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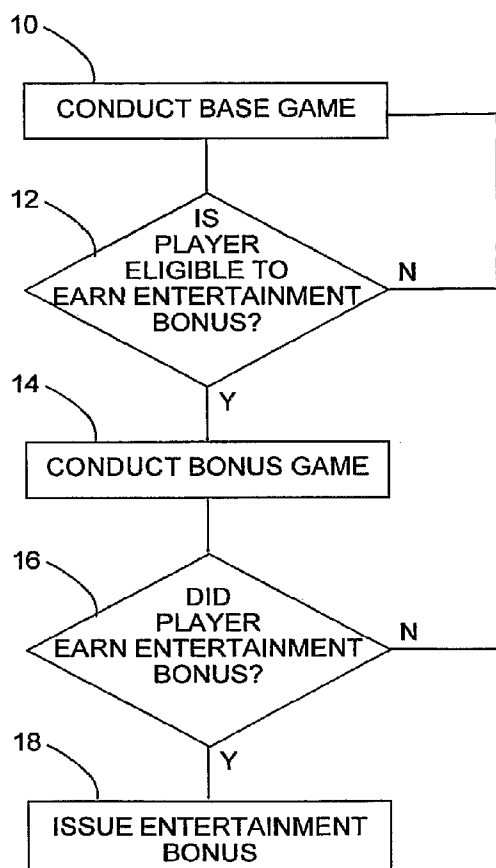
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(54) Title: METHOD OF PROVIDING AN ENTERTAINMENT BONUS FOR A WAGERING GAME



(57) Abstract: A base game is conducted for one or more players playing at networked player terminals. In the course of the base game, eligibility of players to earn an entertainment bonus is determined. In an optional embodiment, eligibility is based at least in part on a base game outcome. Optionally, earning the entertainment bonus includes conducting a bonus game. A player earning an entertainment bonus receives the entertainment bonus at the player's player terminal.

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## **METHOD OF PROVIDING AN ENTERTAINMENT BONUS FOR A WAGERING GAME**

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### Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to methods of conducting a wagering game. Specifically, the present invention is a method for providing an entertainment bonus for players of a wagering game conducted over a network.

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### Background of the Invention

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Poker in its various forms has been growing in popularity over the past several years. Its attraction is reflected in the increased number of books, television shows, movies, websites, and advertisements based upon a poker theme. The most popular game is Texas Hold 'Em while other games include Omaha, 7 Card Stud, Razz, and more. Poker professionals have become famous, and easily recognized. However, as is common in such situations, the supply of poker venues has grown to accept the demand, and there has developed competition among the poker sites, both electronic and "brick-and-mortar." Casinos have long offered comps and perks for high-stakes poker players (along with other gamblers), and the level of play needed for such consideration has often dropped into the more common gambler pool.

With the bloom of poker websites, both free and not, game providers have sought ways to attract more players, and keep them playing longer. Television advertisements for poker sites, featuring former winners of the World Series of Poker® and other recognizable poker celebrities, have become common. Such

advertisements have only limited effect, especially once they become common, and so websites must devise new ways to attract and keep players.

Therefore, it can be seen that there is a need in the art for a method of conducting a wagering game with an entertainment bonus.

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### Summary of the Invention

The present invention includes a method for conducting a wagering game in which an entertainment bonus may be awarded to a player at a player terminal in an Internet-based or other server-based network. The method may be applied to any  
10 wagering game where at least one player plays against other players or against a banker in which a resolution can be reached by determining whether the outcome of the game is a player winning outcome, a player losing outcome, or, in an optional embodiment, a player push outcome. In an optional embodiment, the base game may be a card game such as hold'em poker, blackjack, or the like. The base game  
15 may be player-banked or house-banked, and may be played for legal money, casino credits, non-monetary credits, or any other means for tracking wins and losses.

The present method includes conducting a base game between the player and at least one of another player or a banker. Optionally, the player plays against one or more other live players or a live banker. In an alternate embodiment, the player  
20 plays against one or more computer-controlled players or a computer-controlled banker. Optionally the banker may be a house banker, dealer banker, or player banker.

Optionally, awarding an entertainment bonus comprises two steps (a) player becomes eligible to earn an entertainment bonus and (b) eligible players earn the  
25 entertainment bonus. In one optional embodiment, an entertainment bonus is

available to be earned in any base game; in another optional embodiment, an entertainment bonus is available to be earned only in designated base games. In such optional embodiments, any criterion may be used to determine if a player is eligible to earn an entertainment bonus. In one optional embodiment, the player is  
5 eligible to earn an entertainment bonus based on the outcome of the base game preceding the entertainment bonus. For example, in one such optional embodiment, a player becomes eligible for an entertainment bonus by obtaining a player winning outcome in the base game.

In another optional embodiment, eligibility to earn an entertainment bonus  
10 may be based on a plurality of base game outcomes. Such an eligibility criterion could be evaluated in many different ways. In an optional embodiment, the player becomes eligible by winning a predetermined number of consecutive base games. In another optional embodiment, the player becomes eligible by winning a predetermined ratio of base games.

15 In yet another optional embodiment, eligibility to earn an entertainment bonus may be based on an accrual of bonus points. In such an optional embodiment, bonus points could be awarded in any of a variety of ways, including based on outcome of the base game, e.g. a quantity of points are awarded for a player winning outcome, or independent of outcome of the base game, e.g. a quantity of points are  
20 awarded for time of play, amount wagered, amount won, theoretical or actual action, or any other standard.

In one optional embodiment, players eligible for an entertainment bonus are not automatically awarded the entertainment bonus, but must earn the entertainment bonus by satisfying a bonus award criterion or a set of bonus award criteria. In an  
25 optional embodiment in which bonus points are accrued, a player may earn an

entertainment bonus by exchanging a portion, or all, of the bonus points accrued for an entertainment bonus.

In another optional embodiment, a player earns an entertainment bonus through a bonus game. In an optional embodiment, the bonus game is conducted without requiring the player to stake or wager anything, including any winnings from the base game. In another optional embodiment, the bonus game requires a player to stake an additional wager or a portion of his winnings for the opportunity to earn an entertainment bonus through the bonus game.

The bonus game may take any form, including a game of chance, a game of skill, or a game combining elements of chance and skill. In one optional embodiment, the bonus game is unrelated to the base game. In another optional embodiment, the bonus game is related to the base game. In such an optional embodiment, the relationship between the bonus game and the base game may take many different forms. In one optional embodiment in which the player is dealt a hand of game indicia, the relationship between the base game and the bonus game is that the base game and bonus game are both conducted using the same player hand of game indicia. In a related optional embodiment, the bonus game is another iteration of the base game played using the same player hand of game indicia.

In such an optional embodiment, the outcome of the bonus game determines whether the player has earned an entertainment bonus. For example, in one optional embodiment, the player uses the same player hand of game indicia from the base game to play a bonus game, which is another iteration of the base game, against a bonus hand. If a player winning outcome occurs in the bonus game, the player is awarded an entertainment bonus. Optionally, the entertainment bonus may be viewable to a plurality of players.

The entertainment bonus could take many different forms. In an optional embodiment, the entertainment bonus includes transmitting a video signal, an audio signal, an audio-video signal, or the like to the player's player terminal. Optionally, the signal is a live, real-time video or audio-video signal. In another optional embodiment, the signal is a pre-recorded video or audio-video signal. In yet another optional embodiment, the signal is a stored still-image video signal.

In an optional embodiment, if an eligible player does not earn an entertainment bonus, no entertainment bonus is awarded.

For example, in one optional embodiment, the present invention may be applied to a base game of hold'em poker in which a plurality of players compete against one another. As noted above, the players could be all live players, all computer-controlled players, or a combination of live and computer-controlled players. In one such example, a player hand is dealt to each of the plurality of other players. The base game is resolved among the players with one or more players obtaining a player winning outcome.

In another optional embodiment, the present invention may be applied to a base game of blackjack in which one or more players compete against a dealer. As noted above, the dealer could be a live dealer or a computer-controlled dealer. In one such example, an initial player hand is dealt to each player and a dealer. The base game is resolved between the dealer and each player with each player obtaining a player winning outcome, a player losing outcome, or a player push outcome.

The player or players with the player winning outcome may be eligible to earn an entertainment bonus. For example, in one such optional embodiment, a player winning outcome is sufficient to establish a player's eligibility to earn an entertainment bonus; in another optional embodiment, a player may need to obtain a

player winning outcome and a qualifying final hand to be eligible to earn an entertainment bonus; in yet another optional embodiment, outcomes from multiple players may be used to determine if an entertainment bonus may be earned. Optionally, no additional wager is required to attempt to earn an entertainment  
5 bonus.

In this example, an eligible player attempts to earn an entertainment bonus by playing a bonus game. In one optional embodiment, the bonus game is another iteration of the base game, e.g. hold'em poker or blackjack, using the same player hand used in the base game. In one optional embodiment, the bonus game is  
10 conducted against a computer-controlled bonus hand and is broadcast to the eligible player via a live, real-time video or audio-video signal. The bonus game is resolved between the eligible player and the computer-controlled bonus hand and, depending upon the outcome of the bonus game, the entertainment bonus may be awarded.

In another optional embodiment, the bonus game is conducted against a  
15 bonus hand played by an entertainer and broadcast to the eligible player via a live, real-time video or audio-video signal. The bonus game is resolved between the player hand of the eligible player and the bonus hand of the entertainer. In this optional embodiment, if the eligible player earns the entertainment bonus by obtaining a player winning outcome in the bonus game, the entertainment bonus is  
20 awarded. In one example, the entertainer, via the live, real-time video or audio-video signal, performs act of entertainment value. In one optional embodiment, this could include the removal of an article of clothing.

If the eligible player does not earn the entertainment bonus, such as, for example, by obtaining a player losing outcome, the entertainment bonus is not  
25 awarded. In one optional embodiment of this example, where the entertainment

bonus includes a series of steps, a failure to earn an entertainment bonus may result in no further step being taken, e.g. no additional article of clothing removed, or a regressive step being taken, e.g. an article of clothing replaced.

In an optional embodiment, an entertainment bonus may be awarded only to the player earning the entertainment bonus or may be viewable by other players as well. Optionally, players not earning the entertainment bonus, may be able to view the entertainment bonus, but may be limited in some other way, such as having a lesser degree of interactivity or viewing at a lower resolution or image size, or the like. In an additional or alternative optional embodiment, different entertainment bonuses may be offered with players not earning the entertainment bonus being eligible to share in certain entertainment bonuses but not other entertainment bonuses.

#### Brief Description of the Drawings

FIG. 1 is a flowchart of an optional embodiment of the method disclosed herein.

#### Description

Reference is now made to the figures wherein like parts are referred to by like numerals throughout. Referring first to FIG. 1, the present invention includes a method for conducting a wagering game, in an Internet-based or other networked environment, in which an entertainment bonus may be awarded to a player playing at a player terminal. By "player terminal," it is contemplated that the present game could be conducted by players playing at any type of device, including a gaming machine, kiosk, handheld device, personal digital assistant, cellular telephone,



personal computer, or any other type of device, networked to a server that directs entertainment bonuses to the player terminal. The player terminal may include instructions for the player terminal to conduct the wagering game, such as through stored and/or downloaded software, or may be operated under the control of a server  
5 conducting the wagering game.

The wagering game includes a base game. The base game could be a game of chance, a game of skill, or a game combining chance and skill. For example, where the base game is a game of chance, the game could take any form, including card games, such as poker, blackjack, baccarat, and their variants, or any other form  
10 of card game, tile games, dice games, numbers games, or any other form of game. The base game could be a game in which players compete against one another, compete against a standard, compete against a house either separately or collectively, or the like. In optional embodiments in which the base game is conducted against other players or a dealer, the other players may be computer-controlled, live, or a  
15 combination of computer-controlled and live, and the dealer may be computer-controlled or live. Similarly, the base game may be house-banked or player-banked, and may be conducted using real money, credits representing real money, casino credit, fictitious money or credits representing fictitious money, or any other accounting means. Alternatively, the base game may be conducted without any  
20 accounting means with only wins and losses being tracked.

The base game is conducted 10 and an outcome is generated. As may be appreciated, the steps of obtaining the outcome as well as the outcomes possible may vary depending upon the base game. For example, possible outcomes of a base game may include a player winning outcome, a player losing outcome, a player push  
25 outcome, a no-play outcome, or the like, depending on the base game.

Over a series of base games, one or more entertainment bonuses may become available. In one optional embodiment, players may become eligible to earn an entertainment bonus in any base game. That is, a determination is made in each base game whether one or more players are eligible to earn an entertainment bonus. In  
5 another optional embodiment, players may become eligible to earn an entertainment bonus only in designated base games. That is, a determination is made in only some, but not all, base games whether one or more players are eligible to earn an entertainment bonus. In such an optional embodiment, the determination of which base games are designated for an entertainment bonus could take any form. For  
10 example, base games could be designated randomly, according to a pattern, based on some occurrence in the base game, or on any other basis.

In the course of conducting a base game in which an entertainment bonus is available, the eligibility of players to earn an entertainment bonus is determined 12. Eligibility could be determined based on any eligibility criterion or set of eligibility  
15 criteria. For example, in an optional embodiment, the determination is made after each resolution of a base game and is based on the outcome of the base game. In one such optional embodiment, players obtaining a player winning outcome in the base game may be eligible to earn an entertainment bonus.

In another optional embodiment, the determination of eligibility is made after  
20 each resolution of a base game and depends on the outcomes of a plurality of base games. For example, eligibility may be based on a player obtaining a player winning outcome over a quantity of base games, such as, for example, five consecutive player winning outcomes, or obtaining a player winning outcome in a specified ratio of base games, such as, for example, player winning outcomes in nine of the preceding  
25 ten base games. In another example, bonus points may be awarded to players for

base game outcomes. A player may become eligible to earn an entertainment bonus as the player's accrued bonus points reach a specified balance.

In another optional embodiment, the determination of eligibility is made periodically or continuously based on a player's play. For example, in one such optional embodiment, players may be awarded bonus points based on factors not directly related to outcomes, such as time of play, amount wagered, amount won, actual or theoretical action, number of games, or the like. As above, a player may become eligible to earn an entertainment bonus as the player's accrued bonus points reach a specified balance.

In yet another optional embodiment, a player may become eligible to earn an entertainment bonus as the result of a random occurrence or quasi-random selection.

It is noted that in an optional embodiment, eligibility may be based on the satisfaction of multiple eligibility criteria. For example, in an optional embodiment for a base game where a player has a player hand of game indicia, a player may need to obtain a player winning outcome and possess a qualifying player hand of at least a specified rank to be eligible. In another optional embodiment, a player may need to reach a certain stage of the base game and obtain a certain base game outcome to be eligible.

Eligible players are given the opportunity to earn an entertainment bonus, by satisfying criteria for earning the entertainment bonus. In an optional embodiment, an eligible player is not required to pay, stake, or wager anything additional to earn an entertainment bonus; in another optional embodiment, an eligible player may be required to stake or wager some amount to earn an entertainment bonus.

The process of earning an entertainment bonus, that is, the process for satisfying the bonus award criterion or set of bonus award criteria, may take many

different forms. For example, in an optional embodiment in which bonus points are awarded, a player may earn an entertainment bonus by exchanging a portion or all of the bonus points accrued by the player. In a further optional embodiment, multiple different entertainment bonuses may be available and the quantity of bonus points  
5 needed to earn the entertainment bonuses may differ. Thus, an eligible player in such an optional embodiment may become eligible for some entertainment bonuses at lower accrued bonus point levels than other entertainment bonuses. In such an optional embodiment, a player may opt to continue to accrue bonus points to become eligible to earn an entertainment bonus with a higher accrued bonus point level or  
10 immediately exchange the player's bonus points for an entertainment bonus with a lower accrued bonus point level. In an optional embodiment, entertainment bonuses with a higher accrued bonus point level may be qualitatively and/or quantitatively different from entertainment bonuses with a lower accrued bonus point level. For example, entertainment bonuses could differ in duration, level of interactivity, type  
15 of signal (e.g. still video image as compared to motion video image), content of the entertainment bonus, whether the entertainment bonus is shared or private to the player earning the entertainment bonus, or the like, with the player being able to select from different entertainment bonuses, or different options with an entertainment bonus, in exchange for a different quantity of bonus points.

20 In another optional embodiment, eligible players may earn an entertainment bonus through a bonus game 14. The bonus game may take many different forms and may include player participation or may be conducted without player participation. The bonus game may be a game of skill, a game of chance, or may combine chance and skill. The bonus game may be different from the base game or  
25 may be related to the base game in some fashion, such as another iteration of the

base game but conducted to award an entertainment bonus. Similarly, the bonus game may be independent of the base game, i.e. bonus game is not based on any aspect of the base game, or the bonus game may be based on one or more aspects of the base game. For example, certain aspects of a preceding base game may carry  
5 over to a bonus game, such as the player hand, if any, the community hand, if any, the deck constitution (that is, the bonus game may be conducted using the deck as it existed at the end of the base game rather than reconstituting and/or reshuffling the deck), or the like.

In one version of such an optional embodiment, the bonus game is conducted  
10 against a bonus hand. In an alternate optional embodiment, the bonus hand is conducted by the house, either live or computer-controlled. In yet another optional embodiment, the bonus hand is conducted by an animated, computer-controlled avatar. Optionally, the bonus hand is conducted by an entertainer and conduct of the bonus hand is provided to the player via live, real-time video or audio-video signal.  
15 In such an optional embodiment, the entertainer may conduct the bonus hand at his or her discretion, or according to a predetermined set of rules (such as house rules or a house way) depending upon the bonus game, or according to prompts from a computer executing software to guide conduct of the bonus hand. An outcome of the bonus game is determined and based on the outcome a determination is made  
20 whether the player has earned 16 an entertainment bonus.

If the entertainment bonus has been earned, the entertainment bonus is issued  
18 to the player terminal for the player earning the entertainment bonus. In an optional embodiment, an entertainment bonus includes a signal transmitted to the player terminal. For example, an entertainment bonus could be a still-image video  
25 signal, a pre-recorded video or audio-video signal, a live, real-time video or audio-

video signal, or the like. Optionally, some one-way or two-way communication may be permitted between the player's player terminal and the entertainer, such as through text or instant messaging, e-mail, voice-over-IP, telephone, or the like. The content of the signal may take any form and may be transmitted using any protocol.

5           In an optional embodiment, in addition to communication between the player terminal and the entertainer, the present invention may also include permitting the player at the player terminal to designate a tip amount for the entertainer. For example, in one optional embodiment, the player may be presented with an option to designate a tip amount before, during, and/or after the entertainment bonus is  
10           presented. This could be carried out in any way. For example, in an optional embodiment, the player may be permitted to designate a tip amount from the funds used by the player for wagering. In such an optional embodiment in which the player wagers from a wagering account with the game operator, the tip amount may be deducted from the player's wagering account and allocated to the entertainer. In  
15           yet another optional embodiment in which a player wagers from a wagering account with the game operator, the player may be permitted to maintain a tip account with the game operator separate from the player's wagering account from which tip amounts may be designated. Additionally or alternatively, in an optional  
20           embodiment, the player may be allowed to designate a tip amount from a source other than the player's wagering funds. For example, in such an optional embodiment, the player may be presented with an option to conduct a separate financial transaction from a credit card, debit card, checking account, or other source of funds, to transfer a tip amount to be allocated to the entertainer.

25           The entertainment bonus could include any content. As noted above, the entertainment bonus could be a live, real-time video signal, a transmission of a pre-

recorded video, or video animation of any content. In one optional embodiment, the entertainment bonus may include educational content such as instruction on the base game, the bonus game, or some other topic. For example, the education content could include professional insight and strategy about game play. In another optional  
5 embodiment, the entertainment bonus could include solely entertainment content such as the removal of an article of clothing or the telling of a joke.

Optionally, the entertainment bonus may be delivered to additional player terminals, i.e. player terminals for players not earning the entertainment bonus. In one such optional embodiment, the same entertainment bonus is delivered to the  
10 additional player terminals; in another optional embodiment, the entertainment bonus is altered in some fashion when delivered to the additional player terminals. For example, when delivered to player terminals for players not earning the entertainment bonus, the entertainment bonus may lack some feature that is available to the player earning the entertainment bonus, such as being delivered at a lower  
15 resolution, at a smaller size, without audio signal, without video signal, without interactivity, or otherwise altered. In another optional embodiment, different entertainment bonuses may be offered in which certain entertainment bonuses may be designated for sharing among all players, e.g. the player earning the entertainment bonus as well as those not earning the entertainment bonus, while other  
20 entertainment bonuses may be designated for only the player earning the entertainment bonus. For example, where the entertainment bonuses comprise a series of entertainment bonuses, one or more entertainment bonuses during one segment of the series, such as the early bonuses, may be shared among all players, while one or more entertainment bonuses during another segment of the series, such  
25 as the later bonuses, may be private to the player earning the bonus. As noted above,

in certain embodiments in which a player earns an entertainment bonus through the exchange of bonus points, a different level of bonus points may be used to purchase entertainment bonuses private to the player as compared to the level of bonus points used to purchase shared entertainment bonuses.

5           In an optional embodiment, different entertainment bonuses or entertainment containing different features may be available within a single game. For example, in one optional embodiment, the level of interactivity within the entertainment bonus and whether the entertainment bonus is shared among one or more player terminals or private to a single player terminal could depend on various base game or bonus  
10   game factors, such as wager level or wager history over one or more games, base game outcome over one or more base games, bonus game outcome over one or more bonus games, the particular stage in a sequence of entertainment bonuses, or the like, or upon factors outside of game play, such as a player's player rating by the casino which could be based on any number of different factors, or the like. In another  
15   example, different methods for earning entertainment bonuses may lead to different entertainment bonuses or entertainment bonuses with different features.

          The entertainment bonus, in an optional embodiment, is a live, real-time video signal of an entertainer. In an optional embodiment, the bonus hand is conducted under computer-control rather than by a live person. In such an optional  
20   embodiment, the entertainer may appear solely in the entertainment bonus. In another optional embodiment, the entertainer may participate in conducting the bonus hand. In such an optional embodiment, the entertainer may also appear in the entertainment bonus. However, it is noted that in yet another optional embodiment, the bonus hand is conducted by a person, but the person appearing in the  
25   entertainment bonus may be different from the person that conducted the bonus



hand. In any case, in an optional embodiment, the entertainer performs some act, such as removing an article of clothing, in the entertainment bonus. As may be appreciated, an entertainment bonus may be serial or quasi-serial and a subsequent entertainment bonus may comprise the next serial step of the entertainment bonus.

5 Thus, in an optional embodiment where an entertainment bonus includes an entertainer removing an article of clothing, a subsequent entertainment bonus may commence where a prior entertainment bonus ended and include removing an additional article of clothing.

10 In the event that the player does not earn the entertainment bonus, the entertainment bonus is not delivered to the player terminal. In a further optional embodiment, a consolation video or audio-video signal is transmitted in place of the entertainment bonus. For example, where the entertainment bonus includes an entertainer removing an article of clothing, the failure to earn an entertainment bonus may be accompanied by a consolation video or audio-video signal in which the  
15 entertainer replaces an article of clothing previously removed.

As noted above, the present invention could be applied to any base game. The example below discusses an optional embodiment of the present game applied to a card game, such as hold'em poker or blackjack. However, this discussion should be considered exemplary only and not limiting.

20 In one optional embodiment, a base card game is initiated. Optionally, a player must place a base wager to participate in a base card game. As noted above, in such an optional embodiment, the base wager could be backed by real or fictitious money. The base card game commences with the dealing of a player hand of game indicia, e.g. playing cards to each player.

In a hold'em-type poker game, a community hand is dealt and players form the highest ranking hand possible from the combination of the player's player hand and the community hand. The player with the highest hand wins a player pot, i.e. has a player-winning outcome.

5           In a blackjack-type game, a dealer hand is dealt and players form a final player hand by standing or hitting, or are eliminated from the game, i.e. obtain a player losing outcome, if they bust. Optionally, each player hand and, optionally, the dealer hand is dealt from a separately constituted deck or shoe of multiple decks. During the course of play, players may have the options to increase the base wager  
10       such as through doubling down, or forming two final player hands through splitting. In any event, once each player has formed a final player hand, the dealer forms a final dealer hand. The final player hand is compared to the final dealer hand and the target value of twenty-one. A player winning outcome occurs if the dealer busts, or the player's final hand is closer to the target value than the dealer's final hand is.

15           Continuing with the example, in an optional embodiment, a player becomes eligible to earn an entertainment bonus. As noted above, this could be determined in many different ways. In hold'em -type poker, eligibility may be determined by one or more of: the player hand or a subset thereof, the rank of the player hand or a subset thereof, the cards in the player hand or a subset thereof, the stage reached by a  
20       player hand, the community cards or a subset thereof, the rank of the community cards or a subset thereof, the cards in the community cards or a subset thereof, or a combination of factors, or any other criterion.

          For example, in an optional hold'em-type poker embodiment, a player may be required to have a winning player hand of a specified holding of at least a  
25       specified rank, or contain specified playing cards, to be eligible to earn an

entertainment bonus and the game must have reached at least exposure of the “river” card, i.e. the fifth community card. In a further optional embodiment, player eligibility may also depend upon the dealer hand, such as, for example, requiring that the dealer hand reach some qualifying rank, holding, or playing card content.

5           Similarly, in an optional blackjack embodiment, the eligibility of a player to earn an entertainment bonus could be determined in many different ways. In this regard, eligibility could be based on one or more of: the hand sum of one or multiple player hands (initial, final, or subset thereof), the cards in one or multiple player hands (initial, final, or subset thereof), the quantity of cards in one or multiple  
10   player hands (initial, final, or subset thereof), the dealer hand sum (initial, final, or subset thereof), the cards in a dealer hand (initial, final, or subset thereof), the quantity of cards in a dealer hand (initial, final, or subset thereof), a bonus hand sum (initial, final, or a subset thereof), the cards in a bonus hand (initial, final, or subset thereof), the quantity of cards in a bonus hand (initial, final, or a subset thereof), or  
15   any other measure.

          For example, in one optional embodiment, a player may be required to have a winning hand with a final player hand sum of at least a specified minimum, such as, for example, nineteen, to be eligible to earn an entertainment bonus. In another example, a player or “table” of players competing against the same dealer may  
20   become eligible to earn a bonus based upon the quantity of blackjack hands at the table, the quantity of winning hands at the table, the percentage of winning hands at the table, or any other measure.

          As noted above, the entertainment bonus could take any form. In this optional example, an entertainment bonus is earned by conducting a bonus game  
25   against a bonus hand conducted by an entertainer and displayed in a live, real-time

video signal. More specifically, in this example, the player uses the same player hand to play a bonus game against a bonus hand. It is noted that the bonus hand could be dealt at the beginning of the base game, during the course of the base game, at the end of the base game, at the beginning of the bonus game, or any other time.

5           As suggested above, the bonus game could be based on, or related to, the base game. Thus, in a hold'em-type poker game, the bonus game could include the entertainer using a bonus hand with the community hand to form the best possible poker hand and if that hand is outranked by the best possible poker hand formed from the eligible player's player hand in combination with the community hand, an  
10           entertainment bonus is awarded. In another version of a bonus game for a hold'em-type poker game, the bonus hand may be compared directly to the eligible player's player hand and, if the bonus hand is outranked by the player hand, an entertainment bonus is awarded.

          Similarly, in a blackjack-type game, the bonus game may include comparing  
15           the player hand sum to the bonus hand sum and a target value, e.g. twenty-one. In one optional embodiment, if the player hand sum is closer to the target value than the bonus hand sum is, an entertainment bonus is awarded. In another optional embodiment, the entertainment bonus may be earned in a bonus game if the bonus hand against which the player competes has a predetermined holding such as a  
20           blackjack. It should be noted that while this example does not include any payout to accompany the entertainment bonus, it is contemplated that in certain embodiments such a payout may accompany an entertainment bonus.

          In this example embodiment, the entertainment bonus is a video or audio-  
video signal transmitted to a player terminal. According to the example, the video or  
25           audio-video signal is a live, real-time transmission of an entertainer removing an

article of clothing. The entertainment bonus could be captured in any way. In an optional embodiment, the video signal is captured using a camera such as a webcam, digital video camera, or the like. As noted above, entertainment bonuses could also take the form of prerecorded video or audio-video signals, still video images, or the like. While this example contemplates that an entertainer is a live person, in an alternate optional embodiment, an entertainer may comprise an animated character in lieu of a live person.

As discussed above, the entertainment bonus may also be viewable by other players at different player terminals. In an optional embodiment, the extent of the availability of the entertainment bonus to the other players may be influenced by such factors as the size of the base wagers, or other factors. For example, in one optional embodiment, the entertainment bonus could be viewed by one player or by multiple players depending on various factors such as the stage of a series of entertainment bonuses, the bonus game outcome of one or more players, the wager level of one or more players, or the like.

In this example, the entertainment bonuses are serial or quasi-serial in that with each succeeding entertainment bonus awarded results in the entertainer removing another article of clothing. In an optional embodiment, when the entertainment bonuses have reached the end of the series or quasi-series, for example when the entertainer has reached a predefined maximum level of undress, a number of options may be available. For example, in one optional embodiment, a different entertainer may replace the disrobed entertainer. In another optional embodiment, additional actions by the disrobed entertainer may be transmitted as entertainment bonuses. In a further optional embodiment, a player earning an entertainment bonus may be permitted to transmit a selection of an action for an entertainment bonus.

For example, such acts may comprise suggestive dancing or other activity.

Optionally, the actions available vary depending on any of a number of factors such as base wager levels, whether the player's wagers are backed by real or fictitious money, win amounts, theoretical or actual player action, time of play, or the like.

5           Returning to the example, if an entertainment bonus is not earned, a consolation video or audio-video signal with the entertainer replacing a removed article of clothing.

10           While certain embodiments of the present invention have been shown and described it is to be understood that the present invention is subject to many modifications and changes without departing from the spirit and scope of the claims presented herein.

I CLAIM:

1. A method for conducting a wagering game for one or more players at one or more player terminals, comprising:

defining at least one eligibility criterion to determine whether a player is  
5 eligible to earn an entertainment bonus;

defining at least one bonus award criterion to determine whether an eligible  
player has earned an entertainment bonus;

receiving a wager from a player;

conducting a base game to produce an outcome;

10 determining whether said eligibility criterion is satisfied;

if said eligibility criterion is satisfied, determining whether said bonus award  
criterion is satisfied; and

if said eligibility criterion and said bonus award criterion are satisfied,  
awarding said entertainment bonus at said player terminal.

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2. The method of claim 1 in which said base game outcome includes a player  
winning outcome and wherein said step of determining whether said eligibility  
criterion is satisfied includes determining whether said player obtained a player  
winning outcome.

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3. The method of claim 1 further comprising designating whether an  
entertainment bonus is available in a base game, such that said step of determining  
whether said eligibility criterion is satisfied includes determining whether an  
entertainment bonus is available in said base game.

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4. The method of claim 1 further comprising conducting at least one additional base game, such that said step of determining whether said eligibility criterion is satisfied includes multiple base games.

5 5. The method of claim 1 further comprising accruing bonus points based on said base game, such that said step of determining whether said eligibility criterion is satisfied includes determining the quantity of bonus points accrued.

10 6. The method of claim 5 wherein said step of determining whether said bonus award criterion is satisfied includes exchanging at least a portion of said bonus points for said entertainment bonus.

7. The method of claim 5 wherein said step of determining whether said bonus award criterion is satisfied includes:

15 receiving from said player an election to exchange at least a portion of said bonus points for said entertainment bonus; and

in response to said election, exchanging at least a portion of said bonus points for said entertainment bonus.

20 8. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

defining a bonus game, said bonus game generating a bonus game outcome, said bonus award criterion including at least said player obtaining a predefined bonus game outcome in said bonus game;

25 if said eligibility criterion is satisfied, conducting said bonus game to generate a bonus game outcome; and



based on said bonus game outcome, determining whether said bonus award criterion is satisfied.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein said entertainment bonus includes a video  
5 signal displayed at said player terminal.

10. The method of claim 1 wherein said method is conducted at a plurality of  
player terminals and said entertainment bonus includes a video signal displayed at  
two or more of said player terminals.

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11. A method for conducting a wagering game for one or more players at one or  
more player terminals, comprising:

defining at least one eligibility criterion to determine whether a player is  
eligible to earn an entertainment bonus;

15 defining a bonus game, said bonus game generating a bonus game outcome;

defining at least one bonus award criterion to determine whether an eligible  
player has earned an entertainment bonus, said bonus award criterion including at  
least a player obtaining a predefined bonus game outcome in said bonus game;

receiving a wager from a player;

20 conducting a base game to produce an outcome;

determining whether said eligibility criterion is satisfied;

if said eligibility criterion is satisfied, conducting said bonus game to  
generate a bonus game outcome;

25 based on said bonus game outcome, determining whether said bonus award  
criterion is satisfied; and

if said eligibility criterion and said bonus award criterion are satisfied,  
awarding said entertainment bonus at said player terminal.

12. The method of claim 11 in which said base game outcome includes a player  
winning outcome and wherein said step of determining whether said eligibility  
criterion is satisfied includes determining whether said player obtained a player  
winning outcome.

13. The method of claim 11 further comprising designating whether an  
entertainment bonus is available in a base game, such that said step of determining  
whether said eligibility criterion is satisfied includes determining whether an  
entertainment bonus is available in said base game.

14. The method of claim 11 further comprising conducting at least one additional  
base game, such that said step of determining whether said eligibility criterion is  
satisfied includes multiple base games.

15. The method of claim 11 further comprising accruing bonus points based on  
said base game, such that said step of determining whether said eligibility criterion is  
satisfied includes determining the quantity of bonus points accrued.

16. The method of claim 15 wherein said step of determining whether said bonus  
award criterion is satisfied includes exchanging at least a portion of said bonus  
points for said entertainment bonus.

17. The method of claim 15 wherein said step of determining whether said bonus award criterion is satisfied includes:

receiving from said player an election to exchange at least a portion of said bonus points for said entertainment bonus; and

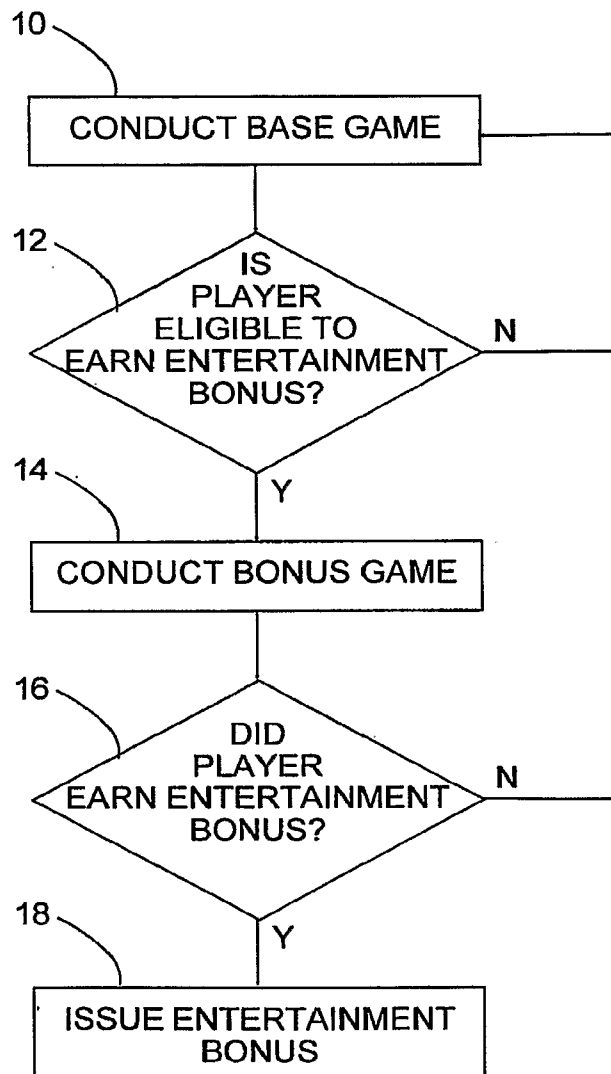
5 in response to said election, exchanging at least a portion of said bonus points for said entertainment bonus.

18. The method of claim 11 wherein said entertainment bonus includes a video signal displayed at said player terminal.

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19. The method of claim 11 wherein said method is conducted at a plurality of player terminals and said entertainment bonus includes a video signal displayed at two or more of said player terminals.

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**FIG. 1**