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(54) **GAMING SYSTEM AND A METHOD OF GAMING**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

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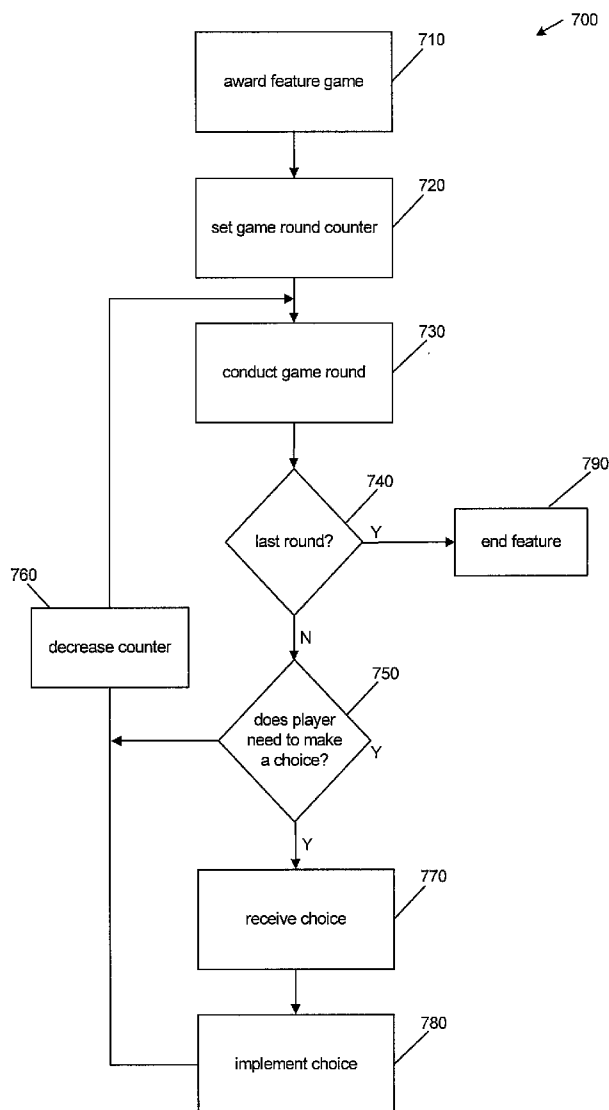
A method of gaming comprising: conducting a plurality of game rounds by generating a game outcome for each game round; determining whether the game round satisfies at least one criterion for at least each game round prior to a final of the game rounds; requiring the player to make a choice prior to the next game round in relation to the game outcome if the game outcome of a respective game round satisfies the at least one criterion; and carrying out any subsequent game rounds based on a received player choice, whereby any choices determine an overall outcome of the plurality of game rounds.

Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation of application No. 12/196,766, filed on Aug. 22, 2008.

Foreign Application Priority Data

Aug. 23, 2007 (AU) 2007904573



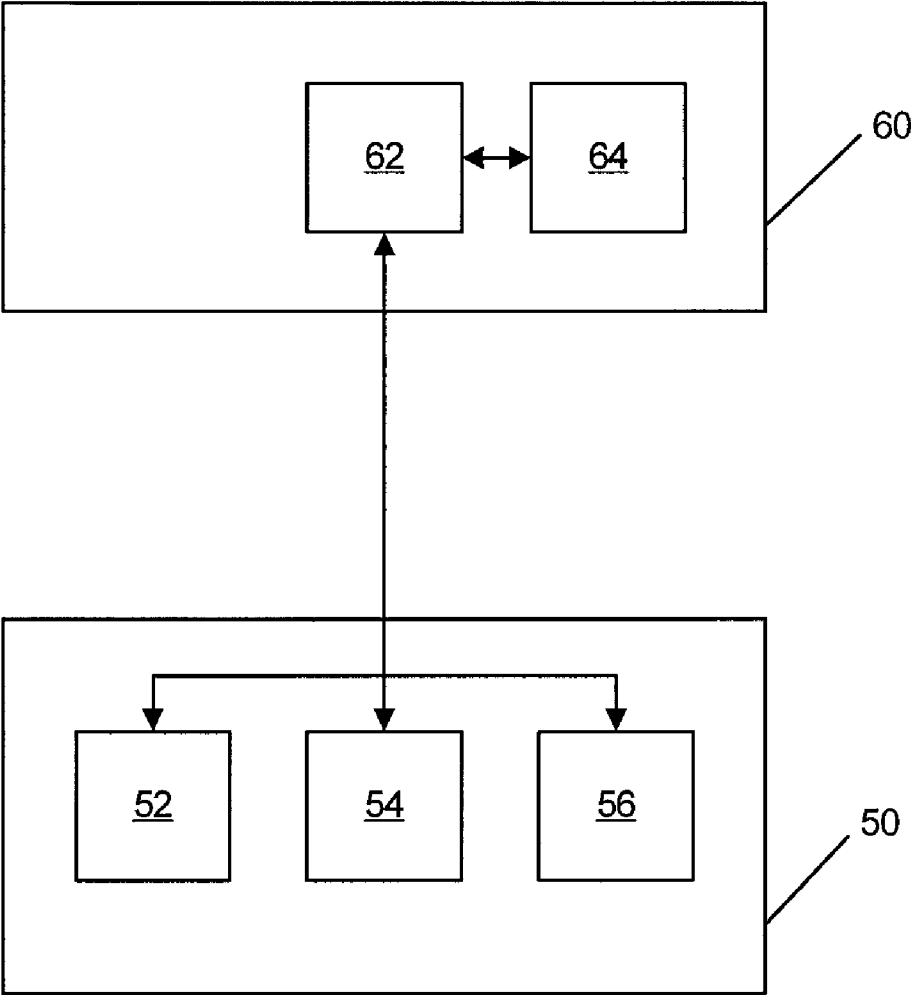


Figure 1

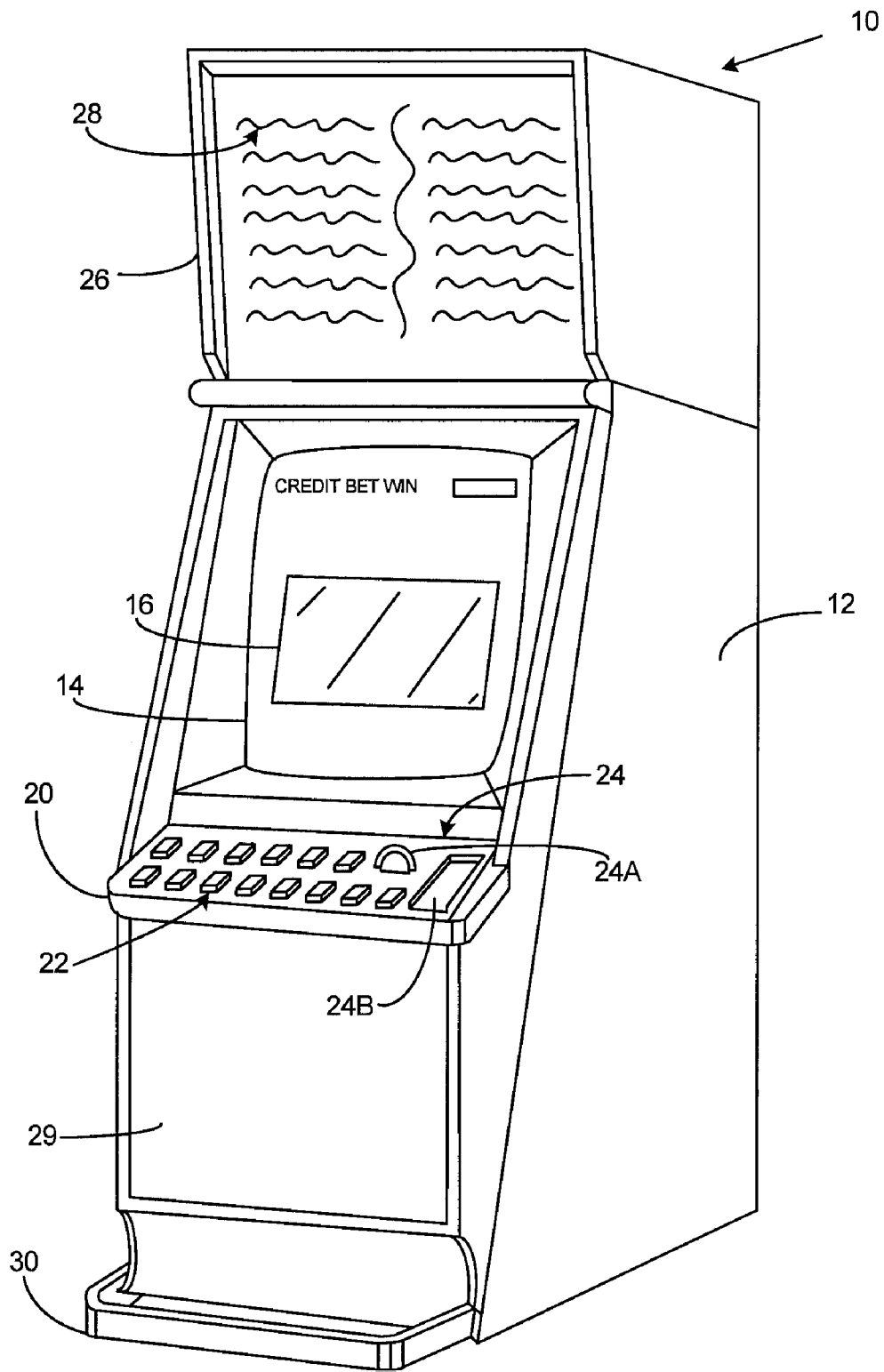


Figure 2

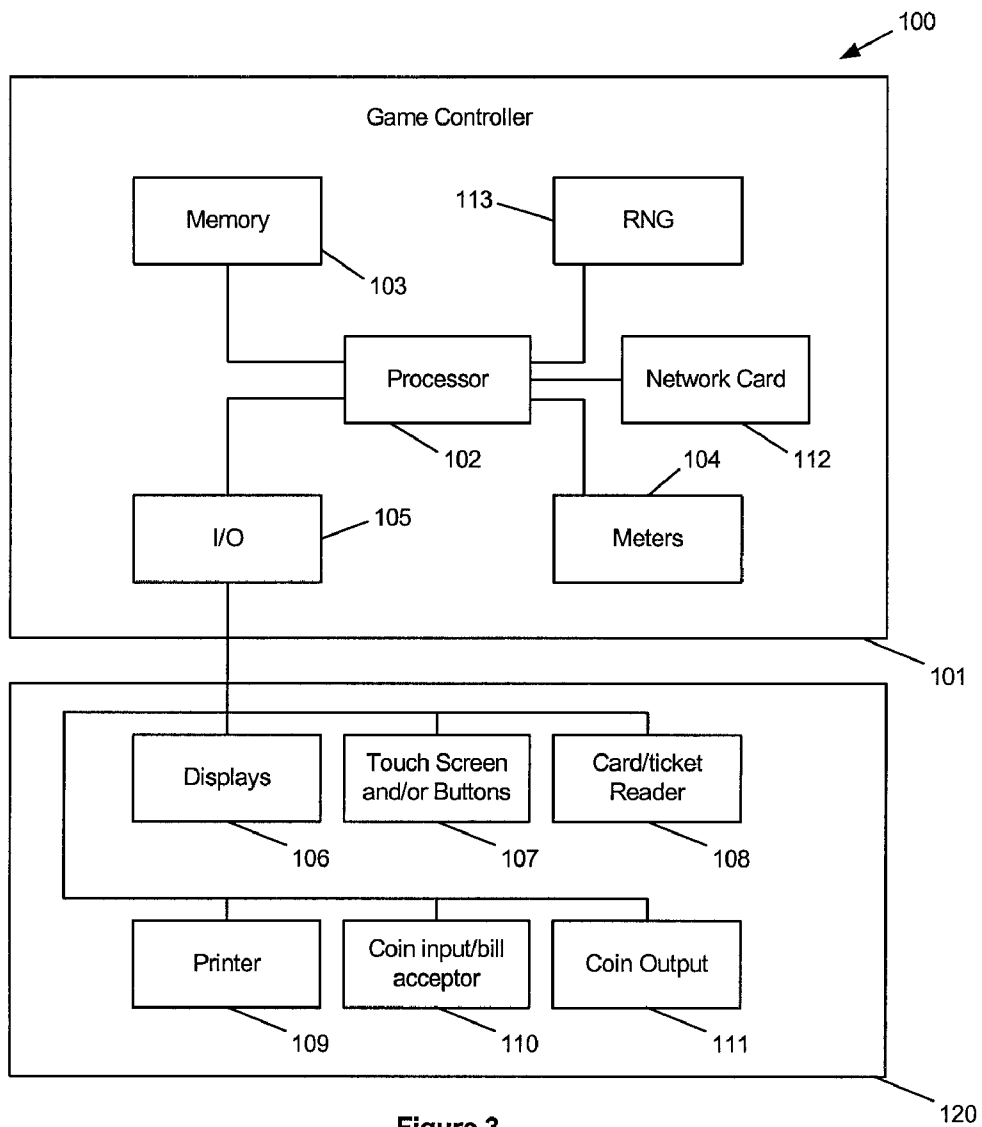


Figure 3

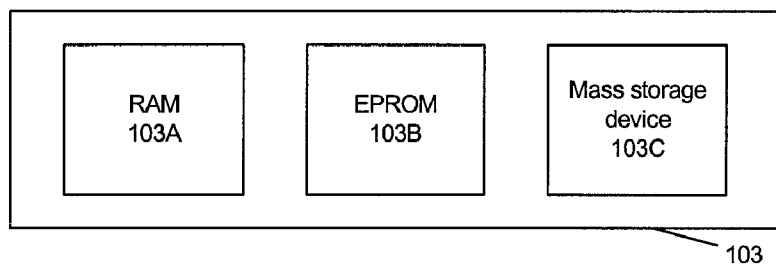


Figure 4

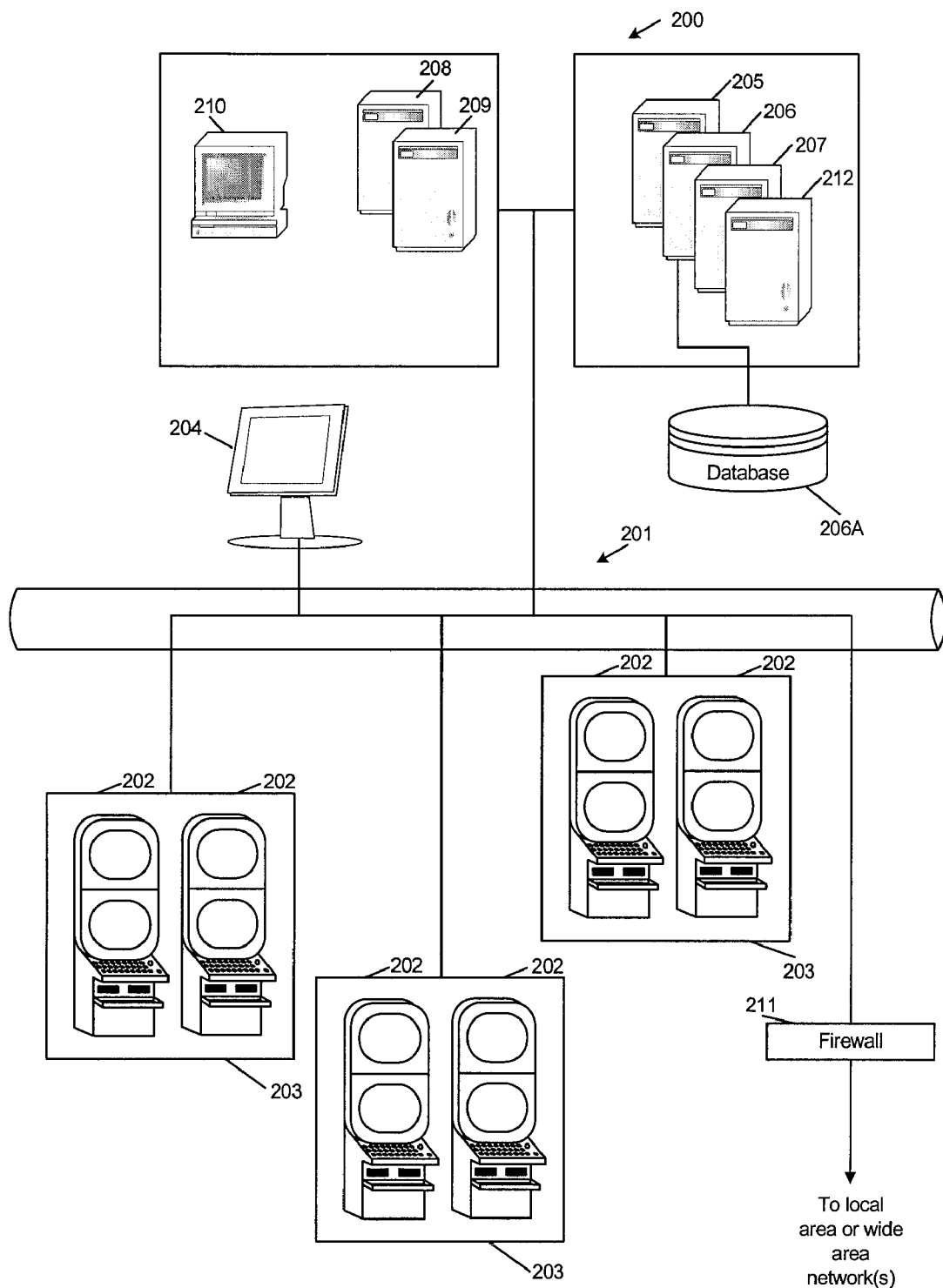


Figure 5

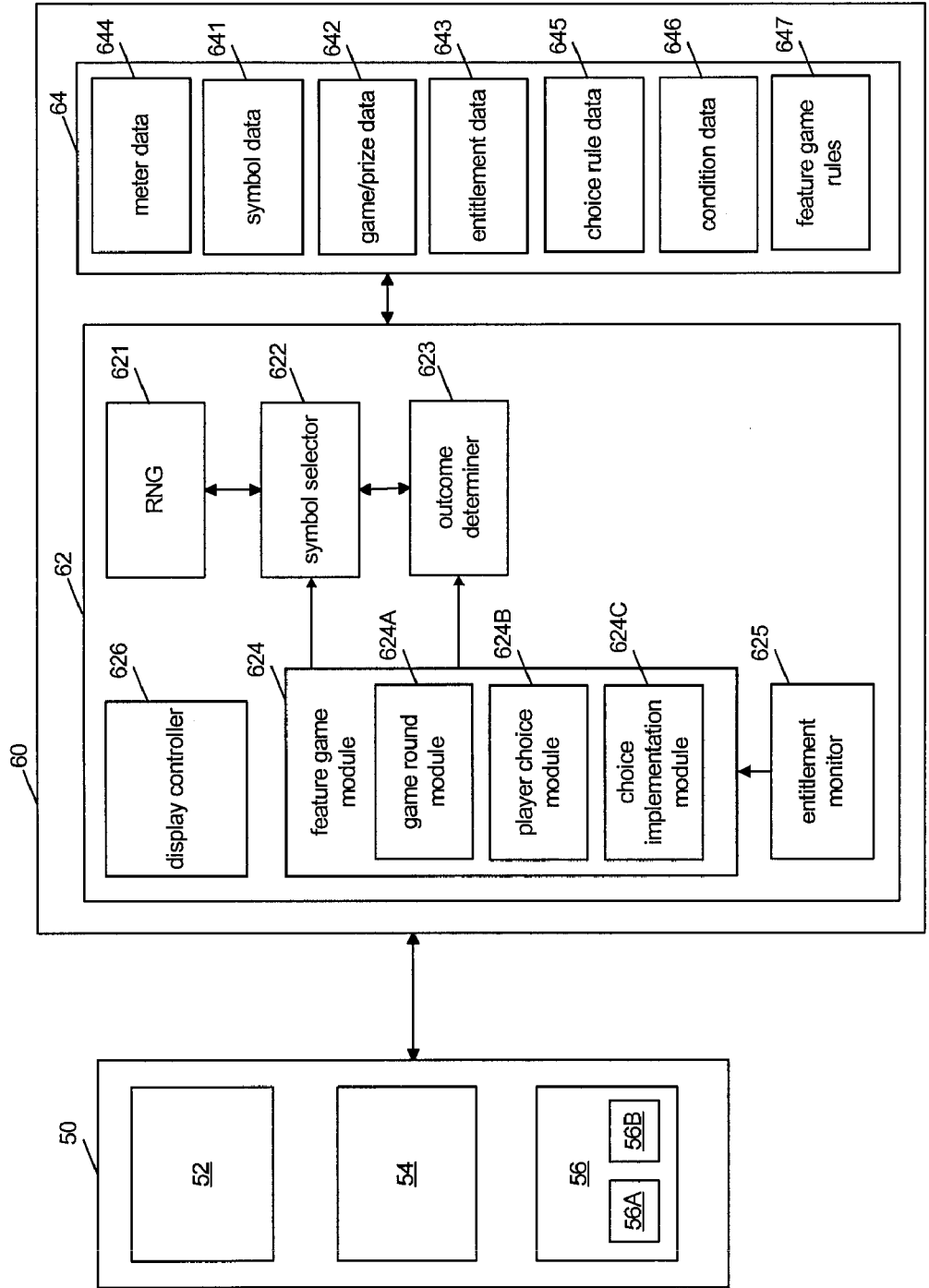


Figure 6

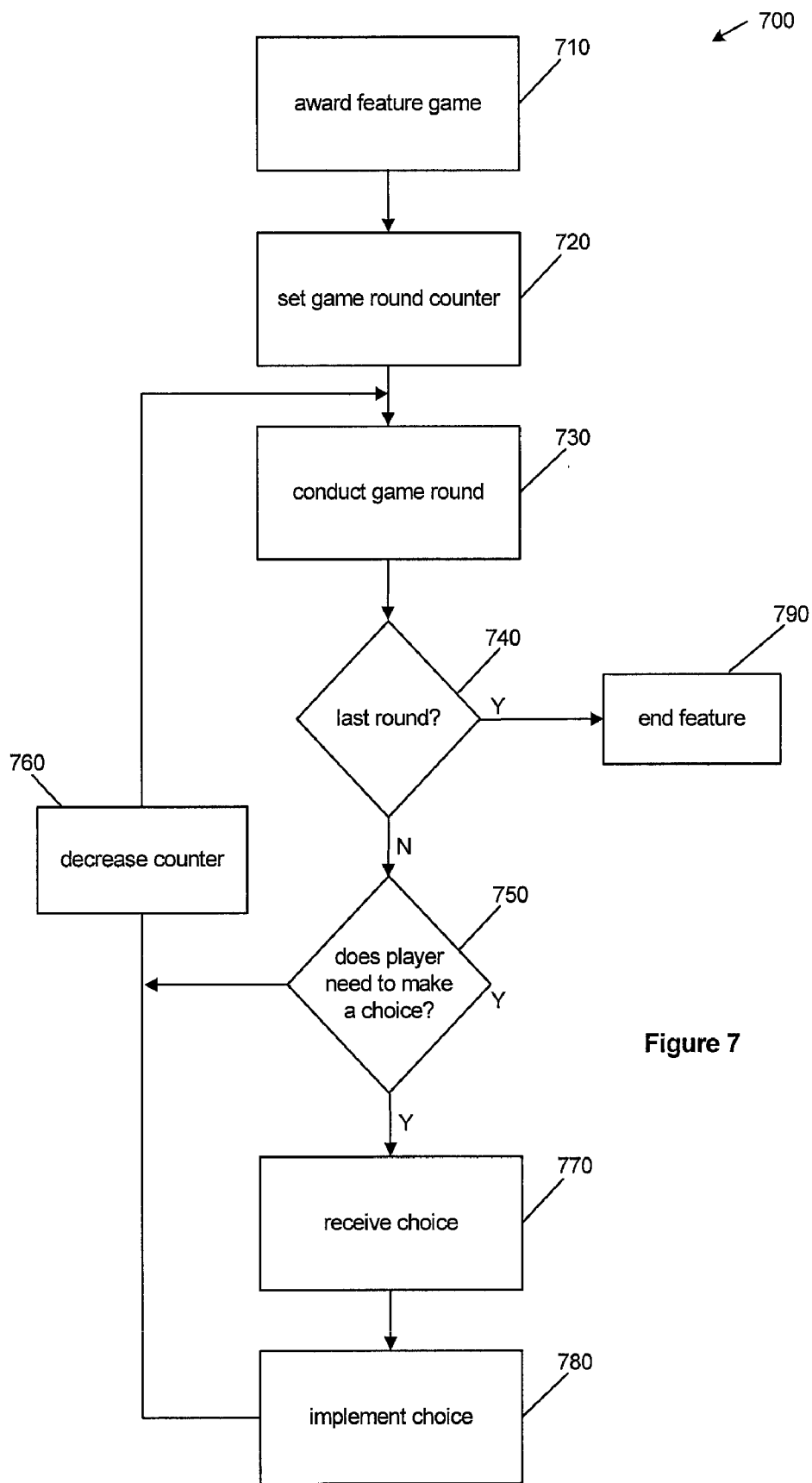


Figure 7

GAMING SYSTEM AND A METHOD OF GAMING

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] The present application claims the benefit of priority as a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 12/196,766, filed on Aug. 22, 2008, entitled "A Gaming System and a Method of Gaming," and to Australian Provisional Patent Application No. 2007904573, filed on Aug. 23, 2007, entitled "A Gaming System and a Method of Gaming", each of which is herein incorporated by reference in its entirety.

FIELD

[0002] The present invention relates to a gaming system, a method of gaming, a game controller and computer program code.

BACKGROUND TO THE INVENTION

[0003] It is known to provide a gaming system which comprises a game controller arranged to randomly display several symbols from a predetermined set of symbols and to determine a game outcome such as a game win based on the displayed symbols. Such gaming systems may commonly be implemented as a stepper machine provided with reels with each reel carrying several symbols of the set, or a video machine wherein selected symbols are displayed on virtual reels on a video display.

[0004] While such gaming systems provide users with enjoyment, a need exists for alternative gaming systems in order to maintain or increase player enjoyment.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] In one aspect, the invention provides a method of gaming including:

- [0006]** conducting a plurality of game rounds by generating a game outcome for each game round;
 - [0007]** determining whether the game round satisfies at least one criterion for at least each game round prior to a final of the game rounds;
 - [0008]** requiring the player to make a choice prior to the next game round in relation to the game outcome if the game outcome of a respective game round satisfies the at least one criterion; and
 - [0009]** carrying out any subsequent game rounds based on a received player choice, whereby any choices determine an overall outcome of the plurality of game rounds.
- [0010]** In an embodiment, a criterion is that the game outcome is a win.
- [0011]** In an embodiment, a criterion is that the game outcome includes a designated symbol.
- [0012]** In an embodiment, the method includes requiring the player to choose whether to transfer a win from a win meter to a credit meter.
- [0013]** In an embodiment, the method includes a choice including whether to use the symbol.
- [0014]** In an embodiment, the symbol has an associated function and requiring the player to make a choice includes requiring the player to choose whether to use the function.
- [0015]** In an embodiment, the symbol is employed in a subsequent game round.
- [0016]** In an embodiment, the symbol is employed in the next game round.

[0017] In an embodiment, the method includes requiring the player to choose a game round in which the symbol is to be employed.

[0018] In an embodiment, at least one game outcome may be a modifying outcome which modifies the win meter.

[0019] In an embodiment, the modifying outcome increases the win meter.

[0020] In an embodiment, the modifying outcome decreases the win meter.

[0021] In an embodiment, generating a game outcome includes:

- [0022]** randomly selecting symbols to be displayed at a plurality of display positions; and
- [0023]** determining whether to award a win based on the selected symbols.

[0024] In an embodiment, the method includes requiring a player to make a choice in relation to the final game round.

[0025] In another aspect, the invention provides a game controller for a gaming system, the game controller arranged to:

- [0026]** conduct a plurality of game rounds by generating a game outcome for each game round;
- [0027]** determine whether the game round satisfies at least one criterion for at least each game round prior to a final of the game rounds;
- [0028]** require the player to make a choice prior to the next game round in relation to the game outcome if the game outcome of a respective game round satisfies the at least one criterion; and
- [0029]** carry out any subsequent game rounds based on a received player choice, whereby any choices determine an overall outcome of the plurality of game rounds.

[0030] In an embodiment, the game controller includes a player choice module arranged to determine whether a game round satisfies the at least one criterion and offer any choices to the player.

[0031] In an embodiment, the game controller includes a choice implementation module arranged to implement the player choice.

[0032] In an embodiment, a criterion is that the game outcome is a win.

[0033] In an embodiment, a criterion is that the game outcome includes a designated symbol.

[0034] In an embodiment, the game controller is arranged to require a choice including whether to transfer a win from a win meter to a credit meter.

[0035] In an embodiment, the game controller is arranged to require a choice including whether to use the symbol.

[0036] In an embodiment, the symbol has an associated function and the game controller is arranged to require a player to make a choice as to whether to use the function.

[0037] In an embodiment, the symbol is employed in a subsequent game round.

[0038] In an embodiment, the symbol is employed in the next game round.

[0039] In an embodiment, the game controller is arranged to require a player choice specifying a game round in which the symbol is to be employed.

[0040] In an embodiment, at least one game outcome is a modifying outcome in response to which the game controller modifies the win meter.

[0041] In an embodiment, the modifying outcome increases the win meter.

[0042] In an embodiment, the modifying outcome decreases the win meter.

[0043] In an embodiment, the game controller is arranged to generate a game outcome by:

- [0044] randomly selecting symbols to be displayed at a plurality of display positions; and
- [0045] determining whether to award a win based on the selected symbols.

[0046] In an embodiment, the game controller is arranged to require a player to make a choice in relation to the final game round.

[0047] In an embodiment, the game controller is implemented, at least in part, by a processor executing program code stored in a memory.

[0048] In another aspect, the invention provides a gaming system including:

- [0049] a player interface including a display on which game outcomes may be displayed, and an instruction input mechanism operable by the player to make player choices; and
- [0050] the game controller arranged to:
- [0051] conduct a plurality of game rounds by generating a game outcome for each game round;
- [0052] determine whether the game round satisfies at least one criterion for at least each game round prior to a final of the game rounds;
- [0053] require the player to make a choice prior to the next game round in relation to the game outcome if the game outcome of a respective game round satisfies the at least one criterion; and
- [0054] carry out any subsequent game rounds based on a received player choice, whereby any choices determine an overall outcome of the plurality of game rounds.

[0055] In an embodiment, the game controller includes a player choice module arranged to determine whether a game round satisfies the at least one criterion and offer any choices to the player.

[0056] In an embodiment, the game controller includes a choice implementation module arranged to implement the player choice.

[0057] In an embodiment, a criterion is that the game outcome is a win.

[0058] In an embodiment, a criterion is that the game outcome includes a designated symbol.

[0059] In an embodiment, the game controller is arranged to require a choice including whether to transfer a win from a win meter to a credit meter.

[0060] In an embodiment, the game controller is arranged to require a choice including whether to use the symbol.

[0061] In an embodiment, the symbol has an associated function and the game controller is arranged to require a player to make a choice as to whether to use the function.

[0062] In an embodiment, the symbol is employed in a subsequent game round.

[0063] In an embodiment, the symbol is employed in the next game round.

[0064] In an embodiment, the gaming system is arranged to require a player choice specifying a game round in which the symbol is to be employed.

[0065] In an embodiment, at least one game outcome may be a modifying outcome in response to which the game controller modifies the win meter.

[0066] In an embodiment, the modifying outcome increases the win meter.

[0067] In an embodiment, the modifying outcome decreases the win meter.

[0068] In an embodiment, the game controller is arranged to generate a game outcome by:

- [0069] randomly selecting symbols to be displayed at a plurality of display positions; and
- [0070] determining whether to award a win based on the selected symbols.

In an embodiment, the game controller is arranged to require a player to make a choice in relation to the final game round.

[0071] In an embodiment, the game controller is implemented, at least in part, by a processor executing program code stored in a memory.

[0072] Certain embodiments of the present invention also provide computer program code which when executed implements the above method.

[0073] Certain embodiments of the present invention also provide a computer readable medium including the computer program code.

[0074] Certain embodiments also provide a data signal including the computer program code.

[0075] Certain embodiments also extend to transmitting the computer program code.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0076] Certain embodiments of the invention will now be described in relation to the following drawings in which:

[0077] FIG. 1 is a block diagram of the core components of a gaming system;

[0078] FIG. 2 is a perspective view of a gaming machine;

[0079] FIG. 3 is a block diagram of the functional components of a gaming machine;

[0080] FIG. 4 is a block diagram representing the structure of a memory;

[0081] FIG. 5 is a diagram schematic of a networked gaming system;

[0082] FIG. 6 is a further block diagram of the gaming system; and

[0083] FIG. 7 is a flowchart of the embodiment.

[0084] The foregoing summary, as well as the following detailed description of certain embodiments of the present invention, will be better understood when read in conjunction with the appended drawings. For the purpose of illustrating the invention, certain embodiments are shown in the drawings. It should be understood, however, that the present invention is not limited to the arrangements and instrumentality shown in the attached drawings.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0085] The embodiment provides a gaming system which implements a game, advantageously but not necessarily, as a feature game. In the game, a player plays a plurality of game rounds and if the game rounds meet criteria, such as they result in a win or include a designated symbol, the player is required to make a choice as to what to do with the win or symbol. The player's choices affect the overall outcome of the feature game. The gaming system may be provided in a number of different forms.

[0086] In a first form, a stand alone gaming machine is provided wherein all or most components for implementing the game are present in a player operable gaming machine.

[0087] In a second form, a distributed architecture is provided wherein some of the components for implementing the

game are present in a player operable gaming machine and some of the components for implementing the game are located remotely relative to the gaming machine. For example, a “thick client” architecture may be used wherein part of the game is executed on a player operable gaming machine and part of the game is executed remotely, such as by a gaming server; or a “thin client” architecture may be used wherein most of the game is executed remotely such as by a gaming server and a player operable gaming machine is used only to display audible and/or visible gaming information to the player and receive gaming inputs from the player.

[0088] However, it will be understood that other arrangements are envisaged. For example, an architecture may be provided wherein a gaming machine is networked to a gaming server and the respective functions of the gaming machine and the gaming server are selectively modifiable. For example, the gaming system may operate in stand alone gaming machine mode, “thick client” mode or “thin client” mode depending on the game being played, operating conditions, and so on. Other variations will be apparent to persons skilled in the art.

[0089] Irrespective of the form, the gaming system has several core components. At the broadest level, the core components are a player interface 50 and a game controller 60 as illustrated in FIG. 1. The player interface is arranged to enable manual interaction between a player and the gaming system and for this purpose includes the input/output components for the player to enter instructions and play the game.

[0090] Components of the player interface may vary from embodiment to embodiment but will typically include a credit mechanism 52 to enable a player to input credits and receive payouts, one or more displays 54 and a game play mechanism 56 that enables a player to input game play instructions.

[0091] The game controller 60 is in data communication with the player interface and typically includes a processor 62 that processes the game play instructions in accordance with game play rules and outputs game play outcomes to the display. Typically, the game play instructions are stored as program code in a memory 64 but can also be hardwired. Herein the term “processor” is used to refer generically to any device that can process game play instructions in accordance with game play rules and may include: a microprocessor, microcontroller, programmable logic device or other computational device, a general purpose computer (e.g. a PC) or a server.

[0092] A gaming system in the form of a stand alone gaming machine 10 is illustrated in FIG. 2. The gaming machine 10 includes a console 12 having a display 14 on which is displayed representations of a game 16 that can be played by a player. A mid-trim 20 of the gaming machine 10 houses a bank of buttons 22 for enabling a player to interact with the gaming machine, in particular during game play. The mid-trim 20 also houses a credit input mechanism 24 which in this example includes a coin input chute 24A and a bill collector 24B. Other credit input mechanisms may also be employed, for example, a card reader for reading a smart card, debit card or credit card. A player marketing module may be provided having a reading device may also be provided for the purpose of reading a player tracking device, for example as part of a loyalty program. The player tracking device may be in the form of a card, flash drive or any other portable storage medium capable of being read by the reading device.

[0093] A top box 26 may carry artwork 28, including for example pay tables and details of bonus awards and other

information or images relating to the game. Further artwork and/or information may be provided on a front panel 29 of the console 12. A coin tray 30 is mounted beneath the front panel 29 for dispensing cash payouts from the gaming machine 10.

[0094] The display 14 shown in FIG. 2 is in the form of a video display unit, particularly a cathode ray tube screen device. Alternatively, the display 14 may be a liquid crystal display, plasma screen, any other suitable video display unit, or the visible portion of an electromechanical device. The top box 26 may also include a display, for example a video display unit, which may be of the same type as the display 14, or of a different type.

[0095] FIG. 3 shows a block diagram of operative components of a typical gaming machine which may be the same as or different to the gaming machine of FIG. 2.

[0096] The gaming machine 100 includes a game controller 101 having a processor 102. Instructions and data to control operation of the processor 102 are stored in a memory 103, which is in data communication with the processor 102. Typically, the gaming machine 100 will include both volatile and non-volatile memory and more than one of each type of memory, with such memories being collectively represented by the memory 103.

[0097] The gaming machine has hardware meters 104 for purposes including ensuring regulatory compliance and monitoring player credit, an input/output (I/O) interface 105 for communicating with peripheral devices of the gaming machine 100. The input/output interface 105 and/or the peripheral devices may be intelligent devices with their own memory for storing associated instructions and data for use with the input/output interface or the peripheral devices. A random number generator module 113 generates random numbers for use by the processor 102. Persons skilled in the art will appreciate that the reference to random numbers includes pseudo-random numbers.

[0098] In the example shown in FIG. 3, a player interface 120 includes peripheral devices that communicate with the game controller 101 including one or more displays 106, a touch screen and/or buttons 107, a card and/or ticket reader 108, a printer 109, a bill acceptor and/or coin input mechanism 110 and a coin output mechanism 111. Additional hardware may be included as part of the gaming machine 100, or hardware may be omitted depending upon the specific implementation.

[0099] In addition, the gaming machine 100 may include a communications interface, for example a network card 112. The network card may, for example, send status information, accounting information or other information to a central controller, server or database and receive data or commands from the central controller, server or database.

[0100] FIG. 4 shows a block diagram of the main components of an exemplary memory 103. The memory 103 includes RAM 103A, EPROM 103B and a mass storage device 103C. The RAM 103A typically temporarily holds program files for execution by the processor 102 and related data. The EPROM 103B may be a boot ROM device and/or may contain some system or game related code. The mass storage device 103C is typically used to store game programs, the integrity of which may be verified and/or authenticated by the processor 102 using protected code from the EPROM 103B or elsewhere.

[0101] It is also possible for the operative components of the gaming machine 100 to be distributed, for example input/

output devices **106,107,108,109,110,111** to be provided remotely from the game controller **101**.

[0102] FIG. 5 shows a gaming system **200** in accordance with an alternative embodiment. The gaming system **200** includes a network **201**, which for example may be an Ethernet network. Gaming machines **202**, shown arranged in three banks **203** of two gaming machines **202** in FIG. 5, are connected to the network **201**. The gaming machines **202** provide a player operable interface and may be the same as the gaming machines **10,100** shown in FIGS. 2 and 3, or may have simplified functionality depending on the requirements for implementing game play. While banks **203** of two gaming machines are illustrated in FIG. 5, banks of one, three or more gaming machines are also envisaged.

[0103] One or more displays **204** may also be connected to the network **201**. The displays **204** may, for example, be associated with one or more banks **203** of gaming machines. The displays **204** may be used to display representations associated with game play on the gaming machines **202**, and/or used to display other representations, for example promotional or informational material.

[0104] In a thick client embodiment, game server **205** implements part of the game played by a player using a gaming machine **202** and the gaming machine **202** implements part of the game. With this embodiment, as both the game server and the gaming device implement part of the game, they collectively provide a game controller. A database management server **206** may manage storage of game programs and associated data for downloading or access by the gaming devices **202** in a database **206A**. Typically, if the gaming system enables players to participate in a Jackpot game, a Jackpot server **207** will be provided to monitor and carry out the Jackpot game. A loyalty program server may also be provided.

[0105] In a thin client embodiment, game server **205** implements most or all of the game played by a player using a gaming machine **202** and the gaming machine **202** essentially provides only the player interface. With this embodiment, the game server **205** provides the game controller. The gaming machine will receive player instructions, pass these to the game server which will process them and return game play outcomes to the gaming machine for display. In a thin client embodiment, the gaming machines could be computer terminals, e.g. PCs running software that provides a player interface operable using standard computer input and output components.

[0106] Servers are also typically provided to assist in the administration of the gaming network **200**, including for example a gaming floor management server **208**, and a licensing server **209** to monitor the use of licenses relating to particular games. An administrator terminal **210** is provided to allow an administrator to run the network **201** and the devices connected to the network.

[0107] The gaming network **200** may communicate with other gaming systems, other local networks, for example a corporate network, and/or a wide area network such as the Internet, for example through a firewall **211**.

[0108] Persons skilled in the art will appreciate that in accordance with known techniques, functionality at the server side of the network may be distributed over a plurality of different computers. For example, elements may be run as a single “engine” on one server or a separate server may be provided. For example, the game server **205** could run a random generator engine. Alternatively, a separate random

number generator server could be provided. Further, persons skilled in the art will appreciate that a plurality of games servers could be provided to run different games or a single game server may run a plurality of different games depending on the involved terminals.

[0109] Gaming systems for implementing games that involve a display of spinning reels as part of the display of the outcome of a game have either a video display or a mechanical display, these later machines most usually being “stepper” machines which have a separate motor for each reel.

[0110] In some implementations the game controllers of such gaming machines select symbols by employing a stop determining function that randomly determines the stop position for each reel. For example, if there are five reels, each having twenty symbols, the stop determining function might determine that the stop positions are positions: 3, 13, 7, 9 and 17. The spinning of the reels is then controlled so that each symbol comes to a stop in the same row, typically a predetermined row in a “window” visible to the player on the display that which corresponds to a player playing a single win line. When a reel stops, the symbols will be in one of a plurality of possible symbol positions for that reel relative to the stop position which constitutes a game outcome.

[0111] Embodiments of the present invention relate to gaming systems that allow a player to select how many win lines of a plurality of win lines they will play in each game—i.e. a minimum of one win line up to the maximum number of win lines allowed by the game. Each win line is formed by a set of symbol positions consisting of one symbol position from each reel. That is, a predetermined symbol position of each reel is assigned to a win line. The symbol positions that constitute each of the win lines are usually advertised to the player by markings on the display or diagrams showing the symbol positions that correspond to each win line.

[0112] Persons skilled in the art, will appreciate that in other embodiments, the player may obtain a win entitlement by selecting a number of reels to play. Such games are marketed under the trade name “Reel Power” by Aristocrat Leisure Industries Pty Ltd. The selection of the reel means that each symbol of the reel can be substituted for a symbol at one or more designated display positions. In other words, all symbol positions of a selected reel can be used to form symbol combinations with designated, displayed symbol positions of non-selected reels.

[0113] In other embodiments a player win entitlement may be affected by purchasing access to particular pay tables—e.g. a first bet amount entitles the player to wins including cherries and a second amount entitles them to wins including plums.

[0114] The game controller **60** of the embodiment is shown in more detail in FIG. 6. As will be apparent from FIG. 6, the processor **62** implements a plurality of modules including a random number generator **621**, a symbol selector **622**, an outcome determiner **623**, an entitlement module **625**, a feature game module **624** and a display controller **626**.

[0115] Persons skilled in the art will appreciate that other implementations are possible. For example, the random number generator module **621** could be implemented as a separate piece of dedicated hardware in data communication with the game controller **60**. Persons skilled in the art will also appreciate that the modules in the embodiment are implemented by portions of software routine of the game software.

[0116] In the embodiment, the game is implemented as a feature game. The entitlement module 625 determines when the player becomes entitled to the feature game and when it should commence.

[0117] The player's eligibility for the feature game can be determined in accordance with any one of a number of known rules including but not limited to:

- [0118] being available to all players for all bets;
- [0119] being available only for certain bet types; or
- [0120] different levels of features being available for different bets.

[0121] Further, the feature game can commence in accordance with any one of a number of known rules including but not limited to:

- [0122] when a special symbol, or a combination of symbols appears in the window;
- [0123] when a time elapses;
- [0124] when a system event occurs;
- [0125] when an underlying random event occurs, for example, in the course of a game;
- [0126] when a turnover has elapsed.

[0127] Once the feature game begins, a plurality of game rounds are awarded and the game rounds of the feature game are controlled by the feature game module 624. The feature game module includes a game round module 624a which tracks whether all of the plurality of game rounds have been completed, a player choice module 624b for determining whether the player should be offered a choice based on a game outcome and a choice implementation module 624c for implementing the choice.

[0128] In the first game round of the feature game, the feature game module controls the symbol selector 622 to select a plurality of symbols from symbol data 641 employing the random number generator 621. For example, where the symbol data 641 specifies the configuration of a plurality of reels, the symbol selector 622 may select the symbols by selecting a stopping position for each reel. The selected symbols are displayed on the display 54 under the display controller 626. An outcome determiner 623 determines whether an award should be made to the player based on the selected symbols, such as a win. It calculates the win amount, if there is one, based on the game/prize data 642.

[0129] The player choice module 624b is configured to determine whether a condition is satisfied for a choice to be offered to the player. In an embodiment, the conditions include that the outcome determiner has determined that there is a win amount. In other embodiments, a condition may be that the symbol selector has selected one or more designated symbols, for example, having an associated function, from the symbol data 641. When the player is offered a choice, they input their response using input mechanism 56. Typically, the player will have two selection choices and hence will be given a choice of two buttons 56a, 56b to press to make their choice.

[0130] The choice implementation module 624c then implements the player's choice in subsequent games. That is, the player is required to make their choice before the next game round is conducted. Play of the feature game continues until the game round module determines that a last game round is being played. In the last game round, the player would typically not need to make a choice. However, in some embodiments, it is envisaged a player may be able to make a choice, for example, as to whether to apply any outstanding function symbols.

[0131] As indicated above, the memory 64 contains the data required by various modules, including choice rule data 645, condition data 646, entitlement data 643 employed by the entitlement module and feature game rules 647 employed by the feature game module 624. Such feature game rules may include the number of game rounds that are available. Memory 64 also includes meter data 644 which stores a current state of the credit and win meters.

[0132] Accordingly, in the above embodiment, during the feature game, the player is given a choice as to what to do with each sub-feature win and/or symbols that appear during the feature games. The choice can be made by pressing one of two selection choices. The choices may be of various actions. For example, "take win" which results in the win being transferred to the credit meter, "ignore win", use the designated symbol, or "would you like to use your triple bonus function for your next game" etc.

[0133] In an alternative embodiment, the player is given a fixed amount of choices and a condition of offering a choice to the player is that the player has not exhausted all of their choices.

[0134] The process 700 is summarised in FIG. 7. The feature game is awarded 710 and a game round counter is set 720 to an initial value. At step 730 a game round is conducted and is determined whether this was the last round 740. If it is the last round, a prize is determined and the feature is ended 790. Otherwise, it is determined whether the player needs to make a choice 750. If the player does need to make a choice, the choice is received 770 and implemented 780. The counter is then decreased 760. The process increase continues until a last round has been played.

EXAMPLE

[0135] A player is entitled to the "choice" feature

1. Machine displays a "credit" meter to accumulate credits available to play and a "win" meter to accumulate credits won during the course of a feature.
2. A "special" feature sequence is triggered. Triggering of the feature can be by any of the methods known in the art.
3. Following commencement of the feature sequence, a series of free games is played.
4. If a prize is won during the feature, the prize amount is added to the "win" meter.
5. There are two buttons that are activated at the commencement of the feature.
6. One button is labelled "BANK" and the second one is labelled "NOT BANK".
7. At the conclusion of each game round, the player is prompted with a decision. To "BANK" or "NOT BANK" the current amount shown on "win" meter.
8. If player presses the "BANK" button his "win" is transferred to the credit meter.
9. If the "NOT BANK" button is pressed, then the "win" is remained in the win meter.
10. The player accumulates "wins" by pressing "NOT BANK". Thus, the "win" meter grows in amount.
11. When player presses "BANK", the accumulated win is transferred to the credit meter.
12. If however a special symbol is spun up while there is an amount on the win meter it will trigger an event whereby the credits are taken away from the win meter, for example, it is reset to zero—thus, a first special symbol can reduce the win.

13. If a second special symbol is spun up while there is an amount on the win meter, it will trigger an event whereby the credits on the win meter are increased—e.g. doubled.

14. Because the special symbols can cause the win meter to increase or decrease, the player can adjust their risk during free games—lower the risk by always banking or increase the risk and possible return by always selecting “not bank”.

15. At the end of the feature game, the amount shown on the win meter is transferred to the credit meter.

16. In markets which permit “gambling” of the “win” the player can select to “gamble” prior to the amount on the win meter being transferred to the credit meter.

[0136] Other variations will be apparent to a person skilled in the art and should be understood as falling within the scope of the invention described herein. For example, the symbol section game could be a card game or a ball draw game such as keno, bingo or arishinko.

[0137] Persons skilled in the art will also appreciate that the method of the embodiment could be embodied in program code. The program code could be supplied in a number of ways, for example on a computer readable medium, such as a disc or a memory (for example, that could replace part of memory 103) or as a data signal (for example, by downloading it from a server).

[0138] It will be understood to persons skilled in the art of the invention that many modifications may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention, in particular it will be apparent that certain features of embodiments of the invention can be employed to form further embodiments.

[0139] It is to be understood that, if any prior art is referred to herein, such reference does not constitute an admission that the prior art forms a part of the common general knowledge in the art in any country.

[0140] In the claims which follow and in the preceding description of the invention, except where the context indicates otherwise due to express language or necessary implication, the word “comprise” or variations such as “comprises” or “comprising” is used in an inclusive sense, i.e. to specify the presence of the stated features but not to preclude the presence or addition of further features in various embodiments of the invention.

[0141] 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. The present embodiments are, therefore, to be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive.

[0142] Several embodiments are described above with reference to the drawings. These drawings illustrate certain details of specific embodiments that implement the systems and methods and programs of the present invention. However, describing the invention with drawings should not be construed as imposing on the invention any limitations associated with features shown in the drawings. The present invention contemplates methods, systems and program products on any electronic device and/or machine-readable media suitable for accomplishing its operations. As noted above, certain embodiments of the present invention may be implemented using an existing computer processor and/or by a special purpose computer processor incorporated for this or another purpose or by a hardwired system, for example.

[0143] As noted above, embodiments within the scope of the present invention include program products comprising

machine-readable media for carrying or having machine-executable instructions or data structures stored thereon. Such machine-readable media can be any available media that can be accessed by a general purpose or special purpose computer or other machine with a processor. By way of example, such machine-readable media may comprise RAM, ROM, PROM, EPROM, EEPROM, Flash, CD-ROM or other optical disk storage, magnetic disk storage or other magnetic storage devices, or any other medium which can be used to carry or store desired program code in the form of machine-executable instructions or data structures and which can be accessed by a general purpose or special purpose computer or other machine with a processor. When information is transferred or provided over a network or another communications connection (either hardwired, wireless, or a combination of hardwired or wireless) to a machine, the machine properly views the connection as a machine-readable medium. Thus, any such a connection is properly termed a machine-readable medium. Combinations of the above are also included within the scope of machine-readable media. Machine-executable instructions comprise, for example, instructions and data which cause a general purpose computer, special purpose computer, or special purpose processing machines to perform a certain function or group of functions.

[0144] Certain embodiments of the invention are described in the general context of method steps which may be implemented in one embodiment by a program product including machine-executable instructions, such as program code, for example in the form of program modules executed by machines in networked environments. Generally, program modules include routines, programs, objects, components, data structures, etc., that perform particular tasks or implement particular abstract data types. Machine-executable instructions, associated data structures, and program modules represent examples of program code for executing steps of the methods disclosed herein. The particular sequence of such executable instructions or associated data structures represents examples of corresponding acts for implementing the functions described in such steps.

1. A method of gaming comprising:
 - conducting a plurality of game rounds by generating a game outcome for each game round;
 - determining whether the game round satisfies at least one criterion for at least each game round prior to a final of the game rounds;
 - requiring the player to make a choice prior to the next game round in relation to the game outcome if the game outcome of a respective game round satisfies the at least one criterion; and
 - carrying out any subsequent game rounds based on a received player choice, whereby any choices determine an overall outcome of the plurality of game rounds.
2. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein a criterion is that the game outcome is a win.
3. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein a criterion is that the game outcome includes a designated symbol.
4. A method as claimed in claim 2, comprising requiring the player to choose whether to transfer a win from a win meter to a credit meter.
5. A method as claimed in claim 3, including a choice comprising whether to use the symbol.

6. A method as claimed in claim 3, wherein the symbol has an associated function and requiring the player to make a choice comprises requiring the player to choose whether to use the function.

7. A method as claimed in claim 5, wherein the symbol is employed in a subsequent game round.

8. A method as claimed in claim 7, wherein the symbol is employed in the next game round.

9. A method as claimed in claim 5, comprising requiring the player to choose a game round in which the symbol is to be employed.

10. A method as claimed in claim 4, wherein at least one game outcome is a modifying outcome and the method comprises modifying the win meter in response to the modifying outcome.

11. A method as claimed in claim 10, wherein the modifying outcome results in an increase to the win meter.

12. A method as claimed in claim 10, wherein the modifying outcome results in a decrease to the win meter.

13. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein generating a game outcome comprises:

randomly selecting symbols to be displayed at a plurality of display positions; and
determining whether to award a win based on the selected symbols.

14. A method as claimed in claim 1 comprising requiring a player to make a choice in relation to the final game round.

15. A game controller for a gaming system, the game controller arranged to:

conduct a plurality of game rounds by generating a game outcome for each game round;

determine whether the game round satisfies at least one criterion for at least each game round prior to a final of the game rounds;

require the player to make a choice prior to the next game round in relation to the game outcome if the game outcome of a respective game round satisfies the at least one criterion; and

carry out any subsequent game rounds based on a received player choice, whereby any choices determine an overall outcome of the plurality of game rounds.

16. A game controller as claimed in claim 15, comprising a player choice module arranged to determine whether a game round satisfies the at least one criterion and offer any choices to the player.

17. A game controller as claimed in claim 15, comprising a choice implementation module arranged to implement the player choice.

18. A game controller as claimed in claim 15, wherein a criterion is that the game outcome is a win.

19. A game controller as claimed in claim 15, wherein a criterion is that the game outcome includes a designated symbol.

20. A game controller as claimed in claim 18, arranged to require a choice comprising whether to transfer a win from a win meter to a credit meter.

21. A game controller as claimed in claim 19, arranged to require a choice comprising whether to use the symbol.

22. A game controller as claimed in claim 19, wherein the symbol has an associated function and the game controller is arranged to require a player to make a choice as to whether to use the function.

23. A game controller as claimed in claim 21, wherein the symbol is employed in a subsequent game round.

24. A game controller as claimed in claim 23, wherein the symbol is employed in the next game round.

25. A game controller as claimed in claim 21, arranged to require a player choice specifying a game round in which the symbol is to be employed.

26. A game controller as claimed in claim 20, wherein at least one game outcome is a modifying outcome in response to which the game controller modifies the win meter.

27. A game controller as claimed in claim 26, wherein the game controller increases the win meter.

28. A game controller as claimed in claim 26, wherein game controller decreases the win meter.

29. A game controller as claimed in claim 15, arranged to generate a game outcome by:

randomly selecting symbols to be displayed at a plurality of display positions; and
determining whether to award a win based on the selected symbols.

30. A game controller as claimed in claim 15, arranged to require a player to make a choice in relation to the final game round.

31. A game controller as claimed in claim 15, implemented, at least in part, by a processor executing program code stored in a memory.

32. A gaming system comprising:

a player interface comprising a display on which game outcomes may be displayed, and an instruction input mechanism operable by the player to make player choices; and

the game controller arranged to:

conduct a plurality of game rounds by generating a game outcome for each game round;

determine whether the game round satisfies at least one criterion for at least each game round prior to a final of the game rounds;

require the player to make a choice prior to the next game round in relation to the game outcome if the game outcome of a respective game round satisfies the at least one criterion; and

carry out any subsequent game rounds based on a received player choice, whereby any choices determine an overall outcome of the plurality of game rounds.

33. A gaming system as claimed in claim 32, wherein the game controller comprises a player choice module arranged to determine whether a game round satisfies the at least one criterion and offer any choices to the player.

34. A gaming system as claimed in claim 32, wherein the game controller comprises a choice implementation module arranged to implement the player choice.

35. A gaming system as claimed in claim 32, wherein a criterion is that the game outcome is a win.

36. A gaming system as claimed in claim 32, wherein a criterion is that the game outcome includes a designated symbol.

37. A gaming system as claimed in claim 35, wherein the game controller is arranged to require a choice comprising whether to transfer a win from a win meter to a credit meter.

38. A gaming system as claimed in claim 36, wherein the game controller is arranged to require a choice comprising whether to use the symbol.

39. A gaming system as claimed in claim 36, wherein the symbol has an associated function and the game controller is arranged to require a player to make a choice as to whether to use the function.

40. A gaming system as claimed in claim 38, wherein the symbol is employed in a subsequent game round.

41. A gaming system as claimed in claim 40, wherein the symbol is employed in the next game round.

42. A gaming system as claimed in claim 38, arranged to require a player choice specifying a game round in which the symbol is to be employed.

43. A gaming system as claimed in claim 37, wherein at least one game outcome is a modifying outcome in response to which the game controller modifies the win meter.

44. A gaming system as claimed in claim 43, wherein the game controller increases the win meter.

45. A gaming system as claimed in claim 43, wherein the game controller decreases the win meter.

46. A gaming system as claimed in claim 32, wherein the game controller is arranged to generate a game outcome by:

randomly selecting symbols to be displayed at a plurality of display positions; and

determining whether to award a win based on the selected symbols.

47. A gaming system as claimed in claim 32, the game controller is arranged to require a player to make a choice in relation to the final game round.

48. A gaming system as claimed in claim 32, wherein the game controller is implemented, at least in part, by a processor executing program code stored in a memory.

49. A computer readable medium including computer program code which when executed implements the method of claim 1.

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