A method of operating an enhanced game of roulette is provided. The method includes receiving one or more selections and player-funded wagers on possible roulette game outcomes from a player. An actual roulette game outcome is then determined. The determined outcome then determines whether the player is to be awarded any winnings and, if so, any determined winnings are awarded to the player. The method further includes determining if a trigger event has occurred. If a trigger event has occurred, then one or more subsequent games of roulette are provided to the player. Each subsequent game does not require any player-funded wagers from the player. In each subsequent game, a roulette game outcome is determined for the subsequent game. A determination is made as to whether the player is to be awarded any bonus award based upon the roulette game outcome for the subsequent game. A bonus award is determined and, if any bonus award is determined to be awarded, then the bonus award is awarded to the player. Methods for enhancing other wagering games are also provided.
FIG. 4

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<td>2</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
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$15 $30 $15

RED $5 BLACK $10

FIG. 5

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FIG. 6

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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
START

NEW GAME

RECEIVE PLAYER WAGERS

DETERMINE GAME OUTCOME

DETERMINE & AWARD ANY PLAYER WINNINGS

TRIGGER EVENT OCCURRED?

NO

YES

PROVIDE SUBSEQUENT GAME

DETERMINE SUBSEQUENT GAME OUTCOME

DETERMINE AND AWARD ANY BONUS AWARD

ANY MORE SUBSEQUENT GAMES TO BE PROVIDED?

NO

YES

FIG. 7
ENHANCED WAGERING GAME
CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS


TECHNICAL FIELD

[0002] The present invention relates to wagering games, such as the game of roulette and, in particular, methods for enhancing such games.

BACKGROUND

[0003] The game of roulette is a popular traditional casino table game. The game involves a wheel divided into segments. A traditional wheel includes 36 segments, numbered 1 to 36, which are divided into two distinct colors (traditionally red and black). One or two additional segments, numbered “0” and “00,” also appear on the wheel. The additional segments are colored a different color (traditionally green). Players place wagers on possible game outcomes on a wagering layout. A variety of betting options are normally provided. A player can place a wager on a particular number or particular groups of numbers (for example red/black, even/odd, etc.). Options that provide lower probabilities of occurring provide the player with higher possible wager returns. The game outcome is determined by spinning the wheel and dropping a ball onto the wheel. The game outcome is defined by the segment in which the ball comes to rest.

[0004] The game play and betting options for roulette are one of the easier to comprehend among casino games. Hence, the game has proved popular among less experienced players as well as experienced players. However, the lack of variation or ability to award larger bonus or jackpot awards can cause players to lose interest in the game. Similar issues can be found in other traditional casino table games.

[0005] It is desirable to provide some form of enhancement to the game of roulette, and other such wagering games, in order to maintain the interest of the player. Having said that, it is important that any enhancement does not detract from the traditional game as this may deter more traditional players.

[0006] One form of enhancement can be the incorporation of one or more large jackpot prizes that can be won. While the chance of winning a large prize may attract the interest of players, from the perspective of the game provider, it is necessary that such prizes are not won frequently to maintain profitability in providing the enhancement.

[0007] The traditional game of roulette does not conveniently provide game outcomes of sufficiently low probability to prove viable to a game provider. In traditional roulette, the lowest probability game outcome is a particular number occurring. In a “00” implementation, this equates to a 1 in 38 chance, which would result in jackpot prizes being awarded too frequently.

SUMMARY

[0008] According to a first aspect of the present invention, there is provided a method of operating an enhanced game of roulette, the method including the steps of:
[0009] a player placing a wager on an underlying game of roulette;
[0010] receiving one or more outcome selections on which to base resolution on the wager on possible roulette game outcomes from a player;
[0011] determining an actual roulette game outcome;
[0012] determining if the player is to be awarded any winnings based on the wager and game outcome;
[0013] awarding any determined winnings to the player;
[0014] determining if a trigger event has occurred, wherein if a trigger event has occurred:
[0015] providing one or more subsequent games of roulette to the player, each of the one or more subsequent games not requiring any additional player-funded wagers from the player, each subsequent game including:
[0016] determining a roulette game outcome for the subsequent game;
[0017] determining if the player is to be awarded any bonus award based upon the roulette game outcome for the subsequent game;
[0018] determining a bonus award, if any bonus award is determined to be awarded; and awarding any determined bonus award to the player.

[0019] Preferably, the step of providing one or more subsequent games of roulette to the player includes providing the player with a credit amount to be used exclusively as non-player-funded wagers in the one or more subsequent games. In certain embodiments, each subsequent game may further include receiving one or more outcome selections and non-player-funded wagers on possible roulette game outcomes for the subsequent game from the player, wherein the one or more outcome selections and non-player-funded wagers are assessed in the step of determining if the player is to be awarded any bonus award. In alternative embodiments, each subsequent game may further include receiving one or more automatic outcome selections and non-player-funded wagers on possible game outcomes for the subsequent game without influence from the player, wherein the one or more automatic outcome selections and non-player-funded wagers are assessed in the step of determining if the player is to be awarded any bonus award.

[0020] In exemplary embodiments, the trigger event includes the actual roulette game outcome being a particular predetermined outcome. The particular outcome may be the same as the outcome from an immediately previous game of roulette, or may be another outcome, such as a randomly determined outcome.

[0021] In preferred embodiments, the trigger event includes the placement of a separate player-funded wager by the player on a side bet option. Ideally, at least a portion of the player-funded wager placed on the side bet option is added to a progressive jackpot pool; wherein a possible bonus award is the award of a jackpot amount sourced from the progressive jackpot pool. The pool may also have a seed fund so that the progressive jackpot has a valuable starting value, to encourage play after a jackpot is awarded. The probability of achieving an award of a jackpot from the progressive jackpot pool can vary relative to the size of the player-funded wager placed on the side bet option.
As an additional point of novelty, when there is a percentage award that is less than 100%, larger percentages (not to exceed 100%, or not to exceed a lower percentage such as 60%, 50%, 40% or the like) may be awarded on larger side bet wager amounts. For example, if a unit-side bet can be awarded 10% of the jackpot award for a predetermined event, then a two-unit wager may return 20%, a three-unit wager may return 30%, etc., on the same predetermined event. Preferably, more than one subsequent game can be provided as a basis of determining jackpot outcomes, the number of subsequent games to be provided being dependent upon the size of the player-funded wager placed on the side bet option. The size of the credit amount provided can alternatively be made proportional to the size of the player-funded wager placed on the side bet option. Similarly, the number of game outcome selections that can be received for the subsequent game can be made proportional to the size of the player-funded wager placed on the side bet option when the possible awards include fixed-value (e.g., dollar) awards or are fixed multipliers on wagers. In a preferred embodiment, jackpot awards are paid on multiple, sequentially played games.

In certain embodiments, the method further includes the step of allowing the player to place any additional player-funded wagers for the subsequent game, wherein the additional player-funded wagers are considered only in accordance with the normal rules of roulette and are not considered for award of any bonus award nor are the wagers used for the side bet.

In optional particular embodiments, the outcome from the subsequent game is determined on one or more separate roulette wheels from the initial roulette game.

In certain alternative embodiments, the step of determining a bonus award includes:

- providing a further game of roulette; and
- determining the bonus award on the basis of the outcome of the further game or games.

For example, a subsequent game comprises two extra spins, and if the spin that triggers the bonus event, the previous spin and at least one bonus spin outcomes are identical (i.e., three black 13), the player wins a bonus prize.

Preferred embodiments of the present invention provide an enhanced game of roulette, which opens the possibility of providing the award of large bonus prizes and jackpot prizes while retaining a fairly traditional look and feel to the game play of roulette.

According to a further aspect of the present invention, there is provided an electronic multi-player platform for enabling a roulette wagering game, including:

- a game display for displaying a virtual roulette wheel or a physical roulette wheel;
- a player display;
- a player interface for inputting wager decisions in the game of roulette and for inputting an optional side bet decision and side bet amount;
- a game processor for randomly determining a roulette game outcome, wherein the processor is further programmed to enable a side bet game, wherein at least one bonus game is offered when a side wager is made and a predetermined event occurs triggering the bonus game, and wherein a number of bonus games awarded is proportional to an amount of the side bet wager.

According to a further aspect of the present invention, there is provided a method of operating an enhanced wagering game, the method including the steps of:

- receiving one or more selections and player-funded wagers on possible game outcomes from a player;
- determining an actual game outcome;
- determining if the player is to be awarded any winnings;
- awarding any determined winnings to the player;
- determining if a trigger event has occurred, wherein if a trigger event has occurred:
  - providing one or more subsequent games to the player, each of the one or more subsequent games not requiring any player-funded wagers from the player, each subsequent game including:
    - determining a game outcome for the subsequent game;
    - determining if the player is to be awarded any bonus award based upon at least the game outcome for the subsequent game;
    - determining a bonus award, if any bonus award is determined to be awarded; and
    - awarding any determined bonus award to the player.

According to a further aspect of the present invention, there is provided a method of operating an enhanced card game, the method including the steps of:

- receiving player-funded wagers from a player;
- determining an actual card game outcome;
- determining if the player is to be awarded any winnings;
- awarding any determined winnings to the player;
- determining if a trigger event has occurred, wherein if a trigger event has occurred:
  - providing one or more subsequent games to the player, each of the one or more subsequent games not requiring any additional player-funded wagers from the player, each subsequent game including:
    - determining a card game outcome for the subsequent game;
    - determining if the player is to be awarded any bonus award based upon at least the card game outcome for the subsequent game;
    - determining a bonus award, if any bonus award is determined to be awarded; and
    - awarding any determined bonus award to the player.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Further features and aspects of the invention will become apparent from the following description of preferred embodiments given in relation to the accompanying drawings, in which:

- FIG. 1 shows an electronic gaming machine console on which the game can be provided;
- FIG. 2 is a functional block schematic diagram of functional elements of an electronic gaming machine;
- FIG. 3 shows the display of a betting layout in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention;
- FIG. 4 shows an enhanced betting layout display for a free game;
- FIG. 5 shows an enhanced secondary betting layout for a free game;
- FIG. 6 shows an alternative enhanced betting layout display for a free game; and
FIG. 7 illustrates the general process steps involved in an implementation of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The present invention lends itself to many different implementations, as will be apparent to those skilled in the art. The following examples are intended to illustrate certain possible implementations. These implementations are largely a matter of a relatively straightforward software modification to an existing game.

A method of playing a wagering game according to the present technology may include steps of: providing a wagering system comprising wagering implements selected from the group consisting of:

a) physical wagering elements selected from the group consisting of roulette wheel and ball, a physical wheel and pointer, dice and playing cards; and

b) virtual wagering elements selected from the group consisting of virtual roulette wheel and ball, a virtual wheel and pointer, virtual dice and virtual playing cards.

In the method, a player places a wager on one or more possible wagering game outcomes. A wagering game outcome is determined using the wagering implements. The game system (including a live dealer or croupier or electronic system) determines if the player is to be awarded any winnings on the wagering game outcome, and any determined winnings are awarded to the player. It is determined if a trigger event has occurred in one or more wagering game outcomes, and if a trigger event has occurred:

one or more additional wagering games is provided to the player subsequent to occurrence of the trigger event, each subsequent game including:

determining a wagering game outcome for the subsequent game;

determining if the player is to be awarded any bonus award based upon the wagering game outcome for the subsequent wagering game;

determining a bonus award, if any bonus award is determined to be awarded based on the subsequent wagering game; and

determining any determined bonus award to the player.

In the method, the subsequent game or games may be provided on the wagering game without using player-funded credit on wagers from the player. What this means is that special credits (distinguishable from credits obtained by the player adding value to the game by cash, tokens, existing real credit, tickets, and the like) are awarded to the player that is separately registered and accounted for, or alternatively, credits for a number of games are awarded (as explained later, at fixed or controlled wager amounts from these special credits).

The step of providing one or more subsequent wagering games to the player may include:

providing the player with a special credit amount that can be used exclusively as wagers in one or more subsequent wagering games without using player-funded credit on wagers. These “special credits” are the credits mentioned above that are separately accounted for as compared to player-funded credits. The subsequent game(s) may further include receiving one or more outcome selections and/or one or more special credit amount wagers on possible wagering game outcomes for the subsequent wagering game from the player, wherein the one or more selections and special credit amount funded wagers may be assessed in the step of determining if the player is to be awarded any bonus award.

Each subsequent wagering game may further include receiving one or more of automatic selections and special credit amount-funded wagers on possible game outcomes for the subsequent wagering game without influence from the player, wherein one or more automatic selections and special credit amount-funded wagers are assessed in the step of determining if the player is to be awarded any bonus award.

In one method according to this technology, the trigger event includes a roulette game outcome being a particular predetermined outcome (a single outcome) or consecutive, particular outcomes (multiple identical outcomes that occur in consecutive spins of the wheel or within a predetermined number of spins, such as two “red 5’s” occurring within two, three, four or five spins, etc.). In one roulette method, the particular outcome may be the same as the outcome from an immediately previous game of roulette. For example, the trigger event might be hitting a black 3, and the bonus award is made for hitting three consecutive black 3s. The trigger event may require the placement of a side bet wager. At least a portion of the side bet wager may be added to a progressive jackpot pool, wherein at least some bonus awards are sourced from the progressive jackpot pool.

Alternatively, the method may have a trigger event that includes another wheel game such as “Big Wheel” game outcome, a dice game outcome being a particular outcome or consecutive particular outcomes or the trigger event includes a playing card game outcome being a particular outcome or consecutive particular outcomes. As explained herein in greater detail, the probability of achieving an award of a jackpot from the progressive jackpot pool can vary relative to the size of the player-funded wager placed on the side bet option, and where more than one subsequent game can be provided. The number of subsequent games to be provided may be dependent upon the size of the player-funded wager placed on the side bet option. For example, a one-unit wager could fund one bonus game outcome while a four-unit wager could fund four consecutively played bonus game outcomes.

An invention relating to roulette will be described with reference to a stand-alone electronic gaming machine version of roulette made and distributed by Shuffle Master Australasia Pty Limited under the trade mark STAR ROULETTE™ systems. Such systems and alternative features are exemplified by U.S. Pat. No. 6,659,866 and Published U.S. Patent Documents 20080113706, 20060157928, and 20050218590.

The STAR ROULETTE™ system machine is a single-player electronic gaming machine that includes a primary display screen 16 and a separate secondary display screen 18. An example of a two-screen gaming machine console 10 is shown in FIG. 1. The machine 10 includes player input buttons 12 and a credit/currency/or ticket input mechanism 14 to receive funds from a player to allow the player to participate in the game. The primary display screen 16 is a touch screen and displays a betting layout as well as other information, such as player-funded credit amount remaining 304 and a total win meter 306 (shown in FIG. 3). The player can select possible game outcomes and place respective player-funded wagers by way of the touch screen 16 and
When the player has placed the bets, the player activates the game by way of a start button or a start option 308 on the touch screen 16. Upon activating the game, the second display 18 shows a simulated roulette wheel spinning and a ball coming to rest in one of the wheel’s segments, which is determined to be the game outcome. It will be appreciated that the simulated display of the wheel is simply an animation to reveal a randomly determined game outcome to the player. The actual determination of the game outcome is made by the machine’s gaming processor.

The main functional elements of the machine are illustrated in FIG. 2 and include the main processor 202 connected to other functional elements by way of a bus connection 220. Associated video drivers 210, 228 are provided for each display 16, 18 and a touch screen interface 214 is provided for the primary display 16. Other elements include various storage devices such as RAM 204, ROM 206 and hard drive 208, user interface 222 and credit interface 224. In certain embodiments, the machine may be required to be part of a network of linked machines, in which case, a communication interface 226 allows the machine to communicate with the network.

There are numerous available computer languages that may be used to implement the game, among the more common being Ada, ALGOL, APL, awk, BASIC, C, C++, COBOL, DELPHI®, EIFFEL®, Euphoria, Forth, Fortran, HTML, Icon, JAVA®, Javascript®, Lisp, Logo, Mathematica®, MATLAB®, Miranda, Modula-2, Oberon, Pascal, PERL®, PL/I, Prolong, Python®, Rexx, SAS®, Scheme, sed, Simula, Smalltalk, SNOBOL®, SQL, Visual Basic®, Visual C++, Visual LISP®, and XML.

Any commercial processor can be employed for implementation, either as a single processor, serial or parallel set of processors. Examples of commercial processors include, but are not limited to, MERCEDSM, PENTIUM®, PENTIUM II XEONS®, CEREBRAM®, PENTIUM PROSM, EFFICEON®, ATHLONS®, AMD® and the like, on PC, MAC® systems or in the form of embedded processors.

The display screens may be segment display screens, analog display screens, digital display screens, CRTs, LED screens, plasma screens, liquid crystal diode screens, and the like.

In general terms, the present invention proposes to enhance the game of roulette by offering a player the possibility of participating in a feature that is triggered by an event arising during the course of a normal roulette game. An example of the triggered feature is essentially one or more subsequent games of roulette that do not require player-funded wagers to determine any bonus award to be made to the player. In other words, the one or more subsequent games can be effectively free games for the player. Within this general premise, the traditional look, feel and game play of roulette can be maintained as far as possible. In other embodiments, participation in a triggered event requires a separate wager.

The general game play process is shown in FIG. 7. The initial steps are effectively the traditional play of roulette. A new game is started at (702) and the player selects and places wagers on possible game outcomes (at 704) via the primary touch screen display 16. When the bets are placed, the player initiates the game and the secondary display 18 shows a simulation of a roulette wheel determining the game outcome at step 706. Any winning wagers are determined and associated winnings are awarded to the player at 708. The game processor determines if a trigger event has occurred (at 710). If no trigger event occurs, the process returns to a new game at 702. If a trigger event has occurred, one or more subsequent games are provided, the first of which is initiated at 712. In a first preferred embodiment, no additional wager is required to participate in the subsequent event. In an alternative embodiment, a separate wager is made upon the occurrence of a triggering event, or when the primary game wager is lodged. The jackpot can grow much more rapidly when the secondary event wager is made before the play of the primary roulette game. The outcome of the subsequent game is determined (at 714), again using the secondary display 18 to show the roulette wheel simulation. The outcome of the subsequent game is used to determine if the player has won a bonus award, the nature of any such bonus award and awards any determined bonus award (at 716). At 718, it is determined if all subsequent games have been played. If yes, the process returns to a new game (at 702). If no, the next subsequent game is initiated (at 712). There are a number of possible permutations and implementations within the general game play process, which will be described below.

An example of a screenshot of an enhanced STAR ROULETTE™ betting layout as displayed on the primary display 16 is illustrated in FIG. 3. The layout is the same as the normal betting layout of STAR ROULETTE™ with the addition of a “jackpot spins” side bet option 302. To be eligible for the feature, the player must place a wager in the side bet option 302 before play of the primary roulette game. Consequently, if a side bet wager is placed and the trigger event occurs, the feature is provided. If the trigger event does not occur, the player loses the side bet wager. If the trigger event occurs but the side bet was not wagered, regular play continues. Any other wagers placed in the triggering game are resolved before the feature is provided.

In exemplary embodiments, the trigger event is the recurrence of the same game outcome as arose in the previous game. In other words, the double hit of the same number in two consecutive games results in a bonus event trigger. In alternative embodiments, the trigger event is the occurrence of a particular preselected number outcome (for example, “09”).

In less preferred embodiments, the number that can cause the trigger is able to be pre-selected by the player at the time of placing their wager on the side bet option. Potentially, embodiments could be provided in which the player can place multiple side bet wagers and pre-select a trigger number for each wager; however, it is perceived that this would be less attractive to gaming establishments.

Ideally, the number of free subsequent games provided is functionally related to the level of wager placed by the player on the side bet option in the triggering game. For example, one free game is provided for every $5 placed on the side bet option. If the player wagers $20.00 on the side bet, four free games are provided. Separate payouts may be made on each separate game, or payouts may be made on the occurrence all separate game outcomes, i.e., four consecutive black 5’s vs. four separate chances to spin a black 5.

Conceivably, a free subsequent game could itself provide a trigger event that would trigger a subset of additional free subsequent games.

In each subsequent game, certain numbers will be assigned to award jackpot prizes if they appear as the game outcome of the subsequent game. In preferred implementations, these certain numbers are predetermined and/or related
to the number that triggered the feature. For example, if a repeated “20” triggered the feature, then hitting the “20” again in the subsequent game will award a major jackpot and hitting either a “0” or “00” will award a mini jackpot. The primary display 16 then displays a corresponding altered betting layout showing the jackpot assignments, see FIG. 4.

In some embodiments, the determination of level of jackpot to be awarded is done over the course of more than one subsequent game. In one example, for the first subsequent game, certain numbers are assigned to result in a jackpot prize. If the outcome of the first subsequent game results in the jackpot prize, then a second subsequent game is used to determine the level of jackpot to be awarded. Hence, for the second subsequent game, each number is assigned a jackpot award level and a corresponding betting layout is displayed on the primary display 16, see FIG. 5. The outcome of the second subsequent game then determines the jackpot prize to be awarded.

Another variation on the above implementation includes the additional placement of free wagers in the subsequent game. In this embodiment, no wager other than the base game wager is required to play the game. The placement of such free wagers is automatically made by the game processor and, again, ideally revolves around the original triggering number. Taking the example of the trigger number being “20,” in which “20” was assigned the major jackpot and “0” and “00” were assigned the minor jackpot, the following free wagers would be automatically and simultaneously placed, see FIG. 4:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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</table>

In preferred embodiments, if any jackpot is won, then all free wagers are ignored and the jackpot is the player’s only win. It will be appreciated that the feature could alternatively be implemented, such that free wagers are not ignored upon a jackpot win and are instead cumulative. If no jackpot is won, then the free wagers are resolved and paid normally, as per the rules of roulette. Consequently, the player is guaranteed some form of bonus award from the free game. It will be appreciated that the automatic placement of free wagers could be determined in some other fashion and may be such that not all outcomes can guarantee some form of bonus award.

In alternate embodiments, instead of providing free wagers, the game processor assigns every number with some type of award in the subsequent game. Certain or all numbers could be assigned the jackpot prizes, while each remaining number is assigned a monetary prize amount or other form of prize, for example, a multiplier value, to be applied to the player’s winnings, or another prize of value, such as free play, extra player loyalty points, event passes, vouchers and the like. In an exemplary embodiment, the level of monetary prize amount assigned to a number depends upon the number’s physical position with respect to the number assigned the major jackpot prize on the betting layout, as shown in FIG. 5. Higher prizes 822, 824, 826 and 828 are assigned to numbers adjacent the major jackpot number 820, while numbers dispersed further away are assigned lower prizes. Exemplary payouts for each number in an altered betting state are illustrated in FIG. 2.

It is anticipated that the assignment of jackpot prizes to numbers could be done in other ways. For example, the assignment could be randomly determined by the game processor. In alternative implementations, the assignment of jackpot prizes to numbers could be made open to selection by the player. Another variation would have the processor assign jackpot prizes to numbers based upon the placement of wagers by the player in the triggering game.

In exemplary implementations, where the machine is networked in a linked progressive system, at least the major jackpot can be a progressive jackpot prize. At least a portion of any side bets made by the player is used to fund the progressive jackpot pool and increment the meter.

As an alternative implementation, when the secondary event is triggered or when the secondary event is won, the player receives free credits for use as wagers in the current game or one or more subsequent games. In this way, the player obtains non-player-funded wagers, the usage of which makes the game effectively free for the player. In this example, the free credits are intended to provide a mechanism by which the player can obtain a free game and are not intended to be directly redeemable by the player for a respective monetary value. Consequently, the player must use the free credits in the one or more subsequent games or lose them.

The amount of free credits may be a predetermined fixed amount or an amount scaled with respect to the level of wager placed by the player on the side bet option in the triggering game.

In preferred embodiments, the placement of non-player-funded wagers from the free credit meter may be automatically determined by the game processor and, hence, cannot be influenced by the player. This automatic placement could be done on a random basis, a predetermined basis or made relative to the placement of wagers by the player in the triggering game. In this manner, the processor controls when the player uses the free credits.

In alternative embodiments, the decision as to when and how much of non-player-funded wagers to lodge from the free credit meter is made open to the player. For this purpose, the free credit amount is displayed as a specially marked stack of virtual chips that are distinguishable from player-funded chips. The player is able to use the “free” chips for the placement of wagers in any subsequent game instead of player-funded chips. In this regard, the player can use the “free” chips whenever desired and is not obliged to use the “free” chips in the immediately subsequent game or other game as determined by the processor.

As an alternative implementation, when the player is participating in the triggered feature, the player may receive specially marked “jackpot” chips or may be provided with unique wagering areas within which to select the jackpot side bet or select other specific parameters of the jackpot events. This feature is readily implemented on an electronic format. Either before or after a trigger event has occurred, the player may select among available winning outcomes to adjust probability of jackpot-winning events, which concomitantly adjusts amounts of payouts in jackpot or bonus-winning events. For example, the jackpot event may include a pay table of winning outcomes and corresponding payouts. Payouts select a single outcome to wager on. The player may use the “jackpot” chips (real on a gaming table or virtual in an electronic system) as a method for placement of a wager in
any subsequent game. A winning outcome based upon the placement of a “jackpot” chip will result in some form of jackpot prize or bonus prize.

[0110] Ideally, the options for placing a “jackpot” chip are limited to wagering options of lower probability of success. In other words, higher probability betting options, such as RED/BLACK or ODD/EVEN, would not be eligible for the placement of a “jackpot” chip. In exemplary implementations, the level of jackpot that can be won from a “jackpot” chip is dependent upon the level of probability of the betting option upon which the “jackpot” chip is placed. For example, placing a “jackpot” chip on a particular number or combinations of numbers (e.g., two consecutive repeated numbers or two adjacent numbers [35 and 36], 4, 5 or 6 consecutive colors, etc., is permitted, because these outcomes represent the lowest probability events in roulette). Payouts on these events award higher major jackpot prizes. Higher probability options, such as a “street” bet, would result in the lowest assigned jackpot prize. Jackpot chips could not be used to make these higher probability wagers.

[0111] In one implementation, not only is the player free to use the “jackpot” chip whenever desired, but the player effectively selects the level of jackpot to aim for.

[0112] While the previously discussed embodiments have been described with respect to implementation in a stand-alone gaming machine that is for a single player, it is contemplated that the invention could be applied in a multi-player communal gaming system. Exemplary examples of such systems include the RAPID ROULETTER® system and VEGAS STAR systems distributed by Shuttle Master Australasia Pty Limited.

[0113] The RAPID ROULETTER® system is fully described in U.S. Patent No. 6,659,866 and the content of this disclosure is incorporated herein by reference.

[0114] Both the RAPID ROULETTER® and VEGAS STAR™ systems employ electronic player terminals via which multiple players interact to place electronic wagers to participate in the same communal roulette game. In VEGAS STAR™ systems, the communal roulette game is conducted as an electronic simulation of a roulette wheel and simulated dealer. The RAPID ROULETTER® system, on the other hand, utilizes a physical roulette wheel and a live dealer but employs electronic wagering interfaces. Given that, in each system, players interact via their own player terminal, the systems can be readily configured to allow players eligible for the enhanced roulette feature to participate via the respective player terminals, while other ineligible players participate in normal roulette via their respective player terminals. In this manner, the communal roulette game outcome can act as a subsequent game outcome for the purpose of the eligible players and simultaneously act as a normal roulette game outcome for ineligible players.

[0115] It is anticipated that in such a communal gaming system that it may be preferred that eligible and ineligible players do not share a communal game outcome and that the determination of a subsequent game for eligible players should be a separate and independent game from the communal game. This could be readily achieved by configuring the system so that the terminals of eligible players provide an independent simulated roulette game as a subsequent game for the player, hence temporarily divorcing the player terminal from the communal game, which can continue to be played by ineligible players. For the RAPID ROULETTER® system, the separate and independent game could be provided by way of a second physical wheel operated by the dealer, a virtual wheel displayed on a communal screen, or a virtual wheel displayed on each player screen.

[0116] While the previously discussed embodiments pertain to the game of roulette, it is contemplated that the invention could be readily adapted to allow the enhancement of other types of traditional casino table games, for example, dice games (such as sic bo or craps) and card games (such as baccarat, poker and blackjack).

[0117] In a sic bo variant, free games could be triggered by a predetermined die roll outcome or set of outcomes, such as any triple appearing on the dice. In other examples, the event is triggered by rolling three randomly selected numbers. A grand jackpot would be awarded for a repeat of the same triggering triple during a free game. Again, the side bet may enable all bonus awards or may be placed on specific combinations for lesser bonus awards. It is also possible to enable a bonus payout system to allow for a player to wager on a specific, higher-probability outcome such as (in sic bo) two identical consecutive triples, and the jackpot award would be higher than for a general jackpot side bet on the jackpot with an outcome of two consecutive dissimilar triples. A major jackpot would alternatively be awarded for any other triple outcome in a free game. A minor jackpot would alternatively be awarded for a double of the same die face value as the triggering triple. Free bets would be automatically placed for the player on the free game outcome having one die with the face value of the triggering triple or the occurrence of any other double.

[0118] In a craps variant, free games could be triggered by a repeat of the last double rolled or by two consecutive dissimilar doubles rolled. A major jackpot would be awarded for a repeat of the triggering double during a free game. A mini jackpot would alternatively be awarded for the two “nearest” doubles being the outcome of a free game (e.g., if the trigger double was 4-4, then the minor jackpot would be awarded upon a 3-3 or 5-5 outcome). Free bets would be automatically placed for the player on a free game outcome being any other double, any craps and any 7. The size of the free bets may be varied so that more is placed on any craps if the triggering double was craps and more on any 7 otherwise.

[0119] The term “free game” can be defined in each type of game with similar considerations. As wagers are variable in most games, with a minimum or maximum range of wagers allowed, free games can have different monetary values and some clear control and definition must be used in the play of the game. A simple format is that, with a one-unit wager, each free game won would be at the one-unit wager level. If multiple free games are won on a one-unit side bet wager, each game may be at the one-unit level, or the player may elect to wager all or a portion of the total value of the free games on one or more subsequent wagers. For example, if a two-unit wager wins five free games (with a total wagering value of ten units), the player may elect ten one-unit wagers, five two-unit wagers, three three-unit wagers plus a one-unit wager, or one ten-unit wager and the like.

[0120] In a baccarat variant, free games could be triggered by high ties (i.e., tied 7s, 8s or 9s). A grand jackpot would be awarded for a tie (or two ties) of the same value as the triggering tie occurring during a free game. A major jackpot would alternatively be awarded for any of the other high ties occurring during a free game (e.g., tied 7s and 8s if tied 9s was the trigger tie). A minor jackpot would alternatively be
awarded for any other tie outcome in a free game. Free bets would be placed for the player on winning player and banker hands in a free game.

[0121] In a poker variant where play is against a dealer, free games could be triggered by the occurrence of a hand having four of a kind. A grand jackpot would be awarded for a repeat occurrence of a hand having the same triggering four of a kind during a free game or a royal flush (or straight flush of at least minimum rank). A major jackpot would be awarded for the occurrence of a hand having three of a kind of the same face value as the triggering four of a kind during a free game. A minor jackpot would be awarded for the occurrence of a hand having a pair of the same face value as the triggering four of a kind during a free game. Free games would be played at a set chip value with the player keeping any winnings. In this regard, the player would receive a selected amount of “free game” chips for use as wagers in the free games. The “free game” chips allow the player to participate in the game for free but are not themselves redeemable as a monetary amount.

[0122] In a blackjack variant, free could be triggered by a player having a hand consisting of three 7s, or in multideck shoes, three 7s of a single color or a single suit (creating higher levels of difficulty). The free games would consist of the player being dealt a number of new hands that are played to conclusion (the number of hands dealt relating to the size of the player’s side bet). A major jackpot would be awarded if any of the free hands result in a final value of 21, with or without color and/or suit requirements. A minor jackpot would alternatively be awarded if any of the hands result in a final value of 19 or 20. All free hands would be played at a set chip value with the player keeping any winnings. In this regard, the player would receive a selected amount of “free game” chips for use as wagers in the free games. The “free game” chips allow the player to participate in the game for free but are not themselves redeemable as a monetary amount.

EXAMPLE

[0123] The following example illustrates a preferred embodiment of the present invention that is implemented in the form of a stand-alone gaming machine, such as the device illustrated in FIG. 1.

[0124] A roulette layout surface as shown in FIG. 3 is displayed on video monitor 16 (shown in FIG. 1). The layout surface 900 has wagering areas 902 that correspond to single spin outcomes, such as a red 36, and wagering areas that represent multiple game outcomes, such as wager area 904. Known traditional roulette wagers may be made on the layout 900. The roulette layout has an additional area 302 to enable betting on a side bet game of the present invention. As with conventional roulette, players make one or more wagers on the layout 900 to participate in a video simulation of roulette and, optionally, make an additional “jackpot spins” wager in area 302.

[0125] After the wagers have been placed, the game begins by pressing the start button 308. A simulation of a roulette wheel appears on upper display 18 (FIG. 1). A first number, such as “black 17” is randomly selected. Preferably, this number is displayed on a historical trend display (not shown). If the player has not placed a wager on the black 17 circle or a combination wager area that includes this game outcome, the game wager is lost, as well as the bonus wager.

[0126] In this example, the player wagered on the black 17 and wins a payout of 2:1 on this game outcome. The jackpot spins wager remains in play and is neither won nor lost when the player wins the base game. The player then continues to play the roulette game. The player either rebets the same bets in the previous spin or makes a series of new bets in the base game. The player depresses the start button 308 and the game outcome again is a black 17. The combination of the second identical winning outcome on a certain number/color that was wagered on as well as the presence of the jackpot spins wager triggers the bonus event. Since the two outcomes are both consecutive and identical, and since a jackpot spins wager remains active on the layout, the player advances into a bonus spin(s) round.

[0127] Multiple opportunities to win are made available in the bonus spin round. Advantageously, only bonus credits are played in the bonus round. Bonus credits cannot be played in the base game and have no cash-out value. The player need not make any additional wagers to participate. The amount initially wagered on the jackpot spins area 302 of the layout determines how many bonus spins are awarded. In this example, the player has made a $5.00 wager, qualifying the player for five free spins.

[0128] The specific wagers made on the auxiliary game are randomly determined. Multiple wagers are made, and the wagers always include the “point” number that advanced the player to the bonus round where, in this case is a black 17. The other wagers are typically a mixture of single outcome wins and multiple outcome wins, some with smaller odds and others with larger odds. In this example, the player will always win a payout of some amount in the auxiliary game.

[0129] If during any of the free spins the ball lands on another black 17 (triples), the player is awarded a major win, entitling the player to a maximum prize amount, such as a large payout amount shown on meter 910. This payout is preferably a fixed payout amount or odds payout amount in the stand-alone version of the game. When multiple machines are linked, this payout may be a progressive payout. A percentage of the jackpot spins wager is retained to fund this jackpot.

[0130] During the bonus spins event, when the ball lands on a zero (shown as area 906 on the layout) or on a double zero (shown as area 908 on the layout), the player automatically wins the amount displayed on the mini meter 912. This payout is made regardless of whether or not the system automatically lodged a wager on the “0” or “00” outcomes. In the preferred embodiment, these wagers are not made, but any time a ball lands on a “0” or “00,” the mini payout is made.

[0131] The only monetary wagers made in this embodiment of the invention are the wagers on the base game of roulette and a single jackpot spins wager. Once the first number is established, this wager remains in play while the player is trying to achieve a second identical matching outcome. When two identical game outcomes occur consecutively, and when a side bet wager is in play, a bonus event is triggered. Then, once the player is participating in the bonus game, the player is only able to play with special non-monetary bonus credits, which can be earned by the player but cannot be cashed out or played in the base game.

[0132] In addition to the major and mini payouts, the player is eligible for additional payouts based on the multiple wagers automatically selected by the game processor. For example, the processor may make seven additional wagers, including a “red” outcome and a “black” outcome. Since all outcomes (excluding the “0” and “00” outcomes) are either red or black, and since the “0” and “00” outcomes pay a mini bonus prize, all outcomes pay a payout in this example of the invention.
When the player is awarded a major or minor payout, in a preferred form of the invention, the player does not receive payouts on the additional wagers that are automatically made by the processor. In other forms of the invention, all winning wagers made pay cumulatively.

If, during the five bonus spins, two consecutive spins result in the same number, a new trigger event is established, resulting in an award of additional bonus spins at the conclusion of play of the five-spin bonus game. If two red 27s are hit in the five-spin bonus game, an additional five spins are awarded since the same $5.00 wager is still being played on the jackpot spins 302 section of the layout.

1. A method for providing a bonus feature in a card game, a dice game or a wheel game, the method including:
   providing an underlying game, being a card game, a dice game or a wheel game, the underlying game including a physical or an electronic player interface for placing bets;
   providing, within the player interface, an option to receive a side bet from the player, so as to make the player eligible for the bonus feature;
   conducting a first underlying game and determining a winning outcome;
   awarding any winnings from the first underlying card game, dice game or wheel game to each player having the winning outcome;
   if the winning outcome of the first underlying game establishes a first component of a bonus feature win, then providing at least one subsequent game to eligible players to determine whether further components of the bonus feature win have been established;
   wherein the at least one subsequent game is a regular underlying game of the card game, dice game or wheel game, on which regular wagers may or may not be received from eligible players and other players, and wherein the further components of the bonus feature win are determined without requiring a further player-funded amount to be received from the eligible players, and wherein the number of subsequent games provided to eligible players is proportional to the amount of respective side bet received from the eligible players during the underlying game in which the first component of the bonus feature win occurred.

2. The method according to claim 1, wherein a bonus wager is received from each eligible player on one or more possible outcomes of each subsequent game.

3. The method according to claim 2, wherein the bonus wager is funded by free credits provided to each eligible player during each subsequent game.

4. The method according to claim 2, wherein the bonus wager is received for a predetermined selection of outcomes, at least one of which is assigned a jackpot prize.

5. The method according to claim 4, wherein the bonus wager consists of a set of wagers of different predetermined value, such that wagers are related to outcomes in descending order of value according to their relationship to the jackpot prize outcome.

6. The method according to claim 5, wherein the relationship is based on the proximity numerically or in the betting layout of the outcomes to the jackpot prize outcome.

7. The method according to claim 5, wherein the relationship is based on a defined set of outcome characteristics.

8. The method according to claim 7, wherein the underlying game is a card game, and the set of outcome characteristics includes color, rank and suit of card.

9. The method according to claim 1, wherein during each subsequent game, one or more possible outcomes are assigned a prize, at least one prize being a jackpot prize.

10. The method according to claim 9, wherein the value of each prize, other than the jackpot prize, assigned to each outcome varies according to its relationship to the jackpot prize outcome.

11. The method according to claim 10, wherein the relationship is based on the proximity numerically or in the betting layout of the outcomes to the jackpot prize.

12. The method according to claim 1, wherein at least a portion of the side bet is added to a progressive jackpot pool.

13. The method according to claim 1, wherein the card game, dice game or wheel game is an electronic simulation of such a game, displayed on a display to each player.

14. The method according to claim 1, wherein the underlying game is roulette, and a bonus feature win requires either a particular winning number, or consecutive, specific winning numbers.

15. The method according to claim 14, wherein a bonus feature win requires the winning number to be the same as the outcome from an immediately previous game of roulette.

16. The method according to claim 1, wherein the underlying game is a dice game, and a bonus feature win requires either a particular winning dice total or combination, or consecutive, specific winning dice totals or combinations.

17. The method according to claim 1, wherein the underlying game is a card game, and a bonus feature win requires either a particular winning hand total or combination, or consecutive, specific winning hand totals or combinations.

18. (canceled)

19. A gaming system, including a game controller and at least one player terminal, the at least one player terminal being adapted for play of an underlying game, being a card game, a dice game or a wheel game, and including a player interface for placing wagers, wherein if the outcome of a first underlying game indicates a first component of a bonus feature win, each eligible player is provided with at least one subsequent game to determine whether further components of the bonus feature have been established;

20. The gaming system according to claim 19, configured to receive, on behalf of each eligible player, a bonus wager on one or more possible outcomes of each subsequent game.

21. The gaming system according to claim 20, configured to fund the bonus wager by free credits provided to each eligible player during each subsequent game.
22. The gaming system according to claim 20, wherein the bonus wager is received for a predetermined selection of outcomes, at least one of which is assigned a jackpot prize.

23. The gaming system according to claim 22, wherein the bonus wager consists of a set of wagers of different predetermined values, such that wagers are related to outcomes in descending order of value according to their relationship to the jackpot prize outcome.

24. The gaming system according to claim 23, wherein the relationship is based on the proximity numerically or in the betting layout of the outcomes to the jackpot prize outcome.

25. The gaming system according to claim 23, wherein the relationship is based on a defined set of outcome characteristics.

26. The gaming system according to claim 25, wherein the underlying game is a card game, and the set of outcome characteristics includes color, rank and suit of card.

27. The gaming system according to claim 19, wherein during each subsequent game, one or more possible outcomes are assigned a prize, at least one prize being a jackpot prize.

28. The gaming system according to claim 27, wherein the value of each prize, other than the jackpot prize, assigned to each outcome varies according to its relationship to the jackpot prize outcome.

29. The gaming system according to claim 28, wherein the relationship is based on the proximity numerically or in the betting layout of the outcomes to the jackpot prize outcome.

30. The gaming system according to claim 28, wherein the relationship is based on a defined set of outcome characteristics.

31. The gaming system according to claim 30, wherein the underlying game is a card game, and the set of outcome characteristics includes color, rank and suit of card.

32. The gaming system according to claim 19, wherein at least a portion of the side bet is added to a progressive jackpot pool.

33. The gaming system according to claim 19, wherein the underlying game is roulette, and a bonus feature win requires either a particular winning number, or consecutive, specific winning numbers.

34. The gaming system according to claim 33, wherein a bonus feature win requires the winning number to be the same as the outcome from an immediately previous game of roulette.

35. The gaming system according to claim 19, wherein the underlying game is a dice game, and a bonus feature win requires either a particular winning dice total or combination, or consecutive, specific winning dice totals or combinations.

36. The gaming system according to claim 19, wherein the underlying game is a card game, and a bonus feature win requires either a particular winning hand total or combination, or consecutive, specific winning hand totals or combinations.