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(19) **United States**(12) **Patent Application Publication**
Yoshizawa(10) **Pub. No.: US 2009/0137307 A1**(43) **Pub. Date: May 28, 2009**(54) **GAMING SYSTEM CONSISTING OF A
PLURALITY OF GAMING MACHINES AND
METHOD FOR CONTROLLING GAMING
MACHINE****Related U.S. Application Data**

(60) Provisional application No. 60/990,487, filed on Nov. 27, 2007.

Publication Classification(75) Inventor: **Kazumasa Yoshizawa, Tokyo (JP)**(51) **Int. Cl.**
A63F 9/24 (2006.01)(52) **U.S. Cl.** **463/20; 463/42**(57) **ABSTRACT**

Correspondence Address:

NDQ&M WATCHSTONE LLP**1300 EYE STREET, NW, SUITE 1000 WEST
TOWER****WASHINGTON, DC 20005 (US)**(73) Assignee: **ARUZE CORP., Tokyo (JP)**(21) Appl. No.: **12/052,027**(22) Filed: **Mar. 20, 2008**

A gaming system comprising plural gaming apparatuses capable of communicating with one another via a communication line, each of the gaming apparatuses comprising an input device which enables an input of a BET and a controller programmed to execute processing of: (a) receiving a BET on the basis of an input from the input device; (b) executing a game; (c) determining a result of the game; and (d) providing an award, when a total result based on the results of the games in the respective gaming apparatuses is a predetermined result.

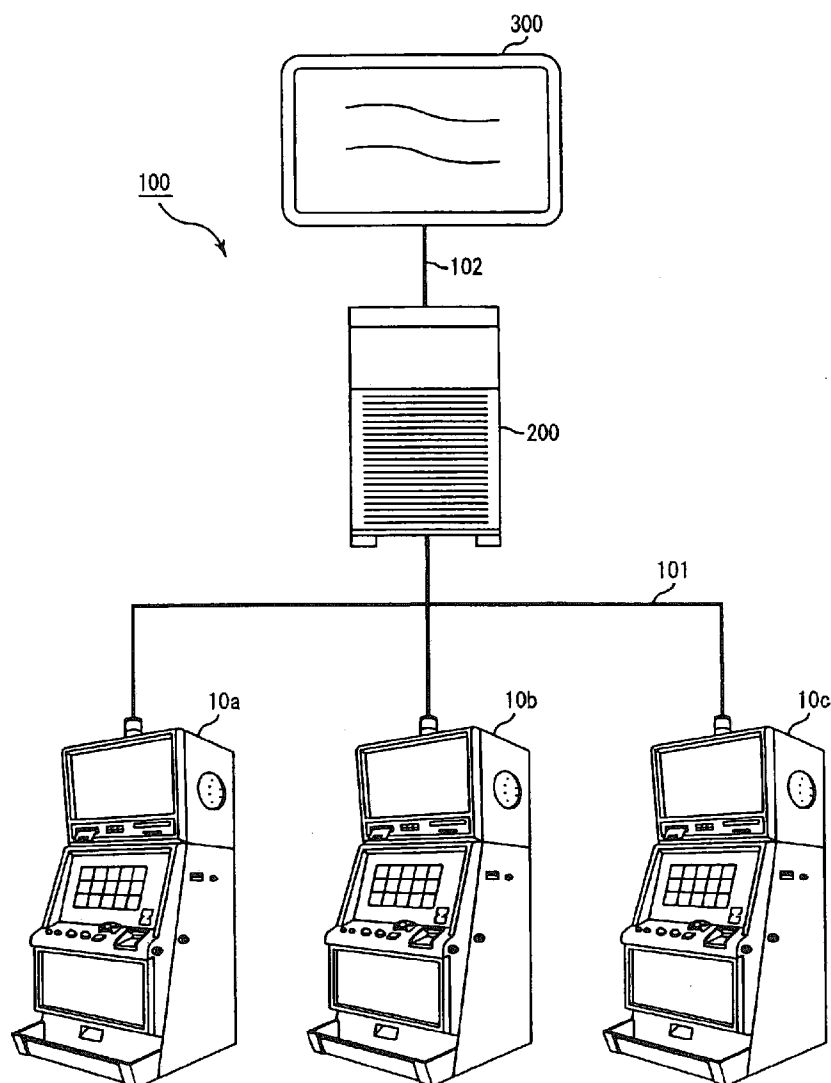


Fig. 1

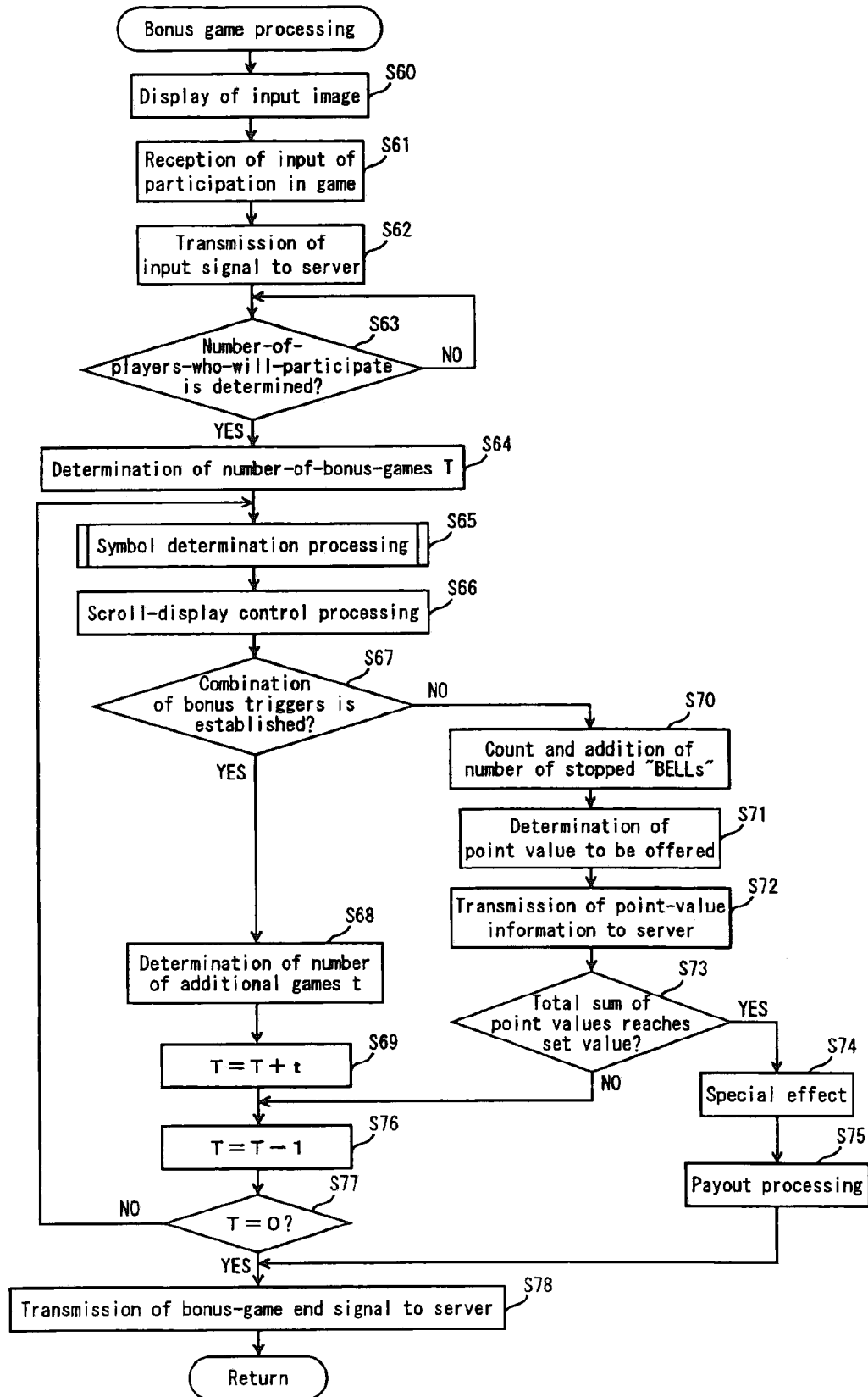


Fig. 2

Number of participating players	Set point value	Award (※1)
1	2	500
2	4	1500
3	6	3000

※1 Award for a single slot machine

Fig. 3

Slot machine	Probability of displaying (%) (※1)	Number of displayed symbols required for 1 point
10a	10	5
10b	5	3
10c	1	1

※1 Probability of displaying 1 "BELL"

Fig. 4

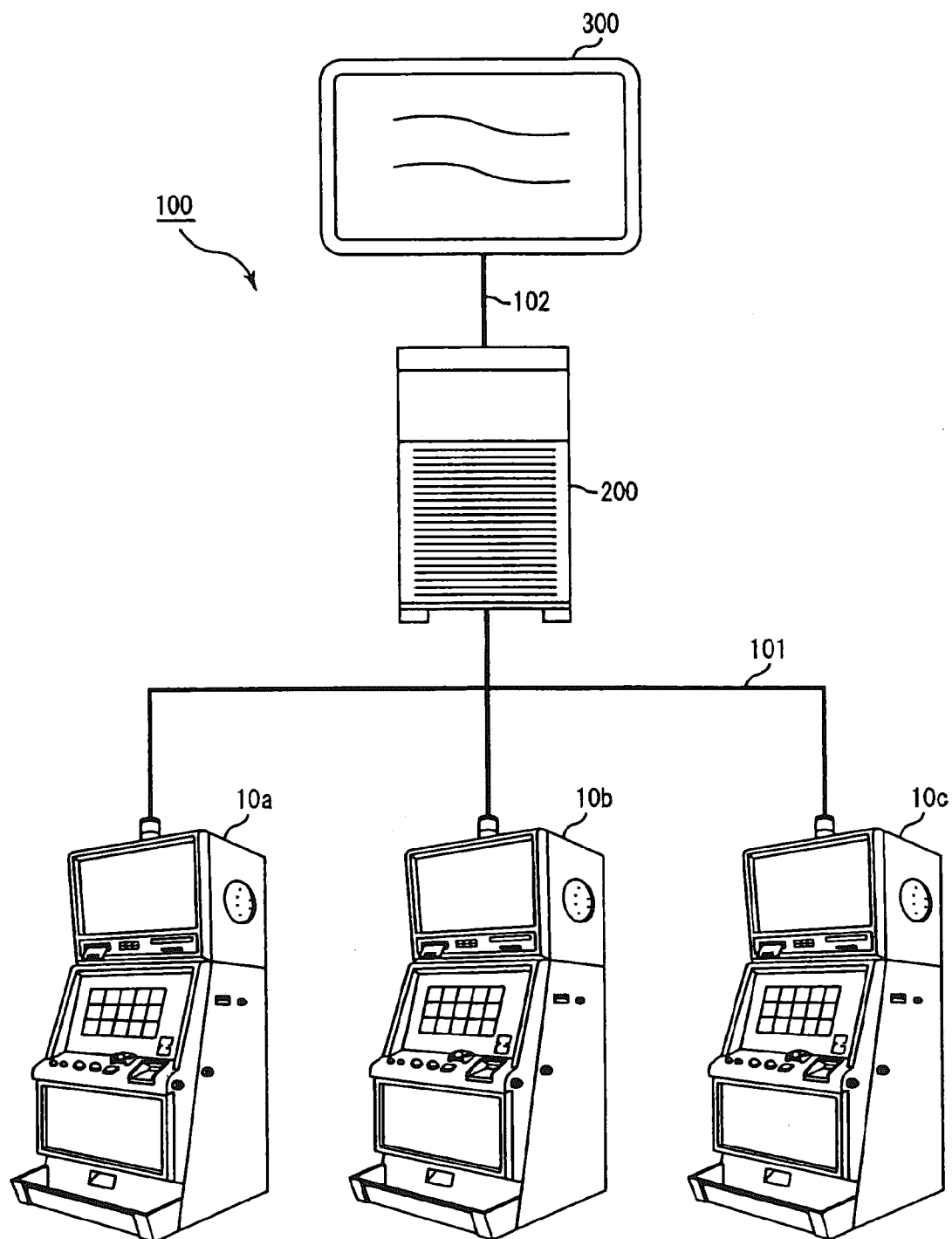


Fig. 5

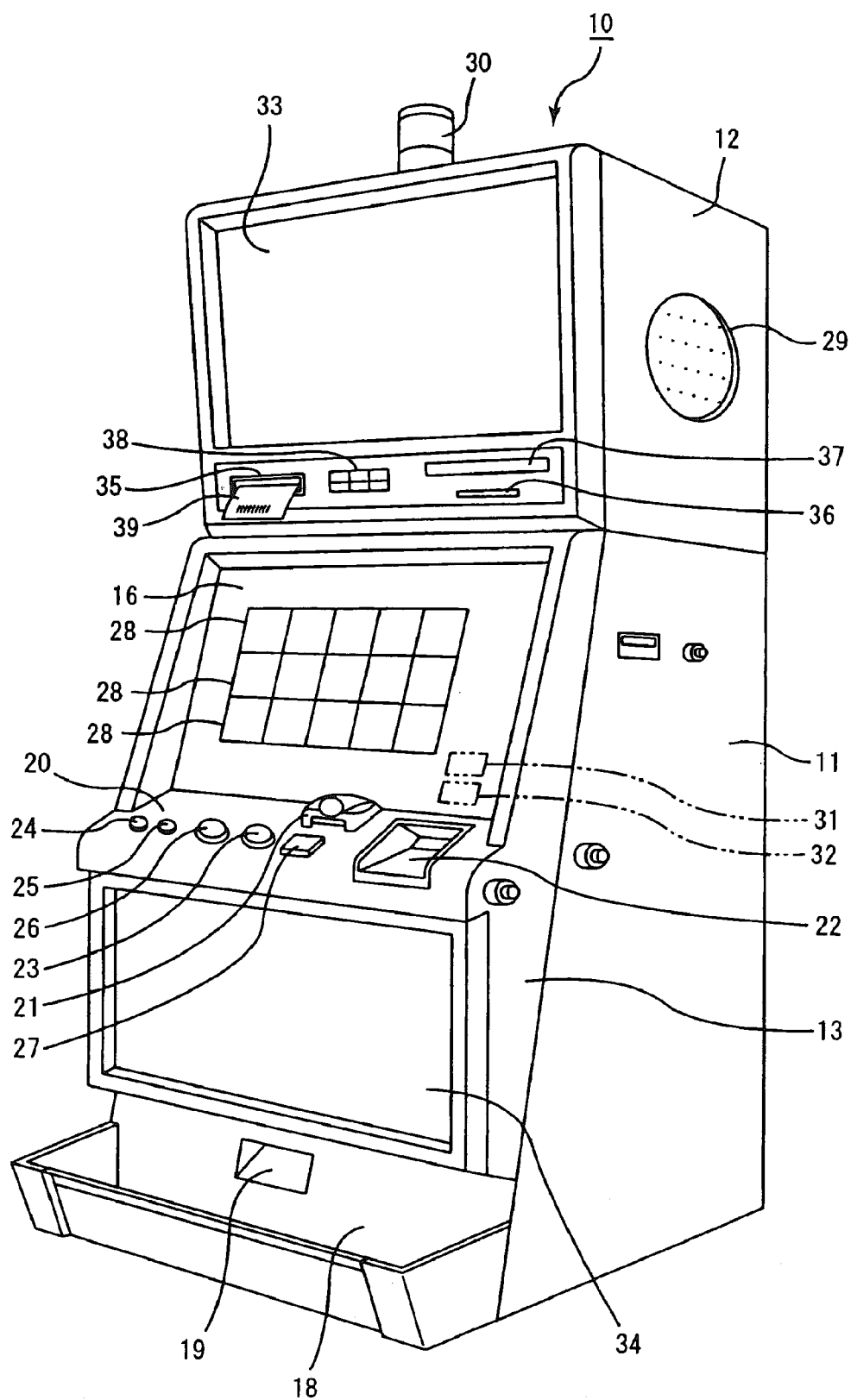


Fig. 6

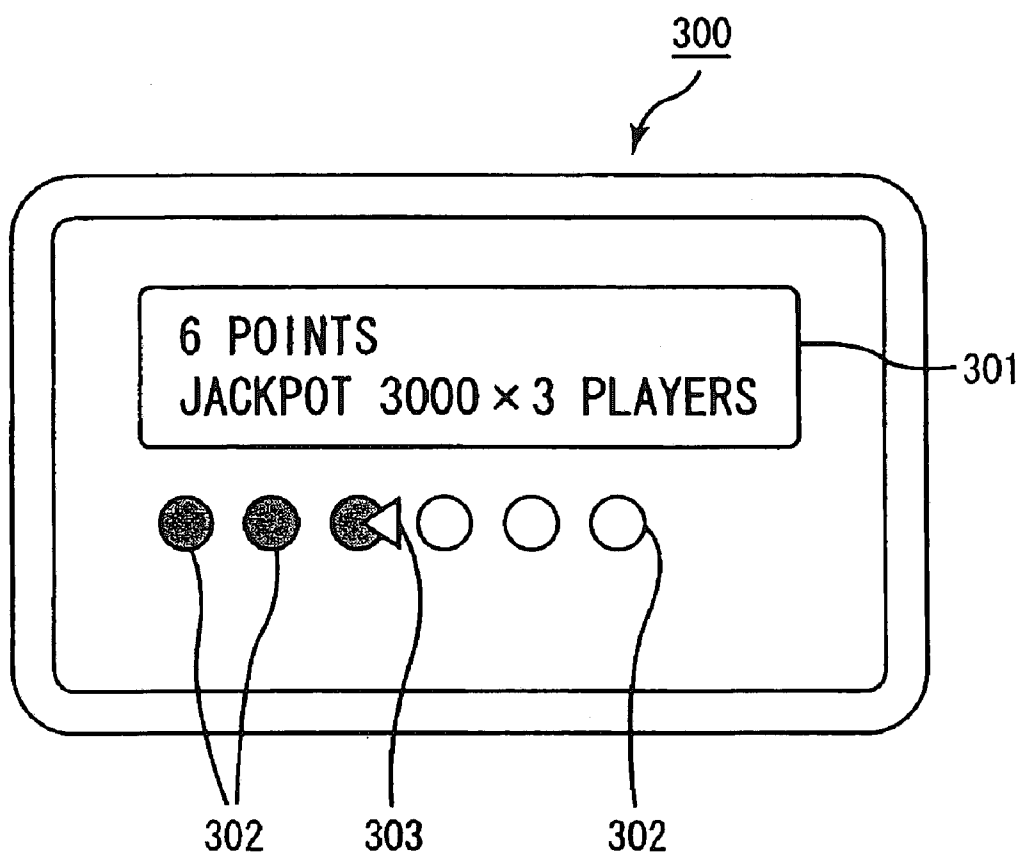


Fig. 7

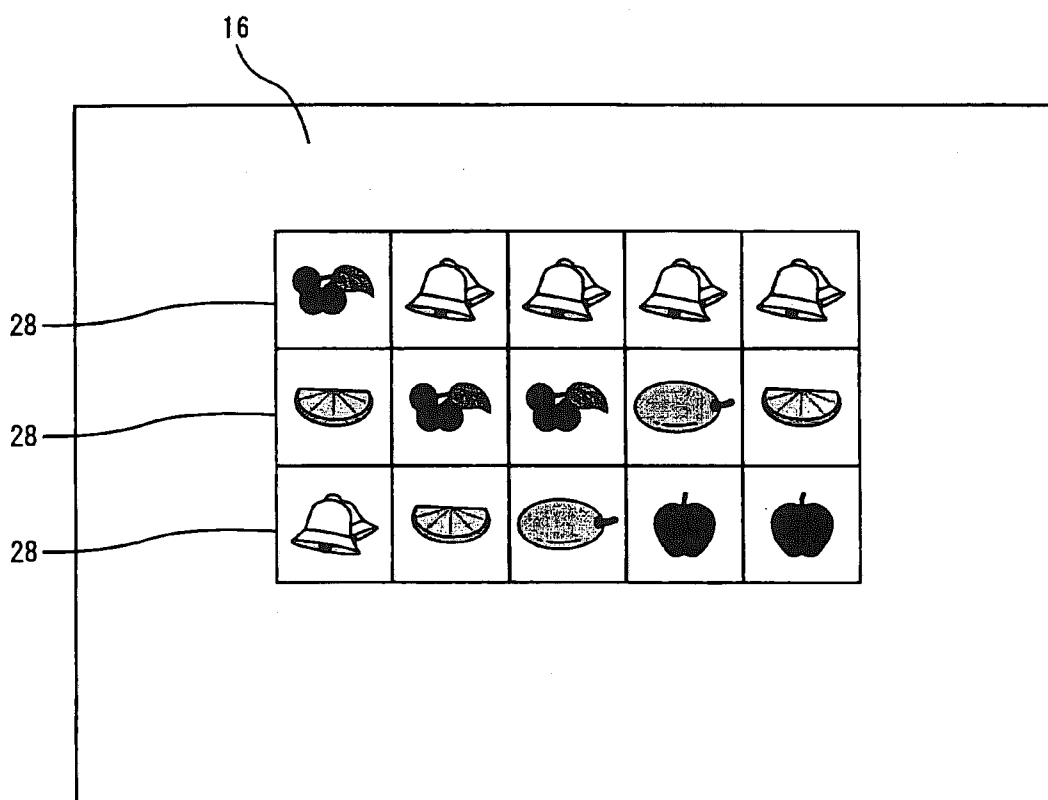


Fig. 8

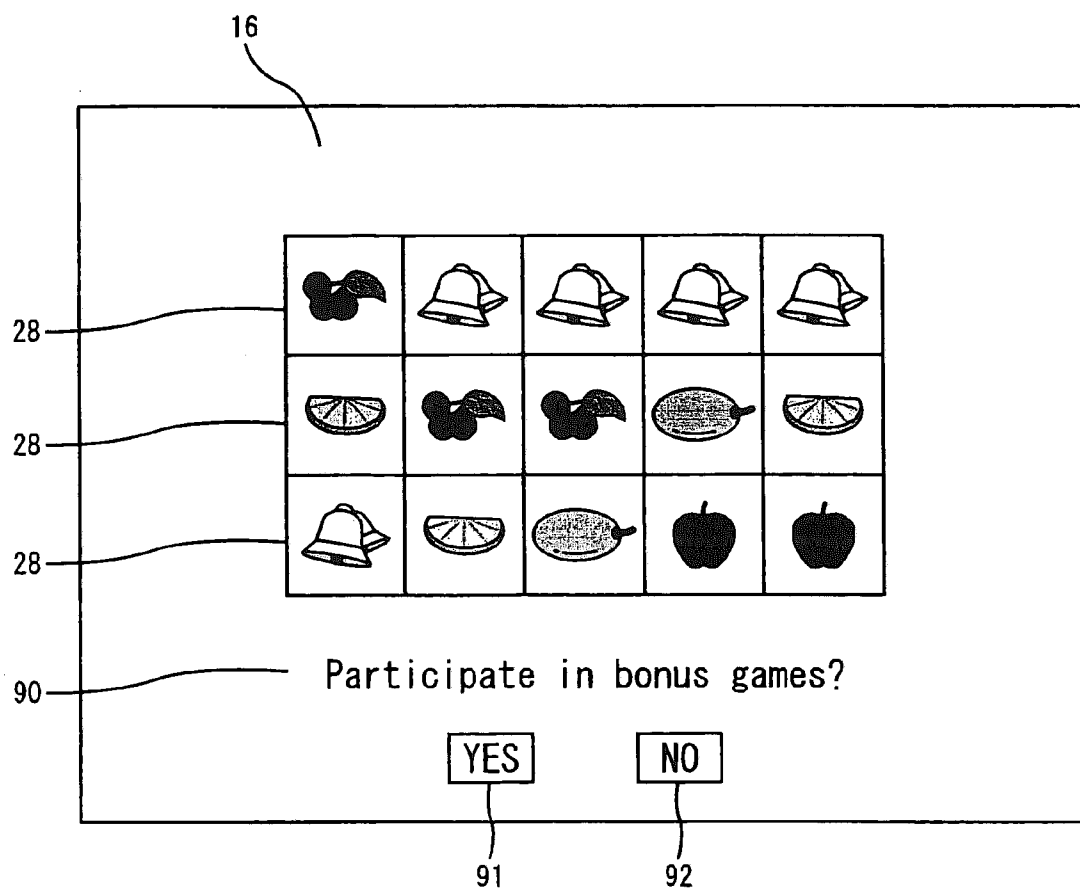


Fig. 9

	First column	Second column	Third column	Fourth column	Fifth column
Code No.	Symbol	Symbol	Symbol	Symbol	Symbol
00	JACKPOT 7	JACKPOT 7	JACKPOT 7	JACKPOT 7	JACKPOT 7
01	PLUM	BELL	CHERRY	ORANGE	APPLE
02	ORANGE	APPLE	ORANGE	PLUM	ORANGE
03	PLUM	BELL	APPLE	STRAWBERRY	BELL
04	ORANGE	CHERRY	ORANGE	BELL	PLUM
05	PLUM	ORANGE	PLUM	PLUM	BLUE 7
06	ORANGE	PLUM	ORANGE	APPLE	ORANGE
07	PLUM	CHERRY	PLUM	BLUE 7	APPLE
08	BLUE 7	BELL	ORANGE	PLUM	PLUM
09	CHERRY	APPLE	PLUM	ORANGE	BELL
10	ORANGE	BELL	ORANGE	BELL	CHERRY
11	BELL	STRAWBERRY	PLUM	ORANGE	PLUM
12	ORANGE	PLUM	BELL	PLUM	BELL
13	STRAWBERRY	BLUE 7	STRAWBERRY	CHERRY	ORANGE
14	BLUE 7	BELL	BLUE 7	APPLE	APPLE
15	ORANGE	APPLE	BELL	STRAWBERRY	PLUM
16	APPLE	BELL	CHERRY	CHERRY	CHERRY
17	PLUM	STRAWBERRY	PLUM	BELL	ORANGE
18	ORANGE	PLUM	ORANGE	PLUM	BELL
19	PLUM	CHERRY	PLUM	ORANGE	ORANGE
20	BLUE 7	BELL	ORANGE	CHERRY	PLUM
21	CHERRY	APPLE	PLUM	PLUM	STRAWBERRY

Fig. 10

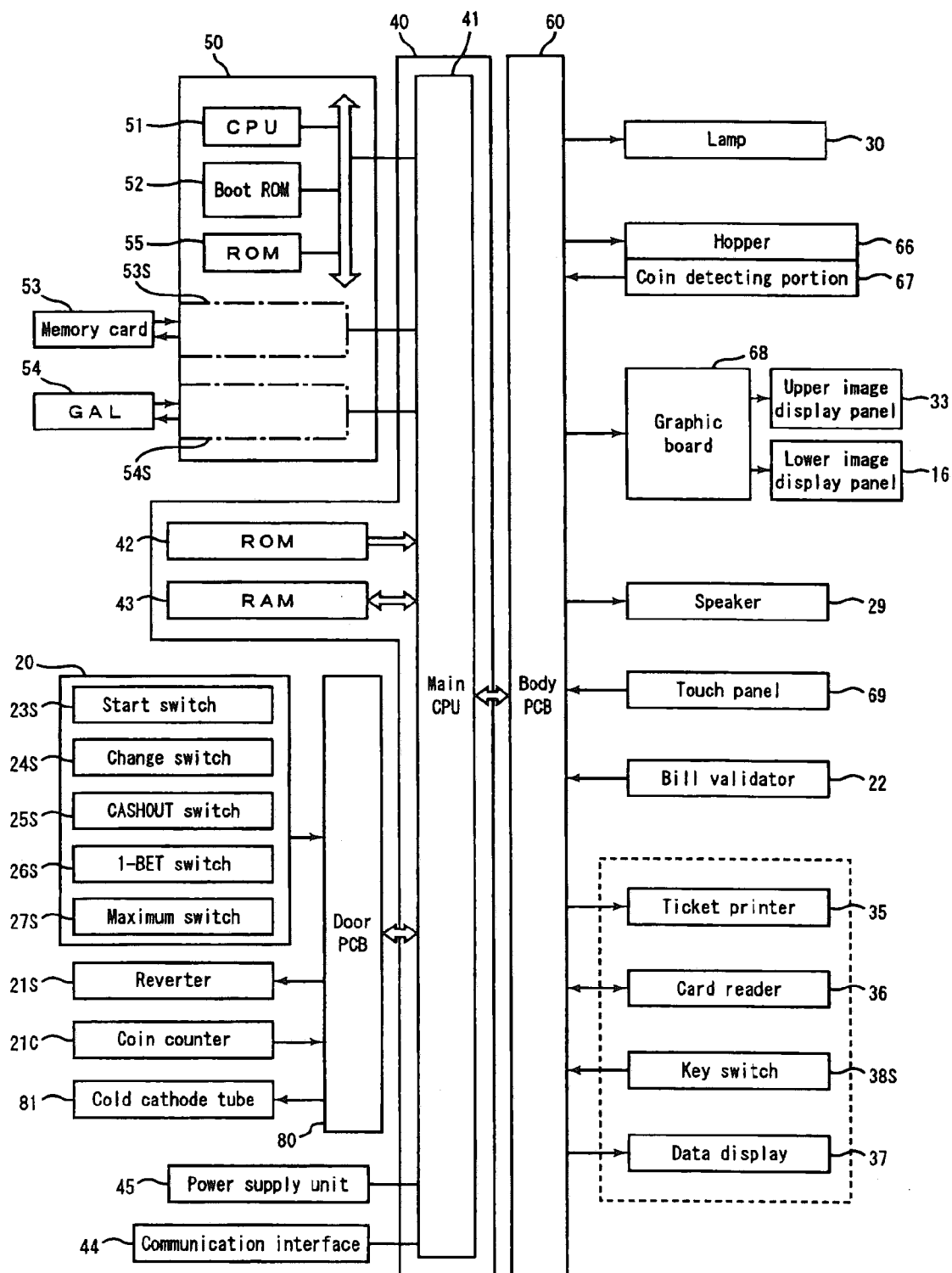


Fig. 11

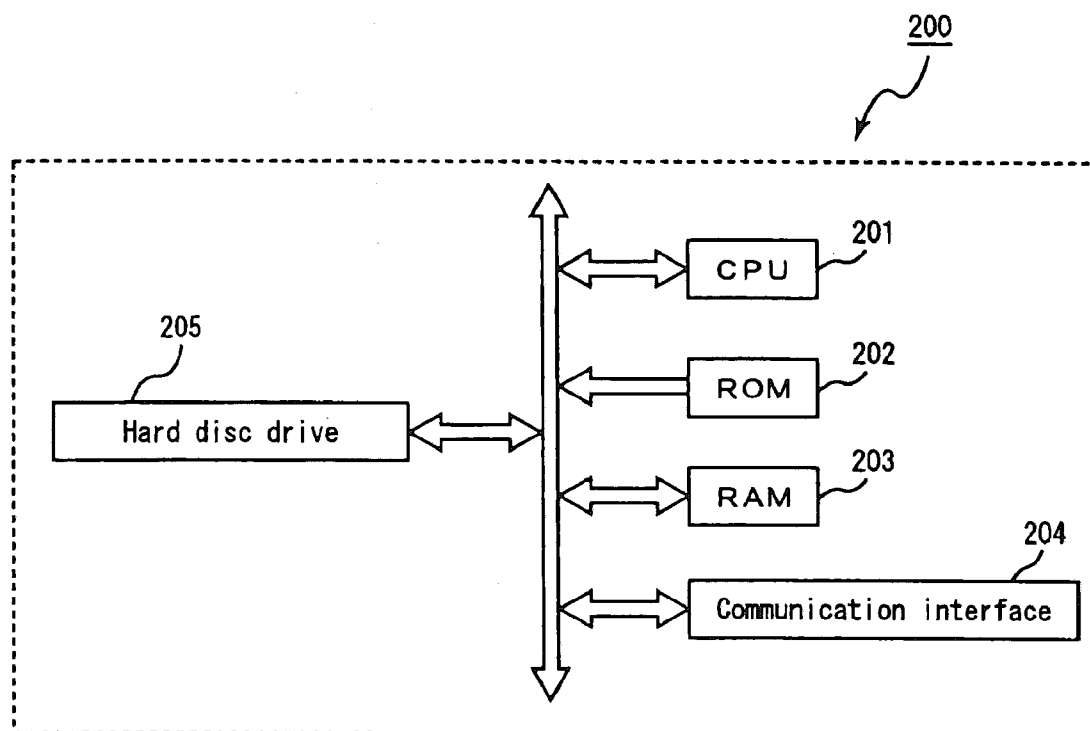


Fig. 12

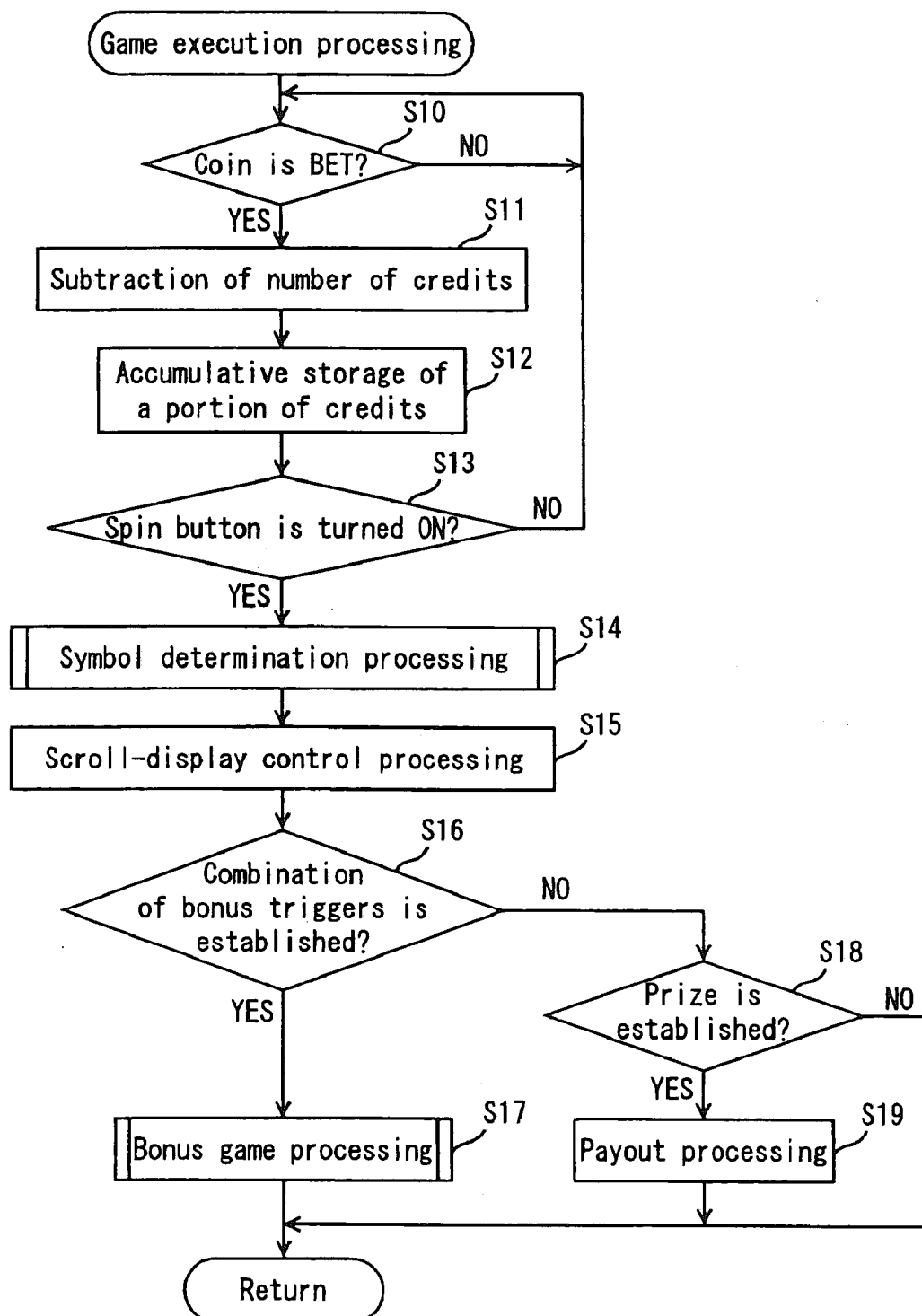


Fig. 13

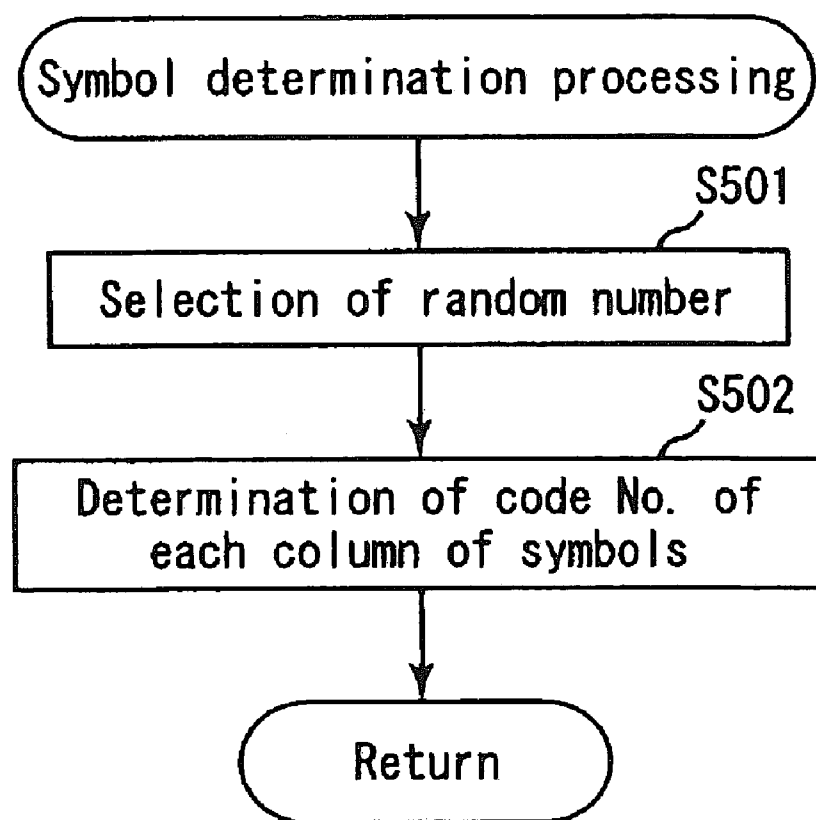


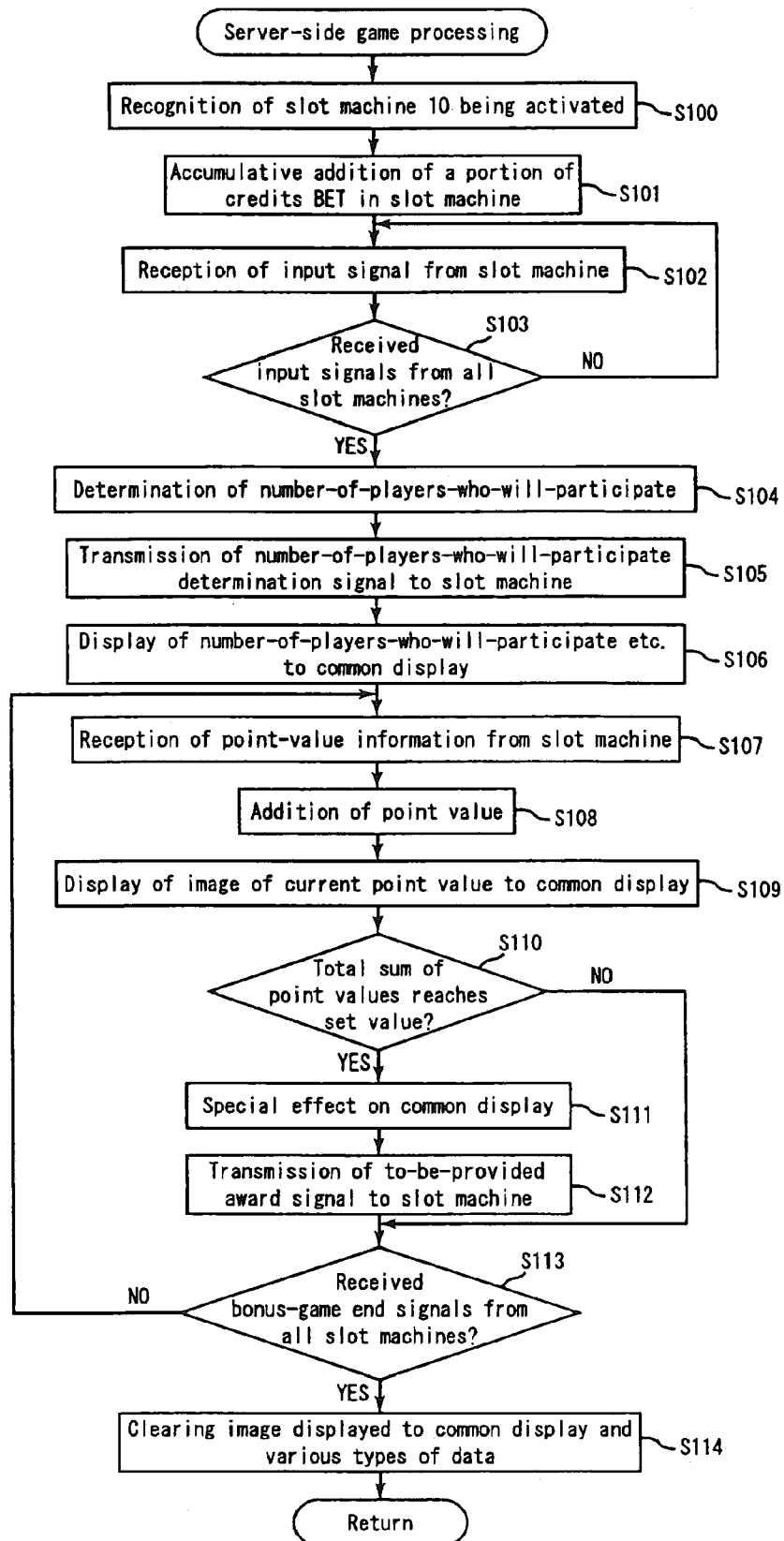
Fig. 14

Symbol	Number of displayed symbols			
	3 symbols	4 symbols	5 symbols	6 or more symbols (※1)
CHERRY	2	4	6	m*(n-2)
BELL	4	8	12	
STRAWBERRY	6	12	18	
ORANGE	8	16	24	
PLUM	10	20	30	
BLUE 7	20	40	60	
JACKPOT 7	40	80	120	m*(n-2)
APPLE	50	100	200	

※1 “m” represents number of coin-outs in the case where three symbols are displayed.
“n” represents number of displayed symbols.

※2 In addition to a payout, a predetermined number of free games are conducted in the case where five or more APPLES are displayed.

Fig. 15



**GAMING SYSTEM CONSISTING OF A
PLURALITY OF GAMING MACHINES AND
METHOD FOR CONTROLLING GAMING
MACHINE**

**CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED
APPLICATIONS**

[0001] This application claims benefit under 35 U.S.C. § 119 of U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/990,487, filed on Nov. 27, 2007, which application is incorporated herein by reference in entirety.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] 1. Field of the Invention

[0003] The present invention relates to a gaming system and a method for controlling a gaming apparatus.

[0004] 2. Discussion of the Background

[0005] Conventionally, there have been techniques for accumulatively storing, in a server and the like, a portion of game media inserted in each gaming apparatus and conducting an award, out of the accumulatively-stored game media, in each gaming apparatus, according to the results of games in each gaming apparatus, in a gaming system including plural gaming apparatuses capable of communicating with one another via communication lines. For example, U.S. Pat. No. 6,416,409, U.S. Pat. No. 5,280,909 and U.S. Pat. No. 5,564,700 disclose techniques for providing an award in each of gaming apparatuses, out of game media which have been accumulatively stored in a server, when a predetermined condition is satisfied in the gaming apparatus, in a gaming system including plural gaming apparatuses which are connected to the server such that they can communicate with the server.

[0006] For example, U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2007/0021187 discloses a slot machine which pays out a predetermined number of game media according to the number of symbols, called scatter symbols, which are arranged to a display regardless of winning lines.

[0007] However, in conventional gaming systems, each of gaming apparatuses has independent contents of games and independent results of games. Therefore, even when plural players desire to enjoy games together, each player should play independent games, thereby causing a problem that the players meagerly feel that they are enjoying games together. Further, although players can play games while competing with one another, for example, in such a way as to fight over game media which have been accumulatively stored, players are not allowed to carry forward games in cooperation with one another.

[0008] The present invention has been devised in view of the aforementioned problems and an object thereof is to provide a gaming system and a method for controlling a gaming apparatus which enables plural players to acquire awards in cooperation with one another.

[0009] The contents of U.S. Pat. No. 6,416,409, U.S. Pat. No. 5,280,909, U.S. Pat. No. 5,564,700 and U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2007/0021187 are incorporated herein by reference in their entirety.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0010] The first aspect of the present invention provides a gaming system having the following configuration.

[0011] Namely, the gaming system includes plural gaming apparatuses capable of communicating with one another via a

communication line, each of the gaming apparatuses comprising an input device which enables an input of a BET and a controller programmed to execute processing of: (a) receiving a BET on the basis of an input from the input device; (b) executing a game; (c) determining a result of the game; and (d) providing an award, when a total result based on the results of the games in the respective gaming apparatuses is a predetermined result.

[0012] According to the above-mentioned gaming system, an award is provided in each of the gaming apparatuses (for example, slot machines or roulette gaming machines), when the total result (for example, the total sum of point values offered in the respective gaming apparatuses or the total sum of game media paid out in the respective gaming apparatuses) based on the results of games in the respective gaming apparatuses is a predetermined result.

[0013] Namely, determination as to whether or not an award should be provided in each of the gaming apparatuses constituting the gaming system is performed on the basis of the total result based on the results of games in the respective gaming apparatuses. Therefore, in order to receive an award, players who are playing games in the respective gaming apparatuses are required to carry forward games in cooperation with one another, such that the total result becomes the predetermined result. This configuration enables players who desire to enjoy games together with other players to feel strongly that they are enjoying games in cooperation with other players.

[0014] This configuration also enables plural players to cooperate with one another in order to achieve a common goal, leading to a safe and peaceful gamble without excessive competitive consciousnesses of the players.

[0015] Preferably, the gaming system further has the following configuration.

[0016] Namely, the processing (b) is processing for executing a game in which a point value can be offered, the processing (c) is processing for determining a point value to be offered in the game, and the processing (d) is processing for providing an award, when the total sum of the point values offered in the respective gaming apparatuses reaches a predetermined value.

[0017] According to the above-mentioned gaming system, an award is provided in each of the gaming apparatuses, when the total sum of the point values offered in the respective gaming apparatuses reaches a predetermined value.

[0018] Namely, determination as to whether or not an award should be provided in each of the gaming apparatuses constituting the gaming system is performed on the basis of the total sum of the point values offered in the respective gaming apparatuses. Therefore, in order to receive an award, players who are playing games in the respective gaming apparatuses are required to accumulate point values in cooperation with one another, such that the total sum of point values reaches the predetermined value. This configuration enables players who desire to enjoy games together with other players to feel strongly that they are enjoying games in cooperation with other players.

[0019] Preferably, the gaming system further has the following configuration.

[0020] Namely, the gaming apparatus further includes a game participation switch which enables an input indicative of participation in a game, the controller is further programmed to execute processing (e) for receiving an input indicative of participation in a game from the game partici-

pation switch, and the processing (d) is processing for providing an award, when the total result based on the results of the games in the respective gaming apparatuses in which participation in a game has been inputted by the game participation switch is a predetermined result, such that an amount of an award to be provided increases with increasing the number of gaming apparatuses in which the input indicative of participation in a game has been performed.

[0021] Further, according to the above-mentioned gaming system, an award provided in each of the gaming apparatuses when the total result becomes the predetermined result increases with increasing the number of players who participate in a game.

[0022] Accordingly, as the number of players who participate in a game increases, an amount of an award that each player can target increases. This configuration urges a greater number of players to play games together with one another with a positive attitude. As a result, the game facility having the gaming system may easily ensure benefits.

[0023] The second aspect of the invention provides a gaming system having the following configuration.

[0024] Namely, the gaming system includes plural gaming apparatuses capable of communicating with one another via a communication line, each of the gaming apparatuses comprising a display for arranging plural symbols thereto, an input device which enables an input of a BET, and a controller programmed to execute processing of: (a) receiving a BET on the basis of an input from the input device; (b) accumulatively storing a predetermined proportion of game media BET in the processing (a); (c) rearranging the plural symbols arranged to the display; (d) determining a result of a game, on the basis of rearranged symbols or a combination thereof; and (e) providing an award, out of the total sum of the accumulatively-stored game media, when a total result based on the results of the games in the respective gaming apparatuses is a predetermined result.

[0025] According to the above-mentioned gaming system, a predetermined proportion of game media BET in the respective gaming apparatuses (for example, slot machines) in which symbols are rearranged is accumulatively stored (in a server, for example). Further, an award is provided in each of the gaming apparatuses, out of the total sum of accumulatively-stored game media, when a total result (for example, the total sum of the point values offered in the respective gaming apparatuses or the total sum of game media paid out in the respective gaming apparatuses) based on the results of games in the respective gaming apparatuses is a predetermined result.

[0026] Namely, determination as to whether or not an award should be provided in each of the gaming apparatuses constituting the gaming system is performed on the basis of the total result based on the results of games in the respective gaming apparatuses. Therefore, in order to receive an award, players who are playing games in the respective gaming apparatuses are required to carry forward games in cooperation with one another, such that the total result becomes the predetermined result. This configuration enables players who desire to enjoy games together with other players to feel strongly that they are enjoying games in cooperation with other players.

[0027] This also enables plural players to cooperate with one another in order to achieve common a goal, leading to a safe and peaceful gamble without excessive competitive consciousnesses of the players.

[0028] Further, when the total result becomes the predetermined result, an award is provided in each of the gaming apparatuses, out of game media obtained by accumulatively storing in the server and the like, some or all of game media BET in the respective gaming apparatuses, resulting in suppression of the loss in the game facility having the gaming system.

[0029] Preferably, the gaming system has the following configuration.

[0030] Namely, the processing (d) is processing for offering a point value on the basis of rearranged symbols or combinations thereof, and

[0031] the processing (e) is processing for providing an award, out of the total sum of the accumulatively-stored game media, when the total sum of the point values offered in the respective gaming apparatuses reaches a predetermined value.

[0032] According to the above-mentioned gaming system, an award is provided in each of the gaming apparatuses, when the total sum of the point values offered in the respective gaming apparatuses reaches a predetermined value.

[0033] Namely, determination as to whether or not an award should be provided in each of the gaming apparatuses constituting the gaming system is performed on the basis of the total sum of the point values offered in the respective gaming apparatuses. Therefore, in order to receive an award, players who are playing a game in the respective gaming apparatuses are required to accumulate point values in cooperation with one another, such that the total sum of point values reaches the predetermined value. This configuration enables players who desire to enjoy games together with other players to feel strongly that they are enjoying games in cooperation with other players.

[0034] Preferably, the gaming system further has the following configuration.

[0035] Namely, the gaming apparatuses further includes a game participation switch which enables an input indicative of participation in a game, the controller is further programmed to execute processing (f) for receiving the input indicative of participation in games through the game participation switch, and the processing (e) is processing for providing an award, out of the total sum of the accumulatively-stored game media, when a total result based on the results of the games in the respective gaming apparatuses in which the input indicative of participation in a game has been performed through the game participation switch is a predetermined result, such that an amount of an award to be provided increases with increasing the number of gaming apparatuses in which the input has been performed.

[0036] Further, according to the above-mentioned gaming system, an award provided in each of the gaming apparatuses when the total result results in the predetermined result increases with increasing the number of players who participate in a game.

[0037] Accordingly, as the number of players who participate in a game increases, an amount of an award that each player can target increases. This configuration urges a greater number of players to play games together with one another with a positive attitude. As a result, the game facility having the gaming system may easily ensure benefits.

[0038] Preferably, the gaming system further has the following configuration.

[0039] Namely, a probability that specific symbols are rearranged in the processing (c) in at least one of the plural gaming apparatuses is different from those in the other gaming apparatuses.

[0040] According to the above-mentioned gaming system, the probability that specific symbols are rearranged upon determining the results of games in some gaming apparatuses, out of the plural gaming apparatuses constituting the gaming system, is different from those in the other gaming apparatuses.

[0041] Accordingly, the gaming system may be constituted by the gaming apparatuses having different characteristics, for example, in such a way that specific symbols are stably rearranged in some gaming apparatuses out of the plural gaming apparatuses constituting the gaming system, but the specific symbols are rarely rearranged in other gaming apparatuses. Accordingly, even in the same gaming system, different strategies for games are required in the respective gaming apparatuses constituting the gaming system, depending on their characteristics. Therefore, players are required to grapple with games in cooperation with one another, in order to achieve a common goal in the gaming apparatuses having the different characteristics, thus enabling the players to feel more strongly that they cooperate with other players.

[0042] The third aspect of the invention provides a gaming system having the following configuration.

[0043] Namely the gaming system includes plural gaming apparatuses capable of communicating with one another via a communication line, each of the gaming apparatuses comprising a display for arranging plural symbols thereto, an input device which enables an input of a BET and a controller programmed to execute processing of: (a) receiving a BET on the basis of an input from the input device; (b) accumulatively storing a predetermined proportion of game media BET in the processing (a); (c) rearranging the plural symbols arranged to the display; (d) executing a bonus game in which the plural symbols are rearranged, when the plural symbols are rearranged in a specific pattern in the processing (c); (e) determining a result of the bonus game on the basis of symbols rearranged in the bonus games and a combination thereof; and (f) providing an award, out of the total sum of the accumulatively-stored game media, when a total result based on the results of the bonus games in the respective gaming apparatuses is a predetermined result.

[0044] According to the above-mentioned gaming system, a predetermined proportion of game media BET in the respective gaming apparatuses (for example, slot machines) in which symbols are rearranged is accumulatively stored (in a server, for example). Further, in each of the gaming apparatuses, bonus games are executed when plural symbols are rearranged in a specific pattern, and an award is provided in each of the gaming apparatuses, out of the total sum of accumulatively-stored game media, when the total result (for example, the total sum of the point values offered in the respective gaming apparatuses or the total sum of game media paid out in the respective gaming apparatuses) based on the results of the bonus games is the predetermined result.

[0045] Namely, determination as to whether or not an award should be provided in each of the gaming apparatuses constituting the gaming system is performed on the basis of the total result based on the results of bonus games in the respective gaming apparatuses. Therefore, in order to receive an award, the players who are playing games in the respective gaming apparatuses are required to carry forward games in

cooperation with one another, such that the total result becomes the predetermined result. This configuration enables players who desire to enjoy games together with other players to feel strongly that they are enjoying games in cooperation with other players.

[0046] Further, the bonus games are executed only when plural symbols are rearranged in a specific pattern. Therefore, there is a need for strategies for acquiring the right to play bonus games, which can offer additional game characteristics.

[0047] This configuration also enables plural players to cooperate with one another in order to achieve a common goal, leading to a safe and peaceful gamble without excessive competitive consciousnesses of the players.

[0048] Further, when the total result becomes the predetermined result, an award is provided in each of the gaming apparatuses, out of game media obtained by accumulatively storing, in the server and the like, some or all of game media BET in the respective gaming apparatuses, resulting in suppression of the loss in the game facility having the gaming system.

[0049] Preferably, the gaming system further has the following configuration.

[0050] Namely, the processing (e) is processing for offering a point value on the basis of rearranged symbols in the bonus game or a combination thereof, and the processing (f) is processing for providing an award, out of the total sum of the accumulatively-stored game media, when the total sum of the point values offered in the respective gaming apparatuses reaches a predetermined value.

[0051] According to the above-mentioned gaming system, an award is provided in each of the gaming apparatuses, when the total sum of the point values offered in the respective gaming apparatuses reaches the predetermined value.

[0052] Namely, determination as to whether or not an award should be provided in each of the gaming apparatuses constituting the gaming system is performed on the basis of the total sum of the point values offered in the respective gaming apparatuses. Therefore, in order to receive an award, players who are playing games in the respective gaming apparatuses are required to accumulate point values in cooperation with one another, such that the total sum of point values reaches the predetermined value. This configuration enables players who desire to enjoy games together with other players to feel strongly that they are enjoying games in cooperation with other players.

[0053] Preferably, the gaming system further has the following configuration.

[0054] Namely, the gaming apparatus further includes a game participation switch which enables an input indicative of participation in a game through the game participation switch, the controller is further programmed to execute processing (g) for receiving the input indicative of participation in a game, and the processing (f) is processing for providing an award, out of the total sum of the accumulatively-stored game media, when a total result based on the results of the bonus games in the respective gaming apparatuses in which the input indicative of participation in a game has been performed through the game participating switch is a predetermined result, such that an amount of an award to be provided increases with increasing the number of gaming apparatuses in which the input has been performed.

[0055] Further, according to the above-mentioned gaming system, an amount of an award provided in each of the gam-

ing apparatuses when the total result becomes the predetermined result increases with increasing the number of players who participate in a game.

[0056] Accordingly, as the number of players who participate in a game increases, an amount of an award that each player can target increases. This configuration urges a greater number of players to play games together with one another with a positive attitude. As a result, the game facility having the gaming system may easily ensure benefits.

[0057] Preferably, the gaming system further has the following configuration.

[0058] Namely, a probability that specific symbols are rearranged in the bonus game executed in the processing (d), in at least one of the plural gaming apparatuses, is different from those in the other gaming apparatuses.

[0059] According to the gaming system, the probability that specific symbols are rearranged upon determining the result of the bonus game in some gaming machines, out of the plural gaming machines constituting the gaming system, is different from those in the other gaming machines.

[0060] Accordingly, the gaming system may be constituted by the gaming apparatuses having different characteristics, for example, in such a way that specific symbols are stably rearranged in some gaming apparatuses out of the plural gaming apparatuses constituting the gaming system, but the specific symbols are rarely rearranged in other gaming apparatuses. Accordingly, even in the same gaming system, different strategies for games are required in the respective gaming apparatuses constituting the gaming system, depending on their characteristics. Therefore, players are required to grapple with games in cooperation with one another, in order to achieve a common goal in the gaming apparatuses having the different characteristics, thus enabling the players to feel more strongly that they cooperate with other players.

[0061] The fourth aspect of the invention provides a method for controlling a gaming apparatus, the method having the following configuration.

[0062] Namely, the method for controlling a gaming apparatus is a method for controlling a gaming apparatus, used in a gaming system comprising plural gaming apparatuses capable of communicating with one another via a communication line, each of the gaming apparatuses comprising an input device which enables an input of a BET, and a controller, the method comprising the steps of: (a) receiving a BET on the basis of an input from the input device by the controller; (b) executing a game by the controller; (c) determining a result of the game by the controller; and (d) providing an award by the controller, when a total result based on the results of the games in the respective gaming apparatuses is a predetermined result.

[0063] According to the above-mentioned method for controlling a gaming apparatus, an award is provided in each of the gaming apparatuses (for example, slot machines or roulette gaming machines), when the total result (for example, the total sum of the point values offered in the respective gaming apparatuses or the total sum of game media paid out in the respective gaming apparatuses) based on the results of games in the respective gaming apparatuses is the predetermined result.

[0064] Namely, determination as to whether or not an award should be provided in each of the gaming apparatuses constituting the gaming system is performed on the basis of the total result based on the results of games in the respective gaming apparatuses. Therefore, in order to receive an award,

players who are playing games in the respective gaming apparatuses are required to carry forward games in cooperation with one another, such that the total result becomes the predetermined result. This configuration enables players who desire to enjoy games together with other players to feel strongly that they are enjoying games in cooperation with other players.

[0065] This configuration also enables plural players to cooperate with one another in order to achieve a common goal, leading to a safe and peaceful gamble without excessive competitive consciousnesses of the players.

[0066] Preferably, the method for controlling a gaming apparatus further has the following configuration.

[0067] Namely, the step (b) is a step of executing by the controller a game in which a point value can be offered, the step (c) is a step of determining a point value to be offered in the games by the controller, and the step (d) is a step of providing an award by the controller when the total sum of the point values offered in the respective gaming apparatuses reaches a predetermined value.

[0068] According to the above-mentioned method for controlling a gaming apparatus, an award is provided in each of the gaming apparatuses, when the total sum of the point values offered in the respective gaming apparatuses reaches the predetermined value.

[0069] Namely, determination as to whether or not an award should be provided in each of the gaming apparatuses constituting the gaming system is performed on the basis of the total sum of the point values offered in the respective gaming apparatuses. Therefore, in order to receive an award, players who are playing games in the respective gaming apparatuses are required to accumulate point values in cooperation with one another, such that the total sum of point values reaches the predetermined value. This configuration enables players who desire to enjoy games together with other players to feel strongly that they are enjoying games in cooperation with other players.

[0070] Preferably, the method for controlling a gaming apparatus further has the following configuration.

[0071] Namely, the method further includes the step (e) of receiving by the controller an input indicative of participation in a game, from a game participation switch which enables an input indicative of participation in a game, wherein the step (d) is a step of providing an award when a total result based on the results of the games in the respective gaming apparatuses in which the input indicative of participation in a game has been performed through the game participation switch is a predetermined result, such that an amount of an award to be provided increases with increasing the number of gaming apparatuses in which the input has been performed.

[0072] Further, according to the above-mentioned method for controlling a gaming apparatus, an amount of an award to be provided in each of the gaming apparatuses when the total result becomes the predetermined result increases with increasing the number of players who participate in games increases.

[0073] Accordingly, as the number of players who participate in games increases, an amount of award that each player can target increases. This configuration urges a greater number of players to play games together with one another with a

positive attitude. As a result, the game facility having the gaming system may easily ensure benefits.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0074] FIG. 1 is a flowchart illustrating a subroutine of bonus game processing;

[0075] FIG. 2 is a view illustrating correspondent relationships among the numbers of players who participate in bonus games, set point values and awards to be provided;

[0076] FIG. 3 is a view illustrating correspondent relationships between probabilities that "BELLS" are displayed in the respective slot machines constituting the gaming system and the numbers of "BELLS" required to be displayed for acquiring 1 point;

[0077] FIG. 4 is a schematic view illustrating the entire structure of the gaming system according to the present embodiment;

[0078] FIG. 5 is a perspective view illustrating the external appearance of a slot machine constituting the gaming system according to the present embodiment;

[0079] FIG. 6 is a view illustrating an exemplary image being displayed to a common display;

[0080] FIG. 7 is a view illustrating an exemplary image being displayed to a lower image display pane;

[0081] FIG. 8 is a view illustrating an exemplary image being displayed to the lower image display panel;

[0082] FIG. 9 is a view illustrating symbols displayed in respective display blocks and the code Nos. of the respective symbols;

[0083] FIG. 10 is a block diagram illustrating the internal configuration of the slot machine illustrated in FIG. 5;

[0084] FIG. 11 is a block diagram illustrating the internal configuration of a server according to the present embodiment;

[0085] FIG. 12 is a flowchart illustrating a subroutine of game execution processing;

[0086] FIG. 13 is a flowchart illustrating a subroutine of symbol determination processing;

[0087] FIG. 14 is a view illustrating the relationship between plural types of prizes and the numbers of coin-outs; and

[0088] FIG. 15 is a flowchart illustrating a subroutine of server-side processing which is executed by the server according to the present embodiment.

DESCRIPTION OF THE EMBODIMENTS

[0089] An embodiment of the present invention will be described, on the basis of the drawings.

[0090] FIG. 1 is a flowchart illustrating a subroutine of bonus game processing.

[0091] The bonus game processing is processing included in game execution processing (see FIG. 12) which is executed by a slot machine 10 (see FIG. 5) which constitute a gaming system 100 (see FIG. 4) according to the present embodiment.

[0092] At first, in step S60, a main CPU 41 (see FIG. 10) included in a slot machine 10 displays to a lower image display panel 16 (see FIG. 5) an input image (see FIG. 8) which enables an input of indicative of participation in bonus games.

[0093] Next, in step S61, the main CPU 41 receives an input indicative of whether or not the player will participate in bonus games. The player can input whether or not he or she

will participate in the bonus game by touching a portion which corresponds to button image 91 or 92 on a touch panel 69 (see FIG. 8) displayed to the lower image display panel 16. At this time, the touch panel 69 functions as a game participation switch according to the present invention.

[0094] Next, in step S62, the main CPU 41 transmits, to a server 200 (see FIG. 4), an input signal indicative of the selection of whether or not the player will participate in bonus games.

[0095] Next, in step S63, the main CPU 41 determines whether or not the number of players who will participate in bonus games has been determined. Namely, the main CPU 41 determines whether or not it has received, from the server 200, a number-of-players-who-will-participate determination signal indicating that the number of players who will participate in bonus games has been determined. When the main CPU 41 determines that the number of players who will participate therein has not been determined, it returns the processing to step S63.

[0096] On the other hand, when the main CPU 41 determines that the number of players who will participate therein has been determined, the main CPU 41 selects the number-of-bonus-games T, out of 10 to 25, on the basis of a random number determined through execution of a random number generation program included in a symbol determination program stored in a RAM 43 (see FIG. 10). The main CPU 41 stores data of the determined number of bonus game, in the RAM 43.

[0097] Next, in step S65, the main CPU 41 executes symbol determination processing. In this symbol determination processing, the main CPU 41 executes the symbol determination program stored in the RAM 43 to determine code Nos. of symbols to be stopped.

[0098] The slot machines 10 of the present embodiment have plural types of symbols, all of which are assigned to be scatter symbols. Scatter symbols are symbols which generate a winning and, therefore, a payout, when the number of the scatter symbols of the same type equal to or more than a predetermined number are displayed (arranged) in display blocks 28 (see FIG. 5) in the lower image display panel 16. Here, in the present embodiment, all the symbols are assigned to be scatter symbols and, therefore, in the following description, scatter symbols will be simply referred to as symbols.

[0099] Here, the processing in step S65 will be described later in more detail, with reference to FIG. 14.

[0100] Next, in step S66, the main CPU 41 executes scroll-display control processing. This processing is processing for controlling to display in such a way as to rearrange the symbols determined in step S65 after the start of scrolling of the symbols.

[0101] Next, in step S67, the main CPU 41 determines whether or not a combination of bonus game triggers has been established, namely whether or not five or more "APPLES" have been displayed in the display blocks 28. When the main CPU 41 determines that a combination of bonus game triggers has been established, the number-of-game-repetitions t of a bonus game is newly determined (step S68), and the determined number-of-game-repetitions t of a bonus game is added to the number-of-bonus-games T (step S69). Thus, when a bonus game is won during a bonus game, the number of remaining bonus games increases. More specifically, for example, in the case in which the game shifts to 20 bonus games for the first time, when the player wins 17 bonus games

at the 12th game of the 20 bonus games, 25(20+12+17) bonus games are executed thereafter.

[0102] When the main CPU 41 determines in step S67 that a combination of bonus triggers has not been established, the main CPU 41 counts the number of “BELLS” rearranged in the display blocks 28, and stores in RAM 43 the counted number added to a value in the RAM 43 (step S70) and determines point values to be offered, on the basis of the number of “BELLS” stored in the RAM 43 (step S71).

[0103] Hereinafter, there will be described numbers of players who participate in bonus games, awards to be provided and set point values required for acquiring the awards, and the like.

[0104] FIG. 2 is a view illustrating correspondent relationships among the numbers of players who participate in bonus games, set point values and awards to be provided. FIG. 3 is a view illustrating correspondent relationships between probabilities that “BELLS” are displayed in the respective slot machines constituting the gaming system and the numbers of “BELLS” required to be displayed for acquiring 1 point.

[0105] In bonus games of the present embodiment, a point value is offered according to the number of “BELLS” rearranged in the display blocks 28 and, when the total sum of the point values offered in the slot machines 10a to 10c (see FIG. 4) reaches a set point value, a predetermined award is provided in each slot machine 10.

[0106] As illustrated in FIG. 2, the set point value and the award to be provided are changed according to the number of players who participate in bonus games and, as the number of players who participate therein increases, the set point value increases and, also, an award to be provided in each slot machine increases. For example, in the case where three players participate in bonus games, when the total sum of the point values offered in the three slot machines 10 reaches 6 points, an award of 3000 credits is provided in each slot machine 10.

[0107] Further, as illustrated in FIG. 3, in the present embodiment, the probabilities that “BELLS” are displayed and the numbers of displayed “BELLS” required for acquiring 1 point are different from one another in the slot machines 10a to 10c constituting the gaming system 100. For example, the probability that “BELLS” are displayed in the slot machine 10a is relatively higher, but, for compensating this, the number of “BELLS” required to be displayed in the slot machine 10a for acquiring 1 point is set to be larger. On the other hand, the probability that “BELLS” are displayed in the slot machine 10c is relatively lower, but, for compensating this, the number of displayed “BELLS” required for acquiring 1 point is set to be smaller.

[0108] In step S71, the main CPU 41 determines the point value to be offered in the slot machine 10, on the basis of the correspondent relationships illustrated in FIG. 3 and a value, which is resulted from accumulative addition of the number of “BELLS” and stored in the RAM 43. For example, for the slot machine 10a, when the number of “BELLS” stored therein is equal to or less than 4, the point value to be offered is determined to be “0”, but when the number of “BELLS” stored therein is in the range of 5 to 9, the point value to be offered is determined to be “1”.

[0109] In the present embodiment, there will be described a case where the numbers of displayed “BELLS” are accumulated during bonus games, the point value to be offered may be determined on the basis of the number of specific symbols displayed as a result of a single rearrangement of symbols.

[0110] Next, in step S72, the main CPU 41 transmits, to the server 200, point-value information indicative of the point value determined in step S71.

[0111] At this time, the number of displayed “BELLS” which corresponds to the determined point value is subtracted from the number of displayed “BELLS” accumulatively stored in the RAM 43. For example, when the number of “BELLS” stored for the slot machine 10a is 9 and the point value to be offered is determined to be “1”, the number “5” of “BELLS” corresponding to the point value “1” is subtracted from the number “9” of “BELLS” stored in the RAM 43.

[0112] The server 200, upon receiving the point-value information, executes processing for summing the point values offered in the respective slot machines 10.

[0113] Next, in step S73, the main CPU 41 determines whether or not the total sum of the point values offered in the slot machines 10a to 10c has reached the set point value. Namely, the main CPU 41 determines whether or not it has received, from the server 200, an award-to-be-provided signal indicating that the total sum of the point values having been offered in the slot machines 10 constituting the gaming system 100 has reached the set point value and also indicative of credit information on an award to be provided in each slot machine 10.

[0114] When the main CPU 41 determines that it has received an award-to-be-provided signal, in step S74, the main CPU 41 performs special effects indicating that the total sum of the point values of the respective slot machines 10 has reached the set point value and an award is to be provided, through at least one of an image displayed to the lower image display panel 16, a sound generated from speakers 29 and lighting of lamps 30.

[0115] Next, in step S75, the main CPU 41 pays out coins, on the basis of the credit information included in the award-to-be-provided signal received from the server 200. Thereafter, the processing is returned to step S78.

[0116] When the main CPU 41 determines in step S73 that it has not received an award-to-be-provided signal, in step S76, the main CPU 41 reads the read number-of-bonus-games T stored in the RAM 43 and subtracts 1 from the number-of-bonus-games T. Then, the number-of-bonus-games T after the subtraction is stored in the RAM 43, again.

[0117] Next, in step S77, the main CPU 41 determines whether or not the number-of-bonus-games T stored in the RAM 43 has reached 0. When the number-of-bonus-games T has not reached 0, the processing is returned to step S65 and the aforementioned processing is repeated.

[0118] On the other hand, when the number-of-bonus-games T is 0, in step S78, the main CPU 41 transmits, to the server 200, a bonus-game end signal indicating that the bonus games have ended. Thereafter, the present subroutine ends.

[0119] Further, although, in the present embodiment, there has been described a case where the bonus games end when the total sum of the point values offered in the slot machines 10a to 10c constituting the gaming system 100 reaches the set point value, the gaming system may be configured such that bonus games may be continued even after the total sum of the offered point values reaches the set point value.

[0120] FIG. 4 is a schematic view illustrating the entire configuration of the gaming system according to the present embodiment.

[0121] As illustrated in FIG. 4, the gaming system 100 includes the server 200. The slot machines 10a to 10c are connected to the server 200 via a communication line 101.

Further, a common display **300** is connected to the server **200** via a communication line **102**. The slot machines **10a** to **10c** and the common display **300** can transmit and receive data to and from the server **200** via the communication lines **101** and **102**, respectively. Further, the slot machines **10a** to **10c** are connected to one another via the communication line **101** such that they can communicate with one another.

[0122] The common display **300** is installed at a position visible to the players who are playing games with the slot machines **10a** to **10c**.

[0123] Although, in the present embodiment, there will be described a case where the slot machines **10a** to **10c**, the server **200** and the common display **300** are connected to one another in a wired manner, the present invention is not limited to the case and they may be adapted to transmission and receipt of data to and from one another in a wireless manner. Namely, the communication lines according to the present invention include both wired transmission paths and wireless transmission paths.

[0124] Further, although, in the present invention, there will be described a case where the gaming system **100** is installed in a single game facility or the like, the respective gaming apparatuses may be installed in different facilities in the present invention.

[0125] Next, the configuration of a slot machine **10** will be described.

[0126] FIG. **5** is a perspective view illustrating the external appearance of the slot machine constituting the gaming system according to the present embodiment.

[0127] The slot machine **10** employs coins, bills or electronic valuable information corresponding thereto, as a game medium. However, in the present invention, a game medium is not particularly limited, and examples thereof may include a medal, a token, electronic money and a ticket. In addition, the ticket is not particularly limited, and examples thereof may include a bar-coded ticket, which will be described later, and the like.

[0128] The slot machine **10** includes a cabinet **11**, a top box **12** installed on the upper side of the cabinet **11**, and a main door **13** provided in a front surface of the cabinet **11**.

[0129] A lower image display panel **16** is provided as a display at the front of the main door **13**. The lower image display panel **16** includes a transparent liquid crystal display panel that displays **15** display blocks **28** in five columns and three rows. Each display block **28** has one symbol displayed therein.

[0130] Further, a number-of-credits display portion **31** and a number-of-payouts display portion **32** are set to the lower image display panel **16**. The number-of-credits display portion **31** displays an image indicative of the number of coins being credited. The number-of-payouts display portion **32** displays an image indicative of the number of coin-outs.

[0131] Further, a touch panel **69**, although not illustrated, is provided in a front surface of the lower image display panel **16**, and a player can input various types of commands by operating the touch panel **69**.

[0132] Below the lower image display panel **16**, there are provided a control panel **20** comprised of plural buttons **23** to **27** which enable the player to input commands relating to the game progress, a coin reception port **21** through which a coin is accepted into the cabinet **11**, and a bill validator **22**.

[0133] The control panel **20** is provided with a spin button **23**, a change button **24**, a CASHOUT button **25**, a 1-BET button **26** and a maximum BET button **27**. The spin button **23**

is for inputting a command for starting scrolling of symbols. The change button **24** is used for making a request to staff of the recreation facility for change. The CASHOUT button **25** is for inputting a command for payout of credited coins into a coin tray **18**.

[0134] The 1-BET button **26** is for inputting a command for betting a single coin on a game out of credited coins. The maximum BET button **27** is for inputting a command for betting, on a game, a maximum number of coins (50 coins, in the present embodiment) which can be BET on a single game, out of credited coins.

[0135] The 1-BET button **26** and the maximum BET button **27** correspond to an input device according to the present invention.

[0136] The bill validator **22** not only discriminates a regular bill from a false bill, but also accepts the regular bill into the cabinet **11**. It should be noted that the bill validator **22** may be configured so as to be capable of reading a later-described ticket **39** with a barcode. At a front surface of the lower portion of the main door **13**, namely below the control panel **20**, there is provided a belly glass **34** on which a character of the slot machine **10** and the like is drawn.

[0137] At a front surface of the top box **12**, an upper image display panel **33** is provided. The upper image display panel **33** includes a liquid crystal panel which displays, for example, images indicative of introduction of the contents of a game and explanation of the rules of games.

[0138] Further, the speakers **29** are provided in the top box **12**. Below the upper image display panel **33**, there are provided a ticket printer **35**, a card reader **36**, a data display device **37** and a key pad **38**. The ticket printer **35** prints, on a ticket, a bar code as coded data of the number of credits, date and time, an identification number of the slot machine **10** and the like, and outputs the ticket as a ticket **39** with a barcode. The player can make another slot machine read the ticket **39** with a barcode to play a game in this slot machine, or can change the ticket **39** with a barcode to bills and the like at a predetermined location in the recreation facility (for example, a cashier in a casino).

[0139] The card reader **36** reads and writes data from and into a smart card. The smart card is a card owned by a player and stores, for example, data for identifying the player and data about the history of games having been played by the player. The smart card may store data corresponding to a coin, a bill or a credit. Also, instead of the smart card, a magnetic stripe card may be used. The data display device **37** is comprised of, for example, a fluorescent display and displays, for example, data read through the card reader **36** and data inputted through the key pad **38** by the player. The key pad **38** is used for inputting commands and data relating to issuing tickets.

[0140] Next, there will be described images displayed to the common display **300** and to the lower image display panel **16** of the slot machine **10**.

[0141] FIG. **6** is a view illustrating an exemplary image displayed to the common display.

[0142] FIG. **6** illustrates an image displayed to the common display **300** in the case where three players participate in bonus games.

[0143] At an upper portion of the common display **300**, there is displayed an image **301** indicating that, when the total sum of the point values in the respective slot machines **10** reaches 6 points, a jackpot of 3000 credits will be paid out to each of the three players. At a lower portion of the image **301**,

there are displayed images **302** indicative of a point value. The number of images **302** displayed therein corresponds to the set point value. For example, in FIG. 6, six images **302** are displayed, since the set point value is "6". The images **302** usually have a white color, but are changed in color to a red color as the point value increases, such that a single image **302** is changed in color to the red color per 1 point. In FIG. 6, the three images **302** from the left have the red color, indicating that 3 points have been accumulated. Further, a pointer image **302** indicative of the currently-accumulated point value is displayed to be overlapped on the rightmost image **302** out of the red images **302**. The pointer image **303** is moved to the next right image **302**, as the point value is increased.

[0144] FIGS. 7 and 8 are views each illustrating one example of an image displayed to the lower image display panel.

[0145] FIG. 7 is an image which is displayed at the time of rearrangement of symbols, during bonus games and during normal games (during games other than bonus games).

[0146] Symbols are scrolled along the respective columns of the display blocks **28** and then are rearranged therealong. Payout is provided, on the basis of the types and the numbers of symbols displayed in the display blocks **28**, at this time. During bonus games, a point value is offered, on the basis of the number of "BELLS" displayed therein at the time of rearrangement.

[0147] FIG. 8 illustrates an image which is displayed to the lower image display panel **16** when the player wins a bonus game.

[0148] Below the display blocks **28**, there is displayed an image **90** which urges the player to select participating or not participating in bonus games and, below the image **90**, there are displayed images **91** and **92** indicative of buttons for inputting the selection of participating or not participating in bonus games.

[0149] The player can input selection of participating or not participating in bonus games, by touching a portion which correspond to the button image **91** or **92** on the touch panel **69**.

[0150] Further, although, in the present embodiment, there has been described the case where 15 symbols are displayed along five columns and three rows, the display of symbols according to the present invention is not limited to display along five columns and three rows. Further, although, in the present embodiment, there has been described the case symbols are scrolled along the respective columns, individual symbols may be independently scroll-displayed.

[0151] Further, although not illustrated, various types of images relating to effects, in addition to the aforementioned images, are displayed to the lower image display panel **16**. As illustrated in FIG. 3, in the present embodiment, the probabilities that a specific symbol is displayed in the respective slot machines **10** are different from one another. A game character is assigned to each of the slot machines **10a** to **10b** constituting the gaming system **100** on the basis of the aforementioned their different characteristics, and the respective slot machine **10** executes effects using an image indicative of the game character assigned to each of the slot machines **10**.

[0152] FIG. 9 is a view illustrating symbols displayed in the respective display blocks and the code Nos. of the respective symbols.

[0153] As illustrated in FIG. 9, for symbols to be displayed in each display block **28**, there is scrolled a symbol sequence consisting of 22 symbols in total, each of which has one of the code numbers "00" to "21". Each of the symbol sequences

consists of a combination of symbols of "JACKPOT 7", "BLUE 7", "BELL", "CHERRY", "STRAWBERRY", "PLUM", "ORANGE" and "APPLE". As described above, these symbols are all scatter symbols, and coins are paid out on the basis of the numbers of these symbols displayed in the display blocks **28** at the time of rearrangement.

[0154] "APPLEs" are a bonus game trigger (symbols for the game to shift to a bonus game). When five or more "APPLEs" are displayed in the display blocks **28**, this combination can shift the game to a bonus game. In the present embodiment, bonus games are free games (games which the player can play a predetermined number of times without BETTING any coins).

[0155] FIG. 10 is a block diagram illustrating the internal configuration of the slot machine illustrated in FIG. 5.

[0156] A gaming board **50** includes a CPU (Central Processing Unit) **51**, a ROM **55** and a boot ROM **52** which are interconnected to one another via an internal bus, a card slot **53S** corresponding to a memory card **53**, and an IC socket **54S** corresponding to a GAL (Generic Array Logic) **54**.

[0157] The memory card **53** is comprised of a nonvolatile memory such as Compact Flash (registered trademark) and has stored a game program. The game program includes a symbol determination program. The symbol determination program is a program for determining a symbol (code No. corresponding to a symbol) to be rearranged in each of the display blocks **28**.

[0158] Further, the card slot **53S** is configured so as to allow the memory card **53** to be inserted thereinto and ejected therefrom, and is connected to a mother board **40** via an IDE bus. Accordingly, it is possible to change the type and the contents of a game to be executed by the slot machine **10** by ejecting the memory card **53** from the card slot **53S**, writing a different game program onto the memory card **53** and inserting the memory card **53** into the card slot **53S**. The game programs include programs relating to the progress of a game. Further, the game programs include image data and sound data to be output during the game.

[0159] The CPU **51**, the ROM **55** and the boot ROM **52** which are interconnected to one another via the internal bus are connected to the mother board **40** via a PCI bus. The PCI bus transfers a signal between the mother board **40** and the gaming board **50** and also supplies electricity from the mother board **40** to the gaming board **50**.

[0160] The mother board **40** is configured by a commercially-available common mother board (a printed wiring board having mounted basic components of a personal computer), and includes the main CPU **41**, a ROM (Read Only Memory) **42**, a RAM (Random Access Memory) **43** and a communication interface **44**. The mother board **40** corresponds to a controller according to the present invention.

[0161] The ROM **42** is configured by a memory device such as a flash memory and stores programs for a BIOS (Basic Input/Output System) and the like to be executed by the main CPU **41** and also stores permanent data. When the BIOS is executed by the main CPU **41**, processing for initializing predetermined peripheral devices is conducted, concurrently with start of processing for loading a game program stored in the memory card **53** through the gaming board **50**. Further, in the present invention, the ROM **42** may be or may not be a content rewritable one.

[0162] The RAM **43** stores data and programs to be used upon operating the main CPU **41**. Further, the RAM **43** can store a game program.

[0163] Further, the RAM 43 stores the number of credits and data on the number of coin-ins or coin-outs per game, and the like.

[0164] Further, a body PCB (Printed Circuit Board) 60 and a door PCB 80, which will be described later, are connected to the mother board 40 through respective USBs. Further, a power-supply unit 45 and a communication interface 44 are connected to the mother board 40.

[0165] The body PCB 60 and the door PCB 80 are connected with equipment and devices that generate input signals to be inputted to the main CPU 41 and equipment and devices operations of which are controlled by control signals outputted from the main CPU 41. The main CPU 41 executes a game program stored in the RAM 43 based on an input signal inputted to the main CPU 41, thereby executes the predetermined arithmetic processing and stores a result thereof in the RAM 43, or transmits a control signal to each of the equipment and devices as processing for controlling each of the equipment and devices.

[0166] The lamps 30, a hopper 66, a coin detecting portion 67, a graphic board 68, the speakers 29, the touch panel 69, the bill validator 22, the ticket printer 35, the card reader 36, the key switch 38S and the data display device 37 are connected to the body PCB 60. The lamp 30 lights up in a predetermined pattern on the basis of a control signal outputted from the main CPU 41.

[0167] The hopper 66 is installed within the cabinet 11 and pays out a predetermined number of coins to the coin tray 18 through a coin payout port 19 on the basis of control signals outputted from the main CPU 41. The coin detection portion 67 is provided inside the coin payout exit 19 and outputs an input signal to the main CPU 41 upon detecting a predetermined number of coins being paid out from the coin payout exit 19.

[0168] The graphic board 68 controls an image display to the upper image display panel 33 and the lower image display panel 16, on the basis of a control signal outputted from the main CPU 41. The lower image display panel 16 displays, in each of the display blocks 28, a background color determined according to the selection of a random number and a symbol that is scrolled or stopped. The number-of-credits display portion 31 of the lower image display panel 16 displays the number of credits stored in the RAM 43. Further, the number-of-payouts display portion 32 of the lower image display panel 16 displays the number of coin-outs.

[0169] The graphic board 68 includes a VDP (Video Display Processor) for generating image data on the basis of a control signal outputted from the main CPU 41, a video RAM for temporarily storing the image data generated by the VDP, and the like. Further, such image data for use in generation of the image data by the VDP is included in a game program which is read from the memory card 53 and stored in the RAM 43.

[0170] The bill validator 22 discriminates a regular bill from a false bill, and also accepts the regular bill into the cabinet 11. The bill validator 22, upon receiving a valid bill, outputs an input signal to the main CPU 41, on the basis of the face amount of the bill. The main CPU 41 stores, in the RAM 43, a number of credits corresponding to the face amount of the bill transmitted with the input signal.

[0171] The ticket printer 35 prints, on a ticket, a bar-code created by encoding data such as the number of credits stored

in the RAM 43, date and time and an identification number of the slot machine 10 and the like and outputs the ticket as a ticket 39 with a barcode.

[0172] The card reader 36 reads data from a smart card and transmits the data to the main CPU 41, or writes data into the smart card on the basis of a control signal from the main CPU 41. The key switch 38S is provided on the key pad 38 and outputs a predetermined input signal to the main CPU 41 when the player operates the keypad 38. The data display 37 displays data read by the card reader 36 or data inputted through the key pad 38 by the player, on the basis of a control signal outputted from the main CPU 41.

[0173] The control panel 20, a reverter 21S, a coin counter 21C and a cold cathode tube 81 are connected to the door PCB 80. The control panel 20 is provided with a start switch 23S corresponding to a spin button 23, a change switch 24S corresponding to the change button 24, a CASHOUT switch 25S corresponding to the CASHOUT button 25, a 1-BET switch 26S corresponding to the 1-BET button 26, and a maximum BET switch 27S corresponding to the maximum BET button 27. The respective switches 23S to 27S output an input signal to the main CPU 41, when the player operates the buttons 23 to 27 corresponding thereto.

[0174] The coin counter 21C is provided inside of the coin receiving slot 21 and discriminates a regular coin from a false coin inserted into the coin receiving slot 21 by the player. Coins other than regular coins are discharged from the coin payout exit 19. Further, the coin counter 21C outputs an input signal to the main CPU 41, upon detecting a regular coin.

[0175] The reverter 21S operates on the basis of a control signal outputted from the main CPU 41 and distributes coins identified by the coin counter 21C as a regular coin into a cash box (not illustrated) or the hopper 66, which are installed inside the slot machine 10. Namely, when the hopper 66 is filled with coins, a regular coin is distributed into the cash box by the reverter 21S. On the other hand, when the hopper 66 is not filled with coins, a regular coin is distributed into the hopper 66. The cold cathode tube 81 functions as a backlight installed on the rear face side of the lower image display panel 16 and the upper image display panel 33 and lights up on the basis of a control signal outputted from the main CPU 41.

[0176] FIG. 11 is a block diagram illustrating the internal configuration of the server according to the present embodiment.

[0177] The server 200 includes a CPU 201, a ROM 202, a RAM 203, a communication interface 204, and the hard disk drive 205 as a memory. The communication interface 204 is connected to the communication interfaces 44 in the respective slot machines 10 via the communication lines 101 and also is connected to the common display 300 via the communication line 102. The ROM 202 stores a system program for controlling the operation of the controller, stores permanent data and the like. In addition, the RAM 203 temporarily stores data received from the respective slot machines 10. Further, the hard disk drive 205 accumulatively stores a portion of game media BET in the slot machines 10a to 10c and also stores information on the point values in the respective slot machines 10 and information on the number of players who participate in bonus games.

[0178] Next, there will be described processing executed in the slot machine 10.

[0179] The main CPU 41 reads and executes game programs for progressing games.

[0180] FIG. 12 is a flowchart illustrating a subroutine of game execution processing.

[0181] In the game execution processing, at first, the main CPU 41 determines whether or not a coin has been BET (step S10). In this processing, the main CPU 41 determines whether or not to have received an input signal outputted from the 1-BET switch 26S when the 1-BET button 26 is operated or an input signal outputted from the maximum BET switch 27S when the maximum BET button 27 is operated. When determining that a coin has not been BET, the main CPU 41 returns the processing to step S10.

[0182] On the other hand, when determining in step S10 that a coin has been BET, the main CPU 41 executes processing for making a subtraction from the number of credits stored in the RAM 43, according to the number of BET coins (step S11). Further, when the number of BET coins is larger than the number of credits stored in the RAM 43, the main CPU returns the processing to step S10, without executing the processing for making a subtraction from the number of credits stored in the RAM 43. Further, when the number of BET coins exceeds an upper limit value of coins that can be BET on a single game (50 coins, in the present embodiment), the processing is carried forward to step S12, without executing the processing for making a subtraction from the number of credits stored in the RAM 43.

[0183] In step S12, the main CPU 41 transmits, to the server 200, information indicative of the number of credits corresponding to 10% of an amount of BET coins. The server 200 accumulatively adds the number of credits indicated by the received information to the value in the hard disk drive 205.

[0184] Next, in step S13, the main CPU 41 determines whether or not the spin button 23 has been turned on. In this processing, the main CPU 41 determines whether or not to have received an input signal outputted from the start switch 23S when the spin button 23 is pressed.

[0185] When it is determined that the spin button 23 has not been turned on, the processing is returned to step S10. Further, when the spin button 23 has not been turned on (for example, when a command for ending a game is inputted without turning on the spin button 23), the main CPU 41 cancels the result of the subtraction in step S11 and transmits, to the server 200, a signal for clearing the information having been transmitted in step S12.

[0186] On the other hand, when it is determined in step S13 that the spin button 23 has been turned on, the processing is shifted to step S14.

[0187] The processing in steps S14 to 15 is the same as the processing in steps S65 to S66 in FIG. 1, and therefore will not be described herein.

[0188] Next, in step S16, the main CPU 41 determines whether or not a combination of bonus game triggers has been established, namely whether or not five or more "APPLEs" have been displayed in the display blocks 28. When the main CPU 41 determines that a combination of bonus game triggers has been established, the main CPU 41 reads a program for executing bonus games from the RAM 43, then executes bonus game processing (step S17) and ends the present subroutine. The bonus game processing has been already described with reference to FIG. 1 and thus a description thereof will be omitted here.

[0189] When the main CPU 41 determines in step S16 that a combination of bonus game triggers has not been established, the main CPU 41 determines in step S18 whether or not a prize has been established. When the main CPU 41

determines that a prize has been established, in step S19, the main CPU 41 pays out coins, on the basis of the number of coin-ins and the types and the numbers of the symbols displayed in the display blocks 28.

[0190] When it is determined in step S18 that a prize has not been established or when the processing in step S19 has been executed, the present subroutine ends.

[0191] FIG. 13 is a flowchart illustrating a subroutine of the symbol determination processing which is called and executed in step S65 of the subroutine illustrated in FIG. 1 and in step S14 of the subroutine illustrated in FIG. 12. This processing is processing which the main CPU 41 executes by executing the symbol determination program stored in the RAM 43.

[0192] At first, the main CPU 41 selects random numbers respectively corresponding to each of the symbols, out of the numerical range of 0 to 255, by executing a random-number generation program included in the symbol determination program (step S501). The present embodiment describes the case of generating random numbers on a program (the case of using so-called software random numbers). However, in the present invention, a random number generator may be provided, and random numbers may be extracted from the random number generating circuit (so-called software random numbers may be used).

[0193] Next, the main CPU 41 determines code Nos. for the respective columns of symbols (see FIG. 9), on the basis of the selected five random numbers (step S502). The code Nos. for the respective columns of symbols correspond to the code Nos. of symbols to be rearranged in the display blocks 28 in the second row, out of the display blocks 28 arranged in the three rows. The main CPU 41 determines a prize by determining code Nos. for the respective symbol sequences.

[0194] Hereinafter, prizes according to the present embodiment will be described.

[0195] FIG. 14 is a view illustrating the relationship between plural types of prizes and the numbers of coin-outs.

[0196] When three or more symbols of any type are stop-displayed in the display blocks 28 during normal games, coins in number illustrated in FIG. 14 are paid out.

[0197] For example, when three "CHERRYs" are stop-displayed in the display blocks 28, two coins are paid out. When four "CHERRYs" are stop-displayed in the display blocks 28, four coins are paid out. Further, when six or more "CHERRYs" are stop-displayed in the display blocks 28, $2 \times (n - 2)$ coins are paid out. Here, n represents the number of "CHERRYs" stop-displayed in the display blocks 28.

[0198] Further, when three "APPLEs" are stop-displayed in the display blocks 28, 50 coins are paid out. When four "APPLEs" are stop-displayed in the display blocks 28, 100 coins are paid out. Further, when six or more "APPLEs" are stop-displayed in the display blocks 28, $50 \times (n - 2)$ coins are paid out. Here, n represents the number of "APPLEs" stop-displayed in the display blocks 28. However, when three or more symbols of any type are not displayed in the display blocks 28, the current game results in no-winning and, thus, a payout of coins is not performed.

[0199] Further, when five or more "APPLEs" are stop-displayed in the display blocks 28, bonus games are occurred, in addition to the above-mentioned prize. As the bonus games, a predetermined number of free games are executed.

[0200] During bonus games, a point value is offered on the basis of the number of rearranged "BELLs", without performing payout based on the prizes. However, when five or

more “APPLES” are stop-displayed in the display blocks 28, the number of free games increases.

[0201] Next, there will be described processing executed in the server 200.

[0202] FIG. 15 is a flowchart illustrating a subroutine of server-side game processing executed by the server according to the present embodiment.

[0203] At first, in step S100, the CPU 201 included in the server 200 executes processing for recognizing a slot machine 10 being activated (executing games) out of slot machines 10. More specifically, the CPU 201 recognizes a slot machine being activated out of the slot machines 10 constituting the gaming system 100, by receiving a signal transmitted from the slot machine 10 when a coin is inserted into the slot machine 10.

[0204] Next, in step S101, the CPU 201 executes processing for accumulatively adding a portion of credits BET in the slot machines 10a to 10c. More specifically, the CPU 201 receives, from the slot machines 10a to 10c, information indicative of the number of credits corresponding to 10% of an amount of coins BET in the slot machines 10a to 10c and accumulatively stores, as data, credits in amount based on the information, in the hard disk drive 205.

[0205] Next, in step S102, the CPU 201 receives an input signal indicative of a selection of whether or not a player will participate in bonus games which has been inputted to a slot machine 10, from this slot machine 10.

[0206] Next, in step S103, the CPU 201 determines whether or not it has received the input signals from all the slot machines 10 (the slot machines 10a to 10c) constituting the gaming system 100.

[0207] When determining not to have received the input signals from all the slot machines 10, the main CPU returns the processing to step S102.

[0208] On the other hand, when the CPU 201 determines to have received the input signals from all the slot machines 10, in step S104, the CPU 201 determines the number of players who will participate in bonus games. Namely, the CPU 201 determines the number of slot machines 10 which have transmitted an input signal indicative of the selection of participation in bonus games, as the number of players who will participate in bonus games.

[0209] Next, in step S105, the CPU 201 transmits, to each slot machine 10, a number-of-players-who-will-participate determination signal indicating that the number of players who will participate in bonus games has been determined.

[0210] Next, in step S106, the CPU 201 displays to the common display 300 an image indicative of the number of players who will participate in bonus games and the like (see FIG. 6), via the communication line 102.

[0211] Next, in step S107, the CPU 201 receives, from each slot machine 10, point-value information indicative of a point value to be offered.

[0212] Next, in step S108, the CPU 201 accumulatively stores the point value based on the point-value information received in step S107, in the hard disk drive 205.

[0213] Next, in step S109, the CPU 201 displays to the common display 300 an image indicative of the current point value (see FIG. 6), via the communication line 102.

[0214] Next, in step S110, the CPU 201 determines whether or not the point value stored in the hard disk drive 205 has reached the set point value. When determining that the point value stored therein has not reached the set point value, the processing is shifted to step S113.

[0215] On the other hand, when the CPU 201 determines that the point value stored therein has reached the set point value, in step S111, the CPU 201 executes special effects indicating that the point value has reached the set point value and a predetermined award will be provided in each slot machine 10, on the common display 300, via the communication line 102.

[0216] Next, in step S112, the CPU 201 transmits, to each slot machine 10, an award-to-be-provided signal indicating that the total sum of the point values offered in the respective slot machines 10 constituting the gaming system 100 has reached the set point value and also indicative of credit information on the award to be provided in each slot machines 10. At this time, the CPU 201 subtracts the number of credits corresponding to the total sum of the awards to be provided in the respective slot machines 10, from the number of credits stored in the hard disk drive 205.

[0217] Next, in step S113, the CPU 201 determines whether or not to have received bonus-game end signals indicating that bonus games has ended, from all of the slot machines 10 (the slot machines 10a to 10c) constituting the gaming system 100.

[0218] When determining to have not received the bonus-game end signals from all of the slot machines 10, the main CPU returns the processing to step S107.

[0219] On the other hand, when the CPU 201 determines that it has received the bonus-game end signals from all of the slot machines 10, in step S114, the CPU 201 clears the image display displayed to the common display 300 and various types of data stored in the hard disk drive 205 and the RAM 203. However, the CPU 201 maintains the data about the credits accumulatively stored in the hard disk drive 205 without clearing it.

[0220] After the execution of the processing in step S114, the present subroutine ends.

[0221] As described above, the gaming system 100 according to the present embodiment includes the plural slot machines 10 capable of communicating with one another via the communication line 101, each slot machine 10 including the lower image display panel 16 (the display) for arranging plural symbols thereto, the 1-BET button 26 and the maximum-BET button 27 (the input devices) which enable input of a BET and the mother board 40 (the controller) programmed to execute processing of; (a) receiving a BET on the basis of an input from the 1-BET button 26 or the maximum-BET button 27; (b) accumulatively storing a predetermined proportion of game media BET in the processing (a); (c) rearranging the plural symbols arranged to the lower image display panel 16; (d) executing bonus games in which the plural symbols are rearranged, when the plural symbols are rearranged in a specific pattern in the processing (c); (e) offering a point value on the basis of the symbols rearranged in the bonus game; and (f) providing an award, out of the total sum of accumulatively-stored game media, if the total sum of the point values offered in the respective slot machines 10 reaches a set point value.

[0222] Namely, the total sum of point values offered in the respective slot machines 10 determines whether or not an award is provided in each of the slot machines 10 constituting the gaming system 100. Therefore, in order to receive an award, players who are playing games in the respective slot machines 10 are required to accumulate point values in cooperation with one another, such that the total sum of point values reaches a predetermined value. This configuration

enables players who desire to enjoy games together with other players to feel strongly that they are enjoying games in cooperation with other players.

[0223] This configuration also causes plural players to cooperate with one another in order to achieve a common goal, leading to a safe and peaceful gamble without excessive competitive consciousnesses of the players. Further, when the total sum of the point values reaches the set point value, an award is provided in each slot machine **10**, out of game media obtained by accumulatively storing, in the server **200**, a portion of game media BET in the respective slot machines **10**, resulting in suppression of the loss in the game facility having the gaming system **100**.

[0224] Further, according to the gaming system **100**, an amount of an award to be provided in each slot machine **10** when the total sum of the point values reaches the set point value increases with increasing number of players who participate in games.

[0225] Accordingly, as the number of players who participate in games increases, an amount of an award that each player can target increases. This configuration urges a greater number of players to play games together with one another with a positive attitude. As a result, the game facility having the gaming system **100** may certainly get benefits.

[0226] Further, according to the gaming system **100**, the probabilities that symbols of "BELLS" are rearranged in a bonus game in the plural slot machines **10** constituting the gaming system **100** are different from one another.

[0227] Accordingly, the gaming system **100** is constituted by the slot machines **10** having different characteristics, for example, in such a way that the symbols of "BELLS" are stably rearranged in some slot machines **10**, out of the plural slot machine **10** constituting the gaming system **100**, but the symbols of "BELLS" are rarely rearranged in other slot machines **10**. Accordingly, even in the same gaming system **100**, different strategies for games are required in the respective slot machines **10** constituting the gaming system **100**, depending on their characteristics. Therefore, players are required to grapple with games in cooperation with one another, in order to achieve a common goal in the slot machines **10** having the different characteristics, thus enabling the players to feel more strongly that they cooperate with other players.

[0228] Further, although, in the present embodiment, there has been described the case where symbols rearranged in the display blocks **28** are all scatter symbols, the symbols according to the present invention are not limited to scatter symbols. For example, a pay line may be provided so that rearrangement of a specific combination of plural symbols along the pay line results in establishment of a prize or offering of a point value. Also, for example, a combination of symbols which cause a wining along a pay line and scatter symbols may be used.

[0229] Further, although, in the present embodiment, a portion of credits BET in the respective slot machines **10** and point values offered in the respective slot machines **10** are accumulatively stored in the server **200**, in the present invention, a portion of BET credits or offered point values may be stored in any of the gaming apparatuses constituting the gaming system.

[0230] Further, although, in the present embodiment, there has been described the case where, when the total sum of the point values offered in the respective slot machines **10** reaches the set point value, an award is provided out of credits

obtained by accumulatively storing a portion of credits BET in the respective slot machines **10**, in the present invention, for example, an award may be provided out of a fund possessed by the game facility.

[0231] Further, although, in the present embodiment, an award is provided when the total sum of the point values offered in the respective slot machines **10** reaches the set point value, the results of games and the total result are not limited to the case. For example, an award may be provided when the total sum of the amounts of game media paid out in the respective slot machines **10** reaches a predetermined amount. Also, an award may be provided when the total sum of the numbers of stages cleared in the respective slot machines **10** reaches a predetermined number.

[0232] Further, although, in the present embodiment, there has been described the case where the total result is determined on the basis of the results of bonus games in the respective slot machines **10** constituting the gaming system **100** to provide an award, in the present invention, the total result may be determined on the basis of the results of normal games (games other than bonus games) in the respective gaming apparatuses to provide an award.

[0233] Further, although, in the present embodiment, there has been described the case where the characteristics (the probabilities that "BELLS" are displayed) of the respective slot machines **10** constituting the gaming system **100** are preliminarily determined, in the present invention, the probabilities that specific symbols are rearranged in the respective gaming apparatuses may be determined every time a game is executed. Further, the probabilities that specific symbols are rearranged in the respective gaming apparatuses may be different from one another like in the present embodiment or same as one another. Also, the probabilities that specific symbols are rearranged in some gaming apparatuses may be different from those in the other gaming apparatuses.

[0234] Further, in the present invention, an input of a selection common among the plural gaming apparatuses constituting the gaming system (for example, an input of a selection as to whether a bonus game in which an award is provided according to the total result is continued) may be performed in any one of the gaming apparatuses. Namely, a single player representative of plural players who play games can perform such an input.

[0235] Further, although, in the present invention, there has been described the case where the slot machines **10** constituting the gaming system **100** are video slot machines, the gaming apparatuses according to the present invention may be mechanical slot machines including reels.

[0236] Further, although, in the present invention, there has been described the case where the gaming system **100** is constituted by plural slot machines **10**, the gaming system according to the present invention may be constituted by plural roulette gaming apparatuses and card gaming apparatuses, for example. Namely, the gaming apparatuses according to the present invention are not limited to slot machines, but may be roulette gaming machines or card gaming machines.

[0237] Although the present invention has been described with reference to embodiments thereof, these embodiments merely illustrate concrete examples, not restrict the present invention. The concrete structures of respective means and the like can be designed and changed as required. Furthermore, there have been merely described most preferable effects of the present invention, as the effects of the present

invention, in the embodiments of the present invention. The effects of the present invention are not limited to those described in the embodiments of the present invention.

[0238] Further, in the aforementioned detailed description, characteristic portions have been mainly described, for ease of understanding the present invention. The present invention is not limited to the embodiments described in the aforementioned detailed description, but can be also applied to other embodiments over a wider range of applications. Further, the terms and phrases used in the present specification have been used for clearly describing the present invention, not for limiting the interpretation of the present invention. Further, those skilled in the art will easily conceive other structures, systems, methods and the like which are included in the concept of the present invention, from the concept of the present invention described in the present specification. Accordingly, the description of the claims is intended to include equivalent structures that fall within the technical scope of the invention. Further, the abstract aims at enabling engineers and the like who belong to the present technical field but are not familiar with the patent office and public institutions, the patent, law terms and technical terms to immediately understand the technical content and the essence of the present application through brief studies. Accordingly, the abstract is not intended to restrict the scope of the invention which should be evaluated from the description of the claims. It is desirable that literatures and the like which have been already disclosed are sufficiently studied and understood, in order to sufficiently understand the objects of the present invention and the specific effects of the present invention.

[0239] In the aforementioned detailed description, there have been described processing to be executed by computers. The aforementioned description and expressions have been described for the sake of enabling those skilled in the art to understand the present invention most effectively. In the present specification, each step for deriving a single result should be understood to be self-consistent processing. Further, each step includes transmission, reception, recording and the like of electric or magnetic signals. Although, in the processing at each step, such signals have been expressed as bits, values, symbols, characters, terms, numerical characters and the like, it should be noticed that they have been merely used for convenience of description. Further, although the processing at each step was described using expressions common to human behaviors in some cases, the processing described in the present specification are to be executed by various types of devices, in principle. Further, other structures required for conducting each step will be apparent from the aforementioned description.

What is claimed as new and desired to be secured by Letters Patent of the United States is:

1. A gaming system comprising plural gaming apparatuses capable of communicating with one another via a communication line, each of the gaming apparatuses comprising an input device which enables an input of a BET and a controller programmed to execute processing of:

- (a) receiving a BET on the basis of an input from said input device;
- (b) executing a game;
- (c) determining a result of said game; and
- (d) providing an award, when a total result based on the results of said games in said respective gaming apparatuses is a predetermined result.

2. The gaming system according to claim 1, wherein

said processing (b) is processing for executing a game in which a point value can be offered,
said processing (c) is processing for determining a point value to be offered in said game, and
said processing (d) is processing for providing an award, when the total sum of the point values offered in said respective gaming apparatuses reaches a predetermined value.

3. The gaming system according to claim 1, wherein

said gaming apparatus further comprises a game participation switch which enables an input indicative of participation in a game,
said controller is further programmed to execute processing (e) for receiving an input indicative of participation in a game from said game participation switch, and
said processing (d) is processing for providing an award, when the total result based on the results of said games in said respective gaming apparatuses in which participation in a game has been inputted by said game participation switch is a predetermined result, such that an amount of an award to be provided increases with increasing the number of gaming apparatuses in which the input indicative of participation in a game has been performed.

4. A gaming system comprising plural gaming apparatuses capable of communicating with one another via a communication line, each of the gaming apparatuses comprising a display for arranging plural symbols thereto, an input device which enables an input of a BET, and a controller programmed to execute processing of:

- (a) receiving a BET on the basis of an input from said input device;
- (b) accumulatively storing a predetermined proportion of game media BET in said processing (a);
- (c) rearranging said plural symbols arranged to said display;
- (d) determining a result of a game, on the basis of rearranged symbols or a combination thereof; and
- (e) providing an award, out of the total sum of the accumulatively-stored game media, when a total result based on the results of said games in said respective gaming apparatuses is a predetermined result.

5. The gaming system according to claim 4, wherein

said processing (d) is processing for offering a point value on the basis of rearranged symbols or combinations thereof, and
said processing (e) is processing for providing an award, out of the total sum of the accumulatively-stored game media, when the total sum of the point values offered in the said respective gaming apparatuses reaches a predetermined value.

6. The gaming system according to claim 4, wherein

said gaming apparatus further comprises a game participation switch which enables an input indicative of participation in a game,
said controller is further programmed to execute processing (f) for receiving the input indicative of participation in games through said game participation switch, and

said processing (e) is processing for providing an award, out of the total sum of the accumulatively-stored game media, when a total result based on the results of said games in said respective gaming apparatuses in which the input indicative of participation in a game has been performed through said game participation switch is a predetermined result, such that an amount of an award to be provided increases with increasing the number of gaming apparatuses in which the input has been performed.

7. The gaming system according to claim 4, wherein

a probability that specific symbols are rearranged in said processing (c) in at least one of said plural gaming apparatuses is different from those in the other gaming apparatuses.

8. A gaming system comprising plural gaming apparatuses capable of communicating with one another via a communication line, each of the gaming apparatuses comprising a display for arranging plural symbols thereto, an input device which enables an input of a BET and a controller programmed to execute processing of:

- (a) receiving a BET on the basis of an input from said input device;
- (b) accumulatively storing a predetermined proportion of game media BET in said processing (a);
- (c) rearranging said plural symbols arranged to said display;
- (d) executing a bonus game in which said plural symbols are rearranged, when said plural symbols are rearranged in a specific pattern in said processing (c);
- (e) determining a result of said bonus game on the basis of symbols rearranged in said bonus games or a combination thereof; and
- (f) providing an award, out of the total sum of the accumulatively-stored game media, when a total result based on the results of said bonus games in said respective gaming apparatuses is a predetermined result.

9. The gaming system according to claim 8, wherein

said processing (e) is processing for offering a point value on the basis of rearranged symbols in said bonus game or a combination thereof, and

said processing (f) is processing for providing an award, out of the total sum of the accumulatively-stored game media, when the total sum of the point values offered in the said respective gaming apparatuses reaches a predetermined value.

10. The gaming system according to claim 8, wherein

said gaming apparatus further comprises a game participation switch which enables an input indicative of participation in a game,

said controller is further programmed to execute processing (g) for receiving the input indicative of participation in a game through said game participation switch, and said processing (f) is processing for providing an award, out of the total sum of the accumulatively-stored game

media, when a total result based on the results of said bonus games in said respective gaming apparatuses in which the input indicative of participation in a game has been performed through said game participating switch is a predetermined result, such that an amount of an award to be provided increases with increasing the number of gaming apparatuses in which the input has been performed.

11. The gaming system according to claim 8,

wherein

a probability that specific symbols are rearranged in said bonus game executed in said processing (d), in at least one of said plural gaming apparatuses, is different from those in the other gaming apparatuses.

12. A method for controlling a gaming apparatus, used in a gaming system comprising plural gaming apparatuses capable of communicating with one another via a communication line, each of the gaming apparatuses comprising an input device which enables an input of a BET, and a controller, the method comprising the steps of:

- (a) receiving a BET on the basis of an input from said input device by said controller;
- (b) executing a game by said controller;
- (c) determining a result of said game by said controller; and
- (d) providing an award by said controller, when a total result based on the results of said games in said respective gaming apparatuses is a predetermined result.

13. The method for controlling a gaming apparatus according to claim 12,

wherein

said step (b) is a step of executing by said controller a game in which a point value can be offered,

said step (c) is a step of determining a point value to be offered in said games by the controller, and

said step (d) is a step of providing an award by said controller when the total sum of the point values offered in said respective gaming apparatuses reaches a predetermined value.

14. The method for controlling a gaming apparatus according to claim 12, further comprising the step (e) of receiving by said controller an input indicative of participation in a game, from a game participation switch which enables an input indicative of participation in a game,

wherein

said step (d) is a step of providing an award when a total result based on the results of said games in said respective gaming apparatuses in which the input indicative of participation in a game has been performed through said game participation switch is a predetermined result, such that an amount of an award to be provided increases with increasing the number of gaming apparatuses in which the input has been performed.

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