), increasing the wager and having each of the two domino tiles become a first domino tile of a new hands (i.e. a "split"), or forfeit the bet and turn in the hand (i.e. a "surrender").

**[0036]** A player's turn is over once he decides to stand, unless he busts, in which case he automatically loses the game. After all players in a game have finished their turns, the dealer reveals his "hole" domino tile and plays the hand. Generally, a dealer must hit until getting a hand value of 17 or more. Typically, wagers are paid out at odds of 1:1. However, other payouts are possible. For example, some casinos provide a payout of 3:2 for a player having a "natural" as described above. Where two or more sets of dominos are used, the occurrence of a "natural" in a domino blackjack game is considerably less likely than in conventional blackjack, since there are 12 face cards (each ascribed a value of 10) in a standard deck of 52 playing cards, any of which could be paired with an Ace to get a natural. In two domino sets, there are more domino tiles with mid-range values (i.e. values of 4 to 8) than cards with mid-range values in a standard deck of playing cards, and equal numbers of domino tiles with 2, 3, and 9, thereby reducing the likelihood of getting a domino tile with a value of 10, Consequently, the payout for a "natural" in domino blackjack could be higher than 3:2 (e.g. 3:1, 4:1, etc.).

**[0037]** A domino blackjack game played in "draw mode" is played exactly like "deal mode" except that the players can select their own domino tile(s) rather than being dealt from a dealer. For example, a domino tile can be physically selected from a "boneyard" on a table, a card comprising a picture domino can be drawn from a deck or a pile, or a virtual domino tile can be selected using a computer screen on which the tile is selected by clicking on the desired tile and/or dragging and dropping the tile into a specified hand area (i.e. an area designated for displaying the player's hand). The term "boneyard" is used herein to refer to any source of domino tiles, such as a set or sets of domino tiles that are randomly arranged so that the player or players cannot see the number or dots on any of the domino tiles. For example, a "boneyard" can be a group of domino tiles that are placed face down (i.e. number side is not facing the players) on a surface, such as a table or the ground. The domino tiles in the boneyard are typically shuffled or otherwise randomly mixed up prior to the selection process in which a player or players choose a domino tile.

**[0038]** In certain embodiments, a domino blackjack game can be played with the rules of any variation of conventional blackjack. Numerous variations of blackjack are known, including but not limited to, Chinese blackjack, Double Attack blackjack, Spanish 21, Pontoon, and Double Exposure blackjack.

**[0039]** In one embodiment, the domino blackjack games can be played by one or more players in electronic video formats, on personal computer, over a global computer network, or in a live casino table game setting.

**[0040]** In a live casino table game setting, each of one or more players is first afforded an opportunity to place a wager to participate in the game. A wager is made by betting according to the casino's house rules.

**[0041]** FIG. **2** shows an exemplary table **10** for playing domino blackjack. As shown in FIG. **2**, the table **10** comprises several areas **11-18** for receiving wagers, hand areas

**21-27** for holding domino tiles, and a dealer box **30** for holding a dealer's hand. The hand areas **21**, **22**, **24**, **25**, and **27** are shown comprising various dominos shown as either hatched (face-up) or unhatched (face-down). It should be understood, however, that a player may hold or store domino tiles in a variety of ways. Furthermore, in lieu of a dealer box, FIG. **3** shows a table **40**, which includes a "boneyard" **42**. When it is a player's turn, a dealer (or a player) may draw a domino tile out of the boneyard **42** and place the drawn tile into a hand area associated with a player.

**[0042]** The embodiments of the domino wagering games disclosed herein are also operable in an electronic gaming machine. It is well known to utilize gaming machines, controlled by processing units, for operating wagering games. The processing unit is typically a computer microprocessor. The gaming machine incorporates a wager accepting means so that a player may place one or more wagers. Once a wager is accepted, a player can choose "deal mode" or "draw mode" of domino blackjack. Alternatively, a player can choose "deal mode" or "draw mode" of domino blackjack prior to placing a wager. Alternatively, either "deal mode" or "draw mode" of domino blackjack may be predetermined. A wager can be placed using any suitable means displayed on a gaming machine display unit such as a CRT screen, plasma screen, video screen, etc.

**[0043]** Play follows the conventional rules of blackjack as discussed above. Alternatively, a variation of conventional blackjack can be selected. A player can choose which rules the game will follow by selecting a game that is displayed on a gaming machine display unit such as a CRT screen, plasma screen, video screen, etc. For example, a player can select "deal mode" or "draw mode." A player can also select "domino full," "domino half," "low half," or "high half." A player can also be given an option of "splitting" during play.

**[0044]** Where "deal mode" is chosen, a gaming machine processor causes a virtual dealer to deal two virtual domino tiles to the player(s). The virtual dealer is also dealt two domino tiles, one of which is displayed with the number side exposed. Play then continues in accordance with the rules of the game that was previously chosen. Once each player in the game has finished his turn and the dealer's hand has been completed in accordance with conventional blackjack rules or a variant thereof, the processing unit causes each player's point value of the domino tiles of each hand to be compared to the dealer's hand to determine whether a payout is due. If the player wins the wager, the player is paid, for example, in credits or coins.

**[0045]** Where "draw mode" is chosen, a gaming machine processor displays a virtual "boneyard" from which the player can select two virtual domino tiles. The player can select a domino tile from the boneyard by clicking or by clicking, dragging, and dropping the domino tile into a specified hand area. The domino tiles are identified to the player on the gaming machine display unit. A gaming machine processor causes a virtual dealer to also select two virtual domino tiles, one of which is displayed with the number side exposed. Play then continues in accordance with the rules of the game that was previously chosen. Once each player in the game has finished his turn, the processing unit causes each player's total point value of the domino tiles each hand to be compared to the dealer's hand to determine whether a payout is due. If the player wins the wager, the player is paid, for example, in credits or coins.

**[0046]** Domino blackjack is particularly well-suited for implementation on an electronic gaming device, such as a personal computer, which communicates with a gaming server over a computer network Published PCT application WO 03/093921 A2 and U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2006/0079331 disclose systems whereby multiple distributed gaming workstations may engage in gaming activity via a central gaming server over a computer network such as the Internet. The entire contents of WO 03/093921 A2 and 2006/0079331 are incorporated by reference herein.

**[0047]** Embodiments will be described with particular reference to a domino blackjack game for which play is facilitated by means of a central gaming server providing game results to a plurality of distributed gaming workstations over a computer network. The distributed gaming workstations can be pooled together to form a virtual blackjack table. Alternatively, each player can play a separate instance of the game. In one possible example, the central gaming server facilitates play by distributed workstations via communication over the Internet. In another possible embodiment, the central gaming server facilitates play by distributed workstations connected to the gaming server via a local area network, for example workstations all located within a casino. In this latter embodiment, the gaming server could also be connected to the local area network.

**[0048]** Referring to FIG. **4**, a gaming system for gaming in an Internet embodiment is indicated generally by reference numeral **50**. The gaming system **50** includes a gaming server **52**, and an on-line casino website **53** hosted on a casino web server (not shown). The online casino website **53** is accessible by a player (not shown) through a player gaming workstation **54** in the form of an Internet-enabled computer workstation having a display monitor **55** and an associated pointing device **55**A such as a mouse or, alternatively, a touchpad. In this embodiment, online casino website **53** is shown as being logically connected to two computer workstations **54**. It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the online casino website **53** can be logically connected to any desired number of such computer workstations **54** simultaneously, which number is physically limited only by considerations of processing power and Internet access bandwidth.

**[0049]** The gaming server **52**, the online casino web server (not shown) corresponding to the online casino website **53**, and the computer workstations **54** are capable of communicating with each other by means of an open communication network that is, in this embodiment, the Internet. The Internet is represented in FIG. **5** as separate logical communication networks **56**, **57**, **58**, and **59**. The particular networking topology used and presence of intermediate networks or switching equipment is not important, and may for example make use of intervening communications network such as the public switched telephone network, cable networks, cellular wireless networks, WiFi, etc.

**[0050]** The gaming server **52** includes a corresponding database **60** with a credit account corresponding to each player who participates in a game offered by the online casino. In the illustrated embodiment, therefore, the database **60** has two associated, but separate, player credit accounts.

**[0051]** The gaming server **52** operates under control of a stored server program (not shown) capable of enabling the workstations **54** to each play a separate instance of a domino

blackjack game. Each instance of the domino blackjack game played by each workstation **54** is treated as totally independent of the other instances of the game.

**[0052]** The online casino website **53** enables a player who desires to play a domino blackjack game, by means of one of the computer workstations **54**, to place wagers on the game and to be presented with a display showing the outcome of play. Each participating player in an instance of the game is presented with graphical user interface ("GUI") on his respective computer workstation **54** by a separate stored program (not shown) in the workstation. The GUI presents to the player, on the display monitor **55**, a display of the domino blackjack game selected for play.

**[0053]** Each computer workstation **54** may take the form of a conventional personal computer operating under a Windows XP, ME, 2000 or other operating system, which is well known and commercially available from the Microsoft Corporation of Redmond, Wash., USA, or other operating system such as provided by Apple Computer or a Linux operating system. The gaming server **52** operates for example under the Windows NT operating system. The stored workstation program (not shown) and the corresponding stored server program will be referred to, for convenience, as a client process and a server process, respectively. The server process generates one or more random events that determine the outcome of play after each hand is scored during the domino blackjack game. The client process of any particular computer workstation **54** obtains the result of the random events from the gaming server **52**, along a communication network and displays the outcome of the game on the display monitor **55** of the workstation in an intelligible manner, e.g., by causing the player's and dealer's score to be displayed thereby showing the outcome. In order to play the domino blackjack games from any particular computer workstation **54**, the client process (not shown) must first be downloaded to that computer workstation from the gaming server **52** or, alternatively from a separate web server (not shown), and then installed on the workstation.

**[0054]** In use, a player wishing to participate in the game of domino blackjack uses a computer workstation **54** to access the online casino website **53** of his choice FIGS. **5** and **6** are flow charts showing a sequence of operations performed by a client process executing in one of the distributed gaming workstations **54** and a server process executing in the central gaming server **52** in the system of FIG. **4** by which a domino blackjack game is played on the workstation in accordance with one representative embodiment.

**[0055]** Referring now to FIG. **5**, at step **102**, a workstation **54** launches their Internet browser and establishes a connection with the gaming server **52**. At step **104**, a player downloads and installs a client application that consists of an executable file that contains logic for presenting a domino blackjack game on the user interface **55** of the workstation **54**. At step **106**, the player launches the application.

**[0056]** To play the game, the user decides on a wager using the mouse and wager icons on the screen and then clicks a deal or draw icon on a display, shown as step **108** in FIG. **5**. At step **110**, a datagram is generated in the client process identifying the workstation (such as by workstation IP address, username, or other means) and containing data indicating the game the player has selected (such as "deal mode" or "draw mode") and the amount of the wager. The datagram is sent to the gaming server **52**. At step **112**, the gaming server **52** activates a state machine for generating an instance of play for the workstation, and randomly selects one or more virtual domino tiles to generate the hand for the player and the dealer. At step **114**, the gaming server **52** sends a datagram to the workstation **54** containing data identifying the domino tiles randomly selected. At step **116**, the datagram is received at the client process in the workstation **54** and the player's hand is displayed.

**[0057]** At step **118**, the player can choose to hit, stand, or split. The selection is received by the client process. At step **120**, the client process generates a datagram identifying what mode of action the player has chosen and transmits the action to the gaming server **52**.

**[0058]** At step **122**, the gaming server **52** randomly selects an additional domino tile to be dealt to the player, unless the player has chosen to stand. At step **124**, the gaming server **52** sends a datagram to the workstation **54** containing data identifying the randomly selected additional domino tile. At step **126**, the datagram is received at the client process in the workstation **54** and the additional domino is displayed with the player's hand. Steps **118** to **126** are be repeated until the player decides to stand or until the point value of the player's hand exceeds 21.

**[0059]** Where a selection to stand is received by the client process, the client process generates a datagram indicating that the player's hand is complete and transmits the action to the gaming server, as shown in step **128**. At step **130**, the gaming server generates the dealer's hand by randomly selecting tiles in accordance with conventional or house blackjack rules.

**[0060]** At step **134**, the gaming server **52** determines whether a winning hand has occurred with reference to the dealer's hand (e.g. the player's hand has a value greater than the dealer's hand without exceeding 21). If the outcome was not a winning result, shown at step **136**, the player loses the wager. If the outcome is a winning result, shown at step **138**, the player wins according to a predetermined payout. Generally, a payout is set at 1:1, so that a winner receives a 1:1 return on the wager (e.g. if a player wagers $10, a winning hand equals a payout of $20).

**[0061]** Referring now to FIG. **6**, where "draw mode" is selected to start a game (branch A of FIG. **5**), a datagram is generated in the client process identifying the workstation (such as by workstation IP address, username, or other means) and containing data indicating the game the player has selected (such as "deal mode" or "draw mode") and the amount of the wager, shown as step **210**. The datagram is sent to the gaming server **52**. At step **212**, the gaming server **52** activates a state machine for generating an instance of play for the workstation, and generates a virtual boneyard of randomly placed virtual domino tiles and randomly selects two domino tiles for the dealer's hand. At step **214**, the gaming server **52** sends a datagram to the workstation **54** containing data regarding the boneyard and displaying one of the randomly selected dealer's domino tiles face up (so that the point value is shown to the player) and the other randomly selected dealer's domino tile face down (so that the point value is hidden from the player). At step **216**, the datagram is received at the client process in the workstation **54** and the boneyard is displayed with the virtual domino tiles facedown so that the numbers cannot be viewed by the players, and one of the dealer's domino tiles is displayed so the player can see its point value. At step **218**, the player can click on a virtual domino tile in the boneyard and drag the

virtual domino tile into a specified hand area as described above. The selection is received by the client process and is displayed as the player's hand.

**[0062]** Step **218** can be repeated until the player decides to stand or until the point value of the player's hand exceeds 21. At step **220**, a player can select to stand. The client process receives the selection. At step **222**, the client process generates a datagram identifying what mode of action the player has chosen and transmits the action to the gaming server **52**.

**[0063]** At step **224**, the gaming server **52** randomly selects an additional domino tile from the boneyard to be dealt to the dealer and continues to generate the dealer's hand in accordance with conventional or house blackjack rules.

**[0064]** At block **226**, the gaming server **52** determines whether a winning hand has occurred with reference to the dealer's hand (e.g. the player's hand has a value greater than the dealer's hand without exceeding 21). If the outcome was not a winning result, shown at step **228**, the player loses the wager. If the outcome is a winning result, shown at step **230**, the player wins according to a predetermined payout. Generally, a payout is set at 1:1, so that a winner receives a 1:1 return on the wager (e.g. if a player wagers $10, a winning hand equals a payout of $20).

**[0065]** As described herein, the domino games can use domino tiles, or any other means of presenting dominos, such as on cards or chips or dice.

**[0066]** As used in this specification and the appended claims, the singular forms "a," "an" and "the" include plural references unless the content clearly dictates otherwise.

**[0067]** It is to be understood that even though numerous characteristics of the present invention have been set forth in the foregoing description, together with an explanation of various possible embodiments and modifications thereto, this disclosure is illustrative only and changes may be made within the spirit of the invention to the full extent indicated by the broad general meaning of the terms in which the appended claims are expressed.

What is claimed is:

**1**. A method of playing a domino game involving at least one player and a dealer, the method comprising:

receiving from each player a wager;

each player receiving one or more domino tiles;

the dealer receiving one or more domino tiles, one of which is displayed face-up;

each player having an option to take another domino tile;

the dealer having an option to take another domino tile when each player has chosen not to take another domino tile; and

comparing a value of the domino tiles in each player's hand with a value of the domino tiles in the dealer's hand.

**2**. The method of claim **1**, wherein each player wins the domino game where the total value of the player's hand is closer to 21 than the total value of the dealer's hand, so long as the total value of the player's hand does not exceed 21 and is not equal to the total value of the dealer's hand.

**3**. The method of claim **1**, wherein each player receives domino tiles by drawing them from a source of domino tiles.

**4**. The method of claim **3**, wherein the source of domino tiles comprises domino tiles laying face down on a surface.

**5**. The method of claim **3**, wherein the source of domino tiles comprises a virtual boneyard, and wherein selecting each domino comprises a user clicking on a domino tile in the virtual boneyard.

**6**. The method of claim **5**, further comprising dragging a domino that has been selected to a first zone, and dropping the domino into specified hand area.

**7**. The method of claim **1**, wherein the value of the player's hand comprises the total of the point values from one half of each domino tile in a player's hand.

**8**. The method of claim **1**, wherein the player is given the option to play multiple hands after receiving a single domino tile, wherein each of the multiple hands comprise the point value from one half of the single domino tile.

**9**. A central gaming system for playing a domino game, the system comprising:

one or more processing units and machine readable storage media comprising a set of instructions, said instructions including instructions for providing the central gaming system to perform the functions of, for each of the distributed gaming workstations:

(a) providing a plurality of dominos, wherein a first portion of the dominos is distributed to a first player and a second portion of the dominos is distributed to a second player, and wherein the first portion of dominos is distributed to the player according to a process that comprises

receiving from the first player a wager;

the first player receiving at least one domino; and

comparing a value associated with the first portion of dominos to a value associated with the second portion of dominos to determine the outcome of play,

(b) generating one or more datagrams containing data comprising the outcome of play, the outcome of play either being a winning result or not a winning result, and

(c) transmitting the one or more datagram to the gaming workstation whereby the workstation may display the outcome of play at the first level and the second level.

**10**. The central gaming system of claim **9**, wherein

the distributed gaming workstations comprise general purpose computing devices communicating with the central gaming system via the Internet.

**11**. The central gaming system of claim **9**, wherein the distributed gaming systems comprise video gaming terminals.

**12**. The central gaming system of claim **9**, wherein the distributed gaming workstations are distributed in a gaming casino.

**13**. The central gaming system of claim **9**, wherein the plurality of dominos comprise virtual domino tiles that are displayed on a monitor.

**14**. The central gaming system of claim **9**, wherein the first player receiving at least one domino tile comprises the first player drawing the at least one domino tile out of a source of domino tiles.

**15**. The central gaming system of claim **9**, wherein the second player is a dealer and wherein the dealer carries out a portion of the process.

**16**. The central gaming system of claim **15**, further comprising the dealer receiving at least one domino.

**17**. The central gaming system of claim **15**, further comprising:

if the value associated with second portion of dominos is greater than the value associated with the first portion of dominos without going over a threshold value, the dealer retaining the wager.

**18**. The central gaming system of claim **15**, further comprising:

if the value associated with first portion of dominos is greater than the value associated with the second portion of dominos without going over a threshold value, the first player receiving a payoff.

**19**. The central gaming system of claim **15**, wherein the first player wins the domino game when the value associated with the first portion of dominos is closer to 21 than the value associated with the second portion of dominos, so long as the value associated with first portion of dominos does not exceed 21 and is not equal to the value associated with second portion of dominos.

**20**. A game for play by a player and a dealer,

wherein the game is played with domino tiles and the player and the dealer each receive a plurality of domino tiles,

wherein each domino tile is ascribed a point value or a playing card value depending on the number of dots on the domino tile, and

wherein the point value or playing card value of the domino tiles held by the player and the dealer are summed to determine a score for the player and the dealer, the outcome of the game determined, at least in part, by comparison of the score of the player and the score of the dealer.

**21**. The game of claim **20**, wherein the game comprises blackjack.

**22**. The game of claim **20**, wherein each player wins the domino game where the total value of the player's hand is closer to 21 than the total value of the dealer's hand, so long as the total value of the player's hand does not exceed 21 and is not equal to the total value of the dealer's hand.

**23**. The game of claim **20**, wherein each player receives domino tiles by drawing them from a source of domino tiles.

**24**. The game of claim **23**, wherein the source of domino tiles comprises domino tiles laying face down on a surface.

**25**. The game of claim **23**, wherein the source of domino tiles comprises a virtual boneyard, and wherein selecting each domino comprises a user clicking on a domino tile in the virtual boneyard.

**26**. The game of claim **25**, further comprising dragging a domino that has been selected to a first zone, and dropping the domino into a specified hand area.

**27**. The game of claim **20**, wherein the value of the player's hand comprises the total of the point values from one half of each domino tile in a player's hand.

**28**. The game of claim **20**, wherein the player is given the option to play multiple hands after receiving a single domino tile, wherein each of the multiple hands comprise the point value from one half of the single domino tile.

**29**. The game of claim **20**, wherein the game is played as a table game.

**30**. The game of claim **20**, wherein the game is played as a video game.

**31**. The game of claim **20**, wherein the game is played on an electronic gaming device.

**32**. The game of claim **31**, wherein the electronic gaming device is a personal computer.

**33**. A machine readable storage medium comprising a set of instructions for execution by a gaming workstation having a display, the gaming workstation placed in communication with a gaming server over a network, the instructions comprising:

(a) instructions for presenting on the display a wager game comprising domino tiles, a dealer, and at least one player;

(b) instructions for facilitating play by the player,

play comprising a plurality of dominos, wherein a first portion of the dominos is distributed to a first player and a second portion of the dominos is distributed to a second player, and wherein the first portion of dominos is distributed to the player according to a process that comprises

receiving from the first player a wager;

the first player receiving at least one domino; and

comparing a value associated with the first portion of dominos to a value associated with the second portion of dominos to determine the outcome of play; and

(c) instructions for the gaming server determining an outcome of play, the outcome of play either being a winning result or not a winning result.

**34**. The machine readable storage medium of claim **33**, wherein the gaming workstation comprises a general purpose computer.

**35**. The machine readable storage medium of claim **33**, wherein the gaming workstation comprises a video gaming terminal.

**36**. The machine readable storage medium of claim **33**, wherein the gaming workstation is installed in a casino.

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