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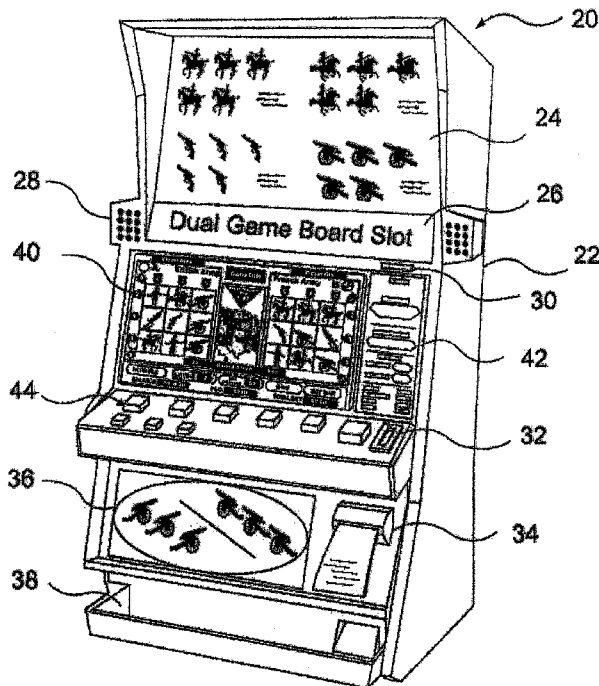
FIG. 2

(57) Abstract: Systems and methods of conducting a video game of chance are disclosed. The method includes the following steps (each corresponding to first and second players) receiving first and second wagers, populating first and second groups of cells, determining if the first and second cells have a winning combination, determining first and second awards if winning combinations are found, and, selecting a round winner based on a comparison of the first and second awards.

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TITLE: <u>**SYSTEMS AND METHODS OF CONDUCTING A GAME OF CHANCE**</u>

<u>TECHNICAL FIELD</u>

5   **[0001]**   The present invention relates to a game of chance. In particular, the invention relates to a game of chance implemented as a video slot game.

<u>BACKGROUND</u>

    [0002]   Playing video games is a very popular and well-known

10   entertainment activity. There is a large variety of video games available to consumers. One category of video games is the games of chance category. Some examples of video games of chance include video poker and video slot games.

    [0003]   Slot machine games were originally designed for mechanical

15   machines that used a number of physically rotating wheels actuated by a user inserting a coin or token and pulling down a lever.

    [0004]   The advent of video slot games permitted game designers to be more creative by eliminating the limitations associated with physical reels and mechanical machines. The designers were no longer limited to physical reels

20   having a fixed number of symbols per reel. Video slot games permitted game designers to easily create any number of virtual reels with any number of symbols on each reel.

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0005]   For a better understanding of embodiments of the systems and methods described herein, and to show more clearly how they may be carried into effect, reference will be made, by way of example, to the accompanying drawings in which:

[0006]   FIG. 1 is a block diagram of a system for conducting a video game of chance according to an embodiment of the present invention;

[0007]   FIG. 2 is a perspective view of a standalone gaming machine for conducting a video game of chance according to an embodiment of the present invention;

[0008]   FIG. 3 is a screen shot of the video game according to an embodiment of the present invention; and

[0009]   FIG. 4 is a flowchart of the steps of a method of conducting a video game of chance according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0010]   It will be appreciated that for simplicity and clarity of illustration, elements shown in the figures have not necessarily been drawn to scale. For example, the dimensions of some of the elements may be exaggerated relative to other elements for clarity. Further, where considered appropriate, reference numerals may be repeated among the figures to indicate corresponding or analogous elements.

SUMMARY

[0011]   According to a first aspect of the invention, a method of conducting a video game of chance is provided. The method comprises:

a)   receiving a first wager from a first player and a second wager from a second player;

b)   populating a first plurality of cells with a first plurality of symbols, wherein the first plurality of cells is associated with the first player;

c)   populating a second plurality of cells with a second plurality of symbols, wherein the second plurality of cells is associated with the second player;

d)   determining whether the first plurality of symbols comprise at least one first winning combination;

5   e)   if the first plurality of cells comprises the at least one first winning combination, determining a first award for the at least one first winning combination;

f)   determining whether the second plurality of symbols comprises at least one second winning combination;

10   g)   if the second plurality of cells comprises the at least one second winning combination, determining a second award for the at least one second winning combination; and

h)   selecting a round winner based on a comparison of the first and second award, wherein the first player is selected as the round winner if the

15   first award exceeds the second award, wherein the second player is selected as the round winner if the second award exceeds the first award.

[0012]   According to a second aspect of the invention, a method of playing a video game of chance is provided. The method comprises:

a)   communicating a first wager from a first player and a second wager

20   from a second player;

b)   displaying a first plurality of cells populated with a first plurality of symbols, wherein the second plurality of cells is associated with the second player;

c)   displaying a second plurality of cells populated with a second plurality

25   of symbols, wherein the first plurality of cells is associated with the first player;

d)   if the first plurality of symbols comprises at least one first winning combination, displaying a first award to the first player, wherein the first award is determined from the at least one first winning combination;

e)   if the second plurality of symbols comprises at least one second winning combination, displaying the second award to the second player, wherein the second award is determined from the at least one second combination; and

5   f)   displaying a round winner based on a comparison of the first and second award, wherein the first player is selected as the round winner if the first award exceeds the second award, wherein the second player is selected as the round winner if the second award exceeds the first award.

[0013]   According to a third aspect of the invention, a system for
10 conducting a video game of chance between a first player and a second player is provided. The system comprises a server and a client device adapted for communication with the server. The client device includes a display. The client device is adapted to receive a first wager and communicate the first wager to the server. The display is adapted to display a
15 first plurality of cells populated with a first plurality of symbols and a second plurality of cells populated with a second plurality of symbols. The first wager is associated with a first plurality of cells, and the second plurality of cells is associated with a second wager. The server is adapted to: (i) determine whether the first plurality of symbols comprise at least one first winning
20 combination, and if the first plurality of symbols comprise at least one first winning combination, determine a first award for the at least one first winning combination; and (ii) determine whether the second plurality of symbols comprise at least one second winning combination, and if the second plurality of symbols comprise at least one second winning combination, determine a
25 second award for the at least one second winning combination. The server is adapted to select a round winner based on a comparison of the first and second award. The first player is selected as the round winner if the first award exceeds the second award. The second player is selected as the round winner if the second award exceeds the first award.

30 [0014]   According to a fourth aspect of the invention, a gaming machine for conducting a video game of chance between a first player and a second

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player is provided. The machine comprises: (a) a processor, (b) a memory, (c) an input interface; and (d) a display. The input interface is adapted to receive a first wager and store the first wager in the memory. The display is adapted to display a first plurality of cells populated with a first plurality of

5   symbols and a second plurality of cells populated with a second plurality of symbols. The first wager is associated with a first plurality of cells, and the second plurality of cells is associated with a second wager. The processor is adapted to: (i) determine whether the first plurality of symbols comprise at least one first winning combination, and if the first plurality of symbols

10   comprise at least one first winning combination, determine a first award for the at least one first winning combination; and (ii) determine whether the second plurality of symbols comprise at least one second winning combination, and if the second plurality of symbols comprise at least one second winning combination, determine a second award for the at least one second winning

15   combination. The processor is adapted to select a round winner based on a comparison of the first and second award. The first player is selected as the round winner if the first award exceeds the second award. The second player is selected as the round winner if the second award exceeds the first award.

20   **DETAILED DESCRIPTION**

[0015]   It will be appreciated that numerous specific details are set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of the exemplary embodiments described herein. However, it will be understood by those of ordinary skill in the art that the embodiments described herein may be practiced without these

25   specific details. In other instances, well-known methods, procedures and components have not been described in detail so as not to obscure the embodiments described herein. Furthermore, this description is not to be considered as limiting the scope of the embodiments described herein in any way, but rather as merely describing the implementation of the various

30   embodiments described herein.

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[0016]   Reference is now made to FIG. 1, in which a system **100** for conducting a video game of chance is illustrated. The system **100** includes a client device **14** that is connected to a host server **10** via a network **12**. A first player uses the client device **14** to access the game, which is hosted on the host server **10**. The game is implemented electronically by software that is installed on the host server **10**.

[0017]   The host server **10** is preferably implemented by the use of one or more general purpose computers, such as, for example, a Sun Microsystems™ F15K server.   The client device **14** is also preferably implemented by the use of one or more general purpose computers, such as, for example, a typical personal computer manufactured by Dell™, Gateway™, or Hewlett-Packard™. Those skilled in the art will understand that the client device **14** may be any other suitable device, such as a game console, a portable gaming device, a laptop computer, a personal digital assistant (PDA), a mobile phone, a set top box, or an interactive television.

[0018]   Each of the host server **10** and the client device **14** may include a microprocessor. The microprocessor can be any type of processor, such as, for example, any type of general purpose microprocessor or microcontroller, a digital signal processing (DSP) processor, an application-specific integrated circuit (ASIC), a programmable read-only memory (PROM), or any combination thereof. The host server **10** may use its microprocessor to read a computer-readable medium containing the software that includes instructions for carrying out one or more of the functions of the host server **10**, as further described below.

[0019]   Each of the host server **10** and the client device **14** can also include computer memory, such as, for example, random-access memory (RAM). However, the computer memory of each of the host server **10** and the client device **14** can be any type of computer memory or any other type of electronic storage medium that is located either internally or externally to the host server **10** or the client device **14**, such as, for example, read-only memory (ROM), compact disc read-only memory (CDROM), electro-optical

memory, magneto-optical memory, erasable programmable read-only memory (EPROM), and electrically-erasable programmable read-only memory (EEPROM), or the like.

[0020]   According to exemplary embodiments, the respective RAM can contain, for example, the operating program for either the host server **10** or the client device **14**.   As will be appreciated based on the following description, the RAM, can, for example, be programmed using conventional techniques known to those having ordinary skill in the art of computer programming.   The actual source code or object code for carrying out the steps of, for example, a computer program can be stored in the RAM.

[0021]   Each of the host server **10** and the client device **14** can also include a database.   The database can be any type of computer database for storing, maintaining, and allowing access to electronic information stored therein.

[0022]   The host server **10** preferably resides on a network **12**, such as a local area network (LAN), a wide area network (WAN), or the Internet.   The client device **14** preferably is connected to the network **12** on which the host server **10** resides, thus enabling electronic communications between the host server **10** and the client device **14** over a communications connection, whether locally or remotely, such as, for example, an Ethernet connection, an RS-232 connection, or the like.

[0023]   The client device typically includes a monitor or other display for displaying the actions and status of the video game.   The client device **14** may be configured to accept player inputs provided via, for example, a keyboard, mouse, a joystick or a touchscreen.

[0024]   The video game may be played in one of two modes: peer-to-computer mode or peer-to-peer mode.   In peer-to-computer mode, a live player plays the game against a computer (also referred to as the House).   In peer-to-peer mode, one live player plays the game against another live player.   Where the game is being played in peer-to-peer mode, system **100** shown in

FIG. 1 will further comprise a second client device **14** (only one is shown in FIG. 1) connected to the network **12** and in communication with the host server **10**.

[0025] Reference is now made to FIG. 2, in which a standalone gaming

5   machine for conducting the game of chance is illustrated. The standalone gaming machine may be a video slot machine **20**. The slot machine **20** is housed in a cabinet **22**. The slot machine includes a reference plate **24** that identifies the type of game played on the slot machine **20**, a name plate **26**, speakers **28**, a bill acceptor **30**, a coin slot **32**, a ticket slot **34** for coinless

10   play, belly art plate **36**, and a coin try **38**. The slot machine also includes a video display **40**, a game playing instructions plate **42**, and an input interface, such as game function buttons **44** for one or more players. In the peer-to-peer mode, the game may be played by two players on a single gaming machine **20**, or the game may be implemented using two or more gaming

15   machines **20** which communicate with each other using any suitable network.

[0026] Those skilled in the art will understand that the video game of chance may be implemented on a wide variety of other standalone gaming devices, such as game consoles, portable gaming devices, personal computers, laptop computers, personal digital assistants (PDAs), mobile

20   phones, set top boxes, and interactive televisions.

[0027] Preferably the gaming machine **20**, includes a microprocessor (not shown). The microprocessor can be any type of processor, such as, for example, any type of general purpose microprocessor or microcontroller, a digital signal processing (DSP) processor, an application-specific integrated

25   circuit (ASIC), a programmable read-only memory (PROM), or any combination thereof. The video slot machine **20** may use its microprocessor to read a computer-readable medium containing the software that includes instructions for carrying out one or more of the functions of the game described below.

30   **[0028]** Preferably, the video slot machine **20** also includes computer memory, such as, for example, random-access memory (RAM). However, the

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computer memory of video slot machine **20** may be any other type of computer memory or any other type of electronic storage medium, such as, for example, read-only memory (ROM), compact disc read-only memory (CDROM), electro-optical memory, magneto-optical memory, erasable

5   programmable read-only memory (EPROM), and electrically-erasable programmable read-only memory (EEPROM), or the like.

[0029]   According to exemplary embodiments, the memory of the video slot machine **20** may contain, for example, the operating instructions to implement the functionality of the game described below. As will be

10   appreciated based on the following description, the memory, can, for example, be programmed using conventional techniques known to those having ordinary skill in the art of computer programming. The actual source code or object code for carrying out the steps of, for example, a computer program can be stored in the memory.

15   [0030]   The video slot machine **20** can also include a data storage, such as a database. The database may be any suitable type of computer database for storing, maintaining, and allowing access to electronic information stored therein.

[0031]   The display **40** of the video slot machine **20** or the display of the

20   client device (depending on the embodiment) is configured to display the game board.

[0032]   Reference is now made to FIG. 3, in which the layout of a game board **300** in accordance with an embodiment is illustrated. The game board **300** includes a first plurality of cells, such as first group of cells **302** and a

25   second plurality of cells, such as second group of cells **304** where the first group of cells **302** is associated with a first player and the second group of cells **304** is associated with a second player. Where the game is being played in peer-to-computer mode, the live player will be referred to as the first player and the computer (or the "House") will be referred to as the second player.

30   Where the game is being played in peer-to-peer mode, both the first and second player are live players.

[0033]   The cells in the first and second groups **302** and **304** may be arranged in an NxM matrix where N represents the number of rows in the matrix and M represents the number of columns in the matrix. N and M may be any whole number greater than one and may be the same or different. In the embodiment shown in FIG. 3, N and M are equal to three, forming 3x3 matrices.

[0034]   The first and second groups of cells **302** and **304** are configured to form a number of lines, herein after referred to as betting lines. For example, the first and second groups of cells **302** and **304** shown in FIG. 3 are configured so that eight betting lines **306, 308, 310, 312, 314, 316, 318,** and **320** are formed, each having three cells. The betting lines may be vertical lines, horizontal lines, or diagonal lines, as shown in FIG. 3, or any other free geometry lines (e.g. broken lines).

[0035]   During game play, each cell is preferably populated by a symbol, which may be randomly generated by video slot machine **20** or by server **10**. In one embodiment, the game has a board game theme and the symbols used to populate the cells are associated with a particular board game. Suitable board games include, but are not limited to, Risk™, Dungeons and Dragons™, Clue™ and Transformers™. In the embodiment shown in FIG. 3, the game has a Risk™ theme. Accordingly, the symbols may comprise various war symbols, such as canons, swords, guns, infantry soldiers, and cavalry soldiers.

[0036]   In one embodiment, the symbols displayed in the first and second groups of cells **302** and **304** are arranged to face the centre of the game board **300** such that the symbols in the two group of cells can be said to be facing each other. For example, as shown in FIG. 3, the cannon symbols in the first group of cells **302** are pointing toward the right and the cannon symbols in the second group of cells **304** are pointing toward the left. Arranging the symbols in this manner creates the entertaining impression, that the two groups of symbols are opposing armies fighting each other.

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[0037]   It is the configuration of the symbols in the first and second groups of cells **302** and **304** that are used to determine the outcome of a primary game. In one embodiment the first player is provided a first award if the symbols in the first group of cells **302** comprise at least one winning

5   combination. Where the game is played in peer-to-peer mode, the second player is similarly provided a second award if the symbols in the second group of cells **304** comprise at least one winning combination. Preferably, a winning combination occurs when all of the cells in a particular betting line are populated with the identical symbol. In the example, shown in FIG. 3, betting

10   line **308** for Player Bill and betting line **320** for Player Alex have winning combinations. Specifically, betting line **308** for Player Bill is made up of three horsemen and betting line **320** for Player Alex is made up of three cannons.

[0038]   The first and second player awards may be displayed in an award section **336** of the game board **300**. For example, it is shown in FIG. 3

15   that the first player, Alex, was provided the first award of $20 based on the first winning combination in the betting line **320** and the second player, Bill, was provided the second award of $140 based on second winning combination in the betting line **308**. Awards for the first and second winning combinations comprised of various symbols may be awarded in accordance

20   with a payout table. Payout tables are well known in the art and will not be further described.

[0039]   The game board **300** may further include a player interface **322** that allows a live player to interact with the game. For example, the input interface **322** may include a paytable button **324**, a betting lines selector **326**,

25   a wager selector **328**, a spin button **330**, and a bet max button **332**. The method for the player to activate the input interface **322** buttons and selectors will depend on the configuration of the client **14** or slot machine **20**. For example, where the display **10** of the slot machine **20** or the display of the client **14** is touch screen enabled then the player may simply touch the

30   buttons and selectors to activate them. Alternatively, the player may be

provided with a pointing device, such as a mouse or the like, that allows them to "click" on the button or selection.

[0040]   The paytable button **324**, when activated, displays the payout table to the player. The pay table may list, for example, payout odds for winning combinations comprised of various symbols. This is a particularly beneficial feature for a new player who is unfamiliar with the game and the symbols used in the game.

[0041]   The betting lines selector **326**, and the wager selector **328** allow the player to adjust his/her wager for a particular round of the primary game. In one embodiment, the betting lines selector **326** allows the player to select the number of betting lines they wish to bet on. For example, if the player selects two betting lines then the first and second betting lines **306** and **308** are used to determine whether the player receives a payout. This means that if a winning combination occurs in one of the other six betting lines **310**, **312**, **314**, **316**, **318**, and **320** the player does not receive a payout.

[0042]   The wager selector **328** allows the player to select the wager amount per betting line. For example, if the wager is $1 and eight betting lines are selected then the total wager is $8.

[0043]   In another embodiment, the betting lines selector **326** and the wager selector **328** may allow the player to strategically select a different wager for each betting line selected. For example, if the betting line selector **326** is set to betting line 1 then the wager selector **328** can be used to set the wager for betting line 1.

[0044]   Both the betting lines selector **326** and the wager selector **328** may have a default setting. For example, the betting lines selector **326** may have a default setting equal to the maximum number of betting lines (e.g. eight) and the wager selector **328** may have a default setting equal to the minimum bet (e.g. $1). In the peer-to-computer embodiment, the wager may be automatically set to a particular amount. Alternatively, the second player

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(i.e. computer or House) wager is automatically matched to the first player's wager.

[0045]   The spin button **330** and the bet max button **332** are used to activate play of the primary game. The spin button **330** activates the primary game using the settings of the betting lines selector **326** and the wager selector **328**. The bet max button **332** activates the primary game using the maximum betting lines and the maximum wager amount. Accordingly, the bet max button **332** effectively ignores the status of the betting lines selector **326** and the wager selector **328**.

[0046]   The player interface **322** may also be used to display other player-specific information such as the player's balance, the total amount paid out to the player and the amount of the current bet. Those skilled in the art will understand that there are many other elements that may be included in the player interface **322**.

[0047]   The game board **300** may further include a bonus game section **334** to display the status of a bonus game. Typically the bonus game is designed to encourage the player to play multiple rounds of the primary game. For example, the bonus game may track the number of rounds of the primary game won and award a bonus to player if he/she wins a predetermined number of rounds. A method for determining the winner of a particular round will be described below in relation to FIG. 4.

[0048]   The bonus game section **334** may display items such as the current number of rounds won for each player and a visual image of the current position of the players with respect to each other.

[0049]   Where the game of chance has a board game theme, then the bonus game may relate to a plot of the board game. For example, where the game of chance has a Risk™ theme, the bonus game may simulate war between two armies. In particular, say the first player is associated with the British Army and the second player is associated with the French Army, then the bonus game may simulate a war between these two countries so that

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when the first player wins a round of the primary game the British Army advances its position (e.g. gains control of additional territory) and when the second player wins a round of the primary game the French Army advances its position. In one embodiment, the greater the margin of victory in a round,
5   the greater the territorial advance of the associated Army.

[0050]   The method according to an embodiment of the present invention will now be described with reference to FIGS. 3 and 4. The method **400** begins at step **402** where a first wager is input by the first player into the video slot machine **20** or by client **14**, as the case may be. In the client-server
10 embodiment, the first wager is communicated to the server **10**.

[0051]   Preferably, the first wager amount is fixed and cannot be changed by the first player (e.g. fixed at $1). Preferably, all betting lines are automatically selected and also cannot be changed by the first player. A second wager and betting line selection is made by the second player in
15 preferably the same manner as for the first player (i.e. automatically). In this embodiment, the betting line selector button **326**, wager selector button **328**, and bet max button **332** shown in FIG. 3 would not be necessary.

[0052]   In an alternative embodiment applicable to the peer-to-computer mode, the first player (i.e. live player) may be given the option of selecting the
20 amount of the wager and the betting lines to be played using the betting line selector button **326**, wager selector button **328**, and bet max button **332**. In such an embodiment, the second wager amount and pay lines of second player (i.e. House) would automatically be selected to match the first wager and betting line selection of the first player.

25 [0053]   In another alternative embodiment applicable to the peer-to-peer mode, each player may be given the option to select the amount of his/her wager (up to a maximum bet) and select one or more betting lines. Each player would select his/her wager and betting line selection in turn using the betting line selector button **326**, wager selector button **328**, and bet max
30 button **332.** Such an embodiment may add an additional strategy and risk element to the game.

[0054]   At step **404**, the first player (in the peer-to-computer mode) or either of the players (in the peer-to-peer mode) press the spin button **330**. Each cell in the first and second groups of cells **302, 304** is then populated with a symbol. As described above in relation to FIG. 3, the symbols may be randomly generated by video slot machine **20** or by server **10**. In addition, to increase the user's enjoyment of the game, the symbols may relate to a particular board game (e.g. Risk™).

[0055]   At decision diamond **406**, the video slot machine **20** or server **10** determines whether any combinations of the symbols in the first group of cells **302** constitute winning combinations. Where the wager is associated with a specified number of betting lines, only the betting lines associated with the wager can qualify as winning combinations. For example, where the first and second group of cells **302** and **304** are configured for eight betting lines as shown in FIG. 3, and the player only associated the wager with one betting line, then only the selected betting line is used to determine if there is a winning combination. Similarly, where the wager is only associated with two betting lines, only the two selected betting lines are used to determine if there is a winning combination. If no winning combinations are present in the first group of cells **302**, the method proceeds to decision diamond **410**.

[0056]   If at least one winning combination is present in the first group of cells, the method proceeds to step **408** where the first award for first player is determined based on the payout odds which depend on the probability of various winning combinations arising, as is known in the art. The first award may be displayed on the display **40** of the slot machine **20** or the display of the client device(s) **14**. For example, the first award may be displayed in the award section **336** of the board game **300**. The first award may be a monetary award or any other type of award, such as additional credits to play the game. Preferably, the first award is provided to the first player at this step, but may also be awarded at a later stage. The method then proceeds to decision diamond **410**.

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[0057]   At decision diamond **410** the video slot machine **20** or server **10** determines whether any combinations of the symbols in the second group of cells **304** constitute winning combinations. Winning combinations are determined in the same manner as described with respect to decision diamond **406**.

[0058]   At step **412**, the second award is determined and displayed in the same manner as described with respect to step **408**. After the second award is determined, the method proceeds to decision diamond **414**. In the peer-to-peer mode, the second award is preferably awarded to the second player at this step, but may be awarded at a later stage. In the peer-to-computer mode, the second award is determined only for the purpose of identifying the round winner, as discussed below.

[0059]   At decision diamond **414**, a round winner is selected by comparing the first award to the second award, with the player having the highest award being selected as the round winner. If the value of the first and second awards is equal, neither player is selected as the round winner. In one embodiment, a bonus award may be awarded to the player who is the round winner. In the peer-to-computer mode, if the second player (i.e. House) is the round winner, this simply means that the first player does not receive the bonus award.

[0060]   In some embodiments this is the end of the game.

[0061]   In other embodiments, this only constitutes one round of the game and the method proceeds to either step **416** or **418**. If the first player is the round winner, then the method proceeds to step **416** where a counter that keeps track of how many rounds the first player has won is incremented. The method then proceeds to decision diamond **420**. If there is a tie, neither counter is incremented and the method returns to step **402** from decision diamond **414**.

[0062]   In the peer-to-peer mode, if the second player is the round winner, then the method proceeds to step **418** where a counter that keeps

track of how many rounds the second player has won is incremented. The method then proceeds to decision diamond **420**. In the peer-to-computer mode where the second player is the House, a counter for the second player is not required.

5   **[0063]**   In the peer-to-peer mode, at decision diamond **420**, the video slot machine **20** or server **10** determines whether either of the players has won a predetermined number of rounds. The predetermined number of rounds may be based on the level of the game. For example, the higher the level of the game, the higher number of games must be won. If none of the players have won the predetermined number of rounds then the method proceeds back to step **402**. In the peer-to-computer mode, a check is made only to determine whether the first player has won the predetermined number of rounds. The second player (i.e. House) wins are ignored. Consequently, the first player is preferably always able to win a bonus award provided he/she plays enough rounds. This provides the added advantage of motivating the player to play more rounds.

[0064]   In the peer-to-peer embodiment, if one of the players has won the predetermined number of rounds, then a bonus award is preferably awarded to the winning player in step **422**. In the peer-to-computer embodiment, if the first player has won the predetermined number of rounds then the first player is awarded a bonus award. The bonus award may be a monetary award or any other type of award such as additional credits to play the game.

[0065]   In one embodiment, the bonus award is based on the total amount wagered in all rounds played. For example, if the first player plays two rounds before they are awarded the bonus, and they wagered $10 in the first round and $5 in the second round, then the amount of the bonus will be based on the total wager in both rounds (i.e. $15).

[0066]   If the first player exits the game before either of the players has won the predetermined number of rounds, the player's number of rounds won may be saved by the client **14**, server **10** or the slot machine **20** for

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subsequent retrieval.   This encourages the player to return at a later time to play this particular game since they do not forfeit credit for any of the winning rounds that they have accumulated.

[0067]   While the above description provides examples of the embodiments, it will be appreciated that some features and/or functions of the described embodiments are susceptible to modification without departing from the spirit and principles of operation of the described embodiments. Accordingly, what has been described above has been intended to be illustrative of the invention and non-limiting and it will be understood by persons skilled in the art that other variants and modifications may be made without departing from the scope of the invention as defined in the claims appended hereto.

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CLAIMS:

1. A method of conducting a video game of chance comprising:

a) receiving a first wager from a first player and a second wager from a second player;

b) populating a first plurality of cells with a first plurality of symbols, wherein the first plurality of cells is associated with the first player;

c) populating a second plurality of cells with a second plurality of symbols, wherein the second plurality of cells is associated with the second player;

d) determining whether the first plurality of symbols comprise at least one first winning combination;

e) if the first plurality of cells comprises the at least one first winning combination, determining a first award for the at least one first winning combination;

f) determining whether the second plurality of symbols comprises at least one second winning combination;

g) if the second plurality of cells comprises the at least one second winning combination, determining a second award for the at least one second winning combination; and

h) selecting a round winner based on a comparison of the first and second award, wherein the first player is selected as the round winner if the first award exceeds the second award, wherein the second player is selected as the round winner if the second award exceeds the first award.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising awarding the first award to the first player.

3. The method of claim 2, further comprising awarding the second award to the second player.

4. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

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i)   repeating steps (a)-(h) for a plurality of subsequent rounds; and

j)   if the first player has won a predetermined number of rounds, determining a first bonus award for the first player.

5.   The method of claim 3, further comprising determining a second bonus award for the second player if the second player has won a predetermined number of rounds.

6.   The method of claim 1, further comprising updating a bonus game display based on the round winner.

7.   The method of claim 6, wherein the bonus game display is situated between the first plurality of cells and the second plurality of cells.

8.   The method of claim 7, wherein the bonus game display is associated with a board game plot.

9.   The method of claim 1, further comprising:

i)   if the round winner is the first player, incrementing a first counter;

j)   if the round winner is the second player, incrementing a second counter;

k)   determining whether one of the first counter and the second counter is equal to a predetermined value

l)   repeating steps a) to k) until one of the first counter and the second counter is equal to or greater than the predetermined value; and

m) if the first counter is equal to or greater than the predetermined value, determining a first bonus award for the first player.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein both the first plurality of cells and the second plurality of cells are arranged in a matrix, each matrix forming a plurality of betting lines.

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11. The method of claim 10, wherein each matrix is a NxM matrix, wherein N is a whole number greater than one and M is a whole number greater than one.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein N and M are each equal to three and wherein each matrix forms eight betting lines.

13.   The method of claim 12, wherein three identical symbols in one betting line constitutes a first winning combination and a second winning combination.

14. The method of claim 10 further comprising receiving a selection of at least one betting line from the first player, wherein the first winning combination is found in the at least one betting line.

15. The method of claim 1, wherein the second player is a House.

16. The method of claim 1, wherein the first plurality of symbols face the second plurality of symbols and the second plurality of symbols face the first plurality of symbols.

17.   The method of claim 1, wherein the first and second plurality of symbols are associated with a board game.

18.   A method of playing a video game of chance comprising:

        a) communicating a first wager from a first player and a second wager from a second player;

        b) displaying a first plurality of cells populated with a first plurality of symbols, wherein the second plurality of cells is associated with the second player;

        c) displaying a second plurality of cells populated with a second plurality of symbols, wherein the first plurality of cells is associated with the first player;

        d) if the first plurality of symbols comprises at least one first winning combination, displaying a first award to the first player, wherein the first award is determined from the at least one first winning combination;

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e) if the second plurality of symbols comprises at least one second winning combination, displaying the second award to the second player, wherein the second award is determined from the at least one second combination; and

f) displaying a round winner based on a comparison of the first and second award, wherein the first player is selected as the round winner if the first award exceeds the second award, wherein the second player is selected as the round winner if the second award exceeds the first award.

19. The method of claim 18, further comprising providing the first award to the first player.

20. The method of claim 19, further comprising:

g) repeating steps (a)-(f) for a plurality of subsequent rounds; and

h) displaying a first bonus award to the first player if the first player is the round winner for a predetermined number of rounds.

21. The method of claim 19, further comprising, displaying a second bonus award to the second player if the second player is the round winner for a predetermined number of rounds.

22. The method of claim 19, further comprising updating a bonus game display based on the round winner.

23. The method of claim 22, wherein the bonus game display is situated between the first plurality of cells and the second plurality of cells.

24. The method of claim 23, wherein the bonus game display is associated with a board game plot.

25. The method of claim 18, further comprising:

g) displaying a first counter, wherein the first counter is incremented when the first player is the round winner;

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h) displaying a second counter, wherein the second counter is incremented when the second player is the round winner;

i) repeating steps a) to h) until one of the first counter and the second counter is equal to the predetermined value; and

j) if the first counter is equal to a predetermined value, displaying a first bonus award to the first player.

26. The method of claim 25, further comprising providing the second award to the second player.

27. The method of claim 18, wherein both the first plurality of cells and the second plurality of cells are arranged in a matrix, each matrix forming a plurality of betting lines.

28. The method of claim 27, wherein each matrix is a NxM matrix, wherein N is a whole number greater than one and M is a whole number greater than one.

29. The method of claim 28, wherein N and M are each equal to three and wherein each matrix forms eight betting lines.

30. The method of claim 29, wherein the first winning combination comprises three identical symbols in one betting line.

31. The method of claim 27, wherein

the first wager is further associated with at least one betting line; and

the first winning combination is found in the at least one betting line.

32. The method of claim 18, wherein one of the first and second players is a House.

33. The method of claim 18, wherein the first plurality of symbols face the second plurality of symbols and the second plurality of symbols face the first plurality of symbols.

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34.   The method of claim 18, wherein the first and second plurality of symbols comprise symbols associated with a board game.

35.   A system for conducting a video game of chance between a first player and a second player, the system comprising:

5   a) a server; and

               b) a client device adapted for communication with the server, the client device comprising a display;

       wherein the client device is adapted to receive a first wager and communicate the first wager to the server;

10   wherein the display is adapted to display a first plurality of cells populated with a first plurality of symbols and a second plurality of cells populated with a second plurality of symbols, wherein the first wager is associated with a first plurality of cells, and the second plurality of cells is associated with a second wager;

15   wherein the server is adapted to:

               determine whether the first plurality of symbols comprise at least one first winning combination, and if the first plurality of symbols comprise at least one first winning combination, determine a first award for the at least one first winning

20   combination; and

               determine whether the second plurality of symbols comprise at least one second winning combination, and if the second plurality of symbols comprise at least one second winning combination, determine a second award for the at least

25   one second winning combination;

       wherein the server is adapted to select a round winner based on a comparison of the first and second award, wherein the first player is selected as the round winner if the first award exceeds the second award, wherein the

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second player is selected as the round winner if the second award exceeds the first award.

36.   A gaming machine for conducting a video game of chance between a first player and a second player, the machine comprising:

a) a processor;

b) a memory;

c) an input interface; and

d) a display

wherein the input interface is adapted to receive a first wager and store the first wager in the memory;

wherein the display is adapted to display a first plurality of cells populated with a first plurality of symbols and a second plurality of cells populated with a second plurality of symbols, wherein the first wager is associated with a first plurality of cells, and the second plurality of cells is associated with a second wager;

wherein the processor is adapted to:

determine whether the first plurality of symbols comprise at least one first winning combination, and if the first plurality of symbols comprise at least one first winning combination, determine a first award for the at least one first winning combination; and

determine whether the second plurality of symbols comprise at least one second winning combination, and if the second plurality of symbols comprise at least one second winning combination, determine a second award for the at least one second winning combination;

wherein the processor is adapted to select a round winner based on a comparison of the first and second award, wherein the first player is selected as the round winner if the first award exceeds the second award, wherein the

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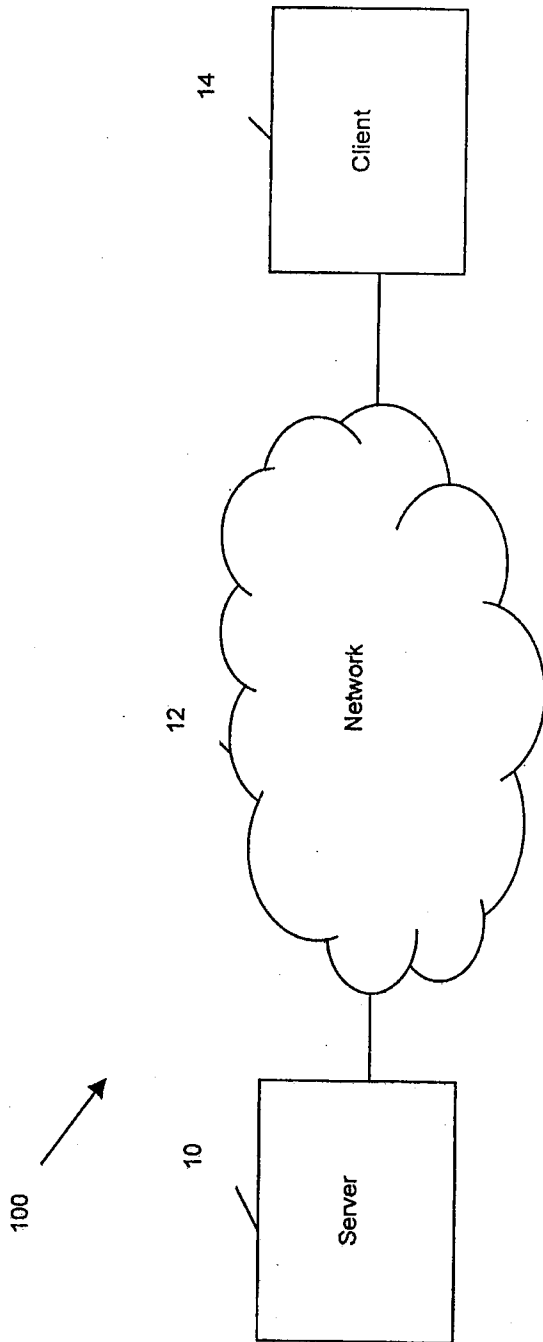second player is selected as the round winner if the second award exceeds the first award.
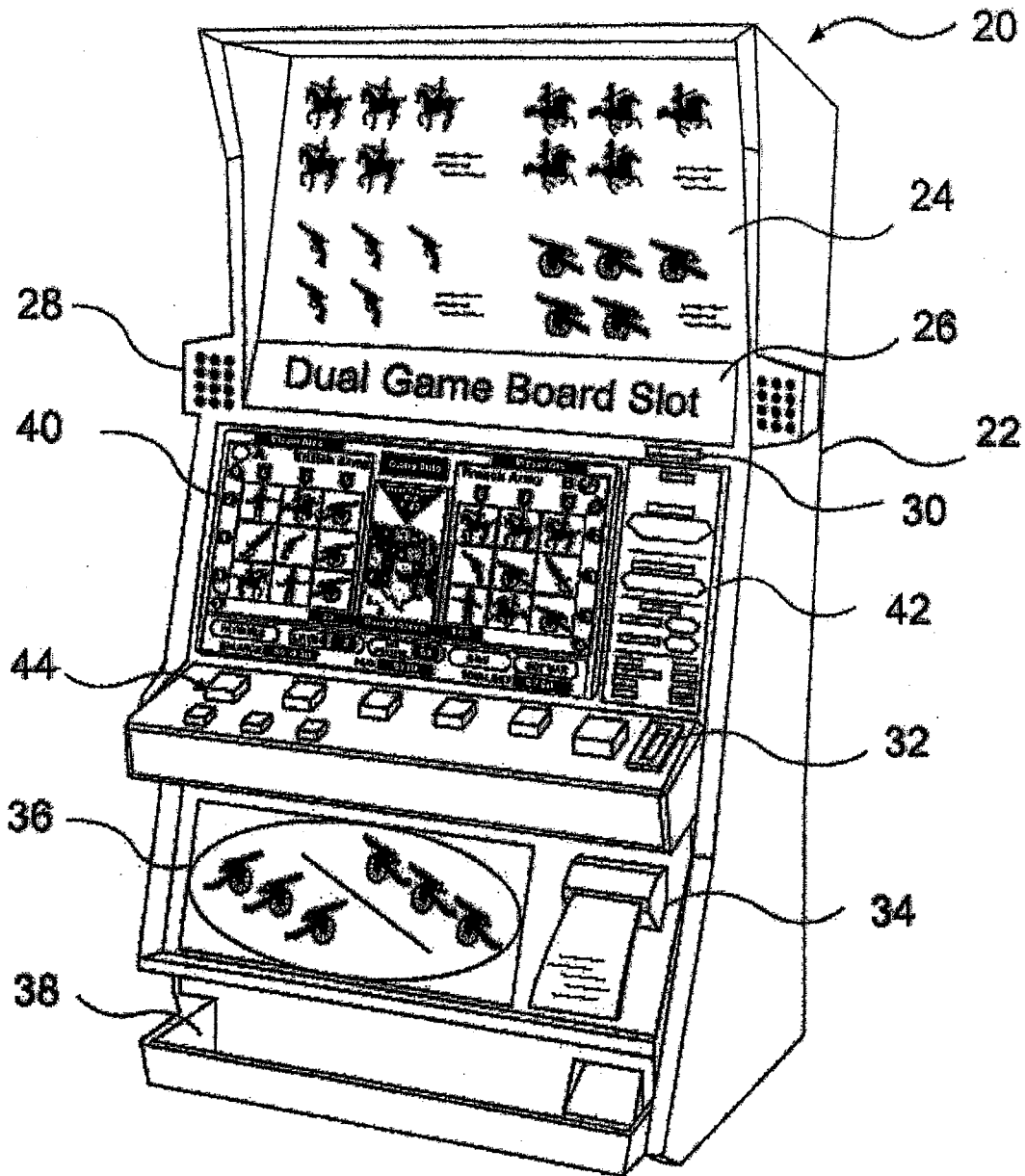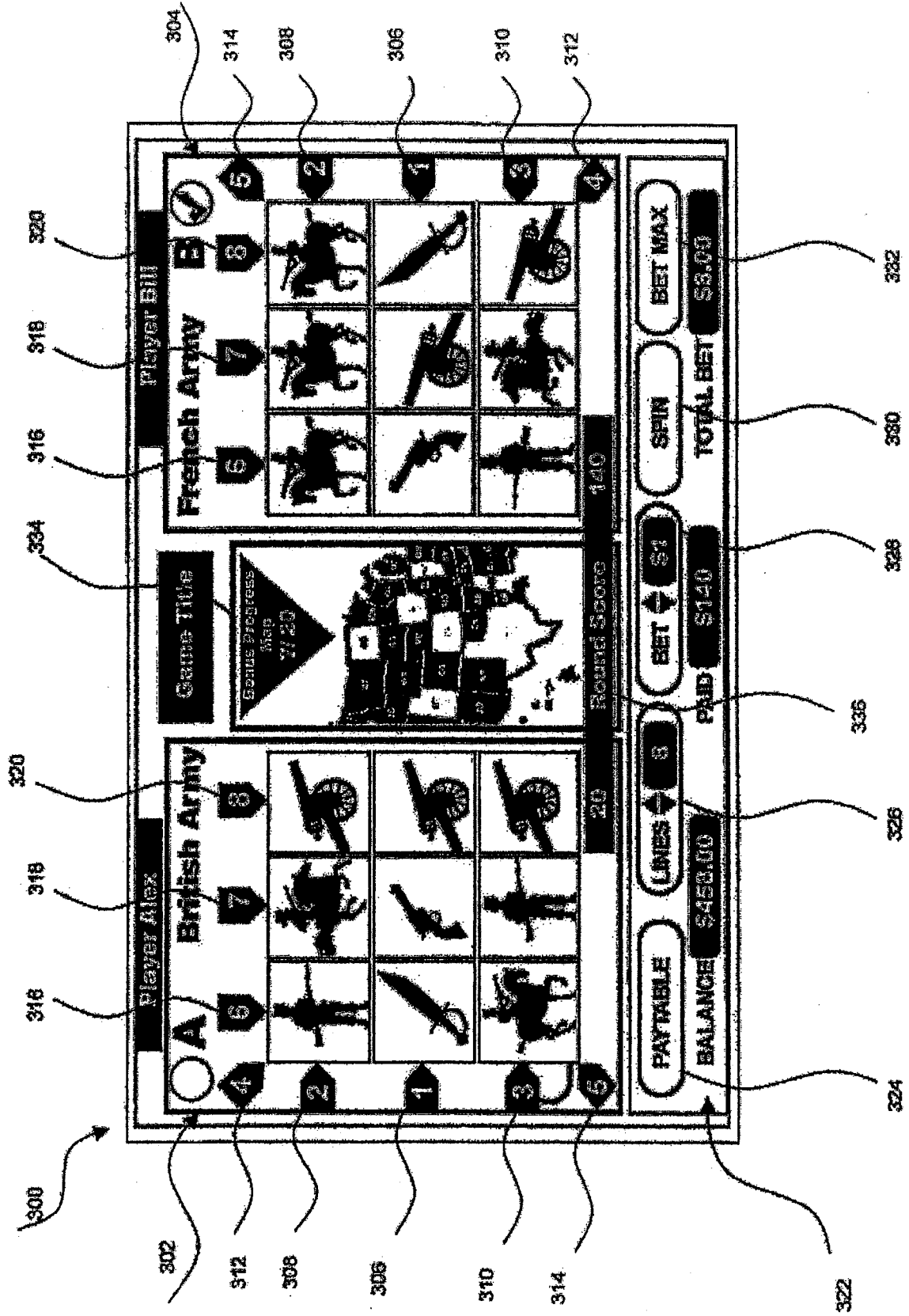
FIG. 1

FIG.2

FIG. 3
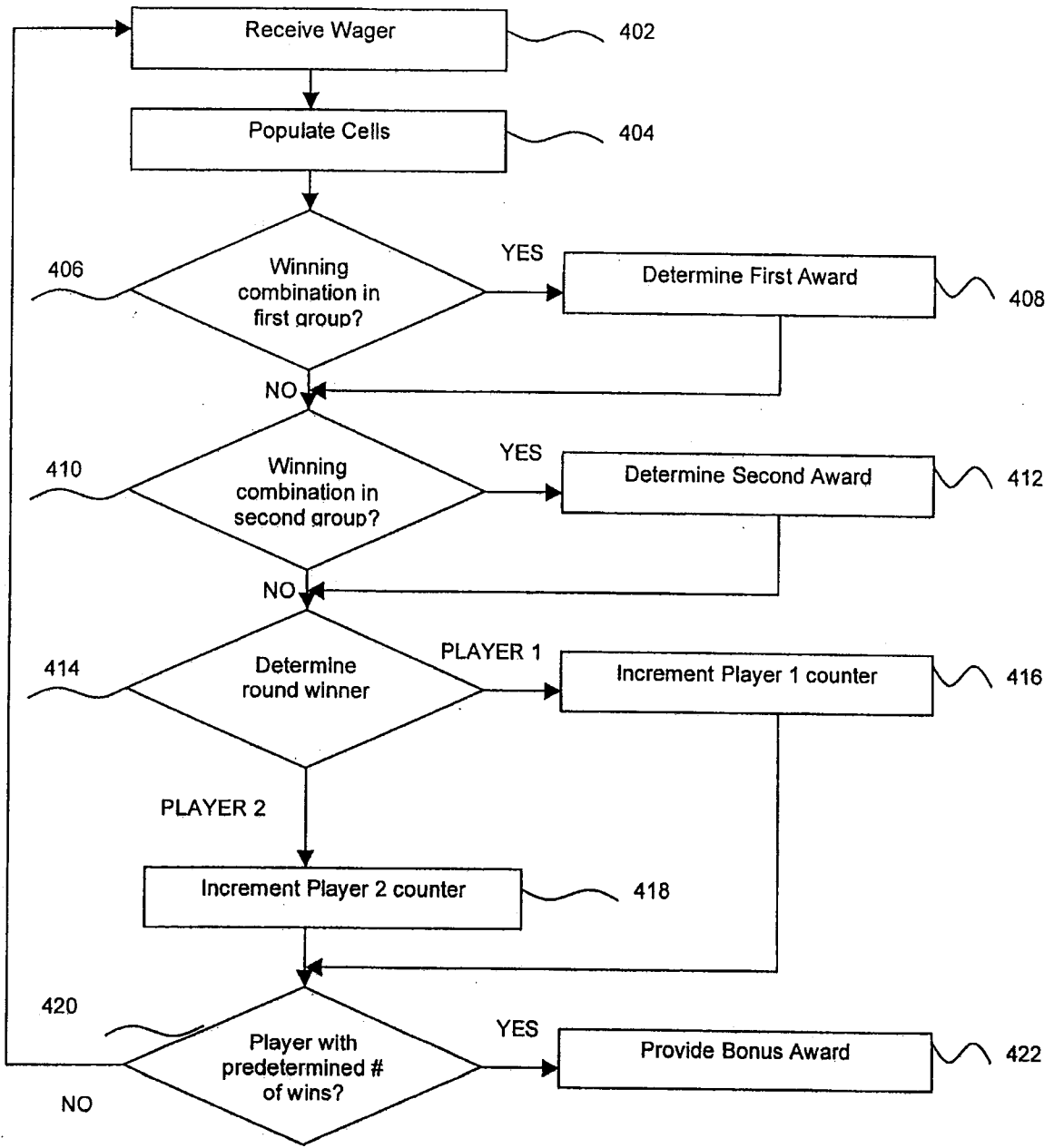
Receive Wager — 402

Populate Cells — 404

406 — Winning combination in first group? — YES → Determine First Award — 408

NO

410 — Winning combination in second group? — YES → Determine Second Award — 412

NO

414 — Determine round winner — PLAYER 1 → Increment Player 1 counter — 416

PLAYER 2

Increment Player 2 counter — 418

420 — Player with predetermined # of wins? — YES → Provide Bonus Award — 422

NO

FIG. 4

A.	CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC: *G07F 17/32* (2006.01) , *A63F 13/00* (2006.01)

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC: *G07F 17/32* (2006.01) , *A63F 13/00* (2006.01)

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic database(s) consulted during the international search (name of database(s) and, where practicable, search terms used)
USPTO WEST, Delphion, Intellect, QPAT, Google Patents: gaming/slot machine, head to head, peer to peer, tournament, round, round winner, board game, two player, etc.

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US 5,879,233 (STUPERO), 9 March 1999 (9-03-1999). see entire document	1 to 36
Y	US 5,647,798 (FALCIGLIA), 15 July 1997 (15-07-1997). see entire document	1 to 36
A	US 6,309,299 (WEISS), 30 October 2001 (30-10-2001). see entire document	1 to 36

[ ] Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.	[X] See patent family annex.

*	Special categories of cited documents :	"T"	later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
"A"	document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	"X"	document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
"E"	earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date		
"L"	document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)	"Y"	document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
"O"	document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means	"&"	document member of the same patent family
"P"	document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed		

Date of the actual completion of the international search	Date of mailing of the international search report
21 April 2009 (21-04-2009)	5 May 2009 (05-05-2009)

Name and mailing address of the ISA/CA	Authorized officer
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Patent Document Cited in Search Report	Publication Date	Patent Family Member(s)	Publication Date
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US 5647798A	15-07-1997	AU 5304596A	02-10-1996
		CA 2214377A1	19-09-1996
		JP 11501842T	16-02-1999
		US 5935002A	10-08-1999
		WO 9628798A1	19-09-1996
US 6309299B1	30-10-2001	None	