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(54) **TEAM POKER GAME**

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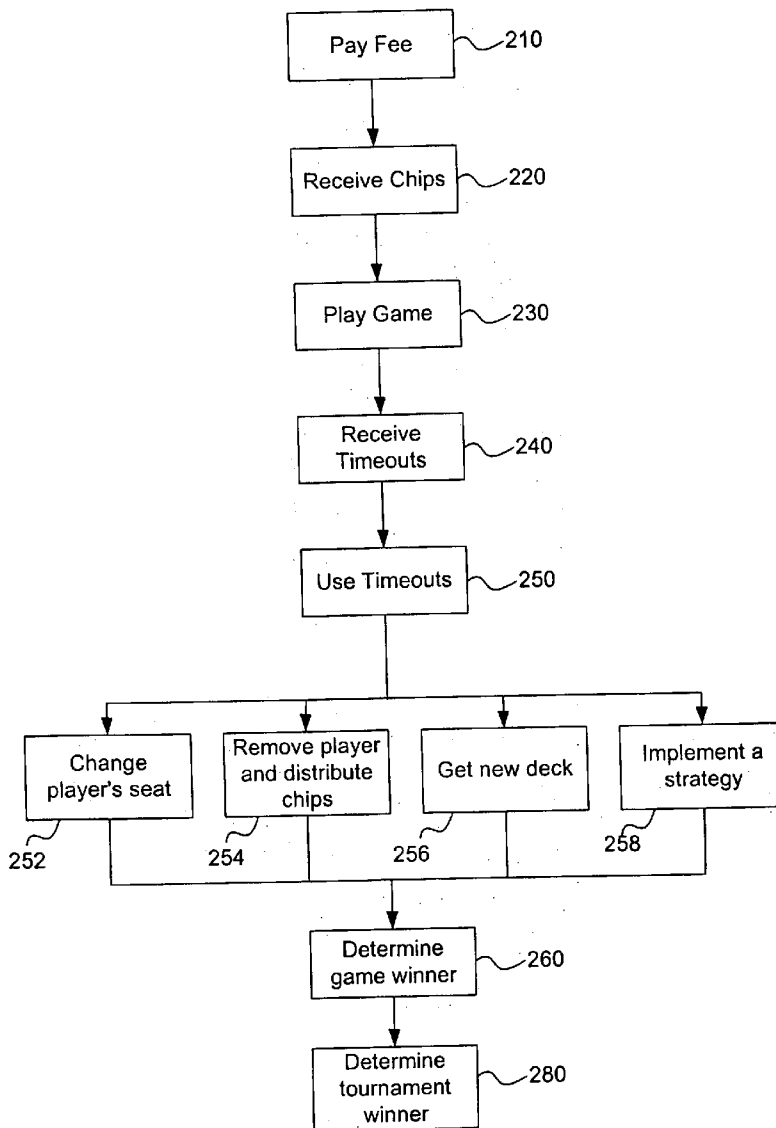
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A team-poker tournament includes having at least two teams play poker either for a predetermined period of time, a predetermined number of hands, or until the members of one team have no chips remaining. A team captain may call a timeout and implement strategic moves.

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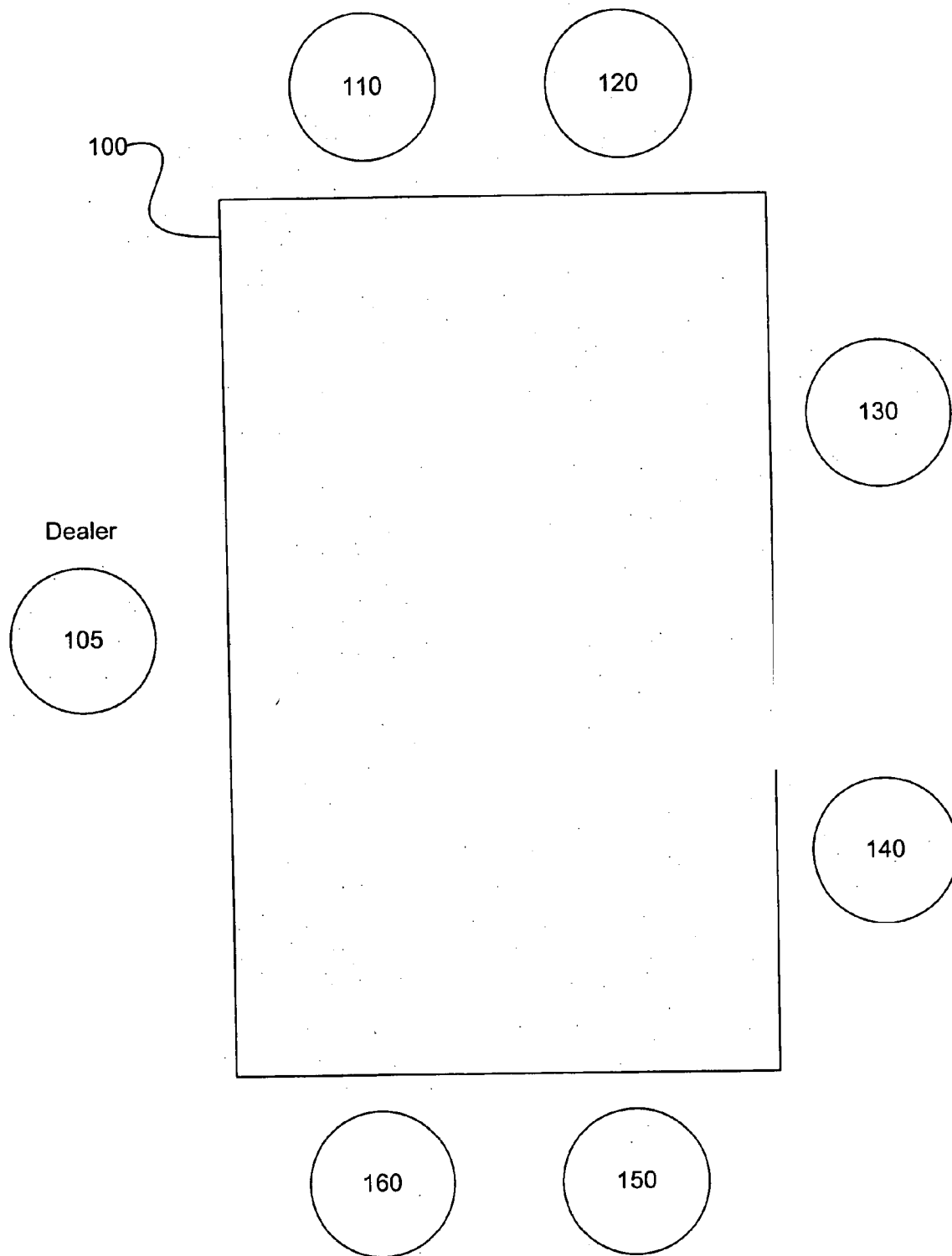


FIGURE 1

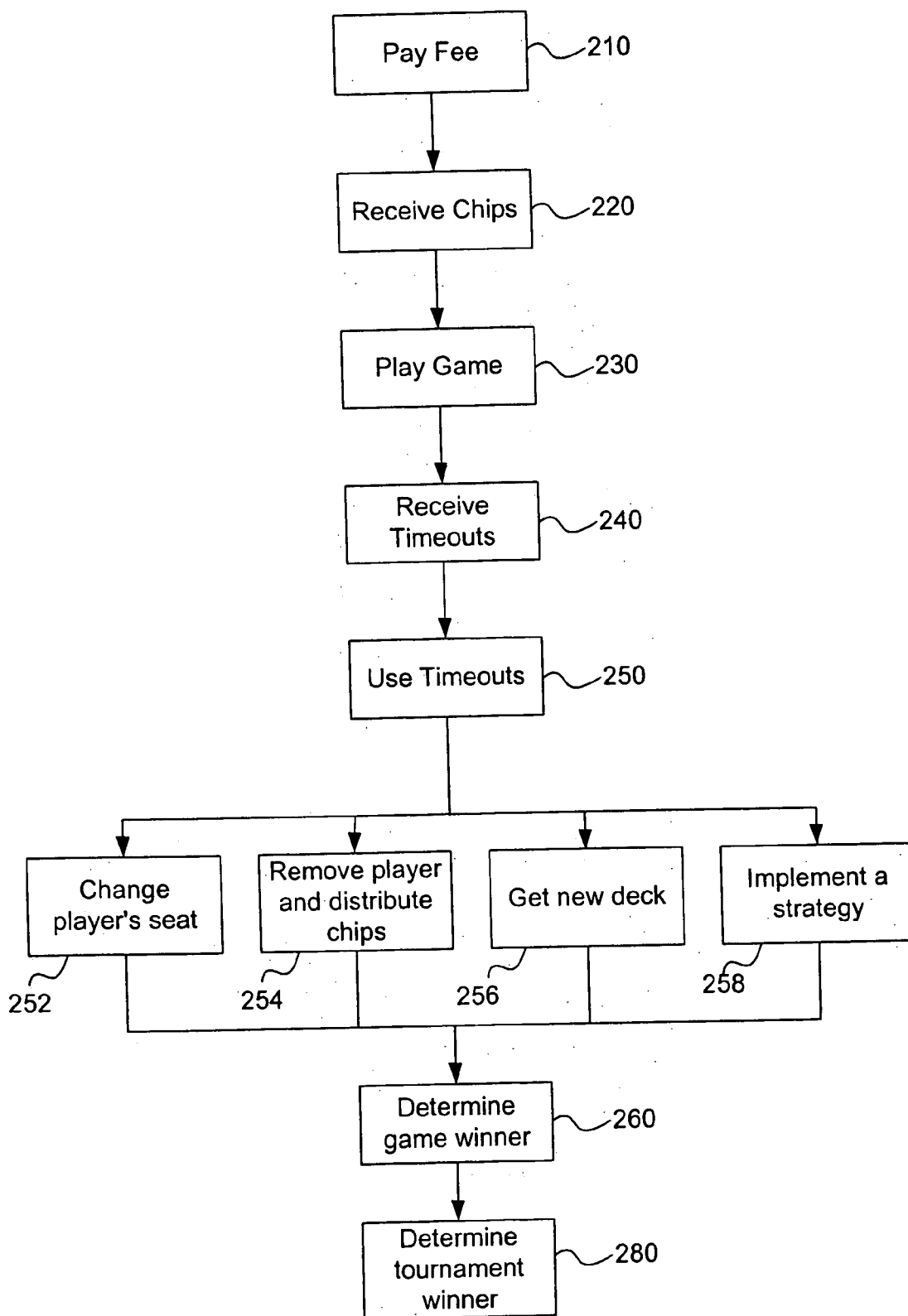


FIGURE 2

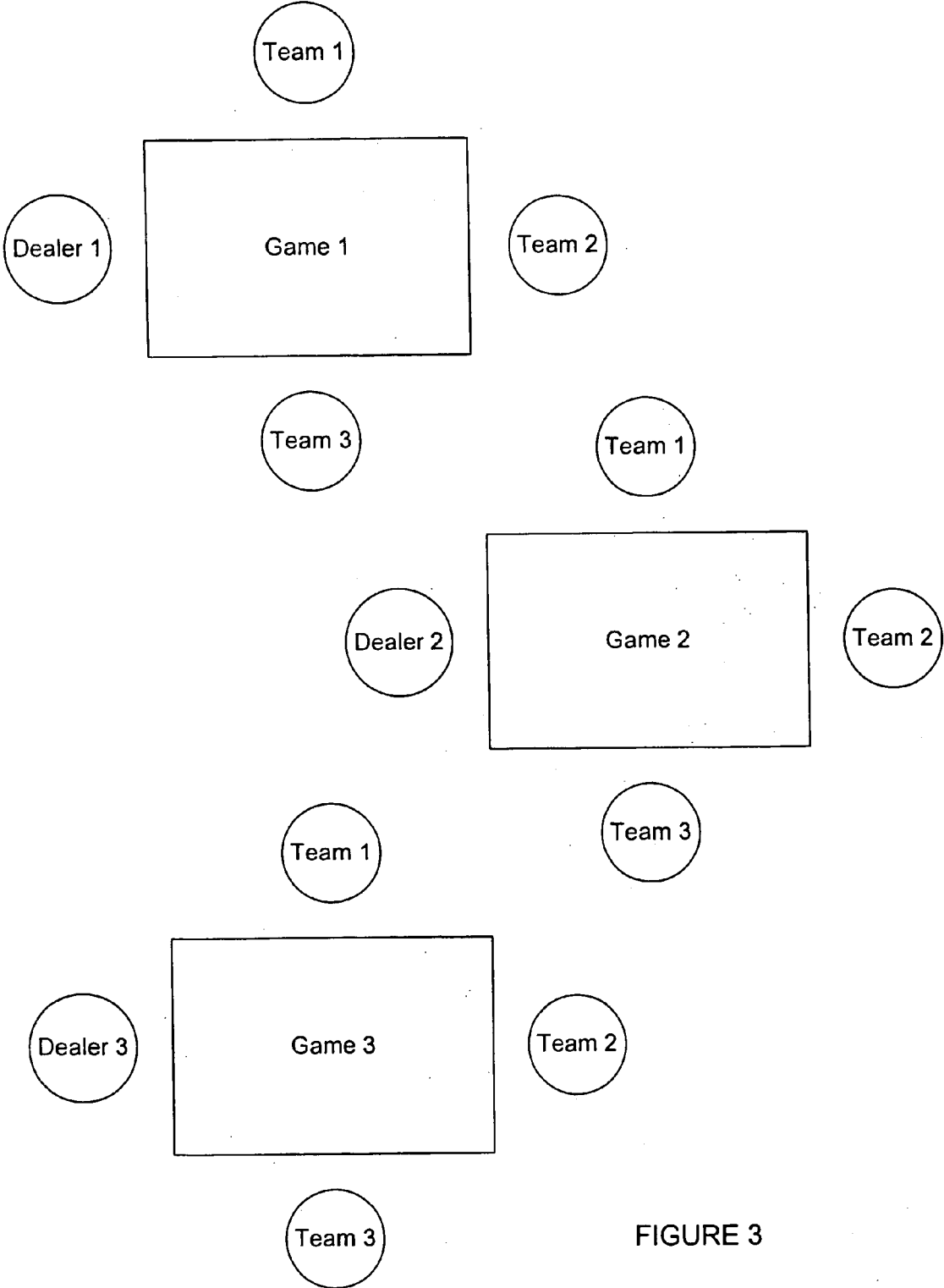


FIGURE 3

TEAM POKER GAME

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] This invention relates generally to the field of card games, and more particularly to the field of poker games.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Poker is the prototypical individual game. Everything a poker player does, from betting, to bluffing, to playing psychological games, is designed solely to benefit the player and to work to the detriment of all other players. As Anthony Holden explained in his book, *The Big Deal: One Year as a Professional Poker Player*, “Whether he likes it or not, a man’s character is stripped bare at the poker table; if the other players read him better than he does, he has only himself to blame. Unless he is both able and prepared to see himself as others do, flaws and all, he will be a loser in cards, as in life.”

[0003] Poker’s popularity has risen in recent years, largely as the result of television coverage, Internet sites, and a new emphasis on the game from casinos. Not only have casinos devoted more of their gambling space to poker, sales of poker books and participation in online poker tournaments have skyrocketed. Poker has an interesting mixture of skill and luck that seems to attract gamblers confident in their ability to have enough skill to conquer luck.

[0004] To capitalize on this increased interest in poker, some casinos now offer poker games, such as pai gow poker, that pit a player against the house. The object of pai-gow poker is to make two poker hands that beat the house hand. A player divides seven cards into a five-card hand (high hand) and a two-card hand (low hand). If both hands beat the house’s hand, the player wins, if both are worse, the house wins, and a split is a push.

[0005] Other poker games of this type include Caribbean Stud, Let’em Ride, and Tri Card Poker. These types of poker games are also available online, but again, they involve individual play.

[0006] Another avenue of increased interest involves poker tournaments, where players compete against each other for prize money awarded to those who survive the longest in games against other players. Tournaments take place online and at casinos.

[0007] Different tournaments involve different poker games. For example, one of the most popular games is Texas Hold’em, where each player first receives two cards face down. A round of betting ensues, as players decide whether to remain in or fold. The dealer then deals five community cards face up as follows. The first three cards are called the “flop,” and the players can bet after these are turned over. The fourth card is called the “turn,” and provides another opportunity to bet. The fifth card, or the “river,” is the last opportunity to bet. The game either has an upper limit for bets or is unlimited. The player with the best hand formed from the two face-down cards and the five community cards takes the pot, as does any player remaining after all the others have folded.

[0008] There are several variations of this type of poker, such as Omaha. Other types of poker, such as five-card draw and its variations (e.g., Lowball), and seven-card stud and its

variations (such as Razz), do not have shared cards. These games are available at casinos or online. They all share one attribute, however. Players are not allowed to collaborate with one another. Any attempts to act in concert with another player constitute cheating.

[0009] Although there is always an interest in developing new poker games, these have been limited to individual games. There has been little if any interest in playing poker in teams, as the team concept runs counter to the inherent individualism of poker.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0010] A method of playing a poker tournament involving teams with multiple members comprises: having the members of each team play hands of poker; selecting a game-ending criterion; determining the scores of each team when the game-ending criterion is met; and declaring a winner with the best determined score.

[0011] The following description of a team-concept gambling game will make clear to persons of ordinary skill objects and advantages of the invention. Both the previous general description and the following detailed description, however, merely provide illustrations and examples, and do not restrict the invention defined by the claims.

[0012] The accompanying drawings, which are incorporated in and constitute a part of this specification, illustrate implementations of the invention, and together with the description, help explain the principles of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0013] FIG. 1 is an exemplary layout for a team poker tournament consistent with the invention.

[0014] FIG. 2 is a flow diagram of a possible team poker tournament consistent with the invention.

[0015] FIG. 3 is an exemplary layout for another team poker tournament consistent with the invention.

DESCRIPTION OF THE EMBODIMENTS

[0016] In the following description, the same reference numbers in the figures refer to the same or similar elements, unless indicated otherwise. The figures, however, merely show some, but not all, examples consistent with the claimed invention.

[0017] In one implementation consistent with the invention, several teams compete against each other. The size of teams is not important, and may, for example, depend on the number of teams. A typical size may be three to five players. Preferably, each team has a captain who could be one of the players, but need not be.

[0018] In one type of team tournament, each game lasts for a preset period of time, such as two hours. Alternatively, each game lasts for a predetermined number of hands, such as fifty hands. In yet another alternative, similar to individual tournaments, a game could continue until only the members of one team have any chips left.

[0019] FIG. 1 shows an arrangement of players around a poker table 100 with a dealer 105. Players 110, 130, and 150 are on one team, and players 120, 140, and 160 are on another team. Alternatively, the players on a team may sit

next to each other to possibly make it easier for a captain to make the strategic moves explained below.

[0020] FIG. 2 is a flow diagram showing possible steps in a team poker tournament. Preferably, the teams provide an entrance fee (Step 210). The amount often reflects the size of the reward for the winners.

[0021] At the start of play, each person on each team preferably receives a designated amount of chips, for example, \$10,000 (Step 220). It does not matter which poker game the players play. It could be Texas Hold'em, or one of the variations, draw poker, or one of its variations, or stud poker, or one of its variations. The teams could also play a different kind of poker, a different type of card game, or some other game involving betting.

[0022] After receiving the chips, the players on each team play the designated game according to the rules of that game (Step 230). It is possible, however, to modify the rules as necessary for team tournament play.

[0023] In addition, each team can have a captain who would have a designated number of timeouts (e.g., ten) or a designated number of timeouts each time unit (e.g., three per hour) (Step 240). Alternatively, the number of timeouts could differ for each hour of the game. For example, during the first hour of a two-hour game, the captain might have three timeouts, but only have two timeouts during the second hour.

[0024] A captain may call a time out to execute any number of strategic maneuvers to try to win the match (Step 250). For example, the captain may switch the players' seats of his players to allow a more aggressive player to bid a certain hand (Step 252). The captain could also remove a player from the game and give that player's chips to another player, such as one having better luck (Step 254). Another option would be to request a new deck (Step 256), or to implement a poker strategy (Step 258) such as refraining from betting a hand that has no ace, king, or better. In general, a player could take any legal action that the captain deems appropriate to win.

[0025] The game continues until no time remains or until one team has no more chips, or whatever game ending criterion is chosen (Step 260). In a tournament, the games would continue until one team prevailed (Step 280).

[0026] This team tournament has several advantages over conventional individual poker games. Using teams can foster rivalries. For example, during baseball season, a New York team can compete against one from Boston. Also, the team concept ensures that the last hand will have at least one player from a different city. This will maintain interest better than a tournament where the last hand involves two players from the same city or team.

[0027] In addition, the team concept allows the audience to see the strategy calls of the team captain. In this sense, a team tournament involves the audience more than individual tournaments.

[0028] The team concept also allows several variations. The teams can be involved in leagues. Each team would receive points equal to the number of chips a team gains above those received at the beginning (and teams could lose points as well if they have fewer chips at the end that they started with). The league winner would be the team with the

most points at the end of a season. Alternatively, the winning team can just be credited with a win, in which case the league winner would be the team with the most wins.

[0029] Another variation would have several simultaneous games with players from the teams at different tables. The tables could be playing the same game or different games. FIG. 3 shows a layout of this type of set-up, with three games, three team members of three teams, and three dealers. A captain's strategy in such a game might involve moving players between games, cashing out of one game and going to another, or sitting out of a game for awhile to stop losses while a teammate is winning at another table.

[0030] Also, although one variation would have games end at a certain time, the games could be continuous or progressive. In a continuous game, a team's chips are totaled after a round (a preset period of time or a preset number of hands) is over. On another day, each team would begin a new round with the number of chips it had at the end of the previous round. In a progressive game, the team's chips could be increased or decreased, or the stakes could be higher. Each round could also involve a different type of poker game. The different poker games could be predetermined, or chosen by chance.

[0031] In addition, the games can take place on line over the Internet. Persons of ordinary skill will recognize how to modify existing poker games that take place online, such as in U.S. Pat. No. 6,508,709, which is herein incorporated by reference. Online gaming enhances the team concept because it allows strategies to be carried out in the privacy of the locations of the team members.

[0032] Other embodiments of the invention will be apparent to those skilled in the art from consideration of the specification and practice of the invention disclosed herein. The specification and examples are merely possible implementations consistent with the claimed invention. The following claims define the scope of the invention.

1-19. (canceled)

20. A method of playing a poker tournament online involving teams with multiple members, comprising:

having the members of each team play hands of poker online;

selecting a game-ending criterion;

determining the scores of each team when the game-ending criterion is met; and

declaring a winner with the best determined score.

21. The method of claim 20, further including,

providing virtual chips to the members of each team before playing the hands of poker, and

wherein determining the scores includes

determining the number of virtual chips possessed by the team members when the game-ending criterion is met.

22. The method of claim 20, wherein selecting the game-ending criterion includes selecting a game end after a predetermined period of time.

23. The method of claim 22, wherein declaring a winner includes identifying as the winner the team whose members have the greatest number of virtual chips.

24. The method of claim 20, wherein selecting the game-ending criterion includes selecting a game end after a predetermined number of hands.

25. The method of claim 24, wherein declaring a winner includes identifying as the winner the team whose members have the greatest number of virtual chips.

26. The method of claim 20, wherein selecting the game-ending criterion includes selecting a game end when none of the members of a team have any virtual chips.

27. The method of claim 26, wherein declaring a winner includes identifying as the winner a team with members that still have at least one virtual chip when none of the members of another team has virtual chips.

28. The method of claim 20, including allowing each of the teams to call a timeout.

29. The method of claim 20 including allowing replacement of a member of a team for a hand of poker.

30. The method of claim 29, wherein the replacement of a member occurs during a timeout.

31. The method of claim 21, including allowing the cashing out of a member of a team, and allowing distribution of the virtual chips of the member cashed out to another member of the team.

32. The method of claim 20, including

allowing the request of a new deck.

33. The method of claim 20, including

allowing each team a preset number of timeouts.

34. The method of claim 20, including

allowing each team a preset number of timeouts during a set period of time.

35. The method of claim 20, including

allowing each team a first preset number of timeouts during a first set period of time, and

allowing each team a second preset number of timeouts during a second set period of time.

36. A method of playing a poker tournament online involving teams with multiple members, comprising:

having the members of each team play hands of poker online;

selecting a game-ending criterion;

determining the scores of each team when the game-ending criterion is met;

declaring a winner with the best determined score;

allowing each team a first preset number of timeouts during a first period of time; and

allowing each team a second preset number of timeouts during a second period of time.

37. A method of playing a poker tournament online involving teams with multiple members, comprising:

having at least two members of each team play hands of poker online;

selecting a game-ending criterion;

determining the scores of each team when the game-ending criterion is met;

declaring a winner with the best determined score;

allowing a member of a team to cash out and receive virtual chips before the game-ending criterion is met; and

allowing distribution of the virtual chips of the player cashed out to a member of the team.

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