SYSTEMS AND METHODS FOR PLAYER RANKINGS FOR ONLINE POKER AND OTHER GAMES

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Appl. No.: 13/476,802

Filed: May 21, 2012

Publication Classification
Int. Cl. A63F 9/24 (2006.01)

U.S. Cl. 463/42, 463/43

ABSTRACT
Embodiments of the invention relate generally to systems and methods for player rankings for online games, such as online poker ring games. In one embodiment, a method for ranking one or more players can include obtaining game play information for a player of a game; calculating or updating a measure of player performance for the player based upon an analysis of the obtained game play information; and determining a player ranking for the player based at least in part on the measure of player performance of the player.
FIG. 1
Start

Select a player

Updated game play information available?

Yes

Obtain updated game play information

Calculate or update measure of player performance

Yes

Additional players to evaluate?

Determine player ranking for each player based upon associated measure of player performance

Stop

FIG. 2
FIG. 7

Ranking for pc2-Obama

Ring Games Rank

Overall: ★★★★★
ROI: 97.83%
Number of hands: 10443

Close
More Info

FIG. 8

Ring Games Rank

Your Ring Games rank value is defined by your ROI (Return on investment). It is calculated only for Texas Hold'em real money tables.

The percentage value of your rank represents the ratio between money at the table at the end of a table session versus money at the table at the beginning of a table session. The percentage is then translated into star rank, which positions each player against all other ranked players in the system.

ROI value of 100% is the breakeven point, thus defining positive as being greater than 100% and negative as less than 100% value.

For your additional reference are listed the number of real money Texas Hold'em hands for which the given table rank is achieved.

Close
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SYSTEMS AND METHODS FOR PLAYER RANKINGS FOR ONLINE POKER AND OTHER GAMES

RELATED APPLICATION

[0001] This application claims priority to U.S. Ser. No. 61/488,432, entitled “Systems and Methods for Player Rankings for Online Poker and Other Games,” filed on May 20, 2011, the contents of which are incorporated herein by reference.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The invention relates generally to player rankings for online poker and other games.

BACKGROUND

[0003] Today’s poker business is a multi-billion dollar industry spanning large geographical areas. There are millions of players playing online poker or similar games on internet gaming sites daily. These players are often playing against players who are much more superior or inferior to them. For example, a beginner who just learned how to play poker may sit at the same table with professional players and within minutes lose his/her entire deposit. Accordingly, there is an opportunity in the industry for systems and methods for player rankings for online poker and other games.

SUMMARY

[0004] Embodiments of the invention relate generally to systems and methods for player rankings for online games, including online poker ring games. For example, the example player rankings may be applied to rank online players within an online poker room or an online poker network comprising a plurality of associated or affiliated online poker rooms. However, the player rankings may also be applicable to other online games, including online casino games such as table games, slot machines, games of skill and many more. It will be appreciated that an online game can be played over a public network, a private network, or a combination thereof, including the Internet. In general, online games may be played via an Internet browser, a mobile application, or virtually any other software that can communicate with a game operator (e.g., service provider computer) that is managing or running the online game. Likewise, the example player rankings can be determined for a number of players either in batch or in real-time according to an example embodiment of the invention. Similarly, the player rankings can be determined while players are online or offline, according to an example embodiment of the invention. Furthermore, in some embodiments, these games may not be limited to merely online games, but also games played in a non-online forum such as at a physical casino.

[0005] A player ranking system in accordance with an example embodiment of the invention would allow someone to know the respective rankings of other players at the table in advance before joining the table or game. Thus, a player can decide if he/she would like to take chances at that table. This player will also have the choice to play at specific tables with players that have a similar ranking, a lower ranking, or a higher ranking. An aspect of the player ranking system is to give the player the choice of which skill level he/she would like to play with. For example, if a beginning player decides to play with higher ranked players, that would be his/her own choice. Thus, these player rankings can be applicable where a ranking of the player may be relevant to other players. For example, in determining whether or how to play in the same game with a particular player.

[0006] In an example embodiment, the example player ranking method may be available for any game that has a starting balance and an ending balance. The starting balance may be an initial amount of money, points, or the like. The ending balance may be a final amount of money, points, or the like, or may include a result such as a score or win/loss result. As will be described in further detail herein, an example player ranking method may begin by collecting accurate data of an individual player’s play or performance, perhaps during a particular game or games during a session. The player’s play or performance can be collected for a single game, or for a plurality of prior games. Once that data is collected, it may be entered into a computer system that compares players’ statistics against other players and determines a player ranking for the player.

[0007] In an example embodiment, the player rankings may be based upon a factor or criteria such as return on investment (ROI). In general, ROI for a player may be calculated based upon the comparison of an ending balance to a starting balance for one or more games of the player. However, in alternative embodiments, other factors or criteria can be alternatively or additionally utilized for the purpose of calculating a player’s ranking. For example, for poker, other factors can include the number of hands played for poker, a win/loss ratio, an average win/loss amount, and the like.

[0008] This brief introduction, including section titles and corresponding summaries, is provided for the reader’s convenience and is not intended to limit the scope of the claims, nor the preceding sections. Furthermore, the techniques described above and below may be implemented in a number of ways and in a number of contexts. Several example implementations and contexts are provided with reference to the following figures, as described below in more detail. However, the following implementations and contexts are but a few of many.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009] Reference will now be made to the accompanying drawings, which are not necessarily drawn to scale, and wherein:

[0010] FIG. 1 illustrates an example player ranking system to facilitate the determination and presentation of player rankings for one or more games, according to an example embodiment of the invention.

[0011] FIG. 2 illustrates a flow diagram of an example process for determining player rankings in accordance with an example embodiment of the invention.

[0012] FIGS. 3-8 illustrate example graphical representations output by systems and processes according to various embodiments of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0013] Embodiments of the invention will be described more fully hereinafter with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which embodiments of the invention are shown. This invention may, however, be embodied in many different forms and should not be construed as limited to the embodiments set forth herein; rather, these embodiments are provided so that this disclosure will be thorough and complete,
and will fully convey the scope of the invention to those of ordinary skill in the art. Like numbers refer to like elements throughout.

[0014] Embodiments of the invention relate generally to systems and methods for player rankings for online games, including online poker ring games. For example, the example player rankings may be applied to rank online players within an online poker room or an online poker network comprising a plurality of associated or affiliated online poker rooms. However, the player rankings may also be applicable to other online games, including online casino games such as table games, slot machines, games of skill and many more. It will be appreciated that an online game can be played over a public network, a private network, or a combination thereof, including the Internet. In general, online games may be played via an Internet browser, a mobile application, or virtually any other software that can communicate with a game operator (e.g., service provider computer) that is managing or running the online game. Likewise, the example player rankings can be determined for a number of players either in batch or in real-time according to an example embodiment of the invention. Similarly, the player rankings can be determined while players are online or offline, according to an example embodiment of the invention. Furthermore, in some embodiments, these games may not be limited to merely online games, but also games played in a non-online forum such as at a physical casino.

[0015] A player ranking system in accordance with an example embodiment of the invention would allow someone to know the respective rankings of other players at the table in advance before joining the table or game. Thus, a player can decide if he/she would like to take chances at that table. This player will also have the choice to play at specific tables with players that have a similar ranking, a lower ranking, or a higher ranking. An aspect of the player ranking system is to give a player the choice of which skill level he/she would like to play with. For example, if a beginning player decides to play with higher ranked players, that would be his/her own choice. Thus, these player rankings can be applicable where a ranking of the player may be relevant to other players. For example, in determining whether or how to play in the same game with a particular player.

[0016] In an example embodiment, the example player ranking method may be available for any game that has a starting balance and an ending balance. The starting balance may be an initial amount of money, points, or the like. The ending balance can be a final amount of money, points, or the like, or may include a result such a score or win/loss result. As will be described in further detail herein, an example player ranking method may begin by collecting accurate data of an individual player’s play or performance, perhaps during a particular game or games during a session. The player’s play or performance can be collected for a single game, or for a plurality of prior games. Once that data is collected, it may be entered into a computer system that compares players’ statistics against other players and determines a player ranking for the player.

[0017] In an example embodiment, the player rankings may be based upon a factor or criteria such as return on investment (ROI). In general, ROI for a player may be calculated based upon the comparison of an ending balance to a starting balance for one or more games of the player. However, in alternative embodiments, other factors or criteria can be alternatively or additionally utilized for the purpose of calculating a player’s ranking. For example, for poker, other factors can include the number of hands played for poker, a win/loss ratio, an average win/loss amount, and the like.

[0018] The player rankings for players can be expressed, displayed, or presented in a variety of ways. In one example embodiment, the player rankings can be expressed as a numeric value. In another example embodiment, the player rankings can alternatively or additionally be represented by the placement of each player in one of a plurality of ranking groups, where each ranking group may include players with certain play characteristics or similar rankings. The number of ranking groups can be determined or configured based upon one or more preferences. These preferences are configurable and may vary by game operator (e.g., poker operator, casino game operator etc.). It will be appreciated that each ranking group may be associated with a particular name (e.g., novice, intermediate, advanced, shark, etc.) or symbol (e.g., number of stars, number of dots, different images, etc.). The player rankings may be made available to all players so that each player can compare himself/herself with other players and/or see his/her standing (rank) within a group or network of players. The player rankings can also be displayed during game play (e.g., online poker table) in conjunction with a player’s name or other indicator, in the lobby of the poker room, on a website, on television, on monitors or any other media outlet. Ranks may be shared with other media through the use of web services or other means of integration.

[0019] For convenience, the following description may describe player rankings in the context of an Internet poker room or within a closed-loop poker network. However, it will be appreciated that example player rankings can likewise be utilized with other games as well, whether played online or in a physical establishment, if the required information (e.g., starting balance and ending balance) for calculating the player rankings can be collected or is otherwise available.

[0020] System Overview

[0021] FIG. 1 illustrates an example player ranking system 100 to facilitate the determination and presentation of player rankings for one or more games, according to an example embodiment of the invention. As shown in FIG. 1, the system 100 may include one or more player computers 103 and service provider computers 104, which are each configured for accessing and reading associated computer-readable media having stored thereon data and/or computer-executable instructions for implementing the various methods of the invention. Generally, network devices and systems, including the one or more player computers 103 and service provider computers 104 have hardware and/or software for transmitting and receiving data and/or computer-executable instructions over a communications link and a memory for storing data and/or computer-executable instructions. These network devices and systems may also include a processor for processing data and executing computer-executable instructions, as well as other internal and peripheral components that are well known in the art. As used herein, the term “computer-readable medium” may describe any form of memory or memory device.

[0022] As shown in FIG. 1, the player computer 103 and service provider computer 104 may be in communication with each other via a network such as network 110, which as described below can include the Internet or one or more separate or shared private and public networks. Each of these components—the player computer 103 and the service provider computer 104—will now be discussed in further detail.
First, the player computer 103 may be any processor-driven device, such as a personal computer, laptop computer, handheld computer, and the like, that may be utilized by a player to access, join, or play an online game. In addition to having a processor 149, the player computer 103 may further include a memory 142, input/output ("I/O") interface(s) 154, and a network interface 156. The memory 142 may store data files 158 and various program modules, such as an operating system ("OS") 150 and a client module 152. The memory 142 may be any computer-readable medium, coupled to the processor 149, such as RAM, ROM, and/or a removable storage device for storing data files 158 and a database management system ("DBMS") to facilitate management of data files 158 and other data stored in the memory 142 and/or stored in separate databases. The OS 150 may be, but is not limited to, Microsoft Windows®, Apple OS X™, Unix, or a mainframe operating system. The client module 152 may be an Internet browser or other software, including a dedicated program or mobile software, for interacting with the service provider computer 104. For example, a player may utilize the client module 152 to interact with the service provider computer 104 via website to access, utilize, or play one or more example online games, as described herein. The client module 152 may also be utilized to retrieve or otherwise receive data, messages, or responses from the service provider computer 104, including one or more player rankings as described herein.

Still referring to the player computer 103, the I/O interface(s) 154 may facilitate communication between the processor 149 and various I/O devices, such as a keyboard, mouse, printer, microphone, speaker, monitor, bar code readers/scanners, RFID readers, and the like. The network interface 156 may take any of a number of forms, such as a network interface card, a modem, a wireless network card, and the like. It will be appreciated that while player computer 103 has been illustrated as a single computer or processor, the player computer 103 may be comprised of a group of computers or processors, according to an example embodiment of the invention.

The service provider computer 104 may be any processor-driven device that is configured for determining player rankings and for collecting or obtaining the necessary information to determine the player rankings. The service provider computer 104 may also be configured for receiving, processing, and fulfilling requests from the player computer 103, including those relating to game play or player rankings, according to an example embodiment of the invention.

The service provider computer 104 may include a processor 126, a memory 128, input/output ("I/O") interface(s) 130, and a network interface 132. The memory 128 may be any computer-readable medium, coupled to the processor 126, such as RAM, ROM, and/or a removable storage device for storing data files 134 and a database management system ("DBMS") 138 to facilitate management of data files 134 and other data stored in the memory 128 and/or stored in one or more databases 182. The memory 128 may store data files 134 and various program modules, such as an operating system ("OS") 136, a database management system ("DBMS") 138, and the host module 140. The OS 136 may be, but is not limited to, Microsoft Windows®, Apple OS X™, Unix, or a mainframe operating system. The host module 140 may receive, process, and respond to requests from a client module 152 of a player computer 103. The service provider computer 104 may include additional program modules or applications for performing player ranking calculations described herein, including supporting or providing one or more of the blocks illustrated in FIG. 2.

In addition, a web interface 109 may also be operative with or otherwise included with the service provider computer 104. In particular, the web interface 109 may allow for a player computer 103 or another computer to access the service provider computer 104 via a website. For example, a player computer 103 may access the web interface 109 via network 110 (e.g., the Internet) to play one or more online games (e.g., poker) or access one or more player rankings. The web interface 109 may be provided by a separate processor-based system that is distinct from the service provider computer 104. By way of example, the web interface 109 may be provided by a web server that is in communication with network 110 and the service provider computer 104. Alternatively, it will be appreciated that the web interface 109 may also be incorporated into the service provider computer 104 as well, perhaps as part of host module 140, according to another example embodiment of the invention.

The service provider computer 104 and/or web interface 109 may also include or be in communication with one or more database(s) 182, according to an example embodiment of the invention. The database 182 may store, for example, access information (e.g., username, password, etc.), gaming software and logic/rules, financial account information, and the like. The database 182 can also be used for storing information that will be utilized for determining player rankings. For example, the database 182 can store starting and ending balances that may be utilized to calculate ROI, or yet other information utilized in calculating performance or return. Although a single database 182 is referred to herein for simplicity, those skilled in the art will appreciate that multiple physical and/or logical databases may be used to store the above mentioned data. For security and performance purposes, the service provider computer 104 may have a dedicated connection to the database 182. However, the service provider computer 104 may also communicate with the database 182 via a network 110, as shown. In other embodiments of the invention, the service provider computer 104 may include the database 182 locally. The service provider computer 104 may also otherwise be part of a distributed or redundant DBMS.

The network 110 may include any telecommunication and/or data network, whether public, private, or a combination thereof, including a local area network, a wide area network, an intranet, an internet, the Internet, intermediate data transfer devices, a publicly switched telephone network (PSTN), and/or any combination thereof and may be wired and/or wireless.

Generally, each of the memories and data storage devices, such as the memories 142, 128 and the database 182, and/or any other memory and data storage device, can store data and information for subsequent retrieval. In this manner, the system 100 can store various received or collected information in memory or in a database associated with one or more games and/or associated player rankings. The memories and databases can be in communication with each other and/or other databases, such as a centralized database, or other types of data storage devices. When needed, data or information stored in a memory or database may be transmitted to a centralized database capable of receiving data, information, or data records from more than one database or other data storage devices. In other embodiments, the databases shown
can be integrated or distributed into any number of databases or other data storage devices. In one example embodiment, for security, the service provider computer 104 (or any other entity) may have a dedicated connection to the database 182, as shown; though, in other embodiments, the service provider computer 104 or another entity may communicate with the database 182 via a network such as network 110.

[0031] Suitable processors, such as the processors 149, 126 of the player computers 103 and service provider computers 104 may comprise a processor, an ASIC, and/or a state machine. Example processors can be those provided by Intel Corporation (Santa Clara, Calif.), AMD Corporation (Sunnyvale, Calif.), and Motorola Corporation ( Schaumburg, Ill.). Such processors comprise, or may be in communication with media, for example computer-readable media, which stores instructions that, when executed by the processor, cause the processor to perform the elements described herein. Embedments of computer-readable media include, but are not limited to, an electronic, optical, magnetic, or other storage or transmission device capable of providing a processor with computer-readable instructions. Other examples of suitable media include, but are not limited to, a floppy disk, CD-ROM, DVD, magnetic disk, memory chip, ROM, RAM, a configured processor, all optical media, all magnetic tape or other magnetic media, or any other medium from which a computer processor can read instructions. Also, various other forms of computer-readable media may transmit or carry instructions to a computer, including a router, private or public network, or other transmission device or channel, both wired and wireless. The instructions may comprise code from any computer-programming language, including, for example, C, C++, C#, Visual Basic, Java, Python, Perl, and JavaScript. Furthermore, any of the processors may operate any operating system capable of supporting locally executed applications, client-server based applications, and/or browser or browser-enabled applications.

[0032] The system 100 shown in and described with respect to Fig. 1 is provided by way of example only. Numerous other operating environments, system architectures, and device configurations are possible. Other system embodiments can include fewer or greater numbers of components and may incorporate some or all of the functionality described with respect to the system components shown in Fig. 1. Accordingly, embodiments of the invention should not be construed as being limited to any particular operating environment, system architecture, or device configuration.

[0033] Operational Overview

[0034] FIG. 2 illustrates a flow diagram of an example process 200 for determining player rankings in accordance with an example embodiment of the invention. The example process can be performed by an example service provider computer 104 or a similar computer, according to an example embodiment of the invention.

[0035] In FIG. 2, at block 205, one of a plurality of players of a game can be selected for purposes of determining whether a player ranking needs to be calculated or updated. Following block 205 is block 210. Block 210 may determine whether updated game play information is available. To determine whether updated game play information is available, block 210 may determine whether the player has played the game for at least a required amount of time, sessions, or other units of progress of a game. For example, for poker, a player may need to play a minimum number of sessions or number of hands in order for the updated game play information to be available. Likewise, in other games, the players may need to play for a minimum amount of time or other units of progress in order for the updated game play information to be available. An aspect of block 210 may be to ensure that sufficient measures of a player’s performance are available for purposes of determining or updating a player’s ranking.

[0036] If block 210 determines that updated game play information is available, then processing may proceed to block 212. Block 212 may obtain the updated game play information associated with the selected player. Indeed, the game play information may have been recorded during a player’s game play and stored in database 182 for subsequent retrieval. In an example embodiment, the updated game play information may include, for example, a starting balance and an ending balance for one or more sessions of a player’s game. For example, when a player starts a poker game, a session is open for the event, and the session contains information identifying the player, the amount of funds, the table information and the time, all of which may be stored in database 182. The amount of funds at the beginning of a session may be the starting balance that is utilized in determining a measure of the player’s performance, as described herein. At the time the player closes a poker game, the amount of funds remaining at the close of the session may be recorded in database 182. The amount of the funds at the end of the session may be the ending balance that is utilized in determining a measure of the player’s performance, as described herein. It will be appreciated that the starting balance and an ending balance may be associated with a monetary balance or a points balance. Alternatively, instead of an ending balance, the game play information can include a result of a game play session, perhaps whether a win/loss resulted or other result was achieved.

[0037] Following block 212 is block 215. Block 215 may calculate or update a measure of the player’s performance. In an example embodiment, the measure of the player’s performance can be a return on investment (ROI). To calculate the ROI for a player, block 215 may determine a ratio of the ending balance to the starting balance. More particularly, the ROI can be expressed as a percentage as follows in equation (1) below.

\[
\text{ROI} = \frac{\text{End Session Money or Points}}{\text{Start Session Money or Points}} \times 100
\]  

[0038] It will be appreciated that the ROI can be positive or negative. For example, a positive ROI can occur when the ending balance is larger than the starting balance. For example, scenario (i) below shows a positive ROI. On the other hand, a negative ROI can occur when the ending balance is smaller than the starting balance. For example, scenario (ii) below shows a negative ROI.

[0039] (i) Positive ROI: End with 150€UR; Start with 50€EUR; –ROI is 300%; and

[0040] (ii) Negative ROI: End with 50€UR; Start with 150€UR; –ROI is 33%

[0041] It will be appreciated that ROI may break even at 100%, so at an ROI of 100%, the player has neither won nor lost money at that point. As will be described in further detail herein, additional information may be made available to other players to provide additional context beyond the ROI itself. For example, in poker, the number of hands played can be shown in addition to ROI, which may provide a perspective for the ROI itself.

[0042] Following block 215, processing may proceed to block 220. Block 220 may determine whether a player ranking needs to be calculated or updated for any other players of
a game. If so, processing may return to block 205, where another player can be selected, and processing may continue as described above. Otherwise, if block 220 determines that no other players need to be evaluated, then processing may proceed to block 225.

At block 225, a player ranking may be determined for each player based upon the associated measure of player performance calculated for each player at block 215. In some example embodiments, the player ranking may comprise the same information as the calculated measure of the player performance. Alternatively or additionally, the player ranking can be derived based upon an analysis of the calculated measure of the player performance, perhaps in comparison to other players. As an example, if the calculated measure of player performance is an ROI, then the ROI for one player can be compared with ROIs for all players being evaluated or otherwise existing in the database 182 or game system (e.g., poker system). By comparing the ROI player against the ROIs for all players under consideration, the players can be sorted into separate groups or categories (e.g., novice, intermediate, advanced, shark, etc.). These categories for a player can then be displayed in conjunction with symbols, names, or other visualization schemes. It will be appreciated that the number of players in each group or category can be determined in many ways. In one example embodiment, it may be predetermined in advance what percentage of the total players will be placed in each group or category (e.g., 15% in novice, 30% in intermediate, etc.). Alternatively, in another example embodiment, ROI ranges can be specified for each group or category such that players having ROIs within certain ROI ranges may be associated with certain groups. Many variations, however, are possible without departing from example embodiments of the invention.

An example visualization or graphical representation of a player ranking will now be described for illustrative purposes with respect to a poker game. In an example embodiment, in an online poker website, players can be ranked with stars on the player's nameplate. More details for the rank itself can be provided in an additional popup window when clicking on the stars on the table indicating the player's ranking. An additional popup shows the ROI and the number of real money hands played by this player and a description of how the rank was calculated. It will be appreciated that these visualizations can be shown in various places on the poker website such as in the game info section in the Main Lobby. Likewise, players with X games (or X table sessions, as configured by a poker operator) can be categorized in respective ranking groups.

Example Embodiment for Poker

An example embodiment for calculating player rankings will now be described for illustrative purposes. In this embodiment, there may be a game of Texas Hold'em that is played on a closed loop network comprised of 10 separate poker rooms. These poker rooms share tables (and players) on this network. However, it will be appreciated that the following player rankings described herein can be applied to any other poker game as well as any game where one can determine and calculate starting balance and win/loss at the end of play (session). Network configuration may be based on the following example assumptions.

Example Assumptions:

1. network has total of 100,000 players; 2. each player must complete minimum of 3 table sessions to be rated; and 3. the players are ranked in 12 categories.

With such assumptions, an example system can determine player rankings as follows:

Each player will be ranked based on how his/her individual score compares with the scores of other qualified ranked players' scores in the system.

To receive a ranking, a player must complete a minimum of 3 table sessions (3 individual plays). All players that play less than 3 table sessions will be categorized as non-rated players or new players in the system. The criteria for the minimum number of sessions (plays) are configurable by the system.

The players in the system will be divided in 12 categories. Those categories are:

1. New player—Player who played less than X number of sessions, in this case less than 3 sessions. This player will be represented with either a graphical image or name such as “New Player” or “Not Ranked” or any other name chosen by the operator of the network.

Half star—This category would represent ¼ of all ranked players in the system.

One Star—This category would represent ¼ of all ranked players in the system.

One and Half star—This category would represent ¼ of all ranked players in the system.

Two stars—This category would represent ¼ of all ranked players in the system.

Two and Half stars—This category would represent ¼ of all ranked players in the system.

Three stars—This category would represent ¼ of all ranked players in the system.

Three and Half stars—This category would represent ¼ of all ranked players in the system.

Four stars—This category would represent ¼ of all ranked players in the system.

Four and Half stars—This category would represent ¼ of all ranked players in the system.

Five stars—This category would represent ¼ of all ranked players in the system.

Professional players’ level—This category would represent ¼ of all ranked players in the system. These players will be represented by an image or the name such as Pro, Whale or any other suitable name that will identify these players as superior to all other players based on their ROI.

Divisions of the groups could be decided (as in the above example) based on an equal number of players per segment. The above case shows 11 groups each containing ¼ of the total ranked players. Another option is to divide players into groups based on percentage. For example, the system can be configured so that all players with an ROI of 200% and above are classified as PRO players. Players with an ROI of 150% to 199% would be 5 stars players, and so on.

It will be appreciated that the foregoing example has been provided by way of illustration only. Indeed, many other variations are available without departing from an example embodiment of the invention.

Example Graphical Representations of Player Rankings

As described herein, player rankings can be illustrated graphically for viewing by other players. The following illustrations are provided to illustrate graphical representations of player rankings for the game of Texas Hold'em poker. However, one will appreciate that many variations of the exampled illustrations are available without departing from example embodiments of the invention.
In one embodiment, an example electronic poker lobby 300, as shown in FIG. 3, may list all available tables 302 in the lobby 300. A player may have access to numerous filters to find desired tables. Next to the “table name” column 304 there is a ranking column 306. In this column 306, the player can see which rankings 308 are allowed at a particular table 302. As an example, if the column 306 next to a particular “table name” 302 has an entry of 2-3, this means that players who have ranking from 2 stars to 3 stars can play at this table. All other players who try to open and sit at this table would receive a message that this table only accepts players with a ranking between 2 and 3 stars. Tables without a rank in the ranking column 306 allow all rankings. The tables with a rank of “NEW” in the ranking column 306 only accept unranked players. Tables with the rank of “PRO” in the ranking column 306 will only accept professional (PRO) players.

In other embodiments, any other symbols, indicia, or color schemes can be used in the ranking column 306.

Clicking on the desired table 302 in the table listings of the “table name” column 304 will open, as shown in FIG. 4, a list 400 of players 402 playing at that table 302 in the “Game Info” section 404. Next to the name of each player 402 there is a graphical display showing the player’s rankings 406. This allows a player to see the players’ rankings 406 on that table 302 before joining the table 302.

Individual Player Ranking Graphical Representation

Turning to FIG. 5, in one embodiment, after a player selects a particular table 500 to join, a graphical representation of the selected table 500 and respective players 502A-502L and player name identifiers can be displayed to the player. If available, the player can join any open seats, such as 504. Under each player name identifier there may be a graphical representation of the player’s ranking, such as 506. In the example illustration of FIG. 5, players who are not rated may be represented by faded stars (gray stars), such as 508. The rated players, such as 502A, 502D, 502E, 502F, 502L, may be represented by respective rankings, such as a number of gold stars. It will be appreciated that other symbols, indicia, or color schemes may be utilized without departing from the example embodiments of the invention.

In certain embodiments, instead of stars or other symbols, indicia, or color schemes, a named ranking can be utilized such as in FIG. 6, for example, with a category name 600, such as “Shark.” The choice of using stars, other symbols, indicia, or color schemes, on a named ranking could be changed upon the discretion of the network operator. In any instance, a player could, by clicking on the ranking, such as 506 or 600, on the nameplate, open a popup window with additional information.

FIG. 7 illustrates an example of additional information in a popup window 700 that appears after clicking on, for instance, the ranking under the nameplate of a particular player, such as “Obama.” From this popup window, additional information can be provided such as the player “Obama” is a 4.5-star ranked player with a 97.83% rating. This rating is the overall ranking based on 10,443 hands. By reading and interpreting the number of hands in the rating, one may ascertain additional value to the player’s ranking. Thus, a player that has a 4.5 star ranking within a 100 hands of play may be a different kind of player than a player that has the same ranking with 10,443 hands. Clicking on a “more info” button may bring up another popup window, such as shown in FIG. 8, which may explain the ranking system in more detail.

The operations described and shown in the methods and/or processes 200 of FIG. 2 may be carried out or performed in any suitable order as desired in various embodiments. Additionally, in certain embodiments, at least a portion of the operations may be carried out in parallel. Furthermore, in certain embodiments, less than or more than the operations described in FIG. 2 may be performed.

Certain aspects of the disclosure are described above with reference to block and flow diagrams of systems, methods, apparatuses, and/or computer program products according to example embodiments. It will be understood that one or more blocks of the block diagrams and flow diagrams, and combinations of blocks in the block diagrams and the flow diagrams, respectively, can be implemented by computer-executable program instructions. Likewise, some blocks of the block diagrams and flow diagrams may not necessarily need to be performed in the order presented, or may not necessarily need to be performed at all, according to some embodiments.

These computer-executable program instructions may be loaded onto a special-purpose computer or other particular machine, a processor, or other programmable data processing apparatus to produce a particular machine, such that the instructions that execute on the computer, processor, or other programmable data processing apparatus create means for implementing one or more functions specified in the flow diagram block or blocks. These computer program instructions may also be stored in a computer-readable memory that can direct a computer or other programmable data processing apparatus to function in a particular manner, such that the instructions stored in the computer-readable memory produce an article of manufacture including instruction means that implement one or more functions specified in the flow diagram block or blocks. As an example, certain embodiments may provide for a computer program product, comprising a computer-readable medium having a computer-readable program code or program instructions embodied therein, said computer-readable program code adapted to be executed to implement one or more functions specified in the flow diagram block or blocks. The computer program instructions may also be loaded onto a computer or other programmable data processing apparatus to cause a series of operational elements or steps to be performed on the computer or other programmable apparatus to produce a computer-implemented process such that the instructions that execute on the computer or other programmable apparatus provide elements or steps for implementing the functions specified in the flow diagram block or blocks.

Accordingly, blocks of the block diagrams and flow diagrams support combinations of means for performing the specified functions, combinations of elements or steps for performing the specified functions and program instruction means for performing the specified functions. It will also be understood that each block of the block diagrams and flow diagrams, and combinations of blocks in the block diagrams and flow diagrams, can be implemented by special-purpose, hardware-based computer systems that perform the specified functions, elements or steps, or combinations of special-purpose hardware and computer instructions.
Conditional language, such as, among others, “can,” “could,” “might,” or “may,” unless specifically stated otherwise, or otherwise understood within the context as used, is generally intended to convey that certain embodiments could include, while other embodiments do not include, certain features, elements, and/or operations. Thus, such conditional language is not generally intended to imply that features, elements, and/or operations are in any way required for one or more embodiments or that one or more embodiments necessarily include logic for deciding, with or without user input or prompting, whether these features, elements, and/or operations are included or are to be performed in any particular embodiment.

Many modifications and other embodiments of the invention set forth herein will be apparent having the benefit of the teachings presented in the foregoing descriptions and the associated drawings. Therefore, it is to be understood that the invention is not to be limited to the specific embodiments disclosed and that modifications and other embodiments are intended to be included within the scope of the appended claims. Although specific terms are employed herein, they are used in a generic and descriptive sense only and not for purposes of limitation.

The claimed invention is:

1. A player ranking system, comprising:
   at least one memory for storing computer-executable instructions; and
   at least one processor in communication with the at least one memory, wherein the at least one processor is configured to execute the computer-executable instructions to:
   obtain game play information for a player of a game; calculate or update a measure of player performance for the player based upon an analysis of the obtained game play information; and determine a player ranking for the player based at least in part on the measure of player performance of the player.

2. The player ranking system of claim 1, wherein the play information comprises a starting balance and an ending balance associated with a player session of the game.

3. The player ranking system of claim 2, wherein the measure of player performance comprises a return on investment (ROI), wherein the ROI is calculated based upon a ratio of the ending balance to the starting balance.

4. The player ranking system of claim 2, wherein the starting balance and the ending balance are associated with one of (i) a monetary balance, or (ii) a points-based balance.

5. The player ranking system of claim 1, wherein the play information includes a number of wins or losses associated with a player session of the game.

6. The player ranking system of claim 1, wherein the player ranking can be associated with a group or a category of a plurality of groups or categories.

7. The player ranking system of claim 6, wherein each of the plurality of groups or categories is associated with a respective symbol or name.

8. A method for ranking one or more players, comprising:
   obtaining game play information for a player of a game;
   calculating or updating a measure of player performance for the player based upon an analysis of the obtained game play information; and
   determining a player ranking for the player based at least in part on the measure of player performance of the player.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the play information comprises a starting balance and an ending balance associated with a player session of the game.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein the measure of player performance comprises a return on investment (ROI), wherein the ROI is calculated based upon a ratio of the ending balance to the starting balance.

11. The method of claim 9, wherein the starting balance and the ending balance are associated with one of (i) a monetary balance, or (ii) a points-based balance.

12. The method of claim 8, wherein the play information includes a number of wins or losses associated with a player session of the game.

13. The method of claim 8, wherein the player ranking can be associated with a group or a category of a plurality of groups or categories.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein each of the plurality of groups or categories is associated with a respective symbol or name.

15. One or more computer readable media storing computer-executable instructions that, when executed by at least one processor, configure the at least one processor to:
   obtain game play information for a player of a game,
   wherein the play information comprises a starting balance and an ending balance associated with a player session of the game;
   calculate or update a measure of player performance for the player based upon an analysis of the obtained game play information, wherein the measure of player performance comprises a return on investment (ROI), wherein the ROI is calculated based upon a ratio of the ending balance to the starting balance; and determine a player ranking for the player based at least in part on the measure of player performance of the player.

16. The one or more computer readable media of claim 15, wherein the starting balance and the ending balance are associated with one of (i) a monetary balance, or (ii) a points-based balance.

17. The one or more computer readable media of claim 15, wherein the play information includes a number of wins or losses associated with a player session of the game.

18. The one or more computer readable media of claim 15, wherein the player ranking can be associated with a group or a category of a plurality of groups or categories.

19. The one or more computer readable media of claim 18, wherein each of the plurality of groups or categories is associated with a respective symbol or name.

20. The one or more computer readable media of claim 15, wherein the game comprises at least one of: an online game, an online poker ring game, or an online casino game.