APPARATUS, METHOD, AND PROGRAM PRODUCT FOR CONDUCTING A BINGO GAME TO PRODUCE CARD GAME-TYPE RESULTS

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Apparatus, methods, and program products for a bingo game are described for selecting a group of designations from an overall set of designations and matching the selected group of designations to designations associated with the locations on a player card. Each designation in the overall set of designations corresponds to a playing card in a standard playing card deck. Matching the group of designations with the player card designations produces a number of matched locations on the player card. These matched locations are used to determine a playing card hand and a player is awarded the result of the game based on the playing card hand.
FIG. 1
FIG. 2
FIG. 5
APPARATUS, METHOD, AND PROGRAM PRODUCT FOR CONDUCTING A BINGO GAME TO PRODUCE CARD GAME-TYPE RESULTS

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

[0001] The Applicants claim the benefit, under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e), of U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/557, 899 filed Mar. 31, 2004, and entitled “Apparatus, Method, And Program Product For Conducting A Bingo Game To Produce Card Game-Type Results.” The entire content of this provisional application is incorporated herein by this reference.

TECHNICAL FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] This invention relates to gaming and gaming systems, and, more particularly, to a bingo gaming system that may be used to simulate the play of a card game such as poker.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] The game known as “bingo” is played with pre-defined bingo cards that each include a number of bingo designations such as numbers, letters, or other symbols, randomly arranged in a desired manner, commonly in a grid. The bingo designations on the cards are selected from an overall set of available designations. In traditional bingo games the cards are physically printed on paper or other suitable material. These traditional printed cards are purchased by players prior to the start of a game. After a buy-in period in which players purchase bingo cards for a game, designations from the available set of designations are selected at random. As the designations are selected and announced in the game, the players match the randomly selected designations with the designations printed on their respective card or cards. This matching and marking of matched designations on the bingo card is commonly referred to as “daubing” the card. The player first producing a predetermined pattern of matches between the randomly selected designations and the printed card designations on a single card, and then announcing “bingo” to claim the win, is considered the winner. Consolation prizes may be awarded to players having cards matched to produce consolation prize patterns at the time of the winning pattern. Additional prizes may be awarded during the course of a traditional bingo game to players matching other patterns prior to the time the game ending or winning pattern is first produced.

[0004] There are numerous variations of the traditional bingo game. One particular variation is played with electronic bingo card representations rather than the traditional printed bingo cards. In these electronic bingo games, each bingo card is represented by a data structure that defines the various card locations and designations associated with the locations. The game is played through player stations connected via a communications network. A central computer system or game server in the network may be responsible for storing the bingo card representations and distributing or communicating bingo card representations to players at the player stations. The player stations display the bingo cards defined by the card representations and also allow the players to daub or mark designation matches on their cards as the designations associated with the ball draw are announced in the game. A primary advantage of this type of electronic bingo game is that the game may be played at a much faster pace than is practical with traditional paper bingo games.

[0005] Although paper and electronically implemented bingo games remain popular to many gaming participants, there have traditionally been aspects of bingo games which limit acceptance of bingo by a wider audience. Most importantly, the graphical presentation of prior bingo games may seem relatively uninteresting or less exciting than competing games, such as reel-type (slot machine) games, and other traditional casino game games, particularly casino card games.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] The present invention includes a method, apparatus, and program product for conducting a bingo game to produce card game-type results. By producing card game-type results, a bingo game according to the present invention may imitate popular card games such as poker, and thereby increase player interest.

[0007] A method embodying the principles of the invention includes selecting a group of designations for a game. This step of selecting a group of designations corresponds to, and may in fact be, a ball draw such as those used in traditional or electronically implemented bingo games. Thus, each of the designations included in the group are selected from an overall set of designations that are available in the bingo game. Unlike prior art bingo games, however, each designation in the overall set corresponds to a particular playing card in a standard playing card deck. After the group of designations is selected, the group is matched to a player card for a particular player. Unlike prior art bingo cards, each player card location or spot in the player card used in the present invention corresponds to a different playing card in the standard playing card deck. Thus, matching the group of designations to the player card produces a number of matched locations on the player card that together comprise or represent a particular playing card hand. According to the present invention, a player is awarded a result of the game based on the matched locations included in the playing card hand.

[0008] One preferred form of the invention includes selecting a primary group of designations and at least one draw sequence group of designations as part of selecting a group of designations for a game. After the primary group of designations is matched to a player card, the player may choose to discard one or more of the matched locations. A respective draw sequence group of designations is then matched with the player card. The step of discarding matched locations and applying draw sequence groups of designations may be repeated a number of times. This use of one or more draw sequence groups of designations after a primary group of designations may be used to imitate draw poker and similar card games.

[0009] A gaming apparatus according to the present invention includes a display device and a player interface device. In addition, the gaming apparatus includes a designation set controller for selecting at least one group of designations for a game and a matching controller operatively connected for communication with the player interface device and the
A program product according to the present invention includes a set of machine-readable instructions that when executed, carry out the methods of the present invention described above. Designation set program code selects at least one group of designations for a game, including a primary group of designations and any draw sequence groups of designations, and matching program code matches each selected group of designations with a player card. In addition, award program code awards a result of the game to a player based on the matched locations on the player card and wagering program code charges a player an amount for any matched locations discarded by a player.

These and other features, and advantages of the invention will be apparent from the following description of the preferred embodiments, considered along with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a block diagram illustrating a gaming apparatus embodying the principles of the invention.

FIG. 2 is a representation of a bingo card suitable for use in playing poker-type card games according to the present invention.

FIG. 3 is a block diagram illustrating a data processing system that may be used in an embodiment of the invention in which one or more processing tasks are distributed to a processing system separate from the player station or stations.

FIG. 4 is a block diagram illustrating a player station that may be used in a gaming system embodying the principles of the invention.

FIG. 5 is a flow chart illustrating the process steps for performing a method embodying the principles of the invention.

DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The claims at the end of this application set out novel features which the Applicants believe are characteristics of the invention. The various advantages and features of the invention are illustrated with preferred modes of use of the invention will best be understood by reference to the following description of illustrative embodiments read in conjunction with the drawings introduced above.

As shown in FIG. 1, a gaming apparatus 100 embodying the principles of the invention includes at least one player display device 101 and a respective player interface device 102. Each respective pair of player display device 101 and player interface device 102 is preferably included in a respective player station 103. Gaming apparatus 100 also includes a central processing device or system 104 which implements a designation set controller 106, a matching controller 108, and an award controller 110.

As will be described further below in connection with the flow diagram of FIG. 5, designation set controller 106 selects at least one group of designations for a game. Each designation included in the respective group is selected from an overall set of designations, where each designation in the overall set corresponds to a respective playing card of a standard playing card deck. An example of one type of standard playing card deck within the scope of the present invention comprises a standard poker deck including fifty-two cards made up of four suits (Spades, Diamonds, Clubs, and Hearts) with thirteen cards in each suit (cards 2 through 10, a Jack, Queen, King, and Ace). An overall set of designations corresponding to this example standard playing card deck would include fifty-two designations, one corresponding to the Ace of Spades, one corresponding to the Ace of Diamonds, and so forth through the entire deck. An example of a group of designations selected by designation set controller 106 for a game might be a group of five designations for a straight five card draw or five card stud poker game according to the invention. In this example, the group of designations might correspond to the playing cards Five of Hearts, Ace of Diamonds, Ace of Hearts, Ten of Clubs, and Four of Diamonds. However, as will be described further below with reference to FIG. 5, designation set controller 106 may select any number of designations for a game from one designation to seven or more designations depending upon the rules of the card game being simulated by the present bingo gaming system.

As used in this disclosure a “standard playing card deck” comprises a deck of cards commonly used in the play of a particular card game. Under this definition, another standard playing card deck for poker would be a fifty-two card deck as described above with two Joker cards.

Matching controller 108 is operatively connected for communication with the player interface device 102 for a given player for whom the game is being conducted, and is also operatively connected for communication with designation set controller 106. In some preferred forms of the invention, matching controller 108 is also connected for communication with display device 101 for the player for whom the game is being conducted. Matching controller 108 receives each group of designations from the designation set controller 106 and matches each respective group of designations to a player card for the respective player for whom the game is being conducted. This matching function is preferably performed in response to a corresponding respective player input initiated through the player’s respective player interface device 102. As will be discussed in detail below with reference to FIG. 5, the player input may be an input requesting an initial deal in the card game being simulated, an input requesting a replacement card in the game being simulated, or an input requesting the next card in a stud poker hand. The structure of a player card that may be used according to the present invention will be described below in detail with reference to FIG. 2. However, it will be noted here that the matching performed by matching controller 108 produces a number of matched locations on the player card.

Award controller 110 is operatively connected for communication with at least matching controller 108 and the
player’s respective display device 101. Award controller 110 receives the matched player card locations from matching controller 108, and awards a result of the game to the player based upon a playing card hand achieved by the matched locations on the player card. Award controller 110 also directs the respective player’s display device 101 to produce a suitable representation that communicates the result of the game to the player. The representations produced on the player’s display device 101 in the course of a game according to the present invention will be described below with reference to FIG. 5.

[0023] FIG. 2 shows an example of a player card 200 that is particularly suited for use in a bingo game according to the present invention that simulates a poker-type card game. Player card 200 includes a number of card locations 201. Each respective card location 201 corresponds to a different playing card in the standard playing card deck for the respective game according to the present invention. In the example, player card 200 shown in FIG. 2, there are fifty-two card locations, one corresponding to each playing card in the fifty-two card standard playing card deck. That is, player card 200 includes a respective card location corresponding to the Ace of each suit in the deck, the King of each suit in the deck and so on. This example player card 200 comprises a two-dimensional array of card locations 201 arranged in four rows 202 along a first axis, each row along the first axis corresponding to a different suit in the card deck, and thirteen rows 203 along a second axis generally perpendicular to the first axis. Each row 203 along the second axis corresponds to a different card face value, Ace, King, Queen, Jack, 10, and so on. It will be appreciated that matching a given group of designations to the player card produces a number of matched locations on the player card and that these matched locations may be used to simulate or represent a hand in a card game. For example, in the earlier presented example of a group of five designations, corresponding to the playing cards Five of Hearts, Ace of Diamonds, Ace of Hearts, Ten of Clubs, and Four of Diamonds, the value of the resulting five card poker hand would be one pair or two-of-a-kind.

[0024] It will be noted from FIG. 2 that a poker hand may be defined in terms of card locations matched on player card 200. For example, the hand “four-of-a-kind” is defined as any single row 203 having all the card locations matched and “three-of-a-kind” is defined as any single row 203 having three card locations matched. A Flush is defined as any row 202 having five matched locations with at least one matched location not being in a row 203 adjacent to the other rows 203 containing matched locations, and a Straight Flush is defined as any row 202 having card locations matched in five adjacent rows 203. A Straight is defined as any five adjacent rows 203 having one matched location with at least one matched location of the five being in a row 202 different from one or more of the other matched locations. The remaining poker hand values may be similarly defined in terms of player card locations in the player card shown in FIG. 2.

[0025] It will be appreciated that there are many arrangements of hardware that may be used to implement the basic gaming apparatus shown in FIG. 1. For example, a respective display device 101 and player interface device 102, together with one or more data processing devices implementing designation set controller 106, matching controller 108, and award controller 110 may all be mounted on a common player station 103.

[0026] Alternatively, an apparatus according to the invention may include a respective player display device 101 and player interface device 102 both mounted on a common player station, with designation set controller 106, matching controller 108, and award controller 110 all implemented in a central processing device separate from the player station. In this alternative form of the invention, a communication arrangement between the central processing device and player stations 103 facilitates the required communications as will be described further below. This arrangement in which designation set controller 106, matching controller 108, and award controller 110 are implemented in a central processing device facilitates a system including multiple player stations 103, and in which the central processing device performs the designation set selection function, matching function, and awarding functions of the controllers 106, 108, and 110 for each of the different player stations. That is, the centralized designation set controller 106 produces the group or groups of designations for each game requested through a respective player station 103, matching controller 108 matches the group or groups of designations to the respective player’s card for each respective player station to identify the respective matched locations for each player participating in the game, and award controller 110 awards a result of the game to each respective player at their respective player station 103 based upon a playing card hand achieved by the respective matched locations on the respective player card. The centralized award controller 110 would also direct each respective player display device 101 at each respective player station 103 to produce a respective representation that communicates the result of the game to the respective player.

[0027] It will be noted that an apparatus according to the invention may include multiple player stations 103 all sharing a common central processing device or system 104 to implement the controllers 106, 108, and 110, where all of the devices are housed in a common console or housing. Even where a central processing device implements the functions of controllers 106, 108, and 110, the player stations 103 need not be housed in separate player station housings. However, forms of the invention may include separate player station housings or cabinets for player stations 103 and communications between the central processing device implementing the controllers may be accomplished by TCP/IP communications, serial communications, or any other suitable communication protocol over wire or wireless.

[0028] It will be further noted that the functions of controllers 106, 108, and 110 may be distributed in any suitable fashion in a gaming apparatus according to the invention. For example, a central processing device shared by two or more player stations 103 may implement only designation set controller 106 and the functions of matching controller 108 and award controller 110 for each respective player station may be performed at a processing device associated with the respective player station. Similarly, the functions of both the designation set controller 106 and matching controller 108 may be performed at a central processing device while the award controller 110 function may be performed
for each respective player station through a processing device associated with the respective player station.

[0029] FIG. 3 provides a diagrammatic representation of a data processing system 300 that may be used to perform the functions of one or more of the controllers 106, 108, and 110 for preferably several different player stations 103.

[0030] Data processing system 300 may include one or more processors 301, nonvolatile memory 302, volatile memory 303, a user interface arrangement 304, and a communications interface 305, all connected to a system bus 306. It will be appreciated that user interface arrangement 304 may include a number of different devices such as a keyboard, a display, and a pointing device such as a mouse or trackball for example, although not shown in FIG. 3. Alternatively to the integrated user interface arrangement 304 shown in FIG. 3, a user interface for system 300 may be provided through a separate computer (not shown) in communication with the system 300.

[0031] FIG. 4 shows an example of a player station 103 that may be used in a gaming system such as that shown in FIG. 1. In addition to player display device 101, the example player station 103 shown in FIG. 4 includes a processor 400, volatile memory 401, nonvolatile memory 402, and a communications interface 403. The volatile and nonvolatile memory stores program computer codes that may be executed by processor 400 to cause the processor to perform or direct the various functions provided by player station 103. Communications interface 403 allows communications between player station 103 and a processing system such as that shown in FIG. 3 which may implement one or more of the controllers 106, 108, and 110. The player interface arrangement for the example player station 103 shown in FIG. 4 includes not just a single player interface device, but a number of different player interface devices for various player interface purposes. This preferred interface arrangement includes player controls 404, a sound system 406, and perhaps other features 407 such as alarms or special displays or alerting devices. The player interface device may also include a touch screen element incorporated with player display device 101. Each player station 103 also preferably includes a convenient system for allowing the player to input player-specific information and for receiving wages and dispensing winnings. For example, the player station 103 shown in FIG. 4 includes a player account card reader 408 that is adapted to read player-specific information from a player account card inserted into the reader. A player account card may, for example, include player information or simply a player identifier encoded on a magnetic medium (magnets) associated with the card, or encoded on a bar code, or a memory device associated with the player account card.

[0032] The player station 103 illustrated in FIG. 4 also includes a device 409 for receiving value and issuing value in the course of play. This device may accept currency, vouchers, or tokens, for example, and also output currency, vouchers, or tokens. Of course, a separate device may be used to receive and issue value for games played according to the present invention. Alternatively or in addition to value in/out device 409, player stations 103 may read player account information from the player account card or player information otherwise input at the player station, and account for wages and winnings in the manner set out in U.S. patent application Ser. No. 10/044,478, filed Jan. 10, 2002, entitled “Distributed Account Based Gaming System,” the entire content of which is incorporated herein by this reference.

[0033] Gaming methods embodying the principles of the invention may be described with particular reference to the high level flow chart shown in FIG. 5. It will be appreciated that the references to physical components are references to the components shown in FIGS. 1-4, and that the physical components for performing the various steps shown in FIG. 5 are not shown in FIG. 5.

[0034] As shown at block 501 in FIG. 5, a gaming method includes selecting at least one group of designations for a game. Each designation included in a respective group is selected from an overall set of designations where each designation in the overall set corresponds to a respective playing card of a standard playing card deck. The method also includes matching each group of designations to a player card for a respective player as indicated at block 502. As discussed above with reference to FIG. 2, the player card includes a number of card locations 201 in that figure, each of which corresponds to a different playing card in the standard playing card deck. Thus, the matching step shown at 502 in FIG. 5 produces a number of matched locations on the player card. As shown at block 503 the method further includes awarding a result of the game to the player based upon a playing card hand achieved by the matched locations on the player card.

[0035] In one preferred form of the invention, the awarding step shown at block 503 is performed based upon the matched locations resulting after matching a single group of designations with the player card. For example, assume that the designation selection step at block 501 results in the selection of five designations, and that the selected designations correspond to the designations of the earlier example, the five of Hearts, the Ace of Diamonds, the Ace of Hearts, the ten of Clubs, and the four of Diamonds. For this example, an appropriate player card would comprise the player card 200 illustrated in FIG. 2. Using this group of designations and the player card 200 shown in FIG. 2, the matching step at block 502 would result in two matched locations in the row 203 dedicated to Aces and a single matched location each in the respective row 203 dedicated to fours, fives, and tens. This matching result would be defined according to the invention as a two-of-a-kind hand. The award at block 503, in FIG. 5, would be an award based on the playing card hand two-of-a-kind. This example, illustrates how the present bingo gaming system may simulate straight poker with no ability to draw after the initial hand.

[0036] The matching step performed at block 502 and the awarding step performed at block 503 may be performed in any suitable fashion according to the present invention. For example, the player card (for example 200 in FIG. 2) may be stored electronically in some suitable fashion so that a match at each respective location on the card may be mapped to the respective playing card represented by that respective card location. The playing card hand resulting after the matching step may then be analyzed, preferably under control of a suitable computer program, to identify the type of hand or value of the playing card hand. That is, the playing card hand resulting after the matching step at block 502 may be analyzed to identify if the type or value of the
hand is two-of-a-kind, three-of-a-kind, four-of-a-kind, etc. It will be noted that this analysis or evaluation to identify the value of the playing card hand represented by the resulting matched player card locations may be performed as part of the matching step 502 under control of matching controller 108 (FIG. 1), or as part of the awarding step 503 under control of award controller 110 (FIG. 1), within the scope of the invention. In any event, once the value of the playing card hand represented to the matched player card locations is identified, the awarding step at block 503 may include conducting a look up in a stored table that correlates all potential playing card hand values with a respective award or result value in the game. For example, a playing card hand value “two-of-a-kind” may be correlated to an award/result value “5 credits,” while a playing card hand value “three-of-a-kind” may be correlated to an award/result value “10 credits,” and so forth for each potential playing card hand value. This look up or other analysis to identify an award/result for the matches produced at matching step 502 is preferably performed by the award controller described above.

[0037] Another method according to the invention comprises an extension of the basic method steps shown at blocks 501, 502, and 503 in FIG. 5, and simulates draw poker. In this form of the invention, the selecting step at block 501 includes selecting a primary group of designations and at least one draw sequence group of designations. Each draw sequence group of designations is preferably selected after the primary group of designations is matched to the player card, and after the player is advised of the matched locations and is given an option to discard one or more of the matched locations after matching with the primary group of designations. As indicated by decision block 504 in FIG. 5, the player may be given an option to discard one or more matched locations. If the player has an option to discard any matched player card locations, the method according to the invention branches from decision block 504 in FIG. 5 to player input block 505. If the player input at block 505 discards one or more matched player card locations, the process loops back to selection block 501. At this point, a draw sequence group of designations is selected at block 501 equal in number to the number of discarded matched locations indicated at player input block 505. The process then proceeds to the matching step 502 where the new draw sequence group of designations is matched to the player card and considered with the matched locations remaining from the primary group of designations after disregarding the discarded matched location or locations. The player may be given another chance to discard one or more matched locations at this point. If the player is not given the option to discard further matched card locations, the process continues on to block 503 and the result is awarded based upon the resulting playing card hand, that is, the resulting matched pattern of locations on the player card.

[0038] The draw poker simulation with the bingo game according to the invention may be illustrated with the following example. Assume the primary group of designations comprises the designations for the five of Hearts, the Ace of Diamonds, the Ace of Hearts, the ten of Clubs, and the four of Diamonds. After the selection and matching steps at blocks 501 and 502, the player is given the option to discard one or more matched locations. The player may choose to discard the matched locations corresponding to the five card, ten card, and four card. The selection step at block 501 would then include selecting a group of three designations to replace the designations associated with the discarded matched locations. Assume that this group of three designations included the eight of Diamonds, the Ace of Spades, and the two of Diamonds. The resulting matched player card locations, disregarding the discarded matched locations would include three matched locations in the row dedicated to Aces, and one matched location each in the row dedicated to eights and in the row dedicated to twos. This pattern of matches would be defined in the bingo game as “three-of-a-kind,” and the player would be awarded the prize corresponding to that playing card hand at block 503.

[0039] It will be noted that even if the player is given the option to discard one or more matched player card locations, it is possible that the player will choose not to discard. For example, the player may achieve a Royal Flush upon matching the primary group of designations. In such a case, the player would not discard any of the matched player card locations. This refusal to discard is itself considered a player input at block 505 in FIG. 5 and results in the process continuing on from block 505 to the awarding block 503.

[0040] It will be appreciated from the above discussion that a game according to the invention may be configured to allow a player to discard matched locations once, or multiple times in an effort to improve their result. In these forms of the invention, the step of awarding the result at block 503 is performed based upon the matched locations remaining after matching a final one of the draw sequence groups of designations.

[0041] In forms of the invention in which the player is given one or more chances to discard one or more matched player card locations, the invention may further include charging the player an amount for each matched location discarded by the player. That is, the player may be allowed to obtain one or more designations to replace previously matched designations, however, each new designation may result in a debit or charge to the player. In one form of the invention, the cost associated with replacement designations may increase with each round of new designations. For example, after the primary group of designations, the player may be charged 25 credits for each discarded matched location (that is, each replacement designation). After the first draw sequence group of designations, the player may be charged 50 credits for each discarded matched location and then 100 credits after the second draw sequence group of designations.

[0042] Allowing players to discard one or more matched locations and obtain or purchase replacement designations allows the bingo gaming arrangement according to the present invention to simulate draw poker. The invention may also be used to simulate stud poker. To simulate stud poker, the player input at block 505 is to show the next card to or to fold. For example, a primary group of designations might include two designations which are matched at block 502 and disclosed to the player. The player may then make an input at block 505 to either purchase another designation or group of designations or to fold. As with the draw poker example described above, the cost of obtaining each successive designation or group of designations may increase after each input or selection.

[0043] Designations may be selected in any suitable way at process block 501. For example, the designation selection
may be by a physical ball draw. More preferably, designations are selected by a random number generator with numbers being mapped to respective designations in the overall set of designations. The designation selection process, however it is performed, may be conducted before or after the player initiates a game. In one form of the invention a separate selection process is performed each time at block 501. For example, five designations are selected for the primary group of designations and then a separate selection process is performed for each draw sequence group of designations. Alternatively, the invention encompasses ordering the entire overall set of designations in some random order and then selecting designations as needed sequentially from the randomly ordered overall set. For example, a randomization process may be run to produce a random sequence of designations. The selection step at block 501 for the primary group of designations may then include selecting the first five designations in that randomly ordered sequence. If the player discards matched locations, the selection process for replacement designations would include selecting the next N designations in the randomly ordered set.

[0044] The present invention may include many variations in the manner in which the game is presented to the player at a player station 103 in FIG. 1. In one preferred form of the invention, an initial graphic produced on display device 101 in FIG. 1 may have a card game theme such as a poker theme. Once the player starts the game through an appropriate input at player station 103, and after the primary group of designations are selected and matched to the player card, the invention may include producing a graphic at display device 101 to show the player the playing card hand resulting from the matched player card locations. The individual playing cards in the hand may even be shown one at a time as designations are selected or otherwise to simulate playing cards being dealt to the player as they would be in a live card game. Any of the controllers 106, 108, or 110 shown in FIG. 1 may be responsible for instructing or driving the player display device 101 to show the initial playing card hand. However, either designation set controller 106 or matching controller 108 are preferably responsible for instructing/driving the display to show the initial playing card hand. After producing the graphic for the initial playing card hand, versions of the invention that give the player options may drive an appropriate graphic through which the player may make their selections. Using touch screen technology for example, a player may touch a displayed representation of a playing card in their initial hand to discard the corresponding matched location or may touch the displayed representation to indicate the card(s)/matched locations the player wishes to keep. Once the player has no further options or otherwise settles on a final group of matched player card locations for the game, the award controller 110 preferably instructs/drives the respective player’s display device 101 to indicate the result or award associated with the player’s play in the game. For example, award controller 110 may cause the display device to produce a graphic that includes the notice “315 of a kind wins 50 credits!!!” where the player’s final set of matched player card locations corresponds to the playing card hand value “three-of-a-kind.”

[0045] It will be appreciated that the method steps and apparatus functions described above are preferably performed by data processing devices under the control of computer program code. The invention encompasses a program product containing such program code stored on a computer readable medium. The program product includes designation set program code that is executed to select the group or groups of designations for a game as indicated at block 501 in FIG. 5. The program product further includes matching program code that is executed to match each group of designations to the player card as described above with reference to FIG. 2. Award program code is included in the program product to award a result of the game to the player based upon the playing card hand achieved by the matched locations on the player card.

[0046] The award program code may operate to award the result based upon the matched locations resulting after the matching program code matches a single group of designations with the player card. Alternatively, the award program code may award the result based upon the matched locations remaining after a final group of designations is selected by the designation set program code after a player input discarding one or more matched locations and then matched to the player card by the matching program code.

[0047] The program product according to the invention may also include wagering program code that is operable upon execution to charge the player an amount for each matched location discarded by the player. Wagering program code may also be responsible for identifying an initial wager placed by the player at the start of a game. The wagering program code may further be adapted to increase the amount charged for each matched location discarded by the player for each respective draw sequence group of designations.

[0048] The above described preferred embodiments are intended to illustrate the principles of the invention, but not to limit the scope of the invention. Various other embodiments and modifications to these preferred embodiments may be made by those skilled in the art without departing from the scope of the following claims.

1. A gaming method including the steps of:
   (a) selecting at least one group of designations for a game, each designation included in the respective group being selected from an overall set of designations wherein each designation in the overall set corresponds to a respective playing card of a standard playing card deck;
   (b) matching each group of designations to a player card for a respective player, the player card including a number of card locations, each respective card location corresponding to a different playing card in the standard playing card deck so that matching each group of designations to the player card produces a number of matched locations on the player card; and
   (c) awarding a result of the game to the player based upon a playing card hand achieved by the matched locations on the player card.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of awarding the result is performed based upon the matched locations resulting after matching a single group of designations with the player card.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein the player card is made up of a two-dimensional array of card locations defined by four different rows of card locations aligned along a first axis and thirteen different rows of card locations aligned along a second axis, each row along the first axis corresponding to a different suit in the standard playing card deck and each
row along the second axis corresponding to a different face value for playing cards in the standard playing card deck.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein:

(a) selecting at least one group of designations for the game includes selecting a primary group of designations and at least one draw sequence group of designations; and

(b) matching each group of designations to a player card for the respective player includes first matching the primary group of designations and then matching each respective draw sequence group of designations separately after enabling the player to discard one or more matched locations remaining after matching the immediately preceding group of designations.

5. The method of claim 4 wherein the step of awarding the result is performed based upon the matched locations remaining after matching a final one of the at least one draw sequence group of designations.

6. The method of claim 4 further including the step of charging the player an amount for each matched location discarded by the player for each respective draw sequence group of designations.

8. A gaming apparatus including:

(a) a display device;

(b) a player interface device;

(c) a designation set controller for selecting at least one group of designations for a game, each designation included in the respective group being selected from an overall set of designations wherein each designation in the overall set corresponds to a respective playing card of a standard playing card deck;

(d) a matching controller operatively connected for communication with the player interface device and the designation set controller, the matching controller for receiving each group of designations from the designation set controller and matching each respective group of designations to a player card for a respective player in response to a corresponding respective player input initiated through the player input device, the player card including a number of card locations, each respective card location corresponding to a different playing card in the standard playing card deck so that matching each group of designations to the player card produces a number of matched locations on the player card; and

(e) an award controller operatively connected for communication with the matching controller and the display device, the award controller for receiving the matched locations from the matching controller, for awarding a result of the game to the player based upon a playing card hand achieved by the matched locations on the player card, and for directing the display device to produce a representation that communicates the result of the game to the player.

9. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein the display device, player input device, designation set controller, matching controller, and award controller are all mounted on a common player station.

10. The apparatus of claim 9 wherein the designation set controller, matching controller, and award controller are all implemented in a common data processing device.

11. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein the display device and player input device are both mounted on a common player station, and wherein the designation set controller, matching controller, and award controller are all implemented in a central processing device separate from the player station and including a communication arrangement facilitating communications between the central processing device and components on the player station.

12. The apparatus of claim 11 further including a number of additional player stations each including a respective additional display device and a respective additional player input device, and wherein the award controller is also for receiving the matched locations from the matching controller for a second player at one of the additional player stations, for awarding a result of the game to the second player based upon a playing card hand achieved by the matched locations on the player card, and for directing the respective additional display device at the respective additional player station to produce a respective representation that communicates the result of the game to the second player.

13. A program product stored on a computer readable medium, the program product including:

(a) designation set program code, the designation set program code being operable when executed to select at least one group of designations for a game, each designation included in the respective group being selected from an overall set of designations wherein each designation in the overall set corresponds to a respective playing card of a standard playing card deck;

(b) matching program code, the matching program code being operable when executed to match each group of designations to a player card for a respective player, the player card including a number of card locations, each respective card location corresponding to a different playing card in the standard playing card deck so that matching each group of designations to the player card produces a number of matched locations on the player card; and

(c) award program code, the award program code being operable when executed to award a result of the game to the player based upon a playing card hand achieved by the matched locations on the player card.

14. The program product of claim 13 wherein the award program code awards the result based upon the matched locations resulting after the matching program code matches a single group of designations with the player card.

15. The method of claim 13 wherein:

(a) the designation set program code selects a primary group of designations and at least one draw sequence group of designations; and

(b) the matching program code matches the primary group of designations and then matches each respective draw sequence group of designations separately each after enabling the player to discard one or more matched locations remaining after matching the immediately preceding group of designations.

16. The program product of claim 15 wherein the award program code awards the result based upon the matched
locations remaining after matching a final one of the at least one draw sequence group of designations.

17. The program product of claim 15 further including wagering program code, the wagering program code being operable when executed to charge the player an amount for each matched location discarded by the player.

18. The program product of claim 17 wherein the wagering program code is also operable when executed to increase the amount charged for each matched location discarded by the player for each respective draw sequence group of designations.