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(54) Title: PROGRESSIVE JACKPOT GAMING WITH RANDOM PRIZE GENERATION

(57) Abstract

A progressive jackpot game provides an auxiliary opportunity for players at a casino to win a prize from the progressive jackpot by participating with a relatively small contribution to the progressive jackpot each time they play a round in the principal casino game. To increase the element of random chance or luck in winning a prize from the progressive jackpot game, a method and apparatus is provided for randomly choosing a winning card or combination of cards, or randomly selecting a person or group of persons eligible to win upon possession of the card or combination of cards. The amount of the prize can also be randomly selected either as a fixed amount or percentage of the progressive jackpot.

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PROGRESSIVE JACKPOT GAMING WITH RANDOM PRIZE GENERATIONTechnical Field

5 The present invention relates to a method and apparatus for controlling an auxiliary game or a progressive jackpot game which is part of a live casino game. More particularly, the invention relates to a method and apparatus for selecting a prize at random for participants in the auxiliary or progressive jackpot
10 game.

Background Art

15 A progressive jackpot game is an auxiliary game to a casino game in which an extra bet is placed at the time of placing a normal bet for the casino game. If the casino game player obtains a predetermined combination of cards or the like, and the player has decided to participate in the progressive jackpot game, then the player wins a portion of the progressive jackpot. The
20 jackpot is progressive because it increases in value as players contribute to it by participating with the extra bet from one round or hand of the main game to the next. The extra bet is a fixed amount.

25 An appeal of the progressive jackpot is that an additional chance to win is presented in which gaming skill of the player or dealer is not an issue. For example, in a poker card game, the progressive jackpot player can win if he or she has any one of a predetermined number of high scoring hands. Usually,
30 these high scoring hands would result in a win at the poker game. However, whether or not the high scoring hand will beat all other hands at the table is not important since it will qualify for a progressive jackpot win. Moreover, a player can only win in poker in proportion to his bet. The progressive jackpot game
35 allows a player to bet modestly and yet win a

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substantial prize if his hand turns out to be high scoring, provided that he continues to place the small extra bet to participate in the progressive jackpot.

5 US patent 4,861,041 to Jones et al. describes a progressive jackpot gaming method and apparatus in which winner selection is based solely on possession of any one of a few predetermined high scoring card arrangements by a participant.

10 Summary of Invention

It has been found that winner selection by possession of one of a few predetermined high scoring arrangements of cards lacks a certain appeal to players who are willing to take a chance on the extra bet for the progressive jackpot, but who do not expect to obtain a high scoring hand. A more random method of winner selection would be more appealing to players participating in a progressive jackpot auxiliary game, because when the winner selection is more random, then anyone can win. The auxiliary game according to the invention may have a prize amount proportional to a total amount of contributions collected (i.e. a progressive jackpot) or a fixed prize amount independent of an amount of contributions collected or of an amount of previously unawarded contributions.

25 According to the invention, there is provided a method and apparatus for selecting at random an element determining a winner in a progressive jackpot game. The element can be simply a player's position (seat), or a given card or combination of cards held by participants in the casino, at a table among all tables in the casino, or by a given participant. For example, blackjack players at three different tables may all participate in a progressive jackpot. Predetermined prizes (i.e. percentages of the jackpot) are awarded to all participants who have high scoring hands, such as

blackjack, twenty-one, or twenty with more than four cards. In addition to these prizes, a card is selected at random, and any participant (winner or loser) having this card in his hand wins a prize of a predetermined or
5 randomly decided value. Similarly, the value of the prize can be increased, and the prize will be awarded to only participants at a randomly selected one of the three tables. Additionally, a given participant can be selected and a single card can be selected as the
10 winning card for the progressive win. As can be appreciated, the perceived chance of winning comprises more luck than skill in the principal casino game.

The invention provides a progressive jackpot game in which a prize is determined by one or more of the
15 following:

i) randomly choosing the winning card or combination of cards at the end of the principal game;

ii) randomly selecting at the end of the principal game from all participants one of the following: a) directly a winner; b) a single participant who may win
20 if in possession of the card or combination of cards determined in i); and c) a table whose participants may win if in possession of the card or combination of cards determined in i); and

25 iii) randomly selecting the amount of the prize either as a random fixed amount or a random percentage of the jackpot.

As mentioned above, a high scoring hand usually implies that a player will win whether he or she has
30 participated in the progressive jackpot or not. The invention extends the chance of winning the jackpot to both winners and losers, which encourages players to participate in the progressive jackpot with every hand. In the case that the prize winner or potential prize
35 winner is selected at random, it is also possible according to the invention to select a player among all

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players at random, whereby the selected player cannot win unless he or she also participated in the progressive jackpot game. This reminds all players that they may miss their chance unless they participate in
5 the progressive jackpot with every hand, especially when they witness a potential winner "miss out" because he or she did not participate.

Additionally, a player may be picked at random and given an opportunity, free of charge, to participate in
10 the progressive jackpot game.

According to the invention, there is provided an apparatus for determining a progressive jackpot prize winner among players of a principal casino game, comprising input means for inputting a state of the
15 principal casino game, the state being after a beginning of the principal casino game, and means connected to the input means for randomly selecting at least one of the players and indicating eligibility of the players selected to win a prize. The invention also provides an
20 apparatus for determining a progressive jackpot prize winner among players of a principal casino card game, comprising input means for inputting a state of the principal casino game, the state being after a beginning of the principal casino card game, and means for
25 randomly picking and displaying one of a winning card and a winning combination of cards, whereby eligible players must possess the winning card or combination of cards to collect the prize. There is further provided according to the invention, an apparatus for determining
30 a progressive jackpot prize winner among players of the principal casino game, comprising input means for inputting a state of the principal casino game, the state being after a beginning of the principal casino game, and prize selecting means for randomly determining
35 the prize to be awarded from the progressive jackpot.

Brief Description of Drawings

The invention will be better understood by way of the following detailed description of a preferred embodiment with reference to the appended drawing, in
5 which:

Fig. 1 is a block diagram of a progressive jackpot prize winner determining apparatus according to the preferred embodiment.

10 Description of Preferred Embodiments

First, the structure of the apparatus according to the preferred embodiment will be described, and thereafter the method of playing the progressive jackpot game will be described.

15 As shown in Fig. 1, the invention according to the preferred embodiment comprises at each casino card table
15 a plurality 'n' of player positions each having a token acceptor 14, and a play indicator LED 22 for
indicating whether the player has put a token into
20 acceptor 14 and is participating in the progressive jackpot game. An additional chosen LED 24 indicates
whether the player has been chosen on a random basis to be eligible for winning a progressive jackpot prize.
When a player wishes to participate in the progressive
25 jackpot game, he or she inserts a token or coin into the acceptor 14. Once the game has started as indicated by
the dealer using the keypad 16, the controller 10 signals on line 40 to lock the token acceptors from
further accepting tokens (i.e. a solenoid blocking
30 mechanism is included in the token acceptor slot).

At each gaming table, there is provided a controller 10 which is connected by buses 40,42,44,46 to units 14,22,24 at each player of the table. The controller 10 is connected to a keypad 16 by which the
35 dealer at the table operates the progressive jackpot game for the table, namely he inputs using the keypad 16

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when the card game is at an end, when the next game is ready to start (i.e. ready to accept tokens for participating in the progressive jackpot game) and when the principal card game is under way. A random player selector 26 includes a random number generator for selecting at random one of the players at the table, either assuming there may be a player at all positions at the table or taking into account which players are present as entered by the dealer at keypad 16.

10 A winning "magic" card or combination of cards are picked anew for each card game round using a random number generator 28 picking cards from a virtual deck of cards. Of course, cards from an actual deck could also be picked. Picking from an actual deck of cards can be done at random using a mechanical card selection device. Computer software card games which randomly pick cards from a virtual deck of cards are known in the art. The value of the prize which may be won by the chosen player having the picked magic card or combination of cards is determined by random prize selector 30. Of course, the prize may be a percentage of the progressive jackpot or a fixed amount.

15 A display 18 is also connected to controller 10 for displaying the magic card or the combination of cards which are eligible to win, as well as the position of the player who is eligible to win and the amount which can be won. The display 18 can be a monitor placed in a location where both the dealer and the players can see it.

20 A master controller 12 is provided for controlling the progressive jackpot game for a group of tables or even for the whole casino. An input keyboard 34 is connected to controller 12 for command input. One or more wall display units 20 are also connected to the controller 12 for showing the amount of the progressive jackpot. Since the controller 12 can also decide on a

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random basis which tables are selected to be eligible to win, a random table selector 32 is provided. Table selection can be weighted based on participation at each table. A report printer 36 is also connected to
5 controller 12 for printing up daily performance reports.

As can be appreciated, the table controller 10 and units 16,18,26,28,30 could be integrated into a personal computer provided with a controller I/O card for the buses 40,42,44,46, network communications link between
10 the computer and the master controller 12, and the appropriate control software. The master controller 12 can also be controlled remotely via a modem 35. In this way, it would even be possible to have a progressive jackpot shared among several casinos with one computer
15 centrally controlling the master controllers 12 at various casino locations by modems 35.

An example of the operation of the preferred embodiment will now be described. The object of the progressive jackpot game is to add to the principal
20 casino game an additional chance of winning which is distinct from the principal game. This may be done in one of two ways. First, the chance of winning in the progressive jackpot game is unrelated to the chance of winning in the casino game. Second, the chance of
25 winning a much larger bonus prize from the progressive jackpot is present when a high scoring arrangement of cards is obtained even if the amount bet in the principal game was small. An example of the first way is a loser in the principal game who participates in the
30 progressive jackpot and possesses the winning cards for the progressive jackpot win on the basis of randomly picked cards. An example of the second way is the player who participates in the progressive jackpot and obtains the highest scoring card combination, such as a Royal
35 Flush in poker or a given combination totaling twenty-one in blackjack. In the first way, the progressive

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jackpot win is achieved by chance unrelated to the principal game. In the second way, the jackpot win is a bonus to what should be a winning hand in the principal game. In the example, both ways of winning are combined.

5 Ultimately, the player who participates in the progressive jackpot game loses none of the excitement and rewards of the principal game while gaining an additional incentive to continue playing.

10 In the present invention, there is an additional random element associated with winning a progressive jackpot prize. The system can choose at random any player or participant, or table of players to be eligible to win the random bonus prize. All players who

15 win if in possession of the predetermined high scoring card combinations. In the case of poker, these combinations are: royal flush, straight flush, four of a kind, full house and flush. The prize awarded for these combinations are a percentage of the total progressive

20 jackpot, the percentage being different for each combination as an inverse proportion to the chances of obtaining the combination. The jackpot is incremented in value each time a player participates by an amount which is less than the amount of the token accepted for

25 participation.

The random bonus prize can be a small fixed amount and can be won by all participants having a picked card termed the magic card. In poker, a player has five cards and the odds of having one of 52 cards is about 1:10.

30 For poker players, the prize may be small, such as 4 tokens. This prize could be paid, or simply be given as a credit to the player's position for future participation. In twenty-one, most players will take only a few cards, so the odds of having the magic card

35 without busting are smaller. For twenty-one players, the

prize could be 12 tokens. Again the prize could be paid or taken in credits.

5 The invention also allows for more interesting versions of the random bonus prize determination. For instance, the master controller can select a table at random in the casino to be a grand prize winner. The selected table could announce to participants after accepting tokens for the game that the magic card bonus prize value is significantly larger, namely ten times greater. Alternatively, the master controller could simply instruct the table controller 10 of the selected table to pick at random one of its participants for the purposes of awarding a bonus prize without any requirement of possession of a given card.

15 The random card picker 28 at each table can also be used to pick out two cards at random from the virtual deck as being the magic cards. Possession of two cards involves much lower odds, and the play back for the two card combination can be significant, e.g. 20 tokens in the case of poker. The random card combination can also be one of a set of card combinations having a medium scoring value, e.g. a red or black pair of any rank, a pair of rank ten or greater, and three of a kind. The value of the prize awarded can take into consideration 20 the odds of having the particular combination of cards selected. 25

CLAIMS

1. An apparatus for determining a progressive
jackpot prize winner among players of a principal casino
5 game, the apparatus comprising:

input means for inputting a state of the principal
casino game, said state being after a beginning of said
principal casino game; and

10 means connected to said input means for randomly
selecting at least one of said players and indicating
eligibility of said at least one player to win a prize.

2. The apparatus as claimed in claim 1, further
comprising indicator means provided at each position of
15 said players for indicating whether a player at each
position has contributed an amount at the beginning of
said principal game to participate in the progressive
jackpot, said indicator means being reset at an end of
said principal game.

20 3. The apparatus as claimed in claim 2, wherein
said indicator means include a token accepting apparatus
and a light at each position of said players.

25 4. The apparatus as claimed in claim 3, wherein
said randomly selecting means randomly select a group of
said players whose positions are located at a common
gaming table of said principal game.

30 5. The apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein
said principal casino game is a card game, further
comprising means for randomly picking a winning card,
whereby eligible players must possess the winning card
to collect the prize.

35

6. The apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein said principal casino game is a card game, further comprising means for randomly picking a winning combination of cards, whereby eligible players must possess the winning card combination to collect the prize.

7. The apparatus as claimed in claim 1, further comprising prize selecting means for randomly determining the prize to be awarded from said progressive jackpot.

8. The apparatus as claimed in claim 7, wherein said prize is calculated as a function of a total value of said progressive jackpot.

9. An apparatus for determining a progressive jackpot prize winner among players of a principal casino card game, the apparatus comprising:

input means for inputting a state of the principal casino game, said state being after a beginning of said principal casino game; and

means for randomly picking and displaying one of a winning card and a winning combination of cards, whereby eligible players must possess the winning card or combination of cards to collect the prize.

10. The apparatus as claimed in claim 9, further comprising indicator means provided at each position of said players for indicating whether a player at each position has contributed an amount at a beginning of said principal game to participate in the progressive jackpot, said indicator means being reset at an end of said principal game.

11. The apparatus as claimed in claim 10, wherein said state is at an end of said principal game, said indicator means comprising a reset switch for resetting said indicator means after determination of progressive
5 jackpot winners.

12. The apparatus as claimed in claim 9, further comprising prize selecting means for randomly determining the prize to be awarded from said
10 progressive jackpot.

13. The apparatus as claimed in claim 12, wherein said prize is calculated as a function of a total value of said progressive jackpot.
15

14. The apparatus as claimed in claim 9, further comprising means connected to said input means for randomly selecting at least one of said players and indicating eligibility of said at least one player to
20 win a prize.

15. The apparatus as claimed in claim 14, wherein said selecting means randomly select a group of said players whose positions are located at a common gaming
25 table of said principal game.

16. An apparatus for determining a progressive jackpot prize winner among players of a principal casino game, the apparatus comprising:
30

input means for inputting a state of the principal casino game, said state being after a beginning of said principal casino game; and

prize selecting means for randomly determining the prize to be awarded from said progressive jackpot.
35

17. The apparatus as claimed in claim 16, wherein said prize is calculated as a function of a total value of said progressive jackpot.

5 18. A method for determining a prize to be awarded in a progressive jackpot game played among players of a principal casino card game at the same time as playing the principal casino game, said prize being determined by the following steps:

10 randomly choosing at least one of a winning card and a winning combination of cards at an end of the principal game; and

indicating eligibility to win the prize on a basis of possession of a matching card by one of the players.

15 19. The method as claimed in claim 18, further comprising further steps of:

20 randomly selecting as eligible to win said prize at an end of the principal game at least one of a particular one of all participants in said progressive jackpot game and a group of said participants seated at a table among a plurality of tables in the casino; and

25 awarding said prize to participants selected as eligible who are also deemed eligible by possession of said matching card.

30 20. A method for determining a prize to be awarded in a progressive jackpot game played among players of a principal casino game at the same time as playing the principal casino game, said prize being determined by the following steps:

35 randomly selecting as eligible to win said prize at an end of the principal game at least one of a particular one of all participants in said progressive jackpot game and a group of said participants seated at a table among a plurality of tables in the casino;

identifying said randomly selected eligible participants; and

awarding said prize to said randomly selected eligible participants according to predetermined
5 conditions.

21. A method of determining a prize in a progressive jackpot game played by participating players of a principal casino game, comprising steps of:

10 incrementing a progressive jackpot as a function of participation in the progressive jackpot game;

determining on the basis of card possession at the end of the principal game eligibility to win a prize; and

15 randomly selecting an amount of the prize to be randomly variable.

22. Method according to claim 19 wherein the prize is determined to be a randomly selected fixed amount.

20

23. Method as claimed in claim 19 wherein the prize is randomly selected to be a random percentage of the progressive jackpot.

