The present invention provides a game chip rack for use in card game. The game chip rack includes a first portion including a plurality of game chip slots, each of the plurality of game chip slots configured to receive a plurality of game chips. A second portion is rotatably mounted to the first portion, such that the first portion is rotatable with respect to the second portion. A timer is mounted to the first portion, the timer includes a time display, ante display, big and small blind displays, and a control panel. The control panel is used to set the a round time, an ante amount, an ante increment for each round, and small blind, and a small blind increment, such that at the expiration of a game round the round time is automatically resets and the ante and small blind are automatically increased in relation to the ante and small blind increment.
Set Round Time

Set Initial Ante

Set Incremental increase in Ante per round

Start Game

FIG. 4
GAME CHIP RACK

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to card game accessories, and more particular to a game chip rack for use in card games.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] In the latter half of the twentieth century, legalized gambling has become a major industry with billions of dollars wagered each year. As a result of the popularity of a number of television programs, there has been a particular reinsurance in card games such as poker.

[0003] Poker is a well-known card game that has existed for hundreds of years. However, there is no one universal game of “poker.” Rather, there are various types of poker, each with its own rules that are based in the same general set of principles. During hands of play, a dealer deals players cards from a deck of cards. It is the player’s objective to put together the best card hand possible from the cards that he has available. The player may wager money in one or more betting rounds against the other players that are added to a community pool known as the pot. After the betting rounds are completed and there are no cards left to deal, a showdown occurs in which the players reveal their cards. The player with the best hand wins the showdown and wins the pot.

[0004] The winner of a showdown is guaranteed winnings from the pot because of an ante. The ante is an amount of chips that are given by one or more players to initialize the pot before any cards are dealt. The ante may be provided either by a select number of players or by all of the players. A community ante is when every player puts in some of its own money at the start of each hand. Additionally or alternatively, individuals can be selected to pay antes by a revolving blind, wherein one or more players are required to pay a preset blind into the pot.

[0005] During the poker game, in particular during tournament play, the ante and/or blinds are increased at set time intervals or rounds. Typically, the dealer keeps track of the round time, informing the players of the increase in the ante and/or blind amounts. However, in the instances where there is no set dealer, the dealing of the cards rotating from player to player, it can be difficult to keep track of the time and ante or blind amounts.

[0006] Thus, there exists a need for an improved game timer which informs the players of an increase in the ante and/or blind amounts.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0007] The present invention provides a game chip rack for use in card games. The game chip rack includes a first portion having a plurality of chip slots each configured for receiving a plurality of game chips. A second portion is rotatably mounted to the first portion, such that the first portion is rotatable with respect to the second portion.

[0008] A timer is mounted to the first portion. The timer includes a time display for displaying a remaining time in a game round. At the expiration of each game round, the time display is reset to the round time. A control panel is included on the timer and used to set the round time.

[0009] The timer further includes an ante display for displaying the current ante amount. The control panel is used to set the ante amount and an ante increment for each round. At the expiration of a game round, the ante amount is automatically increased in relation to the ante increment.

[0010] Big and small blind displays are included on the timer for displaying the current big and small blind amounts. Similarly to the ante amount, the control panel is used to set the small blind amount and a small blind increment. At the expiration of a game round, the small blind amount is automatically increased in relation to the small blind increment. The big blind can be set and increased in relation to the small blind amount, or in the alternative the control panel can be used to set the big blind amount and a big blind increment.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0011] A more complete understanding of the present invention, and the attendant advantages and features thereof, will be more readily understood by reference to the following detailed description when considered in conjunction with the accompanying drawings wherein:

[0012] FIG. 1 depicts a perspective view of the chip rack of the present invention;

[0013] FIG. 2 depicts a side view of the chip rack of FIG. 1;

[0014] FIG. 3 depicts a timer of the chip rack of FIG. 1;

[0015] FIG. 4 depicts a flow chart for setting the timer of FIG. 3;

[0016] FIG. 5 depicts a flow chart for setting the small and big blinds for the timer of FIG. 3; and

[0017] FIG. 6 depicts an alternative flow chart for setting the small and big blinds on the timer of FIG. 3.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0018] The present invention provides a chip rack including a timer for continually informing players of the remaining round time and the ante amount in a card game. Referring now to the drawing figures in which like reference designators refer to like elements, there is shown in FIG. 1 a chip rack 10 of the present invention. A top portion 12 of the chip rack 10 includes a plurality of chip slots 14 evenly dispersed about the circumference 16 of the chip rack 10. The bottom portion 18 of the chip rack 10 is a rotary pedestal, allowing the top portion 12 to be rotated with respect to the bottom portion 18.

[0019] The top portion 12 of the chip rack 10 can optionally include one or more playing card holders 20. The playing card holders 20 are configured to receive a portion or a complete deck of playing cards therein, allowing a player to easily remove the deck of playing cards for use. A timer 22 is further included on the top portion 12 of the chip rack 10. The timer 22 can be positioned on a top or side surface of the chip rack 10, allowing for easy viewing by the player. Although an exemplary embodiment of a timer will now be described, any suitable electronic timer can be used.
with the present invention. Examples include the POKER GENIE (www.thepokergenie.com) and the timers disclosed in U.S. Pat. Nos. 6,357,746; 5,140,564; 4,888,748; and 4,769,797.

[0020] Referring to FIG. 2, the timer 22 is angularly positioned on the top portion 12 of the chip rack 10. The angular position of the timer 22 can be adjusted and presents a front face portion 24 of the timer 22 to the players for easy viewing. A back portion 26 of the timer includes a battery access panel 28. The battery access panel 28 is removeably attached to the timer 22 to allow for easy battery replacement.

[0021] In the above Figures the chip rack 10 is depicted as having a substantially circular cross sectional area. However, it is contemplated that the chip rack 10 can have any cross sectional area which allows for placement of the chip slots 14 around the circumference thereof. For example, but not limited to, the cross sectional area of the chip rack 10 can be rectangular, elliptical, triangular, hexagonal, or octagonal in shape.

[0022] Referring to FIG. 3, the timer 22 of the present invention includes a time display 30. The time display 30 displays the remaining time remaining in the current round, counting down to zero time. A control panel 32 is provided on the timer 22 and includes control buttons for setting the round time. The control panel 32 includes a set button 34 and up and down arrows 36 and 38 for setting the round time. Start and stop buttons 40 and 42 are included to start and stop the timer 22.

[0023] To set the round time the set button 34 is depressed until the time display 30 flashes. The up and down arrows 40 and 42 are used to increase or decrease the time. When the desired round time is displayed, the set button 34 is depressed storing round time. To start the game round the start button 40 is depressed. To stop the timer 22, the stop button 42 is depressed. The players can restart the timer 22 by repressing the start button 40. Alternatively, the timer display 30 can be cleared by holding down the stop button 42 until the time display 30 flashes or displays zero time. Additionally, an audible or other visual indicator can be provided.

[0024] At the completion of each game round, an audible and/or visual signal can be provided, such as from a speaker 35, and the time display 30 is automatically reset to the round time. The next round is then started by depressing the start button 34.

[0025] For games having a set number of game rounds, the timer 22 is programmed to reset the time display 30 at the completion of each game round. Initially, the game round time is set by successively depressing the set button 34 until the time display 30 flashes. The up and down arrows 40 and 42 are used to increase or decrease the time. The set button 34 is depressed storing round time. To set the number of game rounds, the set button 34 is successively depressed until a flashing “R” or an analogous indicator is displayed in the time display 30. The number of game rounds is entered by using the up and down arrows 40 and 42 to increase or decrease the number of game rounds. The set button 34 is depressed storing the number of game rounds. To start the game the start button is depressed 40.

[0026] At the completion of the round, an audible and/or visual indication can be provided and the time display 30 is automatically reset to the round time. The next round is then started by depressing the start button 34. At the completion of the last game round, the time display 30 does not reset and an audible and/or visual indicator can be provided.

[0027] The timer 22 can further include an ante display 44. The ante display 44 displays the current ante amount. The timer 22 is programmed to increase the ante amount for each successive round. Referring to FIG. 4, there is shown a flow chart for setting the timer 22. Initially, the round time is set 100. The set button 34 is successively depressed until the time display 30 flashes. The up and down arrows 40 and 42 are used to increase or decrease the time, until the desired round time is displayed. The set button 34 is depressed storing the round time.

[0028] The initial ante is then set 102. The set button 34 is successively depressed until the ante display 44 flashes or an analogous indicator is shown. The up and down arrows 40 and 42 are used to increase or decrease the ante amount, until the desired initial ante amount is displayed. The set button 34 is depressed storing the initial ante amount.

[0029] The incremental amount to increase the ante is then set 104. The set button 34 is successively depressed until a flashing “F” or an analogous indicator is displayed in the ante display 44. The up and down arrows 40 and 42 are used to increase or decrease the ante increment, until the desired ante increment is displayed. The set button 34 is depressed storing the ante increment.

[0030] Alternatively, the ante increment can be a factor of the previous ante amount. For example, the ante amount can increase by a factor of 1.5 times the previous ante amount. To set the ante increment, the set button 34 is successively depressed until a flashing “F” or an analogous indicator is displayed in the ante display 44. The up and down arrows 40 and 42 are used to increase or decrease the ante increment factor, until the desired ante increment factor is displayed. The set button 34 is depressed storing the ante increment factor.

[0031] At the completion of a game round, the time display 30 is automatically reset to the round time. Additionally, the ante amount is automatically incrementally increased. The next round is then started by depressing the start button 40.

[0032] The timer 22 can further include big and small blind displays 46 and 48. The big and small blind displays 46 and 48 display the current big and small blind amounts. The timer 22 can be programmed to increase the big and small blind amounts for each successive game round. Referring to FIG. 5, there is shown a flow chart for setting the big and small blind amounts. Initially, the small blind amount is set 108. The set button 34 is successively depressed until the small blind display 48 flashes. The up and down arrows 40 and 42 are used to increase or decrease the initial small blind amount until the desired amount is displayed. The set button 34 is depressed storing the initial small blind amount.

[0033] The incremental amount to increase the small blind is then set 110. The set button 34 is successively depressed until a flashing “F” or an analogous indicator is displayed in the small blind display 48. The up and down arrows 40 and 42 are used to increase or decrease the small blind increment, until the desired small blind increment is displayed. The set button 34 is depressed storing the small blind increment.
Alternatively, the small blind increment can be a factor of the previous small blind amount. For example, the small blind amount can increase by a factor of 1.5 times the previous small blind amount. To set the small blind increment factor, the set button 34 is successively depressed until a flashing “F” or an analogous indicator is displayed in the small blind display 48. The up and down arrows 40 and 42 are used to increase or decrease the small blind increment factor, until the desired small blind increment factor is displayed. The set button 34 is depressed storing the small blind increment factor.

In an embodiment, the big blind amount is a function of the small blind amount. For example, the big blind amount is twice the small blind amount. The setting of the small blind automatically sets the big blind amount, wherein the big blind amount incremental increases as the small blind amount increase.

At the completion of the each game round, an audible and/or visual indication can be provided and the time display 30 is automatically reset to the round time. Additionally, the ante amount and small and big blind amounts are automatically incrementally increased. The next game round is then started by depressing the start button 40.

Referring to FIG. 6, there is shown a flow chart for independently setting the big and small blind amounts. Initially, the small blind is set 108. The set button 34 is successively depressed until a flashing “I” or an analogous indicator is displayed in the small blind display 48. The up and down arrows 40 and 42 are used to increase or decrease the initial small blind amount until the desired amount is displayed. The set button 34 is depressed storing the initial small blind amount.

The incremental amount to increase the small blind is then set 110. The set button 34 is successively depressed until a flashing “I” or an analogous indicator is displayed in the small blind display 48. The up and down arrows 40 and 42 are used to increase or decrease the small blind increment amount, until the desired small blind increment is displayed. The set button 34 is depressed storing the small blind increment.

Alternatively, the small blind increment can be a factor of the previous small blind amount. For example, the small blind amount can increase by a factor of 1.5 times the previous small blind amount. To set the small blind increment factor, the set button 34 is successively depressed until a flashing “F” or an analogous indicator is displayed in the small blind display 48. The up and down arrows 40 and 42 are used to increase or decrease the small blind increment factor, until the desired small blind increment factor is displayed. The set button 34 is depressed storing the small blind increment factor.

The big blind is then set 116. The set button 34 is successively depressed until the big blind display 46 flashes. The up and down arrows 40 and 42 are used to increase or decrease the initial big blind amount until the desired amount is displayed. The set button 34 is depressed storing the initial big blind amount.

The incremental amount to increase the big blind is then set 118. The set button 34 is successively depressed until a flashing “I” or an analogous indicator is displayed in the big blind display 46. The up and down arrows 40 and 42 are used to increase or decrease the big blind increment, until the desired big blind increment is displayed. The set button 34 is depressed storing the big blind increment.

Alternatively, the big blind increment can be a factor of the previous big blind amount. For example, the big blind amount can increase by a factor of 1.5 times the previous big blind amount. To set the big blind increment factor, the set button 34 is successively depressed until a flashing “F” or an analogous indicator is displayed in the big blind display 46. The up and down arrows 40 and 42 are used to increase or decrease the big blind increment factor, until the desired big blind increment factor is displayed. The set button 34 is depressed storing the big blind increment factor.

At the completion of the game each round, an audible and/or visual indication can be provided and the time display 30 is automatically reset to the round time. Additionally, the ante amount and small and big blind amounts are automatically incrementally increased. The next round is then started by depressing the start button 40.

All references cited herein are expressly incorporated by reference in their entirety.

It will be appreciated by persons skilled in the art that the present invention is not limited to what has been particularly shown and described herein above. In addition, unless mention was made above to the contrary, it should be noted that all of the accompanying drawings are not to scale. A variety of modifications and variations are possible in light of the above teachings without departing from the scope and spirit of the invention, which is limited only by the following claims.

What is claimed is:
1. A game chip rack comprising:
   a first portion including a plurality of chip slots each configured for receiving a plurality of game chips; and
   a timer mounted to the first portion and including a time display for displaying a remaining time in a game round, wherein at the expiration of each game round the remaining time is reset to a round time.
2. The game chip rack of claim 1, further comprising a second portion rotatably mounted to the first portion, such that the first portion is rotatable with respect to the section portion.
3. The game chip rack of claim 1, wherein the first portion further includes a playing card holder.
4. The game chip rack of claim 1, wherein the timer further comprises a timer holder.
5. The game chip rack of claim 5, wherein the control panel is used to set the round time.
6. The game chip rack of claim 5, wherein the timer further comprises an ante display for displaying an ante amount.
7. The game chip rack of claim 7, wherein the control panel is used to set the ante amount at an initial ante value and an ante increment.
9. The game chip rack of claim 8, wherein at the expiration of the game round the ante amount is increased in relation to the ante increment.

10. The game chip rack of claim 5, wherein the timer further comprises small and big blind displays for displaying small and big blind amounts.

11. The game chip rack of claim 10, wherein the control panel is used to set the small blind amount at an initial small blind value and a small blind increment.

12. The game chip rack of claim 11, wherein at the expiration of the game round the small blind amount is increased in relation to the small blind increment.

13. The game chip rack of claim 12, wherein the big blind amount displayed in the big blind display is proportional to the small blind amount.

14. The game chip rack of claim 12, wherein the control panel is used to set the big blind amount at an initial big blind value and big blind increment.

15. The game chip rack of claim 12, wherein at the expiration of the game round the big blind amount is increased in relation to the big blind increment.

16. A game chip rack comprising:

- a first portion including a plurality of game chip slots, each of the plurality of game chip slots is configured to receive a plurality of game chips; and

- a timer mounted to the first portion and including a round time display for displaying a round time for a game round, the timer including a means for setting the round time and resetting the round time at the expiration of the game round.

17. The game chip rack of claim 16, wherein the timer further comprises an ante display for displaying an ante amount and a means for setting the ante amount and incrementally increasing the ante amount at the expiration of the game round.

18. The game chip rack of claim 16, wherein the timer further comprises big and small blind displays for displaying big and small blind amounts and a means for setting the big and small blind amounts and incrementally increasing the big and small blind amounts at the expiration of the game round.

19. A game chip holder comprising:

- a first portion including a plurality of game chip slots, each of the plurality of game chip slots configured to receive a plurality of game chips;

- a second portion rotatably mounted to the first portion, such that the first portion is rotatable with respect to the second portion; and

- a timer mounted to the first portion and including a time display, ante display, big and small blind displays, and a control panel, wherein the control panel is used to set the a round time, an ante amount, an ante increment, a small blind amount, and a small blind increment, such that expiration of a game round the round time is automatically reset and the ante and small blind amounts are automatically increased in relation to the ante and small blind increments.

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