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(54) **JACKPOT SYSTEM**

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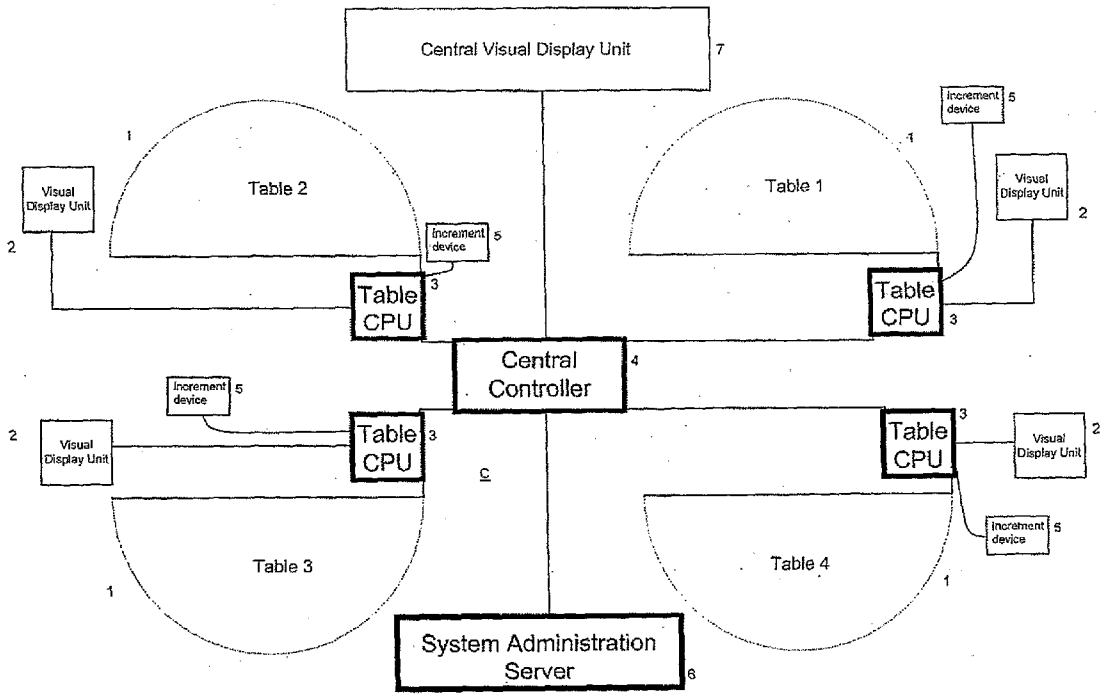
(57) **ABSTRACT**

This invention relates to the awarding of prizes for games, such as for example, table games like card games. In one form the present invention is suitable for use in the game of Blackjack and provides a system for awarding a game prize, comprising: determining a tally corresponding to each game completed at two or more locations at which games are played; and awarding the prize to a second game upon the completion of a first game which causes the tally to reach a predetermined number. Alternatively, the present invention provides a system for awarding a game prize, comprising: determining a tally of predetermined results produced by the play of a game; and awarding the prize to a second game when a predetermined result associated with a first game causes the tally to reach a predetermined number.



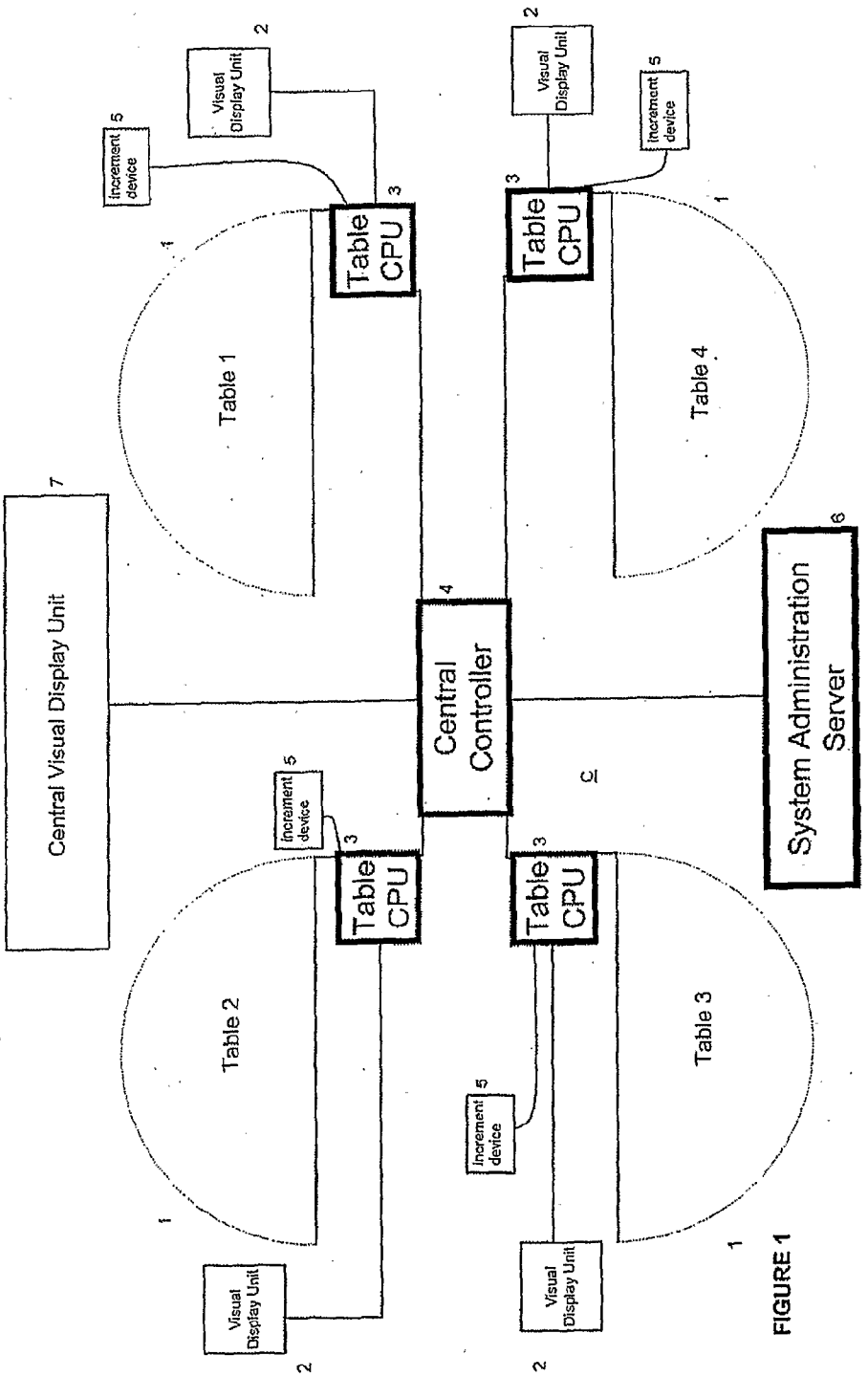

Central Visual Display Unit
7
Central Controller
4
System Administration Server
6
Table 1
Table 2
Table 3
Table 4
Table CPU
3
Visual Display Unit
2
Increment device
5
1

FIGURE 1

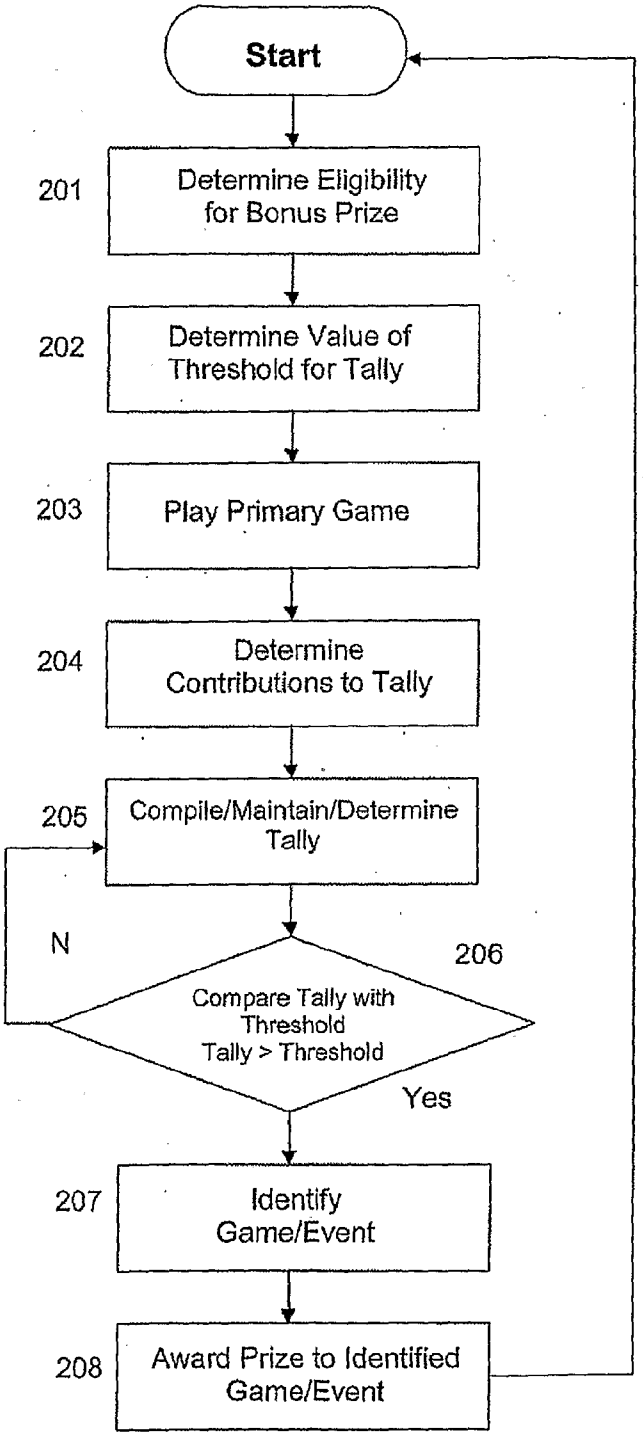

Start
201
Determine Eligibility for Bonus Prize
202
Determine Value of Threshold for Tally
203
Play Primary Game
204
Determine Contributions to Tally
205
Compile/Maintain/Determine Tally
N
206
Compare Tally with Threshold
Tally > Threshold
Yes
207
Identify Game/Event
208
Award Prize to Identified Game/Event

Figure 2

Hit Cycle	Probability	Prize	Prob x Prize
Grand – wide area	1	$100,000	$100,000
Major – wide area	18	$2,500	$45,000
Minor – wide area	788	$200	$157,600
Mini – wide area	4718	$50	$235,900
Mini – Local area	27,625	$20	$552,500
	33,150		$1,091,000

Figure 3

JACKPOT SYSTEM

RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims priority to Australian Provisional Patent Application No. 2005903346 in the name of Crown Limited, which was filed on 24 Jun. 2005, entitled "Jackpot System" and, the specification thereof is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety and for all purposes.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] This invention relates to the awarding of prizes for games, such as for example, table games like card games. In one form the present invention is suitable for use in the game of Blackjack and it will be convenient to hereinafter describe the invention in relation to that use. However, it should be appreciated that the present invention is not limited to that use, only.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] Throughout this specification the use of the word "inventor" in singular form may be taken as reference to one (singular) or all (plural) inventors of the present invention. The inventor has identified the following related art. The attraction of players to table games may often be a combination of the nature of the game play with the perceived odds of winning the game. Accordingly, the schemes by which prizes are awarded may be an important part of attracting and maintaining players.

[0004] Typically, prizes may be awarded for winners at the end of each round of a table game. For example, a player who achieves Blackjack will be one of the winners of that round, and will be rewarded by receiving playing chips or another prize. In this way, each round of a table game can be seen as independent games having no effect or interrelationship with any other game(s).

[0005] Any discussion of documents, devices, acts or knowledge in this specification is included to explain the context of the invention. It should not be taken as an admission that any of the material forms a part of the prior art base or the common general knowledge in the relevant art in Australia or elsewhere on or before the priority date of the disclosure and claims herein.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] In a first aspect the present invention provides a method for awarding a game prize, the method comprising the steps of: determining a tally corresponding to each game completed at two or more locations at which games are played; and awarding the prize to a second game upon the completion of a first game which causes the tally to reach a predetermined number.

[0007] In another aspect the present invention provides a method for awarding a game prize, the method comprising the steps of: determining a tally of predetermined results produced by the play of a game; and awarding the prize to a second game when a predetermined result associated with a first game causes the tally to reach a predetermined number.

[0008] In yet a further aspect the present invention provides apparatus for awarding a game prize, comprising: determining means for determining a tally corresponding to each game completed at two or more locations at which games are played; and awarding means for awarding the prize to a second game upon the completion of a first game which causes the tally to reach a predetermined number.

[0009] In still another aspect the present invention provides apparatus for awarding a game prize, comprising: determining means for determining a tally of predetermined results produced by the play of a game; and awarding means for awarding the prize to a second game when a predetermined result associated with a first game causes the tally to reach a predetermined number.

[0010] In a further aspect, the present invention provides a method for awarding a prize to a table game, the method comprising the steps of: maintaining a tally of each game won on two or more tables on which the same type of table game is played; and awarding the prize to a table or a player who wins a game which causes the tally to reach a predetermined number.

[0011] The value of the prize is preferably randomly selected from within two or more prize scales. The probability of the prize being selected from each one of the prize scales is preferably predetermined.

[0012] Where the prize scales comprise a higher-value prize scale and a lower-value prize scale, preferably the probability of the prize being selected from the higher-value prize scale is lower than the probability of the prize being selected from the lower-value prize scale.

[0013] Preferably, the step of maintaining a tally of each game won involves incrementing the tally only when a game is won at a table by a player who has made a side bet. To facilitate the incrementing of the tally, the player who wins a game may be provided with an incrementing means comprising such as a button or switch. The incrementing means is preferably operated by the player to increment the tally.

[0014] Preferably, the tally is continuously displayed to players of the table game, and the tally is updated as games are won. It is also preferable that the predetermined number is continuously displayed to players of the table game.

[0015] In another aspect, the present invention provides a method for awarding a prize in a table game, the method comprising the steps of: maintaining a tally of predetermined results achieved by players during the play of the table game, wherein each predetermined result achieved by a player contributes to the tally; and awarding the prize to a table or a player which achieves the predetermined result which causes the tally to reach a predetermined number.

[0016] Preferably, each predetermined result achieved by players on two or more tables contributes to the tally.

[0017] In any given embodiment of the present invention, the value of the prize may be randomly selected from within two or more prize scales, and the probability of the prize being selected from each one of the prize scales is preferably predetermined.

[0018] The prize scales preferably comprise a higher-value prize scale and a lower-value prize scale, and the probability of the prize being selected from the higher-value prize scale is preferably lower than the probability of the prize being selected from the lower-value prize scale.

[0019] Preferably, the step of maintaining a tally of predetermined results involves incrementing the tally only when a predetermined result is achieved by a player who has made a side bet.

[0020] The player who achieves a predetermined result may be provided with an incrementing means to cause the

tally to be incremented. Preferably, the incrementing means comprises a button or switch which is operated by the player to increment the tally.

[0021] The tally is preferably continuously displayed to players of the table game and updated as predetermined results are achieved. The predetermined number may also be continuously displayed to players of the table game.

[0022] The table game is preferably one of Pontoon, Blackjack, Baccarat and Roulette, Poker, Bingo, Keno or, any such game that may be played by way of a slot or video game, which may in turn comprise video card games, video Bingo or video Keno.

[0023] A preferred embodiment of the present invention stems from the realisation that the perceived odds for players obtaining a bonus or jackpot prize that may be offered in addition to the primary prize of a given game may be significantly increased by determining a tally of a plurality of game completions or results and awarding the prize to a winning (or second) game or result in response to a first game that causes the tally to reach a predetermined number. For the purposes of this disclosure a "game", in the case of Blackjack for instance, comprises a round of play commencing when the dealer invites players to place bets on the table and concludes when the dealer collects all the remaining cards from the table following settlement as would be understood by the person skilled in the art. As noted herein, the first and second games may be one and the same or, alternately, the first game may precede the second game whether it is played at the same or a different location to the second game.

[0024] With respect to awarding the prize to a winning (or second) game, as herein disclosed, awarding a game may be taken as providing or making available the prize to a location or point at which the winning game was played or completed. Thereafter once the prize has been awarded to the game, the actual distribution of the prize amount or consideration may be handled in a variety of ways some of which would be recognised by the person skilled in the art, for example, the prize amount may be made available to a dealer or croupier to distribute to one or more players of the winning game. Other means of distributing the prize at the point of the winning game are disclosed and claimed hereinafter and it is noted that it is envisaged that the means of distribution does not necessarily need to be actually at the location of the winning game, for instance, it may be performed at a central control point for example in a computer networked gaming system.

[0025] Other aspects, preferred features and advantages of the present invention are disclosed in the specification and/or defined in the appended claims, forming a part of the description of the invention.

[0026] In order that the nature of the present invention may be more clearly understood, a preferred embodiment of the invention will now be described under the heading of detailed description with reference to the following figures.

[0027] Further scope of applicability of the present invention will become apparent from the detailed description given hereinafter. However, it should be understood that the detailed description and specific examples, while indicating preferred embodiments of the invention, are given by way of illustration only, since various changes and modifications within the spirit and scope of the invention will become apparent to those skilled in the art from this detailed description.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0028] Further disclosure, improvements, advantages, features and aspects of the present invention may be better understood by those skilled in the relevant art by reference to the following description of preferred embodiments taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, which are given by way of illustration only, and thus not limiting to the scope of the present invention, and in which:

[0029] FIG. **1** is a schematic view of a network of gaming tables which in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention may be located in one or more casinos and in communication with a central controller and system administration server;

[0030] FIG. **2** is a flow chart illustrating the operation of a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

[0031] FIG. **3** shows an example set of prize scales which may be used with a preferred embodiment of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0032] A preferred embodiment of the present invention will be described in relation to the table game of Blackjack.

[0033] A game of Blackjack may be considered to have been won in two scenarios. The first is where the value of a player's cards total more than the dealer's cards without exceeding twenty-one. The second is where the player has two cards with a value exceeding that of the dealer's cards, and one of the player's cards is an Ace and the other is one of a King, Queen, Jack or Ten—this is what is known as "Blackjack". Embodiments of the present invention are equally applicable to both scenarios or situations. However, to illustrate the present invention, this preferred embodiment requires that a game of Blackjack is only won by a player when that player achieves a "Blackjack". The achievement of "Blackjack" although it may precipitate the completion of a round may also be considered as the achievement of a predetermined result.

[0034] With reference to FIG. **1**, each table **1** on which Blackjack is played is associated with at least one display means **2** visible to at least the players on the table. The display means **2** may be a flat display panel, such as a Liquid Crystal Display or a plasma panel. This display means **2** preferably displays a count (ie tally) in the form of repeated images.

[0035] Each table **1** on which Blackjack is played, along with its associated display means **2**, is connected to a common computer system C through a communications network, which together comprises a CPU **3** at each table in communication with a central controller **4** and a system administration server **6**, which is adapted to perform system administration functions as would be understood by the person skilled in the art. The display means **2** associated with each table obtains its information from the common computer system C.

[0036] Players on a Blackjack table **1** may voluntarily place a side bet, or may be required to place a side bet. Where a player who has placed a side bet achieves Blackjack, he is provided with incrementing means **5** comprising such as a button or switch which is connected (either through wires or wirelessly) to the common computer system C through Table CPU **3**. In a preferred embodiment, the incrementing means **5** may comprise one incrementing device **5** provided per table, however, more than one incrementing device **5** may be provided for each table or, alternatively, one incrementing device **5** may be shared by more than one table. The player activates the button or switch of the incrementing means **5** or in other embodiments, the dealer may activate the button or switch to increment the tally. This activation is detected by the common computer system C through Table CPU **3** which receives a packet of information sent by invoking the incrementing

means **5** and updates its internal tally of games won or Blackjacks achieved. The packet of information also provides an indication of the origin of the particular packet such that the central controller **4** and/or system administration server **6** may identify at least the table of origin of each 'count' packet for incrementing the tally. The common computer system C also instructs the display means **2** associated with each table to display an additional image in a set of repeated images.

[0037] The common computer system C predetermines a threshold comprising a number, n, and at which point when the tally reaches or exceeds that number, n, the prize will be awarded. The tally/count, or an abstract representation of the tally/count such as a bar (where the length of the bar represents the magnitude of the number) is displayed on the display means. Preferably, the tally is also displayed on a central visual display unit **7** for patrons of the casino to view whether they are participants in the primary game or not.

[0038] Each time any player on any participating Blackjack table **1** has placed a side bet and achieves a Blackjack, the common computer system C updates its tally and causes an additional image to be displayed on the display means **2** and/or the central display unit **7**. Accordingly, the number of images on the display means **2** of each table **1** or the central display **7** represents the total number of Blackjacks achieved by all players who place side bets on participating Blackjack tables. It does not simply represent the number of Blackjacks achieved on a single table **2**.

[0039] The table **2** at which a player who places a side bet and achieves Blackjack when the tally is n−1 causes the tally to reach the predetermined number, n. This table **2** at which the predetermined number occurred is awarded a prize which is randomly selected from within two or more prize scales. How the prize is distributed to a winning game may vary from game to game and may preferably be performed in accordance with the rules of the particular games(s) as would be understood by the person skilled in the art.

[0040] With reference to FIG. **2**, there is shown a flow chart of a preferred method of operating a table card game that awards bonus prizes in accordance with the present invention. At step **201** the eligibility for participation on the bonus prize award scheme is determined. This takes the form of a player or players placing a side bet. In an alternate embodiment eligibility may be determined by any player that sits at a participating table or alternatively, database information in relation to carded players and their profiled Information may form the basis of determining eligibility and this may be managed by the central controller **4** and/or systems administration server **7** as would be understood by the person skilled in the art. At step **201***a* value for the tally threshold at which the bonus prize will be awarded is determined. This may be an arbitrary determination and is preferably performed by the use of a pseudo-random number generator. At least one threshold is determined and it is envisaged that more than one threshold may be determined in alternate embodiments. At step **203** play of the primary Blackjack game is commenced and the only pre-requisite step for this is that the eligibility of tables or players is determined. At step **204** contributions to the tally are determined. Preferably this is performed by use of the incrementing means **5** of FIG. **1**. Once contributions to the tally are determined the tally itself may be incremented and maintained at step **205**. As the tally is compiled, at step **206** the tally is compared to the pre-determined threshold value. If the tally has not equalled the threshold value, the tally is further incremented as illustrated by the "N" path in FIG. **2**. Once the tally threshold is reached as indicated by the "Y" path at step **206**, then at step **207**, the identity of the game or event that causes the threshold to be reached is determined. In the preferred embodiment this identity is easily determined because the 'count' packets received by the central controller **4** at step **204** of FIG. **2** comprise an indication of the origin of each contribution to the tally. Based on the indication of the origin or table location of the game result provided by the count packet, the bonus prize may be awarded, as shown at step **208**.

[0041] In the flow chart shown in FIG. **2** it is possible to re-arrange some of the steps to occur in a different sequence. For example the determination of the threshold value of the tally may be performed after the play of the primary card game is commenced.

[0042] FIG. **3** illustrates a set of prize scales that can be used with the preferred embodiment of the present invention. There is one local prize scale, which may be used to award prizes to players who achieve Blackjack, regardless of whether they do so when the tally is n−1. However, if a Blackjack is achieved at a table when the tally is n−1, the prize is randomly selected from one of the "wide area" prize scales labelled "Mini", "Minor", "Major" and "Grand". The Grand prize scale is a higher-value prize scale (having prizes of $100,000) than the Mini prize scale, which has prizes of $50. In the present example, each prize scale is associated with prizes of a single value, for example all prizes in the Minor scale are worth $200. However, each prize scale may be associated with a range of prizes of differing value, and the selection of prizes within each prize scale may be random.

[0043] The probability of the prize being selected from a higher-value prize scale, for example the Grand prize scale, is less than the probability of the prize being selected from a lower-value prize scale, for example the Mini prize scale. In the preferred embodiment of the present invention, the probability of the prize being selected from the Grand prize scale is 1/33150, whereas the probability of the prize being selected from the Mini prize scale is 4718/33150. This ensures that more smaller prizes and fewer larger prizes are awarded.

[0044] Once the prize has been awarded, the tally is reset to zero and incrementing occurs with every Blackjack result provided by a game on any of the connected tables until the number of Blackjack's reaches n at which point a prize is awarded to the table which achieved the Blackjack which caused the tally to reach n, as described with reference to step **202** of FIG. **2**, a new number n between a range of numbers is determined by the central computer system and counting of tally events starts again.

[0045] The preferred embodiment has been described above in relation to the game of Blackjack. However, the present invention may be played with any table game, including games such as Pontoon, Baccarat and Roulette. Further it would be recognised by the person skilled in the art that the invention may also apply to games other than table games, such as for example, gaming machine games which may comprise slot games, and video games such as video card games, video bingo and video keno. Apart from these gaming machine games other live games as would be recognised by the person skilled in the art may comprise further examples such as bingo, keno or poker and all variations of each of these.

[0046] Some table games may be modified to take advantage of the benefits of the present invention. For example, in Baccarat the tie bet may be replaced by a selection by the

player of a number associated with the result of either the player's hand or the banker's hand. There may be 20 numbers, with the first 10 numbers relating to the result of the banker's hand (0-9) and the second 10 numbers relating to the result of the player's hand (0-9). The player is given the opportunity to press the button and increment the tally if the player correctly predicts the result of either the player's hand or the banker's hand. If so, the game being played or a game to follow the present game may be awarded the prize for distribution to either the player or for addition to the primary or local prize for the next result in the game of Baccarat.

[0047] A person skilled in the art will recognise that embodiments of the invention described herein may be implemented using one or more computers. In that case, the method steps disclosed herein may be embodied as instructions that comprise a computer program. The program may be stored on computer-readable media, such as floppy disks, optical discs (eg compact discs), or fixed disks (such as hard drives and the like), and may be resident in memory, such as, for example random access memory (RAM), read-only memory (ROM), firmware, or flash RAM memory. The program as software may then be executed on a computer or microprocessor device to implement the method. The program or portions of its execution, may also be distributed over multiple computers in a network having a topology corresponding to one or a combination of: a small area such as in a LAN (Local Area Network); a large campus or city area such as in a MAN (Metropolitan Area Network) or; a wide geographical area such as in a WAN (Wide Area Network). As an example, the present invention may be suitable for use with a computer network implementation of a table game such as Blackjack, which may be played individually by one or more players against a central micro-controller.

[0048] Throughout this specification the word "comprise", or variations such as "comprises" or "comprising", will be understood to imply the inclusion of a stated element, integer or step, or group of elements, integers or steps, but not the exclusion of any other element, integer or step, or group of elements, integers or steps.

[0049] It will be appreciated by persons skilled in the art that numerous variations and/or modifications may be made to the invention as shown in the specific embodiments without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention as broadly described. For example, prizes may take any form, including cash jackpots, free games and multipliers. The invention may be used in conjunction with more than one type of game (for example, Blackjack and Pontoon). The present embodiments are, therefore, to be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive. This application is therefore intended to cover any variations uses or adaptations of the invention following in general, the principles of the invention and comprising such departures from the present disclosure as come within known or customary practice within the art to which the invention pertains and as may be applied to the essential features hereinbefore set forth.

[0050] As the present invention may be embodied in several forms without departing from the spirit of the essential characteristics of the invention, it should be understood that the above described embodiments are not to limit the present invention unless otherwise specified, but rather should be construed broadly within the spirit and scope of the invention as defined in the appended claims. Various modifications and equivalent arrangements are intended to be included within the spirit and scope of the invention as described hereinabove. Therefore, the specific embodiments are to be understood to be illustrative of the many ways in which the principles of the present invention may be practiced. In the description hereinabove and claims hereinbelow, means-plus-function clauses are intended to cover structures as performing the defined function and not only structural equivalents, but also equivalent structures. For example, although a nail and a screw may not be structural equivalents in that a nail employs a cylindrical surface to secure wooden parts together, whereas a screw employs a helical surface to secure wooden parts together, in the environment of fastening wooden parts, a nail and a screw are equivalent structures.

1-53. (canceled)

54. A method for awarding a game prize, the method comprising the steps of:

determining a tally of predetermined results produced by the play of at least one type of game; and awarding the prize to a second game when the tally of predetermined results reaches a predetermined number upon a predetermined result being produced by a first game.

55. A method as claimed in claim **54** wherein the tally corresponds to predetermined results produced by games played at one or more locations.

56. A method as claimed in claim **55** wherein the same type of game is played at said one or more locations.

57. A method as claimed in claim **55** wherein different types of games are played at said one or more locations.

58. A method as claimed in claim **55** wherein the step of awarding comprises distributing the prize to the location of the second game among eligible players of the second game.

59. A method as claimed in claim **55** wherein the step of determining a tally comprises:

communicating a packet comprising an indication of each game location; and

accumulating a count of each communicated packet to form the tally.

60. A method as claimed in claim **55** wherein the first game and the second game are one and the same game.

61. A method as claimed in claim **54** wherein the first game is completed prior to the start of the second game.

62. A method as claimed in claim **61** wherein the step of awarding further comprises the step of adding the prize to a primary game award associated only with the second game.

63. A method as claimed in claim **54** wherein the step of determining further comprises the step of maintaining an updated tally responsive to at least one of as games are completed and as predetermined results are produced.

64. A method as claimed in claim **54** wherein the step of determining further comprises the step of providing at least one player with an incrementing means for causing the tally to be updated.

65. A method as claimed in claim **54** wherein the tally corresponds to games won and the step of determining a tally comprises incrementing the tally only when a game is won by a player who has made a side bet.

66. A method as claimed in claim **54** wherein the value of the prize is randomly selected from within two or more prize scales comprising at least a higher-value prize scale and a lower-value prize scale and the probability of the prize being selected from each one of the prize scales is predetermined.

67. A method as claimed claim **54** further comprising the step of continuously displaying to players of games one or more of:

the tally; and

the predetermined number.

68. A method as claimed in claim **54** wherein the games comprise one or a combination of:
a table game;
a gaming machine game;
slot games;
video card games;
video bingo; and
video keno.

69. A method as claimed in claim **68** wherein the games comprise a combination of one or more of the following types of games:
Blackjack;
Pontoon;
Baccarat;
Roulette;
Poker;
Bingo; and
Keno.

70. Apparatus for awarding a game prize, comprising:
determining means for determining a tally of predetermined results produced by the play of at least one type of game; and
awarding means for awarding the prize to a second game when the tally of predetermined results reaches a predetermined number upon a predetermined result being produced by a first game.

71. Apparatus as claimed in claim **70** wherein the tally corresponds to games played at one or more locations.

72. Apparatus as claimed in claim **71** wherein the same type of game is played at said one or more locations.

73. Apparatus as claimed in claim **71** wherein different types of games are played at said one or more locations.

74. Apparatus as claimed in claim **71** wherein the awarding means comprises:
distributing means for distributing the prize to the second game wherein the distributing means comprises a computer network configured for packet communications.

75. Apparatus as claimed in claim **70** wherein the determining means comprises:
communication means for communicating a packet comprising an indication of each game location; and
accumulating means for accumulating a count of each communicated packet to form the tally.

76. Apparatus as claimed in claim **70** wherein the first game and the second game are one and the same game.

78. Apparatus as claimed in claim **74** wherein the distributing means is configured to distribute the prize at the location of the second game among eligible players of the second game.

79. Apparatus as claimed in claim **70** wherein the first game is completed prior to the start of the second game.

80. Apparatus as claimed in claim **79** wherein the awarding means further comprises prize adding means for adding the prize to a primary game award associated only with the second game.

81. Apparatus as claimed in claim **70** wherein the determining means further comprises incrementing means, associated with at least one player, for causing the tally to be updated.

82. Apparatus as claimed in claim **70** wherein the determining means further comprises incrementing means for incrementing the tally only when a game is won by a player who has made a side bet.

83. Apparatus as claimed in claim **70** further comprising prize selection means for randomly selecting the value of the prize from within two or more prize scales which comprise at least a higher-value prize scale and a lower-value prize scale and the probability of the prize being selected from each one of the prize scales is predetermined.

84. Apparatus as claimed in claim **70** further comprising display means for continuously displaying to players of games one or more of:
the tally; and
the predetermined number.

85. Apparatus as claimed in claim **70** wherein the games comprise one of:
a table game;
a gaming machine game;
slot games;
video card games;
video bingo; and
video keno.

86. Apparatus as claimed in claim **85** wherein the games comprise a combination of one or more of the following types of game:
Blackjack;
Pontoon;
Baccarat;
Roulette;
Poker;
Bingo; and
Keno.

87. Apparatus for awarding a game prize, said apparatus comprising:
a processor;
memory, operatively coupled to the processor, for storing computer-executable instructions, which when executed by the processor perform the method of:
determining a tally of predetermined results produced by the play of at least one type of game; and
awarding the prize to a second game when the tally of predetermined results reaches a predetermined number upon a predetermined result being produced by a first game.

88. A computer readable storage medium comprising computer-executable instructions stored thereon, which when executed by a processor perform the method of:
determining a tally of predetermined results produced by the play of at least one type of game; and
awarding the prize to a second game when the tally of predetermined results reaches a predetermined number upon a predetermined result being produced by a first game.

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