

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization
International Bureau



(43) International Publication Date
30 May 2002 (30.05.2002)

PCT

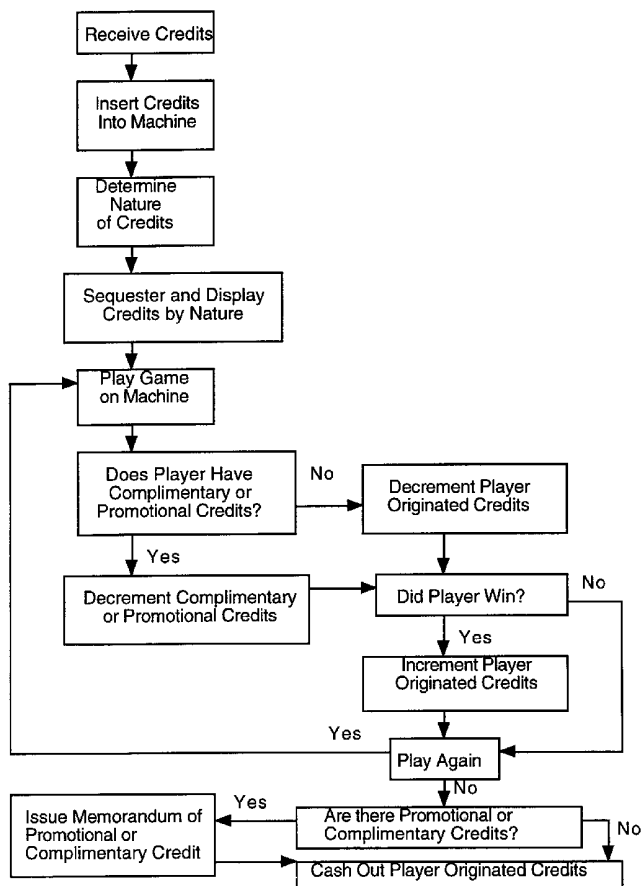
(10) International Publication Number
WO 02/41963 A2

- (51) International Patent Classification⁷: A65F
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- (21) International Application Number: PCT/US01/42962
- (81) Designated States (*national*): AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DZ, EC, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MZ, NO, NZ, OM, PH, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW.
- (22) International Filing Date: 20 November 2001 (20.11.2001)
- (25) Filing Language: English
- (26) Publication Language: English
- (30) Priority Data: 09/717,434 20 November 2000 (20.11.2000) US
- (84) Designated States (*regional*): ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, MZ, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZM, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE, TR), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GQ, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).
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[Continued on next page]

(54) Title: CREDIT SEQUENCING AND DISPENSATION DEVICE AND METHOD

(57) Abstract: A method and apparatus (10) for sequestering credits on a gaming device according to type and then dispensing the credits in a preferential manner.



WO 02/41963 A2



Published:

— *without international search report and to be republished upon receipt of that report*

For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

Credit Sequencing and Dispensation Device and Method

Technical Field

The following invention is generally related to instrumentalities and methodologies in gaming devices. More specifically, the instant invention is directed to a method for sequestering and then sequencing the dispensation of credits in a gaming device.

Background of Invention

Gaming establishments employ various promotional endeavors to encourage people to patronize their businesses. One such promotion is offering credits to players, with the intent that these credits be redeemed in machines at the issuing establishment. These credits often take the form of tokens, electronic keycards, or simply credit certificates and script.

The promotional goal is thwarted when a player either redeems credit certificates directly for cash or inserts the credits into a machine at the issuing establishment, and then opts to cash out immediately rather than putting the credits into play. Redeemed credits are not limited to use in that establishment and the issuing establishment is then subsidizing the player or other competing business establishments.

A similar problem arises when an establishment awards complimentary credits to a player as a reward for their patronage. These credits can be awarded in the physical form of keycards or tokens, but also may be awarded automatically by the gaming machine when a player meets predetermined criteria. These complimentary credits are subject to the same cashing-out problem as the promotional credits discussed above.

There are devices in the prior art, such as keycards, that allow an establishment to keep track of the number of credits held by a particular player. These work by means of memory devices that interface with a gaming machine and are unique to each establishment. Cards or other tangible rewards issued by one establishment are not usually compatible with the gaming machines in a different establishment. These devices are not able to illustrate a particular player's differing credit types. These devices merely record a total number of available credits without distinguishing whether the credits are complimentary, promotional, or acquired by the player for cash.

The following prior art reflects the state of the art of which applicant is aware and is included herewith to discharge applicant's acknowledged duty to disclose relevant prior art. It is stipulated, however, that this reference does not teach singly nor render obvious

when considered in any conceivable combination, the nexus of the instant invention as disclosed in greater detail hereinafter and as particularly claimed.

PATENT NO.
5,321,241

ISSUE DATE
June 14, 1994

INVENTOR
Craine

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SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is distinguishable over the prior art in a multiplicity of ways. For example, the instant invention provides a method and apparatus to track different types of credits that may be awarded to a player.

10 In addition, the present invention allows differing credits to be deployed by preference to some types of credits over others, ensuring that promotional or complimentary credits awarded by an establishment are utilized in that establishment. The player is always allowed to cash out any credits that were obtained by winning a game or those obtained by converting the player's own money to credits.

Industrial Applicability

15 The industrial applicability of this invention shall be demonstrated through discussion of the following objects of the invention.

Accordingly, it is a primary object of the present invention to provide a new, novel and useful method for sequestering and dispensing credits inserted into a gaming device such that a gaming establishment may guarantee that its promotional funds are being
20 retained within that establishment.

It is a further object of the present invention to provide a method as characterized above which provides a player with the ability to redeem for cash any credits that originated with the player.

25 It is a further object of the present invention to provide a method for allowing different types of credits to be played according to different paytables, affording the player greater gaming opportunities, depending on the types of credits held.

It is a further object of the present invention to provide a method for sequencing the dispensation of credits when the credits are represented on a card having memory means capable of sequestering credits by type.

30 Viewed from a first vantage point, it is an object of the present invention to provide a method for sequestering and then sequencing the dispensation of credits from a gaming device, the steps including: scanning inputted credits as to their nature, displaying the credits to a player as a function of their nature, and decrementing certain credits in deference to others.

Viewed from a second vantage point, it is an object of the present invention to provide a gaming device, comprising, in combination: credit input means, a processor, credit-analyzing means operatively coupled to said processor to analyze credit input means and report status to said processor, a display operatively coupled to said processor receiving data from said credit-analyzing means, said display including a plurality of credit counters reflective of status reported by said credit-analyzing means, and means for incrementing and decrementing said credit counters as a function of game play.

These and other objects will be made manifest when considering the following detailed specification when taken in conjunction with the appended drawing figures.

10

Brief Description of Drawings

Figure 1 is a flowchart of the methodology according to the present invention.

Figure 2 is a depiction of the apparatus associated therewith.

Figure 3 is a depiction of the display screen shown in Figure 2, detailing the sequestration boxes for credits awarded.

15

Best Mode(s) for Carrying Out The Invention

Considering the drawings, wherein like reference numerals denote like parts throughout the various drawing figures, reference numeral 10 as shown in figure 2 is directed to the device according to the present invention.

In its essence, the apparatus 10 includes a housing 16 which supports a visual display 2, preferably a video monitor, therewithin. Alternatively, the device may use a mechanical reel system. The display 2 includes a window 8 for special messages and for incrementing and decrementing credits accumulated by the player. The device also includes an LED readout 4 for prompting the player and can provide similar verbiage as the window 8 or in lieu thereof, to stimulate the player. The device includes an inlet 6 for the reception therein for coins, currency, tokens, vouchers, and promotional or complementary credits to auger in the inception of play. A plurality of decision-making buttons 12 are located on the face of the apparatus 10, preferable below the display 2 and a pull handle 14 can be used to initiate play as an alternative to supplement the decision-making buttons 12. A coin hopper 18 may be included to effectuate an output of an award due the player. A mechanism 17 for issuing and receiving a memorandum of promotional or complementary credits is also provided. For example, a card 60 having an integral magnetic memory strip could be used. The apparatus 10 may have a top portion 32 with a display thereon having a motif correlative with the game to be played and can include a payable. A plurality of speakers 34 may be included on the device for aural

interaction with the player. The apparatus also includes a processor P coordinating all functions and a random number generator G operatively coupled thereto for generating outcomes.

5 More specifically, and with reference to figure 3, greater details with respect the video display 2 can be explored. The display 2 features a windows 8 for special messages and display of credits accumulated. The window 8 contains a plurality of sequestration boxes 22, corresponding to the number of different types of credits offered by an establishment, which display the number of available credits of each type. For example, box 22a posts and then decrements casino originated complementary credits. Box 22b
10 posts and then decrements casino originated promotional credits. Box 22c posts player originated credits. Box 22c posts winnings from not only the player originated credits, but also from the promotional and complementary accounts. Losses are posted on the player originated account only after the other two credit sources are exhausted.

Referring to figure 1, the flow chart associated with the apparatus of FIGS. 2 and 3
15 can be explored. Initially, the player receives credits from an establishment and inserts them into a gaming machine. The machine discerns the nature of any credits inserted by the player (as to origin: complementary, promotional or player) and displays the number of credits accumulated, sequestered by nature. As the player plays on the machine, credits are deducted from the player's total, with any complimentary or promotional credits
20 deducted first and any player-originated credits, that is, winnings from the game or money inserted by the player, deducted last. If the player chooses to cash out at any time, all player-originated credits are cashed out to the player. Any remaining promotional credits may be retained by the machine or zeroed out rather than surrendered to the player as freely negotiable currency. In another embodiment, any remaining
25 promotional or complimentary credits may be dispensed to the player in the form of a printed voucher or keycard via mechanism 17, therefore ensuring their use only in the issuing casino. This feature affords the player an opportunity to stop gaming and resume at a future time in the preferred establishment as to the promotional or complementary credits.

30 Because the credits can be sequestered as to origin, they may also be distinguishable to the extent that they can offer different payouts. In one form of the invention, it is contemplated that one or more classes of credits can be played according to a different payable or for non-pecuniary prizes, such as a vacation, dinner for two, a car, etc.

Moreover, having thus described the invention, it should be apparent that numerous structural modifications and adaptations may be resorted to without departing from the scope and fair meaning of the instant invention as set forth hereinabove and as described hereinbelow by the claims.

Claims

I Claim:

Claim 1 - A method for sequestering and then sequencing the dispensation of credits from a gaming device, the steps including:

- 5 scanning inputted credits as to their nature,
 displaying the credits to a player as a function of their nature, and
 decrementing certain credits in deference to others.

Claim 2 - The method of claim 1 including nominating some credits as promotional credits and decrement the promotional credits first.

- 10 Claim 3 - The method of claim 1 including nominating the credits as a plurality of types of promotional credits and decrementing the credits according to a preferential hierarchy.

Claim 4 - The method of claim 3 including nominating the credits as complimentary credits which are subject to a secondary payable when played.

- 15 Claim 5 - The method of claim 1 including decrementing player originated credits last.

Claim 6 - The method of claim 1 including retaining remaining promotional credits when one player cashes out, such that other subsequent players use them.

- 20 Claim 7 - The method of claim 1 including zeroing out remaining promotional credits when the player cashes out, such that no other players may use them.

Claim 8 - The method of claim 1 including dispensing remaining promotional credits to the player as a printed voucher when the player cashes out.

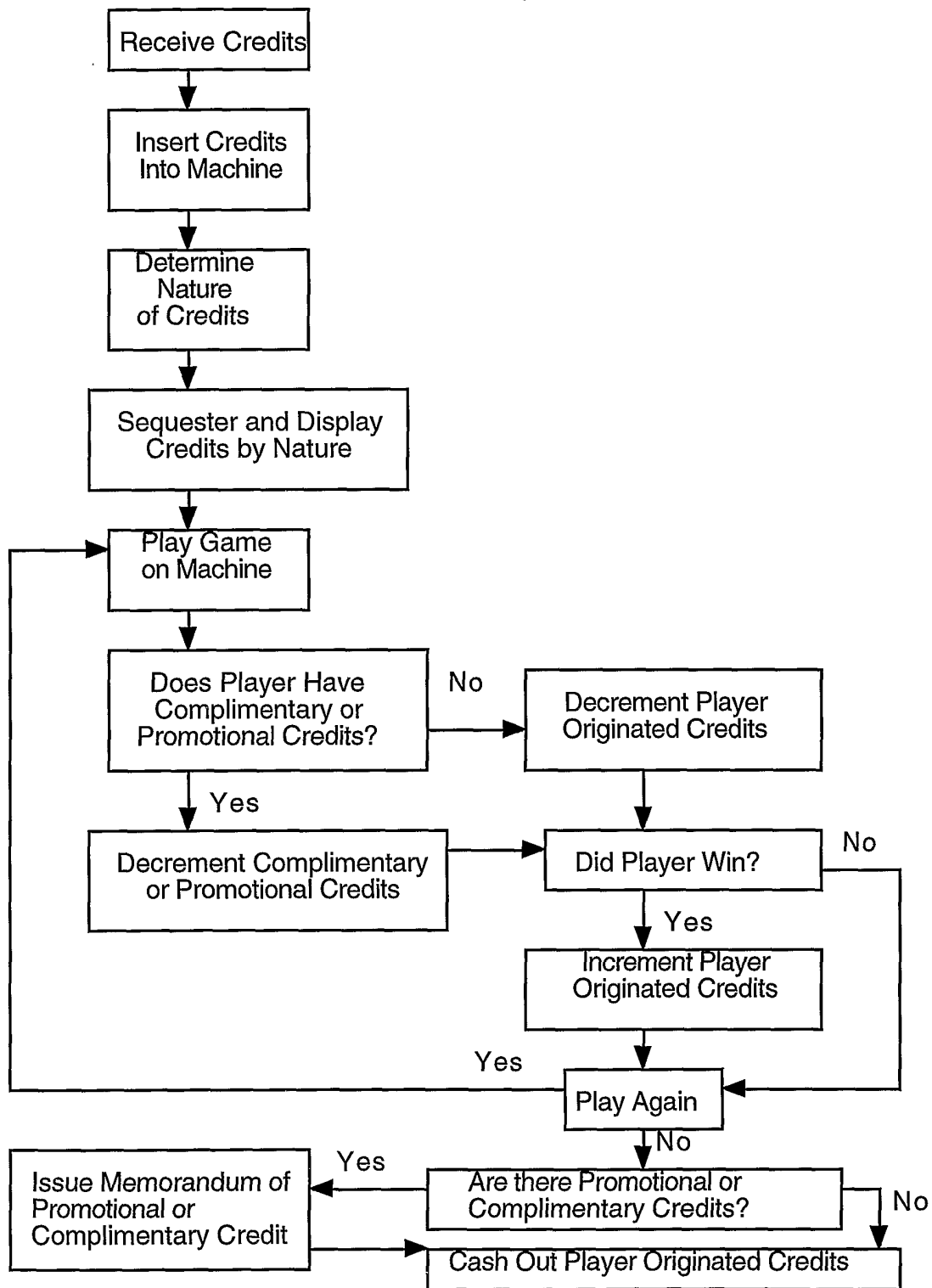
Claim 9 - The method of claim 1 including dispensing remaining promotional credits by issuing to the player a card having memory means.

- 25 Claim 10 - A device for sequestering and then sequencing the dispensation of credits in a gaming device, comprising, in combination:

- credit input means,
 a processor,
 credit-analyzing means operatively coupled to said processor to analyze
30 credit input means and report status to said processor,
 a display operatively coupled to said processor receiving data from said credit-analyzing means, said display including a plurality of credit counters reflective of status reported by said credit-analyzing means, and

means for incrementing and decrementing said credit counters as a function of game play.

Claim 11 - The device of claim 10 wherein said processor reads from a card having memory means, said memory means capable of reporting a plurality of credit statuses to
5 said credit-analyzing means.



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