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(54) **GAMING METHOD, GAMING APPARATUS FOR PERFORMING THE GAMING METHOD, AND COMPUTER PROGRAM PRODUCT STORING A GAMING PROGRAM OF THE GAMING METHOD**

(75) Inventor: **Arden YANG**, Rosemead, CA (US)

Correspondence Address:
FOLEY AND LARDNER LLP
SUITE 500
3000 K STREET NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20007

(73) Assignee: **ASTRO CORP.**

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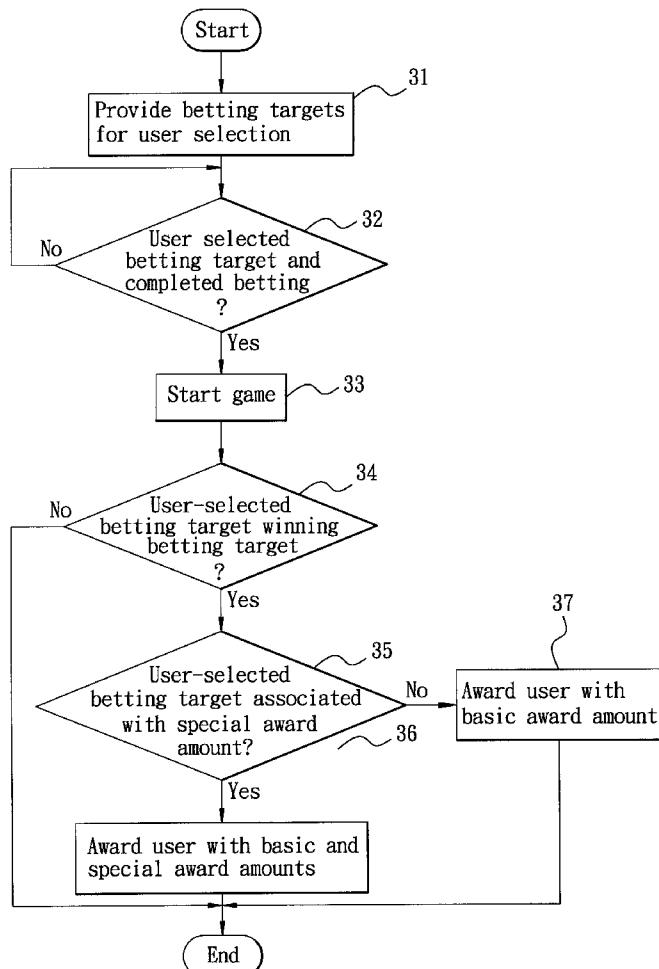
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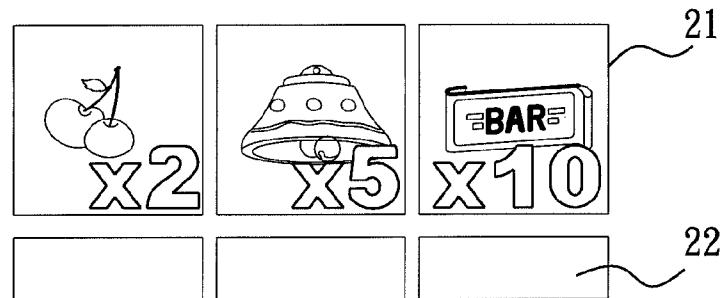
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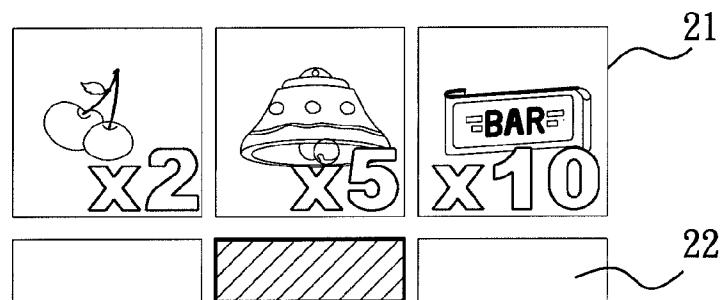
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A gaming method is implemented using an electronic gaming apparatus, and includes: a) providing betting targets for user selection, each of the betting targets being associated with a basic award amount and at least one being associated with a special award amount; b) starting a game after the user selects a betting target; c) at the end of the game, determining if the user-selected betting target is a winning betting target, and if so, determining if the user-selected betting target is associated with the special award amount; and d) when the user-selected betting target is determined to be the winning betting target, awarding the user with the basic and special award amounts if the user-selected betting target is associated with the special award amount, and awarding the user with only the basic award amount if otherwise. A gaming apparatus and a computer program product are also disclosed.

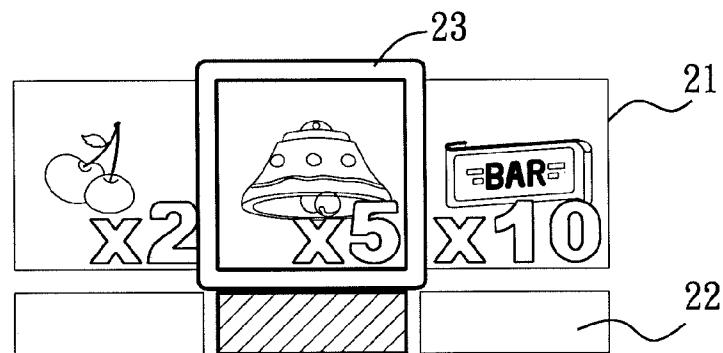




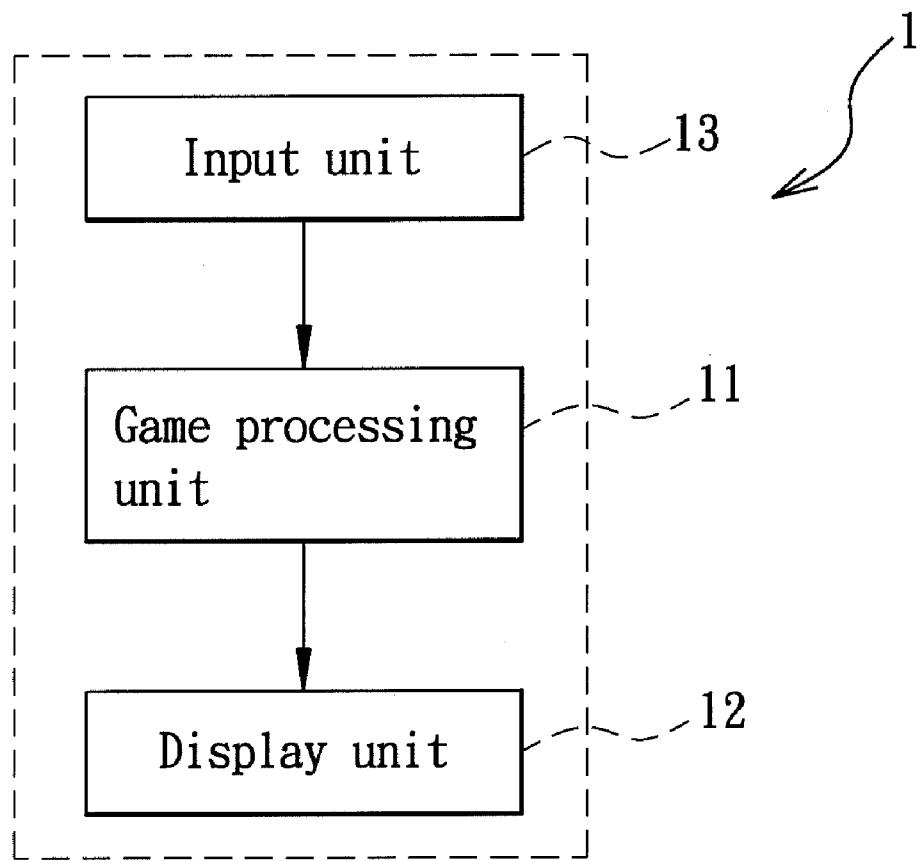
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PRIOR ART



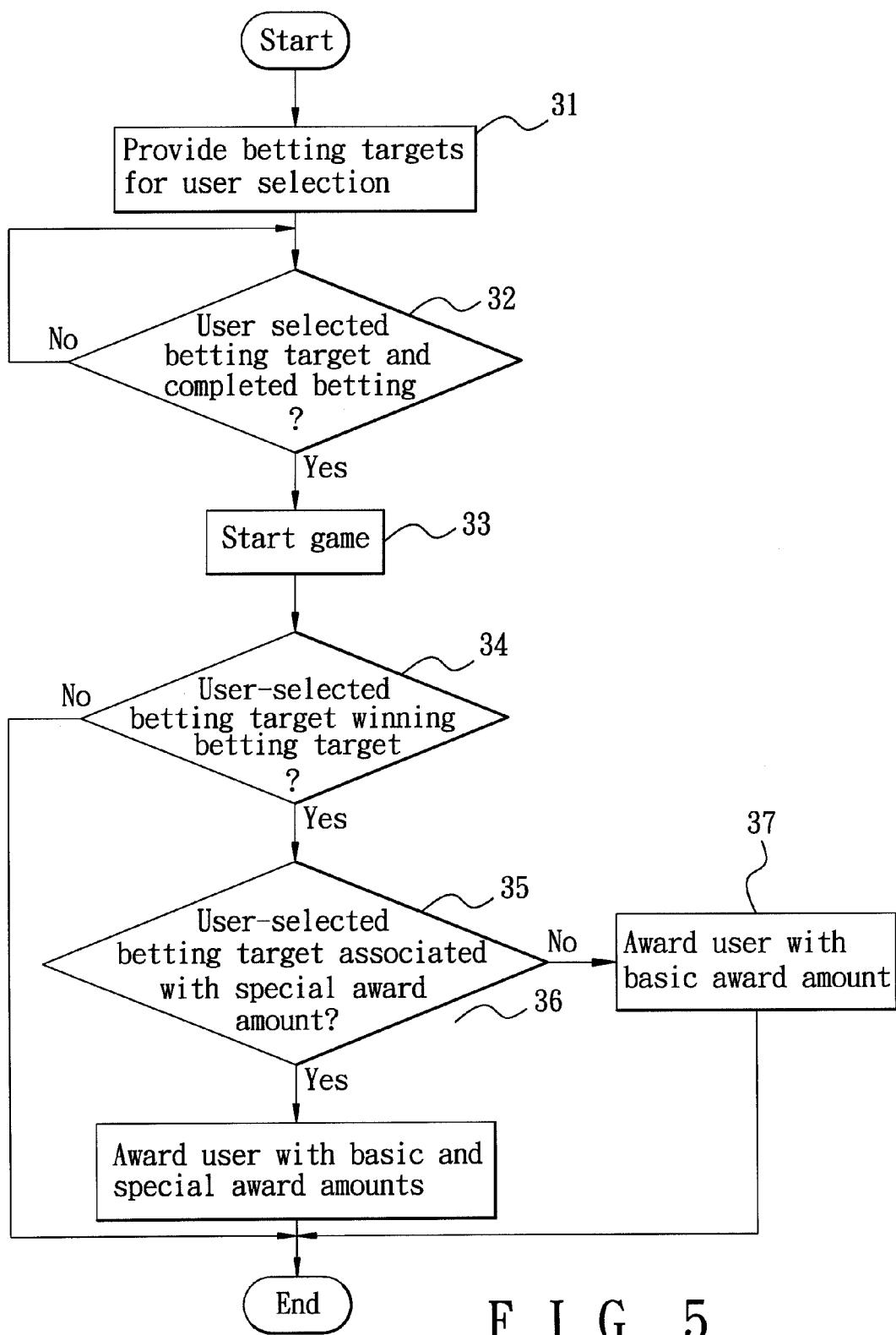
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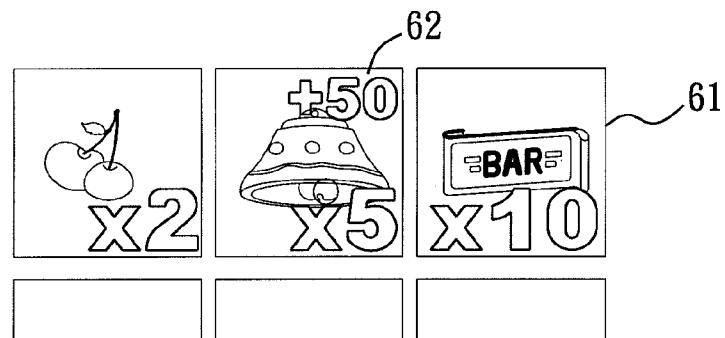
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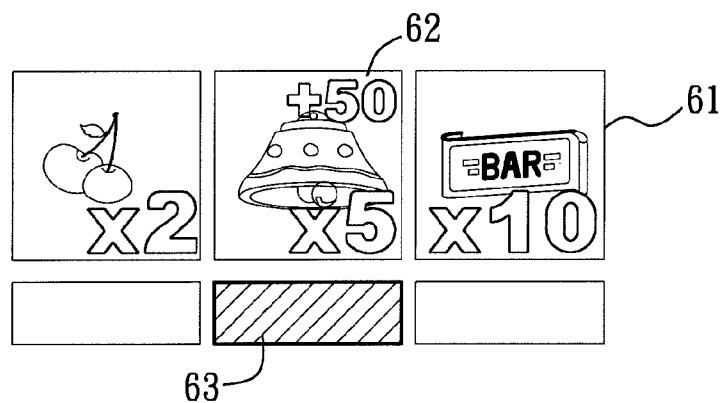
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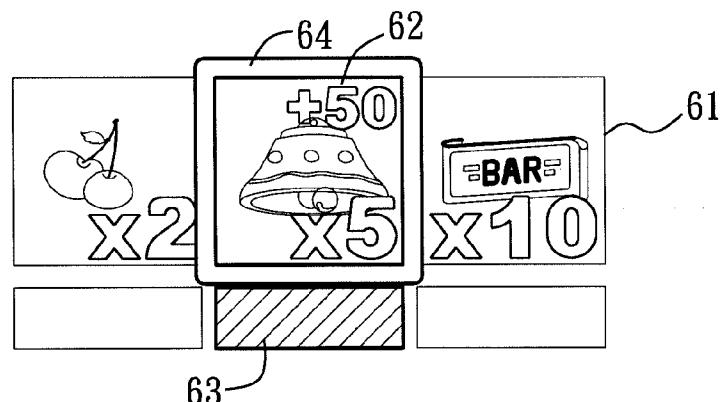
F I G. 5



F I G. 6



F I G. 7



F I G. 8

GAMING METHOD, GAMING APPARATUS FOR PERFORMING THE GAMING METHOD, AND COMPUTER PROGRAM PRODUCT STORING A GAMING PROGRAM OF THE GAMING METHOD

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

[0001] This application claims priority of Taiwanese Application No. 095130258, filed on Aug. 17, 2006.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] 1. Field of the Invention

[0003] The present invention relates to a gaming method that provides for additional award options. The present invention also relates to a gaming apparatus for performing the gaming method, and a computer program product that stores a gaming program of the gaming method.

[0004] 2. Description of the Related Art

[0005] Referring to FIG. 1, in a conventional slot machine-type of game, a plurality of indicia 21 (e.g., three) are provided for selection by a user. By activating one of a plurality of selectors 22, which correspond respectively to the indicia 21, one of the indicia 21 is selected by a user, as shown in FIG. 2. Next, as shown in FIG. 3, a highlight window 23 alternately surrounds perimeters of the indicia 21, and stops at one of the indicia 21 after a predetermined time interval. If the indicium 21 selected by the user corresponds to the indicium 21 whereat the highlight window 23 has stopped after the predetermined time interval, then the user has won the game.

[0006] Each of the indicium 21 is associated with an award amount (i.e., x2, x5, and x10), and the user is awarded according to the award amount if he or she has won the game. However, such an award scheme in which one award amount is associated with each of the indicia 21 quickly becomes monotonous, causing users to soon lose interest in the game.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0007] Therefore, the object of this invention is to provide a gaming method in which an additional award option is associated with at least one of a plurality of betting targets, thereby enhancing the gaming experience for users.

[0008] According to one aspect, the gaming method of this invention is implemented using an electronic gaming apparatus. The gaming method comprises: a) providing a plurality of betting targets for selection by a user, each of the betting targets being associated with a basic award amount and at least one of the betting targets being further associated with a special award amount; b) starting a game after the user selects one of the betting targets and completes betting; c) at the end of the game, determining if the user-selected betting target is a winning betting target, and if so, determining if the user-selected betting target is associated with the special award amount; and d) when the user-selected betting target is determined to be the winning betting target, awarding the user with the basic award amount and the special award amount if the user-selected betting target is associated with the special award amount, and awarding the user with only the basic award amount if otherwise.

[0009] According to another aspect of this invention, a gaming apparatus comprises: a display unit; a game pro-

cessing unit coupled to the display unit and configured to perform steps of the gaming method of this invention; and an input unit coupled to the game processing unit and allowing input by a user.

[0010] According to yet another aspect of this invention, a computer program product comprises a computer-readable storage medium that stores a gaming program for causing a computer to execute steps of the gaming method of this invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0011] Other features and advantages of the present invention will become apparent in the following detailed description of the preferred embodiment with reference to the accompanying drawings, of which:

[0012] FIGS. 1-3 are schematic views of sequential gaming screens in a conventional gaming apparatus;

[0013] FIG. 4 is a schematic circuit block diagram of a gaming apparatus according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

[0014] FIG. 5 is a flow chart of a gaming method according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention; and

[0015] FIGS. 6-8 are schematic views of sequential gaming screens appearing on a display unit of the gaming apparatus of FIG. 4 while playing a game according to the gaming method of the preferred embodiment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0016] Referring first to FIG. 4, a gaming apparatus 1 according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention includes a display unit 12, a game processing unit 11 coupled to the display unit 12 and configured to perform steps of a gaming method, and an input unit 13 coupled to the game processing unit 11 and allowing input by a user. In the preferred embodiment, the gaming apparatus 1 is an electronic gaming apparatus on which one or more video games that allow betting may be played. In some embodiments, the game processing unit 11 may be implemented using a computer motherboard. The present invention also provides a computer program product comprising a computer-readable storage medium that stores a gaming program for causing a computer to execute the steps of a gaming method. As an example, the gaming program may cause the game processing unit 11 to execute the steps of the gaming method. Further, the computer-readable storage medium may be a part of the game processing unit 11, or may be separate from but accessible by the game processing unit 11.

[0017] A gaming method according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention will now be described with reference to FIG. 5. An exemplary embodiment of the gaming method will simultaneously be described with reference to FIGS. 6-8.

[0018] First, in step 31, a plurality of betting targets are provided on the display unit 12 for selection by a user through the input unit 13. Each of the betting targets is associated with a basic award amount and at least one of the betting targets is further associated with a special award amount.

[0019] In the exemplary embodiment of FIGS. 6-8, the betting targets are respectively different indicia 61 (three in this example), in which each of the indicia 61 is associated with a unique basic award amount (i.e., x2, x5, and x10), and

one the indicia **61** is associated with a special award amount **62** (i.e., +50 for the middle indicium **61**).

[0020] Next, in step **32**, it is determined if the user has selected one of the betting targets and completed betting. If so, then the process continues. Otherwise, this step is repeated.

[0021] In the exemplary embodiment, the user selects one of the indicia **61** by activating one of a plurality of selectors **63**, which correspond respectively to the indicia **61**. In particular, as shown in FIG. 7, the middle selector **63** is shown activated, indicating that the middle indicium **61** has been selected.

[0022] Next, in step **33**, a game is started.

[0023] In the exemplary embodiment, during the game, an indicator is generated that alternately indicates the different indicia **61**, and the game ends after a predetermined time interval. That is, with reference to FIG. 8, the indicator is a highlight window **64** that alternately surrounds perimeters of the different indicia **61**.

[0024] Subsequently, in step **34**, at the end of the game, it is determined if the user-selected betting target is a winning betting target. If not, the game is ended.

[0025] In the exemplary embodiment, it is determined if the user-selected betting target is the winning betting target on the basis of where the indicator (i.e., the highlight window **64**) stops at the end of the game. As shown in FIG. 8, the highlight window **64** is shown stopped at the indicium **61** that was selected by the user, and hence, the indicium **61** is a winning betting target. However, if the highlight window **64** does not stop at the indicium **61** selected by the user, it is determined that the user-selected betting target is not the winning betting target.

[0026] If the user-selected betting target is a winning betting target in step **34**, it is subsequently determined if the user-selected betting target is associated with the special award amount in step **35**.

[0027] In the exemplary embodiment, since the user-selected indicium **61** is a winning betting target, it is determined if the user-selected indicium **61** is further associated with a special award amount. As shown in FIG. 8, the user-selected indicium **61** is associated with a special award amount **62**, which is an additional 50 points in this example.

[0028] Assuming the user-selected betting target is determined to be the winning betting target in step **34**, the user is awarded with the basic award amount and the special award amount in step **36** if the user-selected betting target is associated with the special award amount. However, if the user-selected betting target is not associated with the special award amount, the user is awarded with only the basic award amount in step **37**.

[0029] Hence, in the exemplary embodiment of FIGS. 6-8, in addition to being awarded with five times a wagered amount, the user is further awarded with an additional 50 points. Of course, if any of the other two indicia **61** were selected by the user and the particular indicium **61** was a winning betting target, then the user would be awarded with only the corresponding basic award amount, namely, either two times or ten times the wagered amount.

[0030] The game is ended after step **36** and step **37**.

[0031] The exemplary embodiment of FIGS. 6-8 is a slot machine-type of game. However, this is only one of many different games to which the gaming method of the present invention may be applied. As another example, the gaming apparatus **1** may provide a car racing game. In this case, in

step **31**, the betting targets are respectively different virtual race cars, in which each of the virtual race cars may be associated with the same basic award amount. Furthermore, each of the race cars may be associated with a fictional race car driver (or even a video representation of a famous race car driver), and in order to provide an even greater enhanced gaming experience, one of the race car drivers may announce through a visual image on the display unit **12** and/or through an audible message via a speaker (not shown) of the gaming apparatus **1**, the special award amount that is associated with the virtual race car that the fictional race car driver is driving.

[0032] In this car racing game example, the car racing game is started in step **33** after the user selects one of the virtual race cars and completes betting in step **32**, and the car racing game ends after a predetermined time interval. Further, in step **34**, a determination of whether or not the user-selected betting target is the winning betting target is made on the basis of whether the user-selected virtual race car is in first place at the end of the game.

[0033] In the present invention described hereinabove, by associating at least one betting target in a game with a special award amount, more variety and excitement are provided. Hence, the interest of users is maintained for a longer time than with traditional betting schemes.

[0034] While the present invention has been described in connection with what is considered the most practical and preferred embodiment, it is understood that this invention is not limited to the disclosed embodiment but is intended to cover various arrangements included within the spirit and scope of the broadest interpretation so as to encompass all such modifications and equivalent arrangements.

What is claimed is:

1. A gaming method to be implemented using an electronic gaming apparatus, said gaming method comprising:
 - providing a plurality of betting targets for selection by a user, each of the betting targets being associated with a basic award amount and at least one of the betting targets being further associated with a special award amount;
 - starting a game after the user selects one of the betting targets and completes betting;
 - at the end of the game, determining if the user-selected betting target is a winning betting target, and if so, determining if the user-selected betting target is associated with the special award amount; and
 - when the user-selected betting target is determined to be the winning betting target, awarding the user with the basic award amount and the special award amount if the user-selected betting target is associated with the special award amount, and awarding the user with only the basic award amount if otherwise.
2. The gaming method of claim 1, the electronic gaming apparatus providing a slot machine-type of game, wherein, in step a), the betting targets are respectively different indicia and each of the indicia is associated with a unique basic award amount, and in step b), during the game, an indicator is generated that alternately indicates the different indicia, and the game ends after a predetermined time interval.
3. The gaming method of claim 2, wherein, in step c), determining if the user-selected betting target is the winning betting target is made on the basis of where the indicator stops at the end of the game.

4. The gaming method of claim **3**, wherein, in step c), when the indicator does not stop at the user-selected betting target, it is determined that the user-selected betting target is not the winning betting target.

5. The gaming method of claim **2**, wherein the indicator is a highlight window that alternately surrounds perimeters of the different indicia.

6. The gaming method of claim **1**, the electronic gaming apparatus providing a car racing game, wherein, in step a), the betting targets are respectively different virtual race cars and each of the virtual race cars is associated with the same basic award amount, and in step b), the car racing game is started after the user selects one of the virtual race cars and completes betting, and the car racing game ends after a predetermined time interval.

7. The gaming method of claim **6**, wherein, in step c), determining if the user-selected betting target is the winning betting target is made on the basis of whether the user-selected virtual race car is in first place at the end of the game.

8. A gaming apparatus, comprising:

a display unit;

a game processing unit coupled to said display unit and configured to perform steps of a gaming method; and an input unit coupled to said game processing unit and allowing input by a user;

wherein the gaming method includes:

a) providing on said display unit a plurality of betting targets for selection by the user through said input unit, each of the betting targets being associated with a basic award amount and at least one of the betting targets being further associated with a special award amount;

b) starting a game after the user selects one of the betting targets and completes betting;

c) at the end of the game, determining if the user-selected betting target is a winning betting target, and if so, determining if the user-selected betting target is associated with the special award amount; and

d) when the user-selected betting target is determined to be the winning betting target, awarding the user with the basic award amount and the special award amount if the user-selected betting target is associated with the special award amount, and awarding the user with only the basic award amount if otherwise.

9. The gaming apparatus of claim **8**, the gaming apparatus providing a slot machine-type of game, wherein, in step a), the betting targets are respectively different indicia and each of the indicia is associated with a unique basic award amount, and in step b), during the game, an indicator is generated that alternately indicates the different indicia, and the game ends after a predetermined time interval.

10. The gaming apparatus of claim **9**, wherein, in step c), determining if the user-selected betting target is the winning betting target is made on the basis of where the indicator stops at the end of the game.

11. The gaming apparatus of claim **10**, wherein, in step c), when the indicator does not stop at the user-selected betting target, it is determined that the user-selected betting target is not the winning betting target.

12. The gaming apparatus of claim **10**, wherein the indicator is a highlight window that alternately surrounds perimeters of the different indicia.

13. The gaming apparatus of claim **8**, the gaming apparatus providing a car racing game, wherein, in step a), the betting targets are respectively different virtual race cars and each of the virtual race cars is associated with the same basic

award amount, and in step b), the car racing game is started after the user selects one of the virtual race cars and completes betting, and the car racing game ends after a predetermined time interval.

14. The gaming apparatus of claim **13**, wherein, in step c), determining if the user-selected betting target is the winning betting target is made on the basis of whether the user-selected virtual race car is in first place at the end of the game.

15. A computer program product comprising a computer-readable storage medium that stores a gaming program for causing a computer to execute steps of a gaming method including:

a) providing a plurality of betting targets for selection by a user, each of the betting targets being associated with a basic award amount and at least one of the betting targets being further associated with a special award amount;

b) starting a game after the user selects one of the betting targets and completes betting;

c) at the end of the game, determining if the user-selected betting target is a winning betting target, and if so, determining if the user-selected betting target is associated with the special award amount; and

d) when the user-selected betting target is determined to be the winning betting target, awarding the user with the basic award amount and the special award amount if the user-selected betting target is associated with the special award amount, and awarding the user with only the basic award amount if otherwise.

16. The computer program product of claim **15**, wherein said gaming program provides a slot machine-type of game, and in step a), the betting targets are respectively different indicia and each of the indicia is associated with a unique basic award amount, and in step b), during the game, an indicator is generated that alternately indicates the different indicia, and the game ends after a predetermined time interval.

17. The computer program product of claim **16**, wherein, in step c), determining if the user-selected betting target is the winning betting target is made on the basis of where the indicator stops at the end of the game.

18. The computer program product of claim **17**, wherein, in step c), when the indicator does not stop at the user-selected betting target, it is determined that the user-selected betting target is not the winning betting target.

19. The computer program product of claim **16**, wherein the indicator is a highlight window that alternately surrounds perimeters of the different indicia.

20. The computer program product of claim **15**, wherein said gaming program provides a car racing game, and in step a), the betting targets are respectively different virtual race cars and each of the virtual race cars is associated with the same basic award amount, and in step b), the car racing game is started after the user selects one of the virtual race cars and completes betting, and the car racing game ends after a predetermined time interval.

21. The computer program product of claim **20**, wherein, in step c), determining if the user-selected betting target is the winning betting target is made on the basis of whether the user-selected virtual race car is in first place at the end of the game.