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(54) **METHOD OF PLAYING A POKER GAME USING CARDS WITH RANDOMLY GENERATED BONUS INITITATOR INDICIA**

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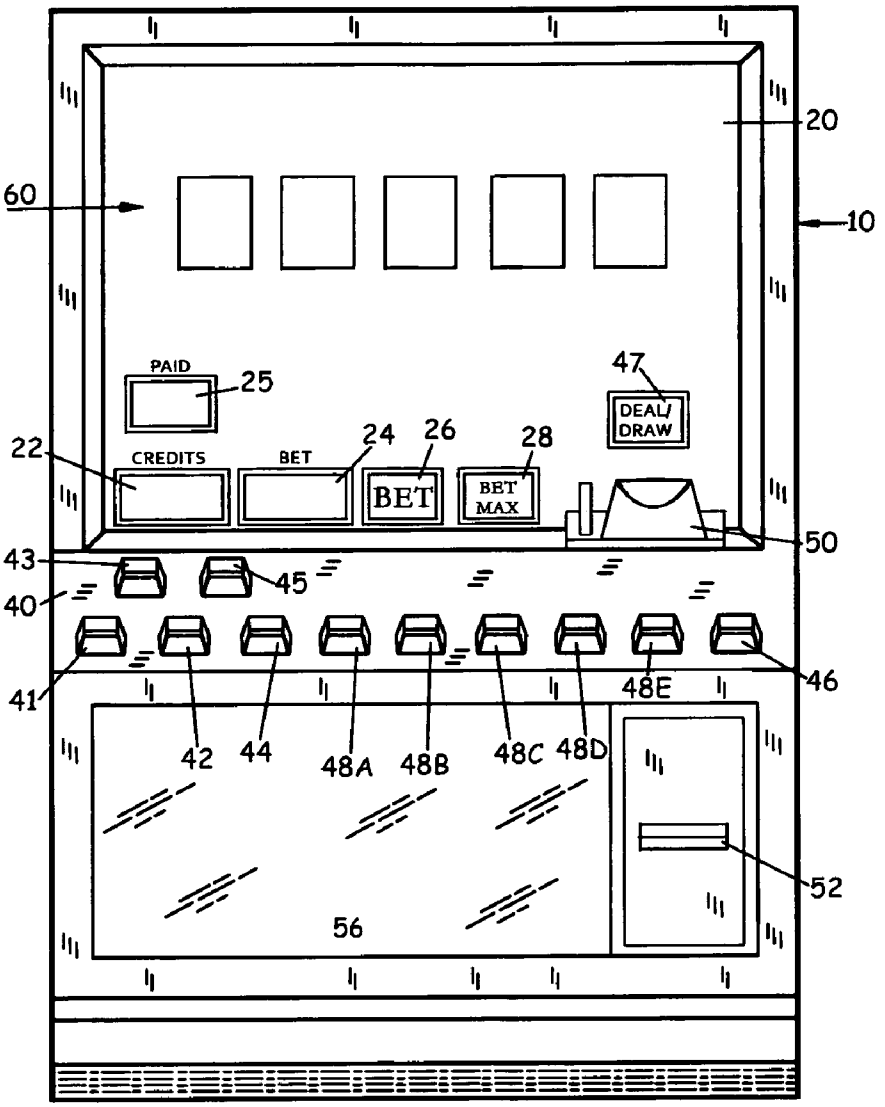
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A video poker game using a traditional deck of fifty-two cards plus a Joker card with randomly generated diamond-shaped indicia. In the base game, the appearance of diamond-shaped indicia initiates a free games bonus event. In the bonus event, the appearance of diamond-shaped indicia affects the value of winning poker hands achieved during the free games.



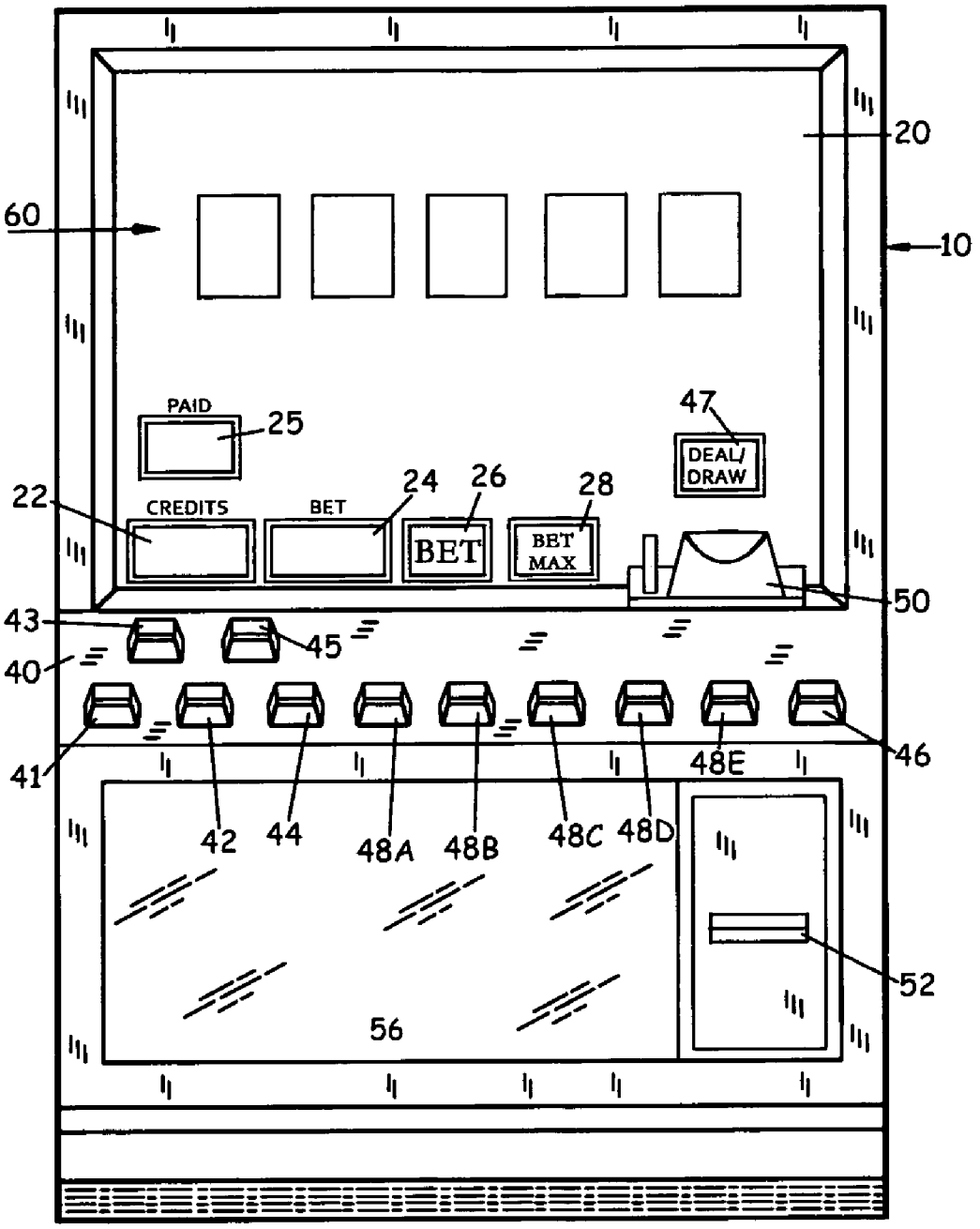

20
60
10
PAID
25
47
DEAL/
DRAW
22
CREDITS
BET
24
26
28
BET
BET
MAX
50
43
45
40
41
42
44
48A
48B
48C
48D
48E
46
52
56

FIG - 1

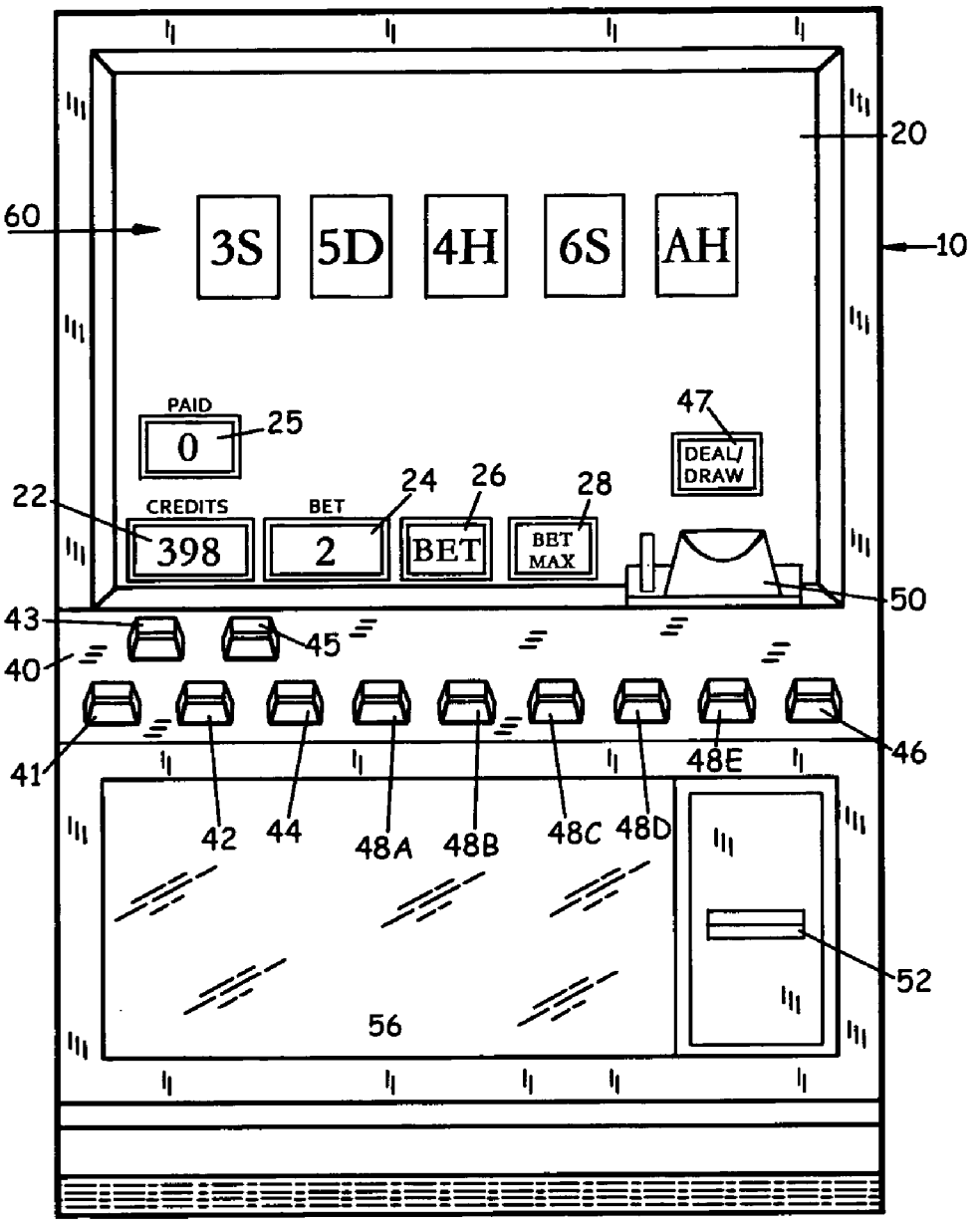

60
3S
5D
4H
6S
AH
20
10
PAID
0
25
47
DEAL/
DRAW
22
CREDITS
398
BET
2
24
26
BET
28
BET
MAX
50
43
45
40
41
42
44
48A
48B
48C
48D
48E
46
52
56

FIG - 2

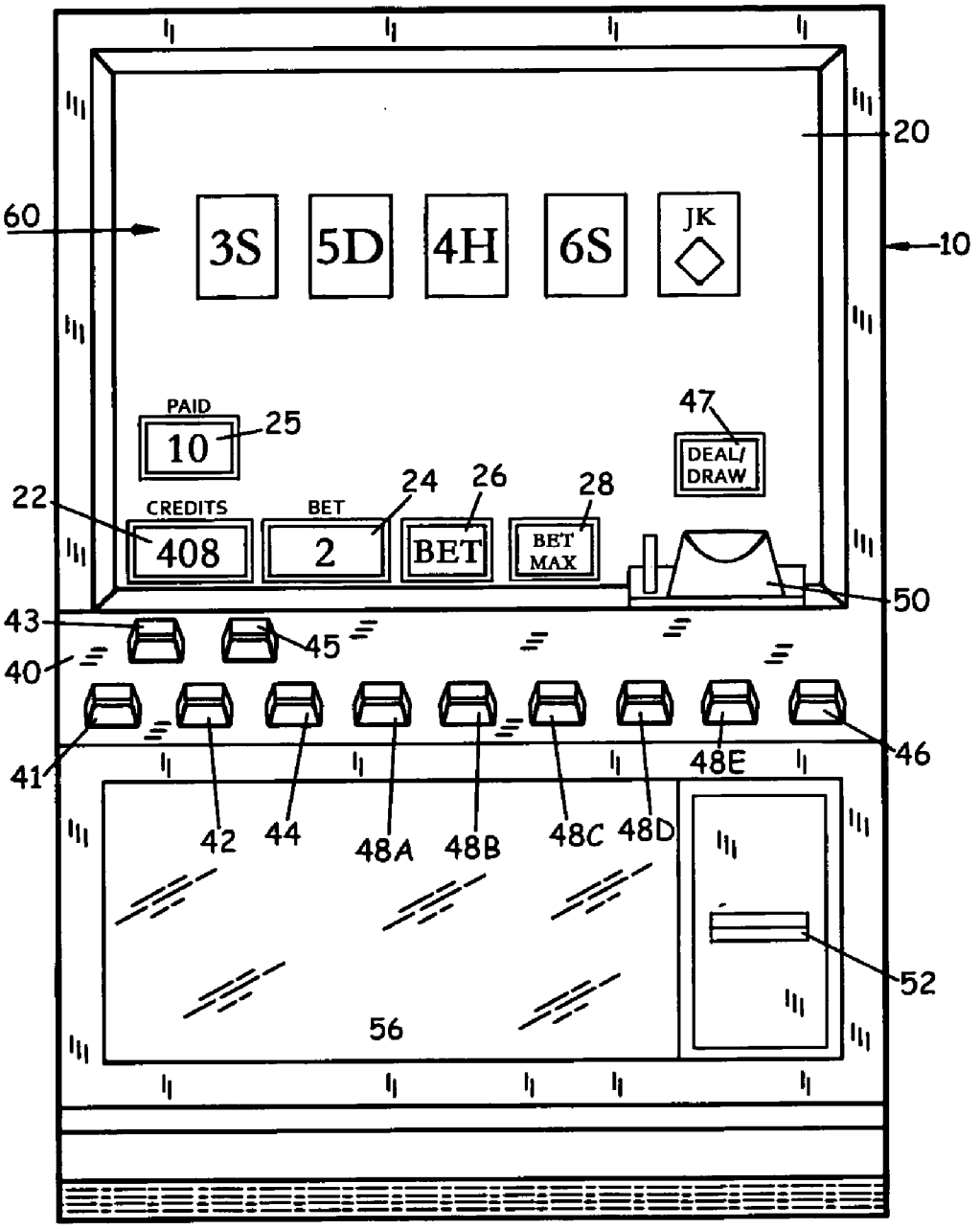

60
3S
5D
4H
6S
JK
20
10
PAID
10
25
47
DEAL/
DRAW
22
CREDITS
408
BET
2
24
26
BET
28
BET
MAX
50
43
45
40
41
42
44
48A
48B
48C
48D
48E
46
52
56

FIG - 3

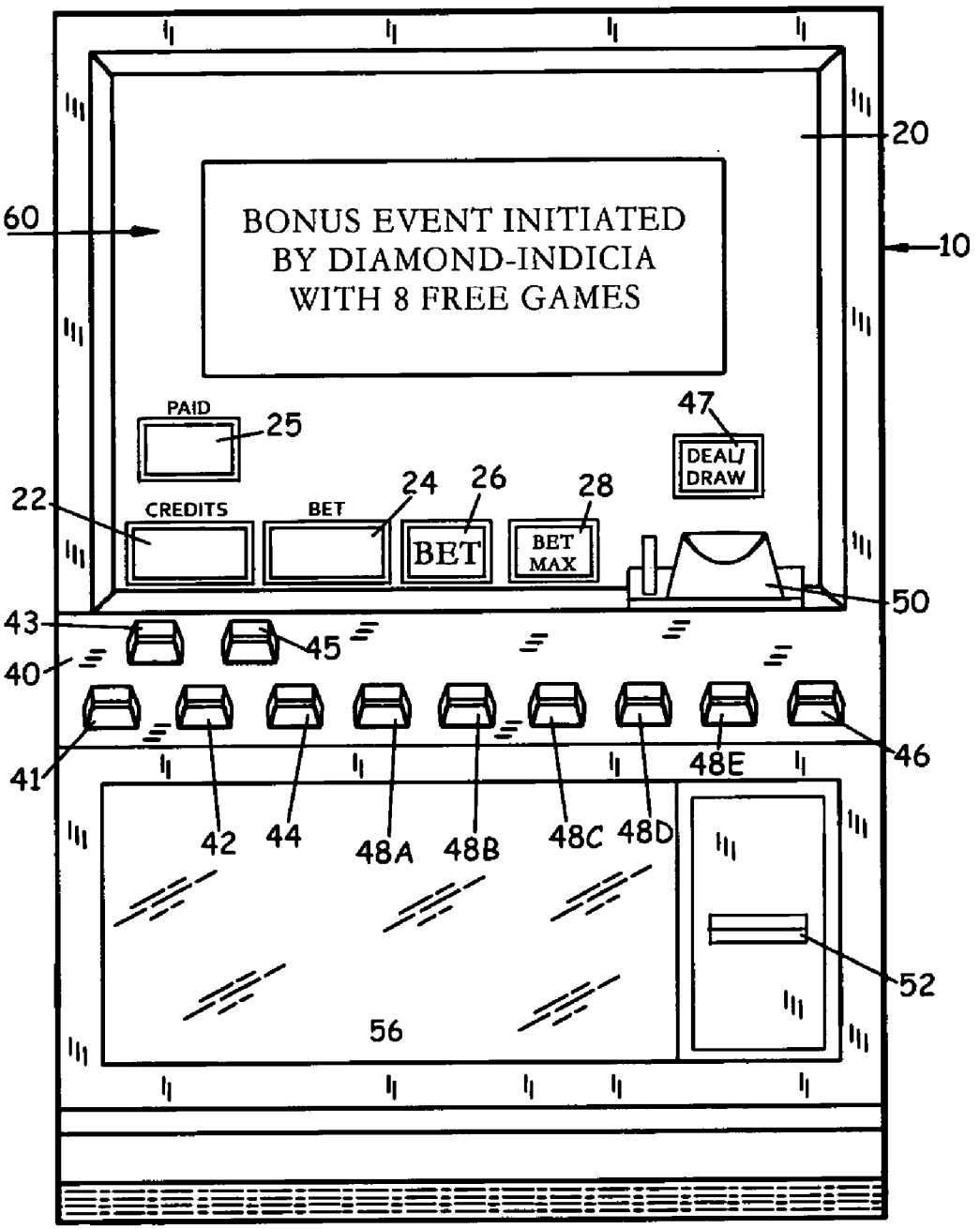
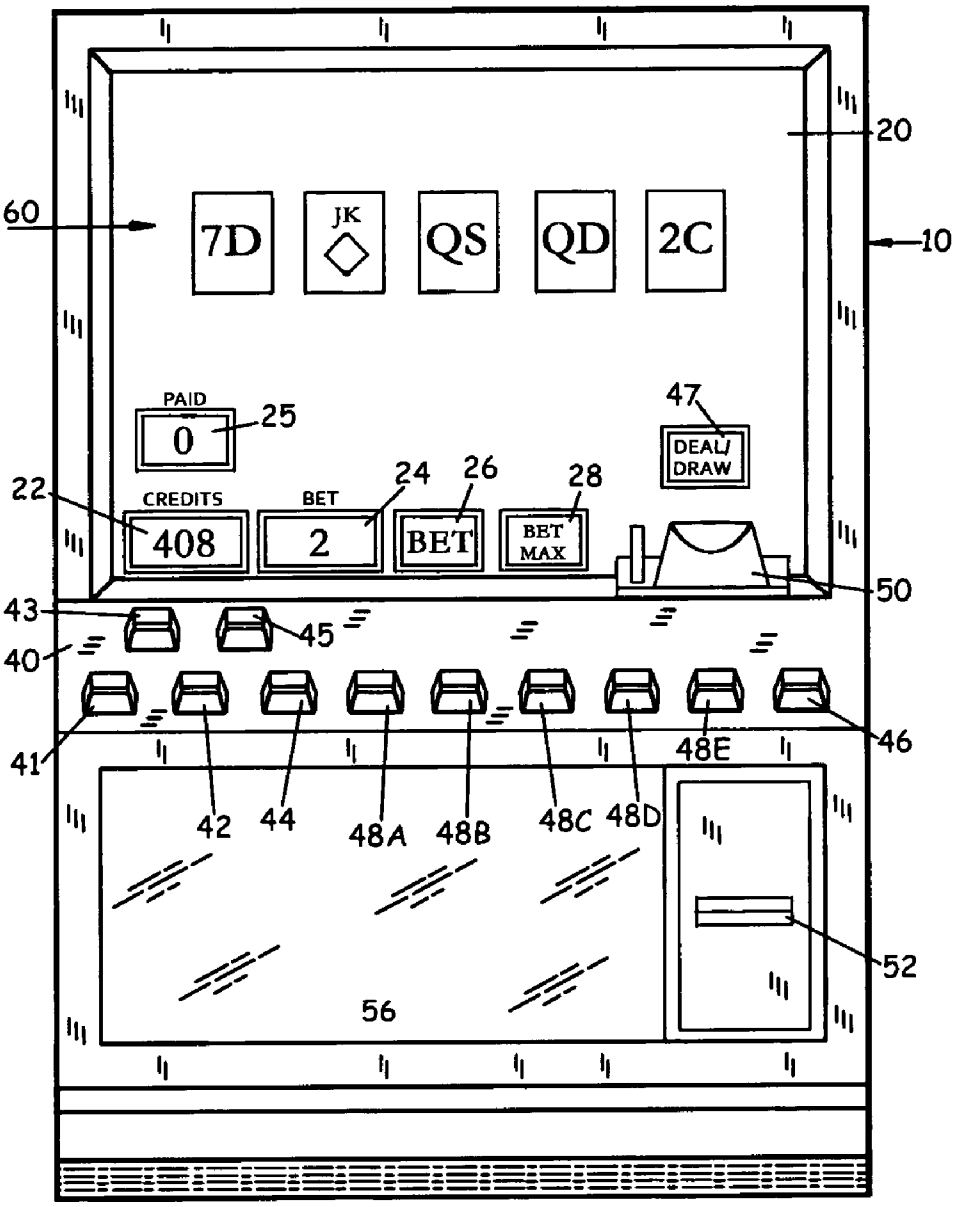

BONUS EVENT INITIATED
BY DIAMOND-INDICIA
WITH 8 FREE GAMES
PAID
CREDITS
BET
BET
BET MAX
DEAL/
DRAW
20
60
10
25
47
22
24
26
28
50
43
45
40
41
46
48E
42
44
48A
48B
48C
48D
52
56

FIG - 4


60
7D
JK
QS
QD
2C
20
10
PAID
0
25
47
DEAL/
DRAW
22
CREDITS
408
BET
2
24
26
BET
28
BET
MAX
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40
41
42
44
48A
48B
48C
48D
48E
46
52
56

FIG - 5

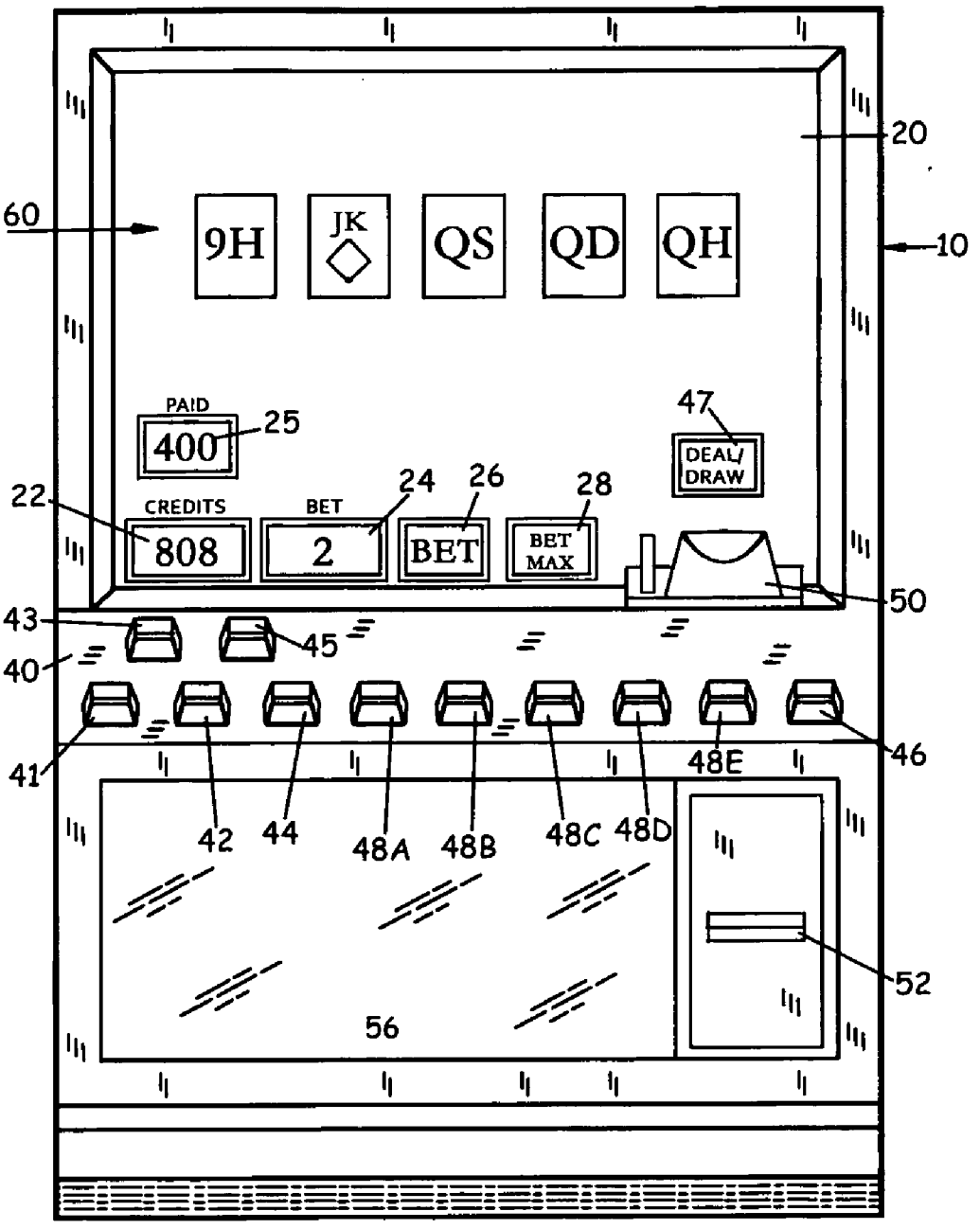
60
9H
JK
QS
QD
QH
20
10
PAID
400
25
47
DEAL/
DRAW
22
CREDITS
808
BET
2
24
BET
26
BET
MAX
28
50
43
45
40
41
42
44
48A
48B
48C
48D
48E
46
52
56

FIG - 6

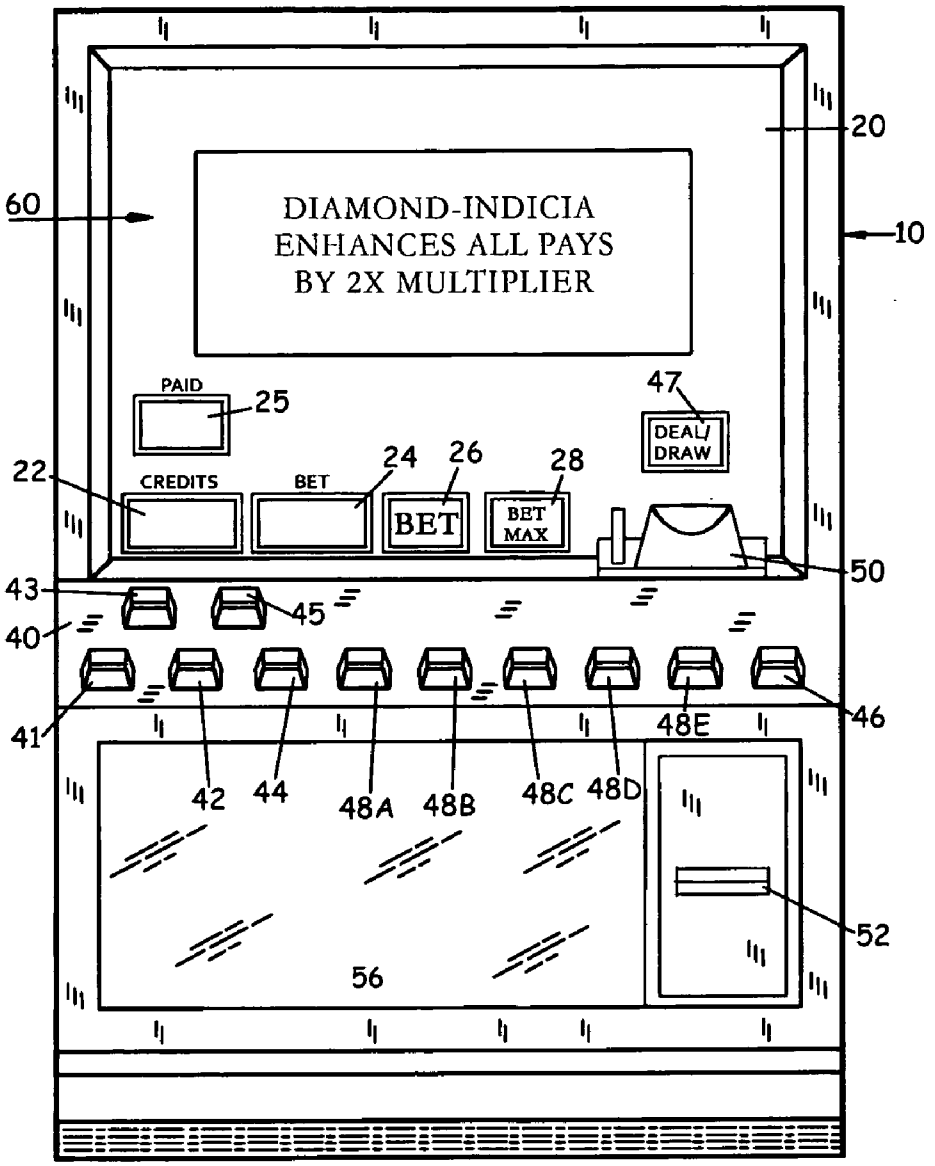
DIAMOND-INDICIA
ENHANCES ALL PAYS
BY 2X MULTIPLIER
PAID
CREDITS
BET
BET
BET MAX
DEAL/
DRAW
60
10
20
22
24
25
26
28
47
43
45
40
41
42
44
48A
48B
48C
48D
48E
46
50
52
56

FIG - 7

METHOD OF PLAYING A POKER GAME USING CARDS WITH RANDOMLY GENERATED BONUS INITITATOR INDICIA

PRIORITY CLAIM

[0001] This application is a non-provisional patent application that claims priority to and the benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 61/194,710, filed Sep. 29, 2008, incorporated herein by reference.

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FIELD OF INVENTION

[0003] This invention relates primarily to electronic video gaming devices, and more particularly to electronic video poker games that randomly generate and display indicia on playing cards to initiate bonus events.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0004] In a conventional poker machine, a five-card poker game is offered to the player. To play a game, the player deposits money in the form of coins, gaming tokens or paper currency either into a coin head or bill acceptor ("the coin-in"). The coins and gaming tokens are collected in a reservoir inside the gaming machine ("the hopper") while the paper currency is collected in the bill acceptor inside the gaming machine. If the coins, gaming tokens or paper currency are validated as authentic, the player accrues the appropriate number of playing units ("credits") on a credit meter on the gaming machine depending on the denomination of the wager as set on the gaming machine. For example, a 25-cent poker machine will accrue four credits for each dollar deposited into the poker machine by way of the coin head or the bill acceptor.

[0005] After accruing credits on the credit meter, the player determines how many credits he wishes to wager ("total bet") and then deals the cards by pressing the Deal button. In a Draw Poker game, the poker machine deals five cards face-up ("deal") from a deck of fifty-two cards ("deck"); the player makes a decision as to which cards to hold and which cards to discard ("discard"); discarded cards are replaced with new cards from the remaining cards in the deck ("draw"); and the game determines the value based on poker hand rankings of the resulting five cards ("the final hand"). In a Stud Poker game, there is just a deal and final hand, with no discard or draw. In other poker games, there may be other methods of play, such as limitations on the number of discards (i.e. three or fewer cards), two or more draws (i.e. double-draw), and/or more or less than five cards in the poker hand (i.e. three card poker).

[0006] The player collects credit awards for various types of card combinations in the final hand, according to a predetermined schedule ("pay table"). The number of credits indicated by the pay table multiplies the total wager to determine the credit award. For example: a player wagers 10 credits on a deal, achieves a final hand worth 6 credits, and therefore, receives a 60-credit award. Following any credit award, the credits won are added to the player's balance of credits shown in the credit meter. As long as the player has credits on the credit meter, the player may continue to play the poker machine or the player may collect the remaining balance of credits by pressing the Cash Out button. In addition, the player may view the rules of the game by pressing the Help button.

[0007] Since conventional poker machines are limited to the foregoing methods, players, casinos, and manufacturers suffer. Players grow bored of playing games using same method of play; casinos suffer from player dissatisfaction with the casino's game selection; casinos cannot distinguish their games from other casinos; and game manufacturers cannot distinguish their products from other manufacturers. New methods of poker, therefore, are required to provide players, casinos, and manufacturers with unique poker games, such as a poker game that generates indicia on playing cards to initiate bonus events.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0008] The present invention includes a variety of methods to generate indicia on playing cards to initiate bonus events. A preferred embodiment of the present invention uses a traditional deck of fifty-two cards plus a Joker card to play a five-card video poker game, with diamond-shaped indicia randomly appearing on said Joker card.

[0009] In the base game of a preferred embodiment, the appearance of any diamond-shaped indicia initiates a free games bonus event. For example, the appearance of diamond-shaped indicia on a Joker dealt during the base game starts a bonus event with 8 free video poker games. A weighted random table determines the frequency that diamond-shaped indicia are displayed on any Joker dealt in a base game. For example, a first random weighted table generates diamond-shaped indicia on 15% of dealt Jokers.

[0010] In the bonus event of a preferred embodiment, the appearance of diamond-shaped indicia initiates another bonus event that enhances the value of winning poker hands achieved during the free games. For example, the appearance of diamond-shaped indicia on a Joker dealt during the free games increases the pay schedule for the instant game and all subsequent free games remaining in the bonus event. Another random weighted table determines the frequency of diamond-shaped indicia appearing on any Joker dealt during the free games bonus event. For example, a second random weighted table generates diamond-shaped indicia on 100% of dealt Jokers.

SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVE EMBODIMENTS

[0011] In addition to the preferred embodiments, as described above, the present invention may be modified in one or more aspects, including but not limited to the following alternative embodiments:

[0012] Any type of game. The present invention allows for any type of poker game. For example, 3-card draw, 5-card draw, 3-card stud, 5-card stud, 7-card stud, and/or other forms and combinations of poker games including multi-hand poker games. In addition, the present invention also allows for slot machine, keno, bingo, blackjack, and other casino game embodiments.

[0013] Any type of pay table. The present invention allows for any pay table. For example, Draw Poker, Bonus Poker,

Double Bonus Poker, Double-Double Bonus Poker, and/or other types and combinations of pay tables.

[0014] Any method of generating indicia. The present invention allows for any method of generating indicia. For example indicia may be generated randomly using lists, tables, reels, arrays, or other method suitable to random generation.

[0015] Any timing for generating indicia. The present invention allows for generating indicia at any time prior, during or after a game. For example, indicia may be generated during the deal, during the draw, during the deal or during the draw, during the first draw but not any subsequent draw, a time determined by a third party, and/or at random times.

[0016] Any method of displaying indicia. The present invention allows for any method of displaying indicia. For example, indicia may be displayed on or around any playing card, at any location on the main video display screen or secondary screen, or at any other location suitable for displaying randomly generated indicia.

[0017] Any number of indicia. The present invention allows for any number of indicia to be generated and/or displayed during a game or series of games. For example, two or more indicia may be randomly generated and displayed during any game. In addition, the number of indicia may change during the play of the game. For example, more indicia may be generated during the deal than during the draw (or vice versa).

[0018] Any effect of indicia. The present invention allows indicia to serve any single function and/or numerous separate functions. For example, a first indicia may initiate a bonus event with 5 free games and a second indicia may initiate a bonus event with 10 free games. In addition, indicia may award free games, extra cards, additional draws, wild cards, credits, and/or products and services. Further, multiple indicia may be required to enhance the value of some or all winning card combinations. For example, two indicia may be required to initiate a bonus event.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0019] FIG. **1** shows a gaming machine that can be used to practice the method of the present invention.

[0020] FIG. **2** shows the deal of said first-hand of a 5-card draw poker game.

[0021] FIG. **3** shows the draw of said first-hand of a 5-card draw poker game, including a Joker displaying diamond-shaped indicia.

[0022] FIG. **4** shows the transition message indicating that a bonus event has been initiated by the appearance of a Joker with diamond-shaped indicia.

[0023] FIG. **5** shows the deal of a free game of a 5-card draw poker game.

[0024] FIG. **6** shows the draw of said free game of a 5-card draw poker game, including a Joker displaying diamond-shaped indicia.

[0025] FIG. **7** shows a representative table of multiplicative enhancements to the pay schedule based upon the number of diamond-shaped indicia appearing in the free games bonus event.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF A PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0026] A preferred embodiment of the present invention uses a traditional deck of fifty-two cards plus a Joker card to play a five-card video poker game. In the base game, the appearance of diamond-shaped indicia initiates a free games bonus event. In the bonus event, the appearance of diamond-shaped indicia affects the value of winning poker hands achieved during the free games.

Gaming Device

[0027] FIG. **1** shows the operation of a preferred embodiment on an electronic video gaming machine **10**. The electronic video gaming machine **10** includes a conventional coin head **50** into which the player can insert coins or gaming tokens and a slot **52** which leads to a conventional bill acceptor mounted on the interior of the gaming machine and into which the player can insert paper currency. The use of coins, tokens or paper currency is the mechanism by which the player wagers on the poker hands the player wishes to play.

[0028] A credit meter display **22** is provided to show the amount of credits that the player has accrued on the gaming machine **10**—either by inserting coins, tokens or paper currency or from winning plays achieved by the player. Whenever the player makes a wager, the amount of the wager is decremented from the credit meter display **22**. Whenever the player achieves a winning play during the play of the game, the amount of the winning play is incremented on the credit meter display **22**.

[0029] A conventional payout hopper is located on the interior of the gaming machine and is used to dispense coins or tokens to the player into a payout tray **56** when the player wishes to collect any winning amounts the player has accrued. Other suitable and conventional payout mechanisms can be used, such as a ticket printer or other cashless payout devices.

[0030] The gaming machine **10** also includes a video screen display **20** of any suitable type upon which representations of playing cards are displayed. The video screen display **20** preferably contains locations at which information may be displayed to the player, including the amount wagered on each hand, for example, BET **24**, the amount remaining in the credit pool, for example, CREDITS **22**, and the amount of any award issued, for example, PAID **25**. Any other information may also be displayed on the video screen display, for example the title of the game (not shown), the speed of game play (not shown), or the volume level (not shown).

[0031] A button panel **40** is also provided on the gaming machine **10** and the buttons mounted on the button panel **40** are used by the player to control the operation of the gaming machine **10**. Any suitable configuration of the buttons on the button panel can be used and, alternatively, conventional touch screen technology can be used for any or all of the buttons mounted on the button panel.

[0032] A typical button arrangement is shown on the button panel **40** in FIG. **1**. A "BET ONE" button **42** is provided to allow the player to wager one credit at a time. A "BET MAX" button **44** is provided to allow the player to wager the maximum amount of credits permitted by the configuration of the gaming machine **10**. Any number of credits can be set as the maximum amount that it is possible to wager on each hand and, typically, five credits will be the maximum number of credits for any particular hand. Alternatively, a BET ONE location **26** and a BET MAX location **28** can be provided on the video screen display **20** to allow the player to wager by using conventional touch screen technology.

[0033] A conventional "DEAL/DRAW" button **46** is also provided on the button panel **40** which is used by the player to

activate the initial deal of the cards at the deal stage of the method of play or the dealing of replacement cards at the draw stage of the method of play as is appropriate. Similarly, a DEAL/DRAW location **47** can be provided on the video screen display **20** to allow the player to effect either the deal step or the draw step by using conventional touch screen technology.

[0034] The button panel **40** is also provided with five "CARD" buttons **48**A, **48**B, **48**C, **48**D and **48**E associated with each horizontal card location on the video screen display: card button **48**A is associated with the left most card location, card button **48**B is associated with the second from the left card location, card button **48**C is associated with the middle card location, card button **48**D is associated with the second from the right card location and card button **48**E is associated with the right most card location. Each card button is preferably aligned below the card locations so that the player can easily associate the appropriate card button with the appropriate card location.

[0035] A "HELP" button **43** on the button panel **40** displays the rules of the poker game on video screen display **20**. The rules preferably include detailed descriptions of how to build a credit pool, set a wager, deal cards from a deck with Reward Cards, hold and discard cards, and collect awards for winning card combinations according to a pay schedule, including enhanced awards based upon the appearance of Reward Cards.

[0036] A "PAY TABLE" button **45** display the pays for winning card combinations on video screen display **20**. The pays preferably include a visual illustration of each winning card combination along with the award for each such combination. Further, the pays also preferably include the enhanced pay for each winning card combination, as determined by the appearance of one or more Reward Cards (RCs) during the play of the game.

Gaming Method

[0037] To play a preferred embodiment the player establishes a pool of credits, sets the wager, deals from a deck of cards, chooses which cards to hold and discard, draws replacement cards, and collects credits for winning card combinations. The appearance of diamond-shaped indicia in the base game initiates a free games bonus event and the appearance of diamond-shaped indicia in the free games bonus event enhances the pay schedule for winning hands formed during the free games.

[0038] Credit Pool. The player deposits coins, tokens, paper currency, credit cards, debit cards, or other forms of physical and/or electronic currency into the coin head slot **50** or a paper currency bill acceptor **52** to establish a pool of credits. The amount of this common pool of credits is displayed to the player on the credits meter **22**. The pool of credits increases and decreases according to the player's wins or losses and may be supplemented, if necessary, by the player by additional deposits of coins, tokens, paper currency, credit cards, debit cards, or other forms of physical and/or electronic currency.

[0039] Set the Wager. The player sets the value of the wager by using the bet one **42** and bet max **44** buttons. The bet may range between one credit and N-credits, with N equal to a predetermined maximum or set by the current value of the Credit Pool. The typical video poker gaming machine uses a five credit maximum wager.

[0040] Deck of Cards. Each card dealt is selected from a deck of cards comprised of: a fifty-two card traditional deck (i.e. the traditional four suits of Spades, Hearts, Diamonds, Clubs, with thirteen ranks in each suit of 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, Jack, Queen, King and Ace), plus one Joker card which acts as a wildcard to help form winning poker hands.

[0041] Deal of Cards. The player causes the machine to deal the cards by pressing the deal button **46**. Once the deal button **46** is pressed, the wager is final and non-refundable. For each deal, the machine randomly displays five cards face-up in the five card positions **60**. A displayed card is removed from the deck and may not be dealt again during the game.

[0042] If a Joker card is dealt as one of the five face-up cards, a first weighted random table determines whether or not said Joker card displays diamond-shaped indicia, as shown in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1

Display Indicia On Joker Card Dealt in Base Game?	
Yes	15% (or .15)
No	85% (or .85)

[0043] In the event that the result from the first weighted random table generates a diamond-shaped indicia (i.e. Yes), the Joker card displays diamond-shaped indicia over the center of the card. In the event that the result from the first weighted random table does not generate a diamond-shaped indicia (i.e. No), the Joker card does not display diamond-shaped indicia over the center of the card.

[0044] Hold and Discard. The player selects which cards to hold and which cards to discard using the card buttons **48**A-**48**E on the machine **10** or touching the cards on the video screen display **20** (i.e. pressing a button or touching a card will "hold" the card). Alternatively, the machine **10** may automatically select cards to hold and/or discard and then allow the player to override the selections by using the card buttons **48**A-**48**E or touching the video screen display **20**.

[0045] Draw. Following the discard of any cards, the machine replaces each discarded card with a card from the remaining cards in the deck. If a Joker card is dealt as one of the drawn cards, the first weighted random table again determines whether or not said Joker card displays diamond-shaped indicia. A "Yes" result generates diamond-shaped indicia over the center of the Joker card and a "No" result does not generate a diamond-shaped indicia over the center of a Joker card dealt during the draw.

[0046] Winning Card Combinations. The player is paid for predetermined winning combinations of cards that appear in the final hand. Each winning combination pays the amount indicated on the game's pay table times the total amount wagered on that hand.

[0047] Following payment for any winning hands, the machine then determines whether any diamond-shaped indicia appeared during the game and, if so, initiates a free games bonus event.

[0048] Free games Bonus Event. The appearance of any diamond-shaped indicia during the deal or draw initiates a bonus event with 8 free games. Each of the free games operates in the same manner and at the same wager-level as the initiating base game poker game.

[0049] On the appearance of a Joker card during the deal of a free game, a second weighted random table determines

whether or not said Joker card displays diamond-shaped indicia, as shown in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2

Display Indicia On Joker Card Dealt in Free Game?	
Yes	100% (or 1)
No	0% (or 0)

[0050] Since Table 2 forces all results to be "Yes," the Joker card will always display diamond-shaped indicia over the center of the card. Unlike the base game, however, the appearance of diamond-shaped indicia in a free game does not initiate a free games bonus event. Instead diamond-shaped indicia initiates a bonus event that enhances the pay schedule for winning hands formed during the free games.

[0051] The pay schedule enhancement affects the pays for the instant hand in which the diamond-shaped indicia appears and all subsequent free games in that bonus event, as shown in Table 3 below.

TABLE 3

Pay Schedule Enhancement in Free Games	
8 Diamond-Shaped Indicia	X100
7 Diamond-Shaped Indicia	X50
6 Diamond-Shaped Indicia	X25
5 Diamond-Shaped Indicia	X15
4 Diamond-Shaped Indicia	X9
3 Diamond-Shaped Indicia	X5
2 Diamond-Shaped Indicia	X3
1 Diamond-Shaped Indicia	X2

[0052] In accordance with Table 3, a first diamond-shaped indicia enhances the pay schedule by multiplying all pays by 2; the second diamond-shaped indicia multiplies all pays by 3; the third diamond-shaped indicia multiplies all pays by 5; the fourth diamond-shaped indicia multiplies all pays by 9; the fifth diamond-shaped indicia multiplies all pays by 15; the sixth diamond-shaped indicia multiplies all pays by 25; the seventh diamond-shaped indicia multiplies all pays by 50; and the eighth diamond-shaped indicia multiplies all pays by 100.

[0053] Base Game—FIGS. **2** to **4**: In FIG. **2**, the player creates a pool of credits by depositing $20 into the bill acceptor slot **52**. The credit meter **22** counts up to 400 by awarding one credit for every 5-cents deposited. The player sets the wager to 2 by pressing the bet one button **42** two times to raise the bet meter **24** from 0 to 2.

[0054] The player then presses the deal/draw **46** button. Upon the deal, the credits meter **22** counts down from 400 to 398. From the deck of fifty-three cards, the machine **10** randomly selects five cards to deal into the five card positions **60**. Each of the cards in deck are indicated using S(pades), H(earts), D(iamonds), C(lubs), to represent the four suits; numbers 2 to 10, J(ack), Q(ueen), K(ing), A(ce) to represent the ranks within each suit set; the Joker card is indicated by JK.

[0055] FIG. **2** shows five cards dealt to the card positions **60** of the video screen display **20**: 3S, 5D, 4H, 6S, AH. Using the card buttons **48**A-**48**E below each of the five card positions, the player holds the 3S, 5D, 4H, and 6S, but does not hold the AH. The player then presses the deal/draw **46** button to replace the non-held card and compose the final hand. The replacement card is randomly drawn from the remaining 47 cards in the deck.

[0056] FIG. **3** shows the replacement of the AH with the JK with diamond-shaped indicia to create the following final hand: 3S, 5D, 4H, 6S, JK. The game **10** issues a credit award for five cards of consecutive ranks, or a Straight. The award is calculated by multiplying 5-credit award for a Straight by the 2 credits wagered on the game. The credits meter **22** counts up from 398 to 408 and the paid meter **25** reads 10.

[0057] The appearance of a JK with diamond-shaped indicia initiates a bonus event with 8 free games operating in the same manner and at the same wager-level as the initiating base game poker game. FIG. **4** shows message window **90** indicating that a free games bonus event has been initiated by the appearance of a Joker card with diamond-shaped indicia.

[0058] Free Games—FIGS. **5** to **7**: In the bonus event, the player does not need to place a wager as the games are free. The player presses the deal/draw **46** button. Upon the deal, the credits meter remains at 408.

[0059] From the deck of fifty-three cards, the machine **10** randomly selects five cards to deal into the five card positions **60**. FIG. **5** shows five cards dealt to the card positions **60** of the video screen display **20**, including the one Joker card with diamond-shaped indicia: 7D, JK with diamond-shaped indicia, QS, QD, 2C.

[0060] The JK with diamond-shaped indicia acts as a Q(ueen) Clubs to help form a winning Q-Q-Q card combination. In addition, the appearance of a first diamond-shaped indicia enhanced the pay schedule enhanced to 2× in accordance with Table 3 and as shown in the message window **90** in FIG. **7**.

[0061] Using the card buttons **48**A-**48**E below each of the five card positions, the player Holds the JK, QS and QD, but does not hold the 7D or 2C. The player then presses the deal/draw **46** button to replace the non-held cards and compose the final hand. The replacement card is randomly drawn from the remaining 47 cards in the deck.

[0062] FIG. **6** shows the replacement of 7D and 2C with 9H and QH to create the following final hand: 9H, JK with diamond-shaped indicia, QS, QD, QH. The game **10** issues an enhanced 400 credit award for four cards of the same rank, or Four of a Kind. The enhanced award is calculated by multiplying the 100 credit award for Four of a Kind by the 2 credits wagered on the game by the 2× pay schedule enhancement for a first diamond-shaped indicia. The credits meter **22** counts up from 408 to 808 and the paid meter **25** reads 400.

[0063] Content with his or her winnings, the player presses the cash out button **41**. The gaming device issues 808 nickels or any other form of currency, including cash, an EZ-PAY™ ticket, or electronic payment transfer card/device.

SCOPE & SPIRT OF THE PRESENT INVENTION

[0064] The many features and advantages of the present invention are apparent from the descriptions of the preferred and alternative embodiments. The present invention, however, is not limited to these particular embodiments, as the invention is capable of being practiced and carried out in various ways. For example, new features may be added to an existing embodiment or features from two or more embodiments may be combined to produce a new embodiment. Further, features mentioned in any embodiment may be interchanged with similar features not mentioned that perform the same or similar functions. And, finally, the phraseology and

terminology used to explain the embodiments are only descriptive and should not be regarded as limiting. The claims, therefore, seek to cover all features and advantages that fall within the true spirit and scope of the present invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A method of playing a card game in which a player makes a wager to participate in the card game comprising:

a) providing a modified deck of playing cards having a standard fifty-two card deck and one or more wildcards;

b) providing a pay table in which payouts are based on predetermined combinations of poker hand rankings;

c) shuffling the modified deck of cards and dealing an initial hand of cards to the player;

d) if a wildcard appears in the initial hand of cards, randomly determining if an indicia will display on said wildcard;

e) selecting none, one or more of the cards as cards to be held;

f) discarding the cards that were not selected to be held and replacing each of those cards with another card to make a final hand;

g) if a wildcard did not appear in the initial hand of cards but appears in the final hand of cards, randomly determining if an indicia will display on said wildcard;

h) determining the poker hand ranking of the final hand;

i) awarding pay outs for final hands in accordance with the pay table; and

j) if a wildcard displayed an indicia in the initial or final hand of cards, initiating a bonus event.

2. A method of claim **1** which uses a weighted probability table to determine if a wildcard displays indicia.

3. A method of claim **1** which uses a bonus event providing one or more free games to the player.

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