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(54) **SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR MANAGING A VIRTUAL HOME GAME**

(52) **U.S. Cl. 463/42**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

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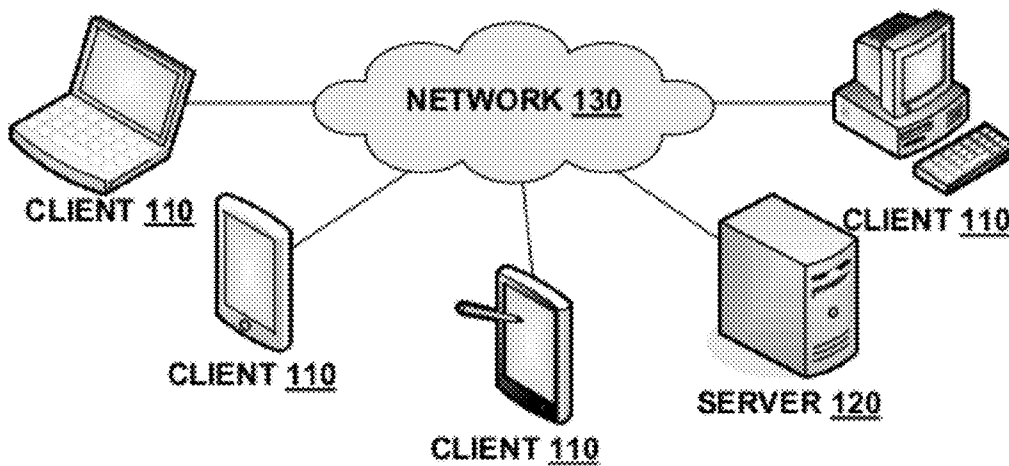
A home game system and method for scheduling virtual home game in a home game club. Membership to the club is restricted and managed by the club manager. The number of home game clubs that a player can create, the number of games that are scheduled for a home game club, the number of players that may be granted membership in the home game club, and the number of home game clubs that a player may join may all be limited by predetermined thresholds. Members may have different levels of access to the home game system. Members with a lower level of access permission may have lower thresholds than members with a higher level of access permission and may not play in games with a higher level of access permission. Club rankings and game results may be tracked.

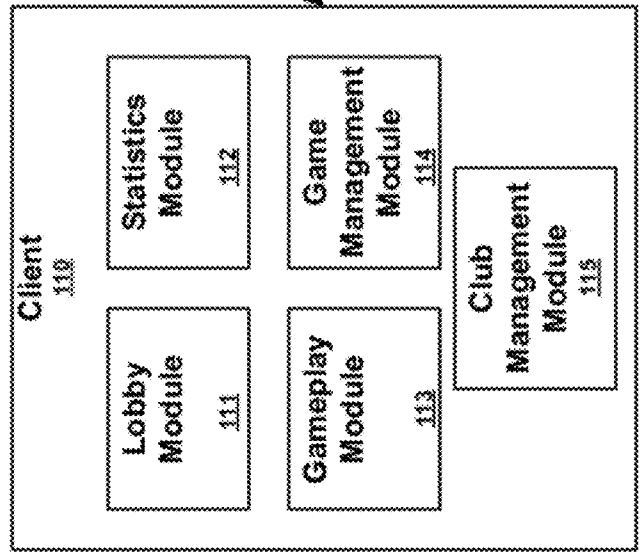
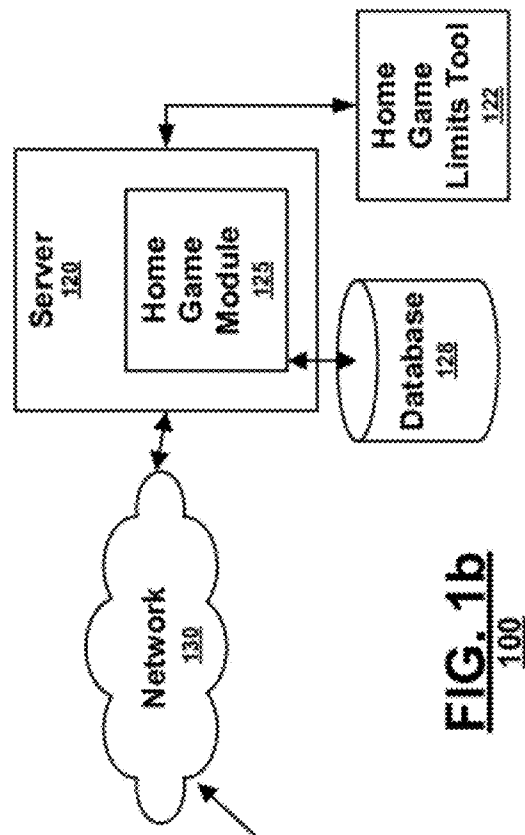
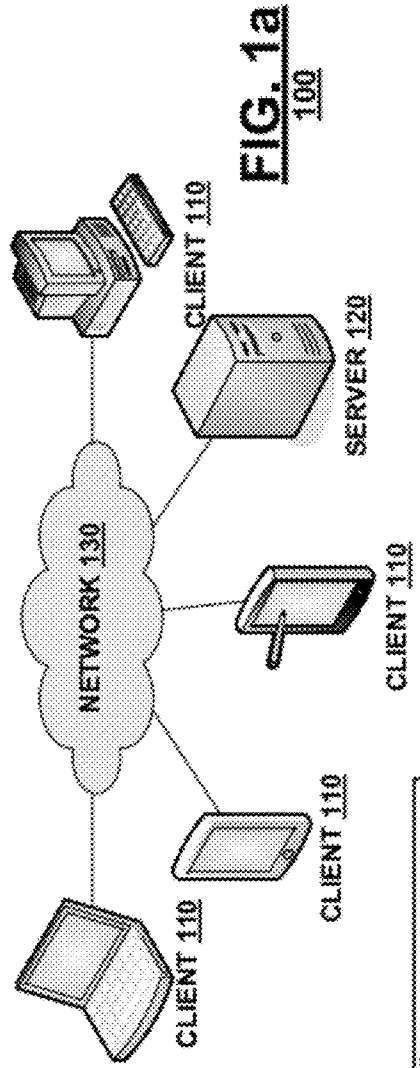
Related U.S. Application Data

(60) **Provisional application No. 61/429,731, filed on Jan. 4, 2011.**

Publication Classification

(51) **Int. Cl. A63F 9/24 (2006.01)**





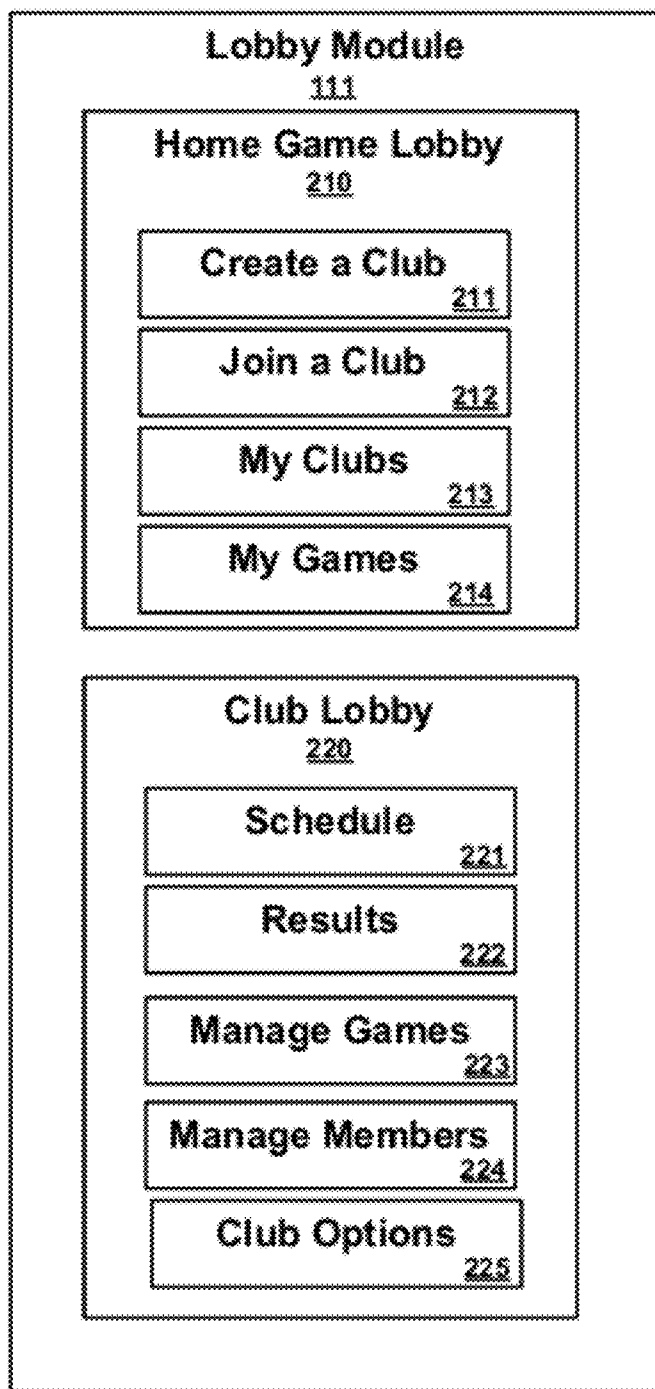


FIG. 2

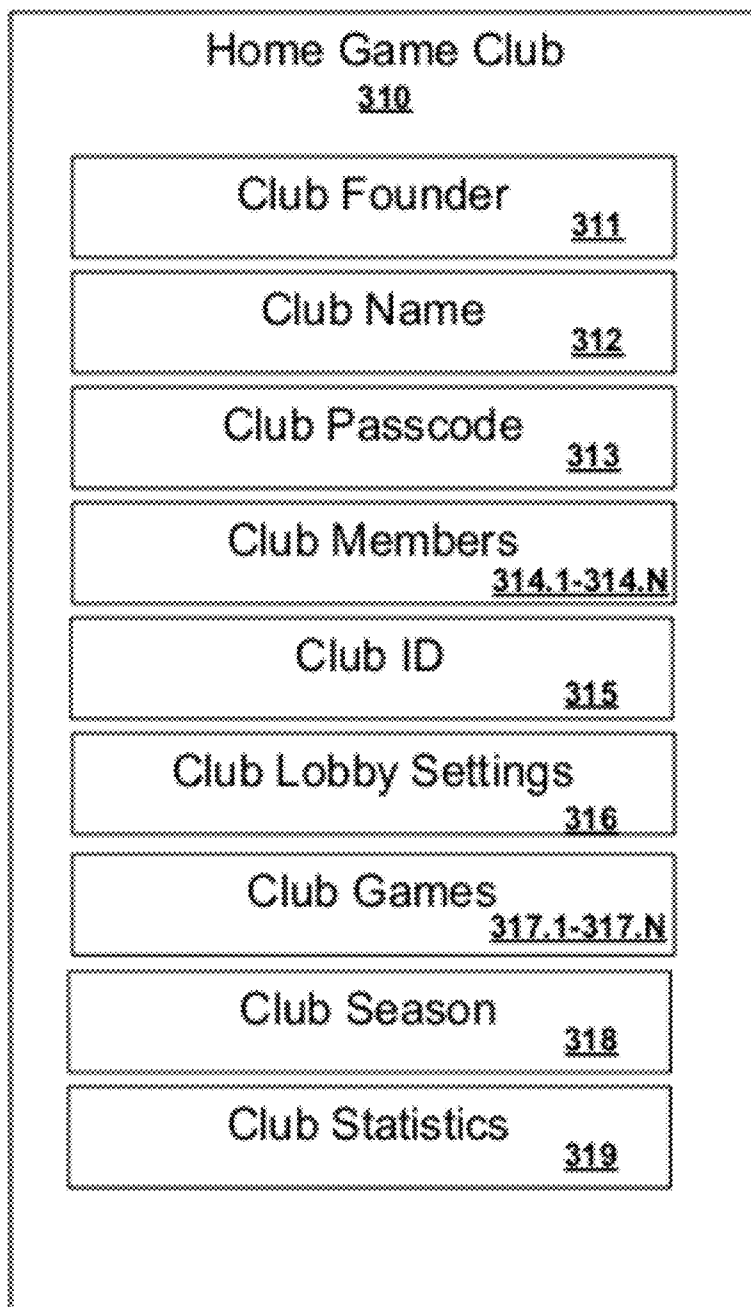


FIG. 3

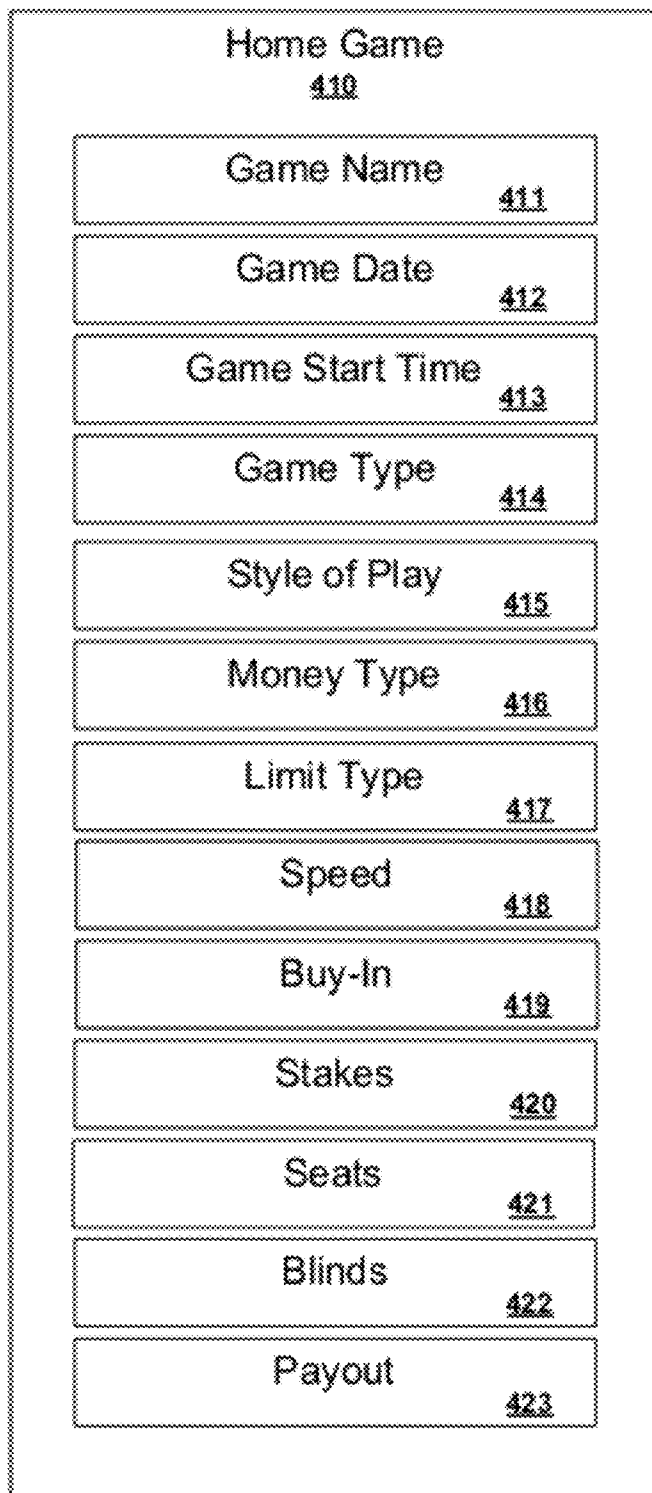


FIG. 4

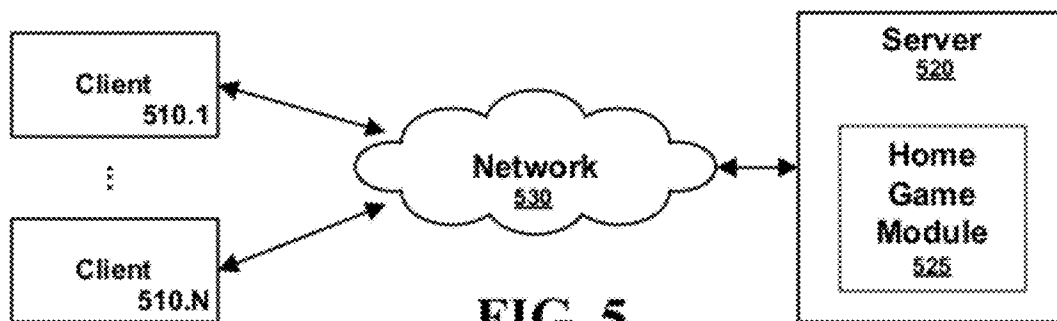


FIG. 5
500

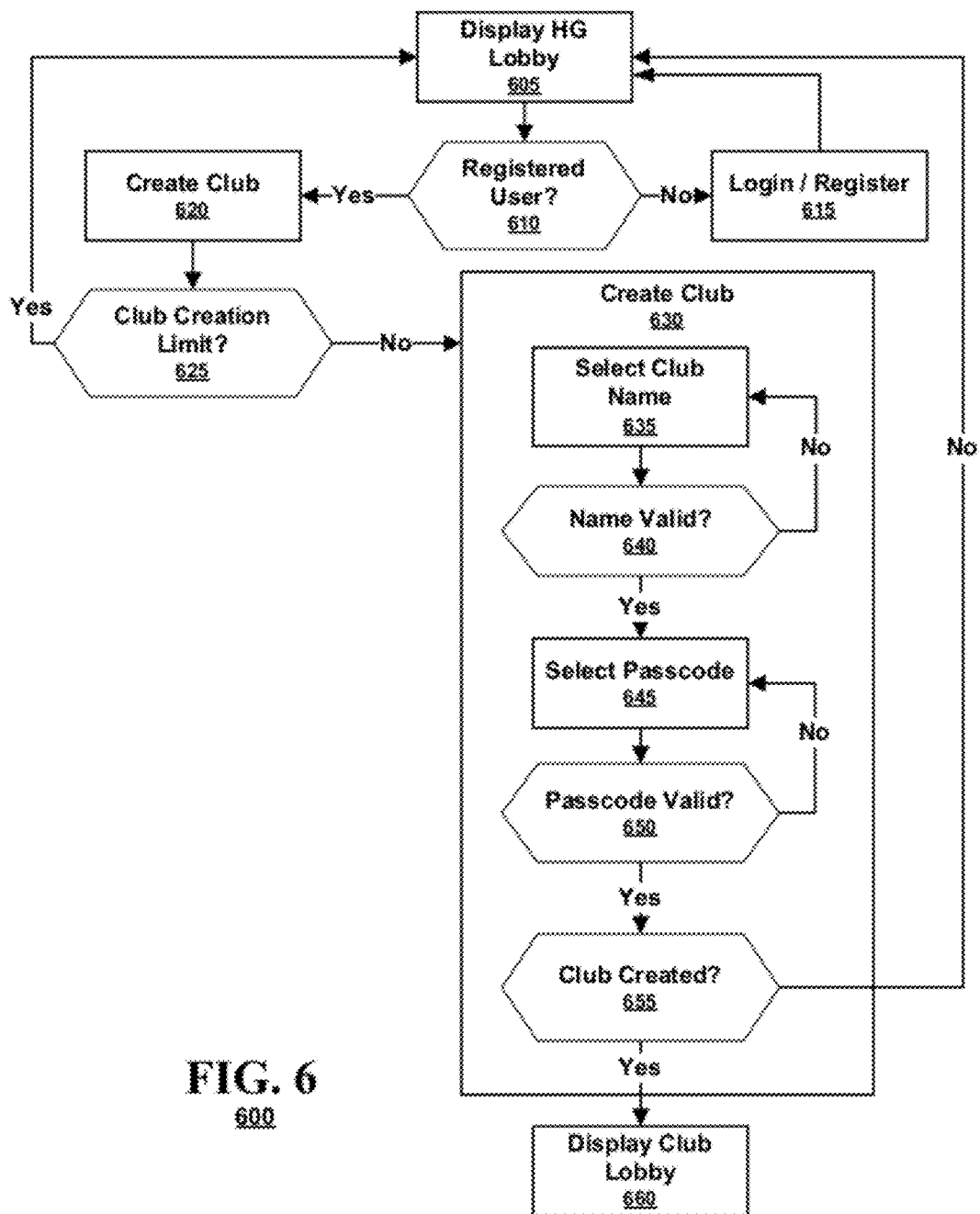


FIG. 6
600

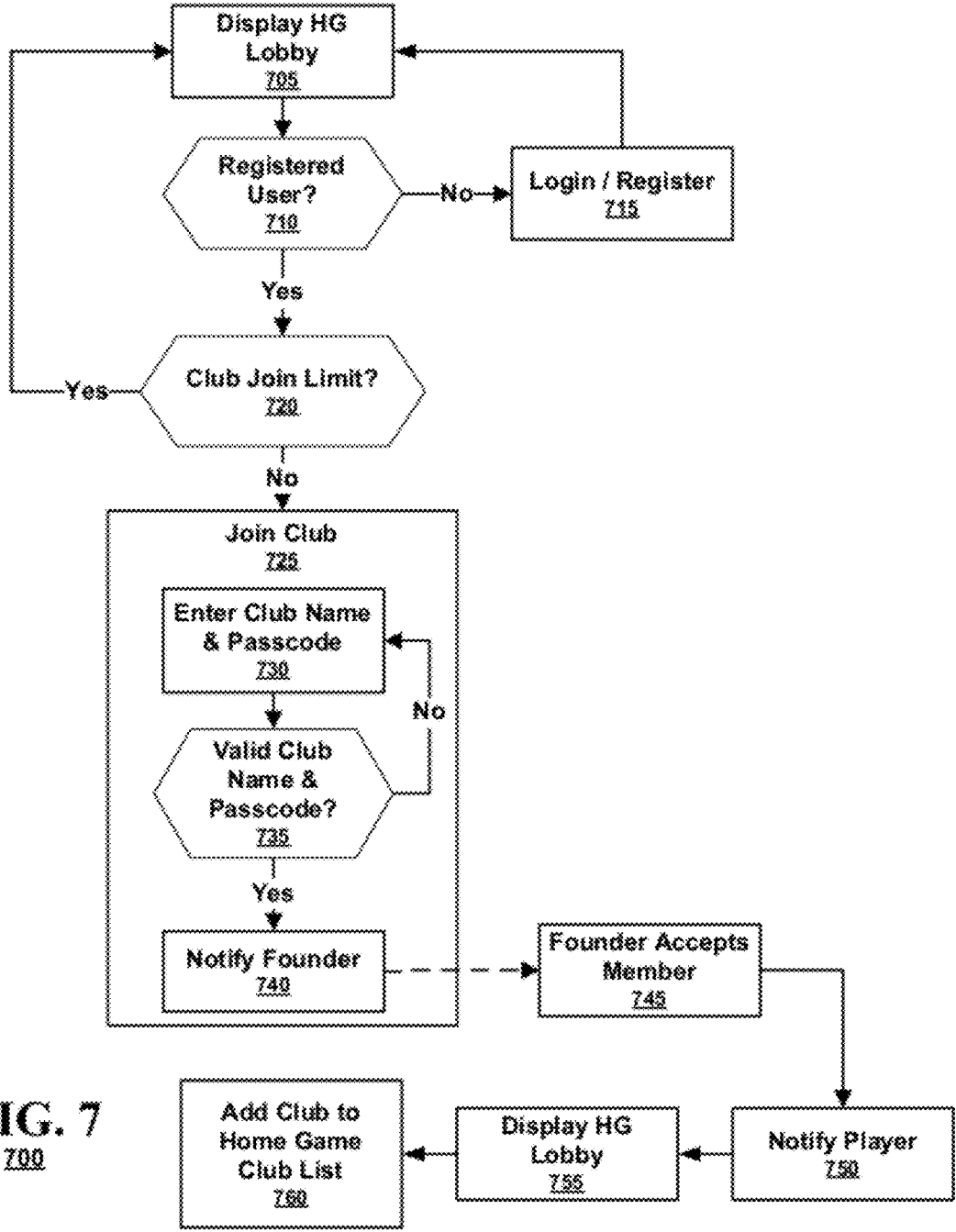


FIG. 7
700

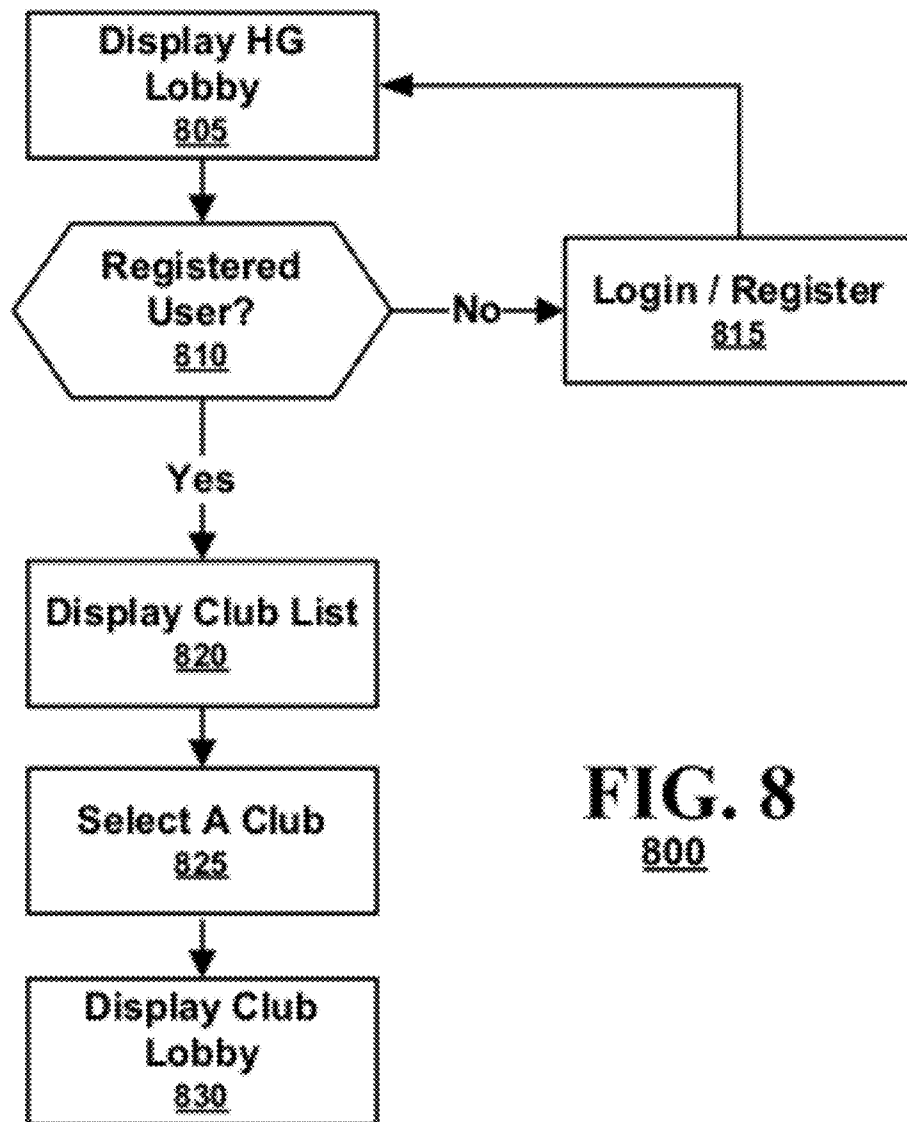


FIG. 8
800

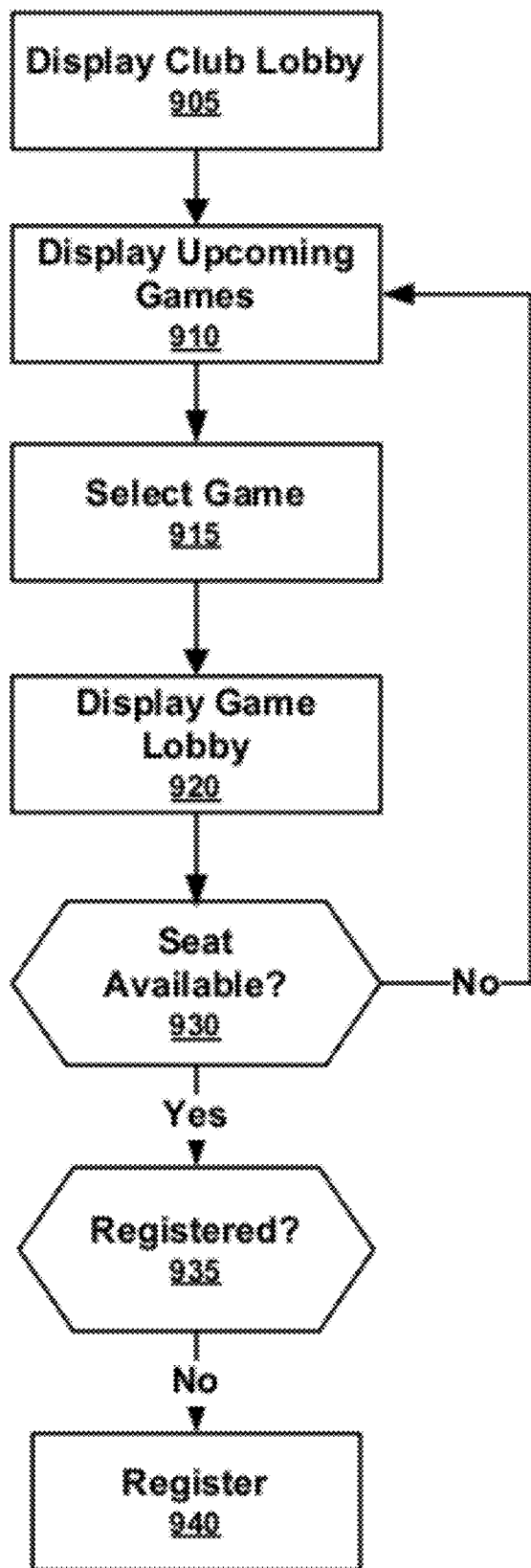


FIG. 9
900

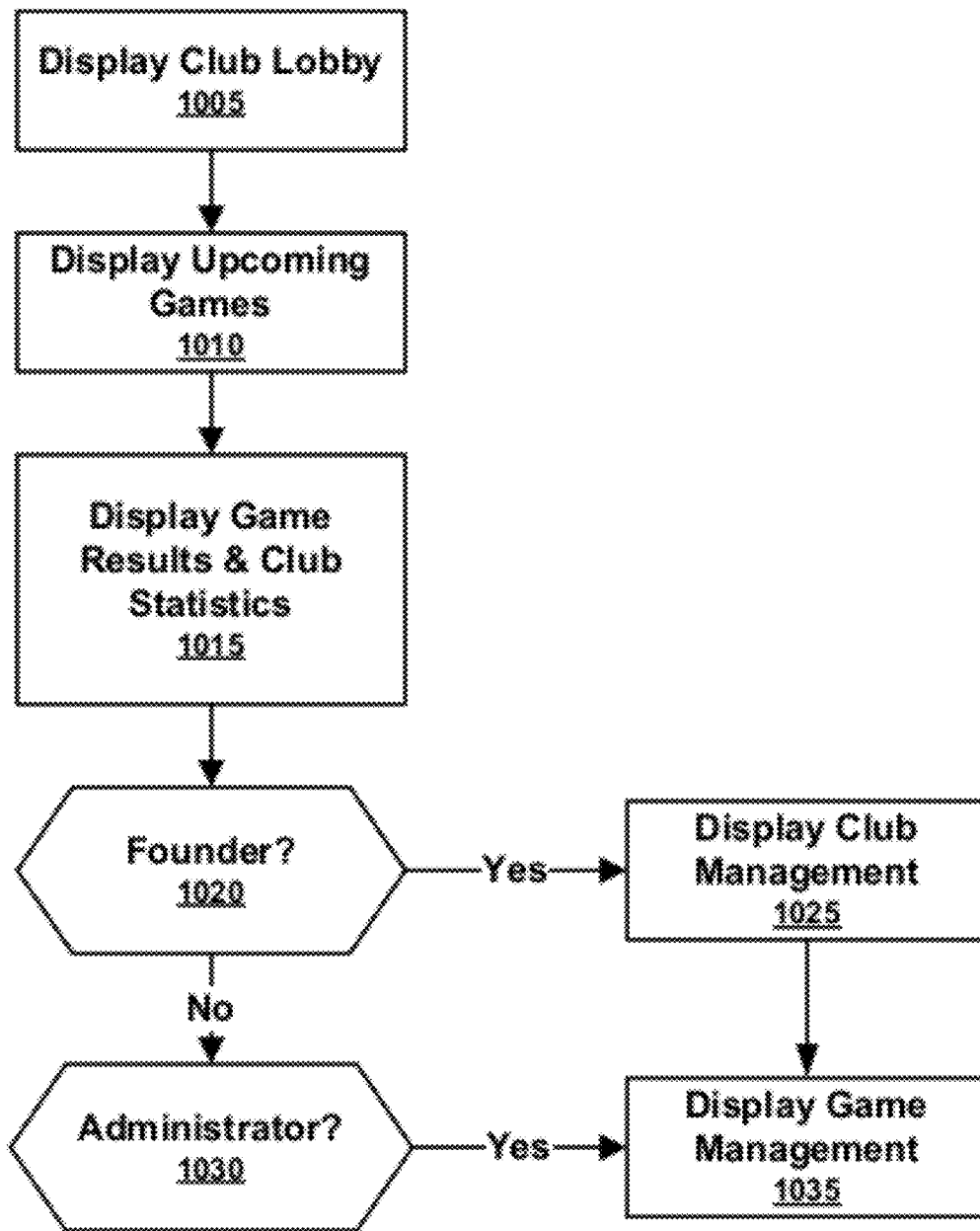


FIG. 10
1000

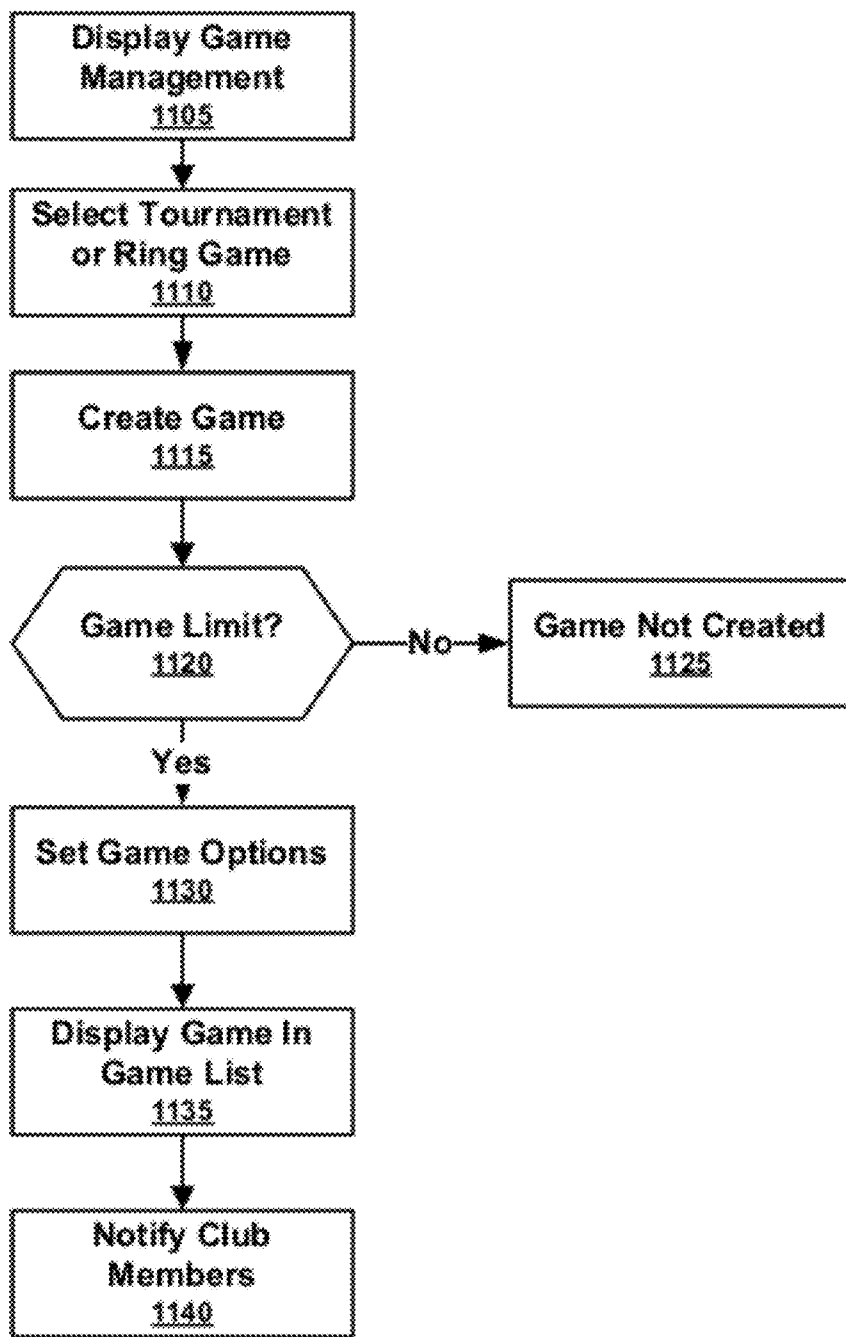


FIG. 11

1100

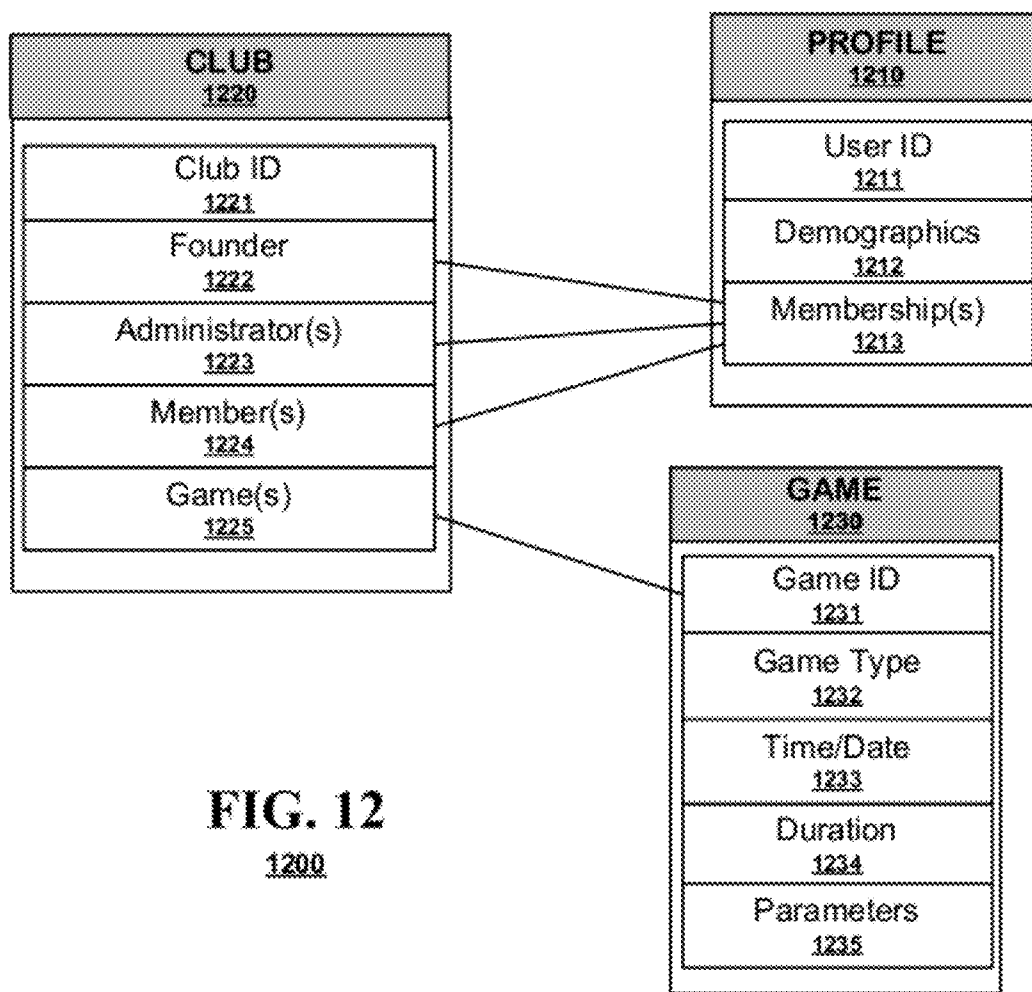


FIG. 12
1200

Home Games Global Settings Management Page <u>1310</u>		
<p>This page is to make changes to the GLOBAL settings for Home Games. Changes made here will affect ALL clubs / players unless they have had a higher value applied through individual settings. Make sure you know what you are doing.</p>		
Global Club Size <input type="text" value="50"/> <input type="button" value="Submit"/>	Global Number of Clubs Created COM <input type="text" value="3"/> NET <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="button" value="Submit"/>	Global Number of Clubs Joined COM <input type="text" value="10"/> NET <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="button" value="Submit"/>
Global Number of Tournaments Scheduled RM <input type="text" value="5"/> PM COM <input type="text" value="2"/> PM NET <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="button" value="Submit"/>		Global Number of Ring Games RM <input type="text" value="6"/> PM COM <input type="text" value="2"/> PM NET <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="button" value="Submit"/>
Click here to access Stake Management Portal Click here to access Country Restrictions Portal		

FIG. 13

1300

Home Games Stake Management Portal

1410

Fixed Limit Ring Games

Low (Default) 0.02 / 0.04 0.05 / 0.10 0.10 / 0.20 0.25 / 0.50 0.50 / 1.00 1 / 2	Move	Medium 2 / 4 3 / 6 4 / 8 5 / 10	Move	High 10 / 20 20 / 40 30 / 60	Move	Nozebleed 50 / 100 100 / 200	Move	Forbidden 200 / 400 500 / 1000 1000 / 2000	Move
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No Limit / Pot Limit Ring Games

Low (Default) 0.01 / 0.02 0.02 / 0.05 0.05 / 0.10 10 / 20	Move	Medium 0.25 / 0.50 0.50 / 1.00 1 / 2 2 / 4	Move	High 3 / 6 5 / 10 10 / 20	Move	Nozebleed 25 / 50 50 / 100	Move	Forbidden 100 / 200	Move
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Tournaments

Low (Default) 1.10 2.20 3.30 5.50 11 22	Move	Medium 33 55	Move	High 109 215 320	Move	Nozebleed 530 1050	Move	Forbidden 2100 5200	Move
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Submit
Cancel

FIG. 14

1400

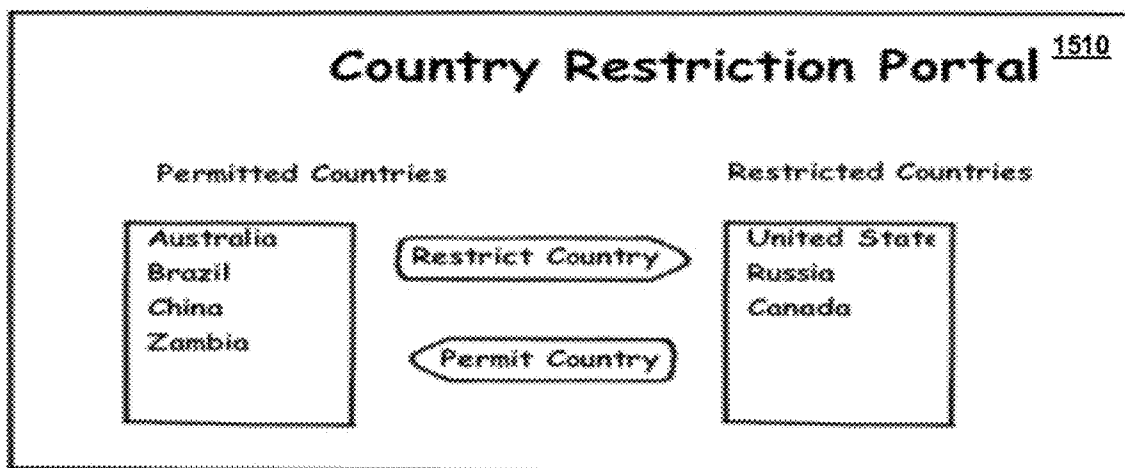


FIG. 15

1500

SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR MANAGING A VIRTUAL HOME GAME

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] The present application claims the benefit of co-pending U.S. Provisional Application Ser. No. 61/429,731, filed Jan. 4, 2011, entitled “SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR MANAGING A VIRTUAL HOME GAME”, the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

BACKGROUND

[0002] Millions of people around the world enjoy hosting a “poker night” at their home with friends and family in a relaxed, comfortable, trusted environment. Some poker night players are regular poker players who often play in more serious poker games online or in live poker rooms, but enjoy the chance for friendly competition with people they know. Some poker night players, however, are casual poker players who don’t play online because they aren’t comfortable playing with strangers.

[0003] Often, the plans for a “home game” may fall through because some participants can’t get away for the length of a home game or are away in another city on business. Sometimes, a group may fall apart because friends or family become separated geographically as they graduate, marry or change jobs. Accordingly, there is a need for a virtual home game to provide a venue for a group of friends to enjoy a home game, wherever in the world they may be.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0004] The foregoing and other aspects of various embodiments of the present invention will be apparent through examination of the following detailed description thereof in conjunction with the accompanying drawing figures in which similar reference numbers are used to indicate functionally similar elements.

[0005] FIG. 1 is a functional block diagram illustrating components of an exemplary system according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0006] FIG. 2 is a simple block diagram illustrating components accessible from an exemplary lobby module according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0007] FIG. 3 is a simple block diagram illustrating elements of an exemplary home game club according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0008] FIG. 4 is a simple block diagram illustrating elements of an exemplary home game according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0009] FIG. 5 is a simple block diagram illustrating an exemplary system according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0010] FIG. 6 illustrates a method for creating a home game club according to an embodiment of the present application.

[0011] FIG. 7 illustrates a method for joining a home game club according to an embodiment of the present application.

[0012] FIG. 8 illustrates a method for displaying a home game club lobby according to an embodiment of the present application.

[0013] FIG. 9 illustrates a method for joining a home game according to an embodiment of the present application.

[0014] FIG. 10 illustrates a method for accessing features of a home game club according to an embodiment of the present application.

[0015] FIG. 11 illustrates a method for creating a home game according to an embodiment of the present application.

[0016] FIG. 12 illustrates exemplary records for storing home game club information according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0017] FIG. 13 illustrates an exemplary home games global settings management page for the management of global settings according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0018] FIG. 14 illustrates an exemplary home games stake management portal for the management of global game stakes according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0019] FIG. 15 illustrates an exemplary home game country restriction portal for the management of countries that are allowed to use a homes game system.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0020] A home game system with games scheduled and managed by a player may allow both casual and serious poker players to set up private clubs to play home games over a computer network with their friends and acquaintances. Casual players can feel comfortable playing a private club with people they know and trust. Serious players can access their home games despite work, family, and life obligations keeping them from physically attending their usual games. Friends in distributed locations may access a scheduled home game thereby bringing together persons separated by time and distance. The home game may facilitate the ability for players with difficult schedules or who are located in different areas to play a relaxed game with friends and acquaintances over a network rather than play with strangers online. With a computer-based virtual home game, automatic error-free dealing may eliminate concerns about shuffling, cutting or dealing—mis-deals can be avoided. Split pots, blind management, and pot-limits may also be automated and banking and buy-in disputes may be avoided with an automated cashier. In addition, a computer-based virtual home game may provide faster dealing of cards to players, thus allowing more hands to be played. Further, a computer-based virtual environment may easily allow for multiple tables to be used at the same time. The home game system, with groups of acquaintances organizing private home game clubs and games may facilitate maintaining club rankings and statistics to encourage friendly competition between club members and provide game and hand histories. Intra-club competitions between established home game clubs may additionally encourage team camaraderie.

[0021] FIG. 1 is a functional block diagram illustrating components of an exemplary system 100 according to an embodiment of the present invention. As shown in FIG. 1(a), the system 100 may include one or more clients 110 accessing a server 120 via a network 130. The server 120 may be a network server connected to the client 110 via the network 130. The server 120 may execute game modules to manage operation of a poker game for club users connected via the clients 110. FIG. 1(a) is intended to illustrate components that inter-operate to support a single home game. In practice, functionality of the server 120 may be replicated to support multiple home games (not shown) that operate simultaneously. In other words, multiple home games may execute simultaneously and share resources of a common server 120. The network 130 may be a wired or wireless network that may

include a local area network (LAN), a wireless area network (WAN), the Internet, or any other network available for accessing the server 120 via the client 110.

[0022] Although the system finds application with clients 110 at geographically distributed locations, the system also can be used with co-located client devices. For example, home game users may find it convenient to convene in a common location with portable client devices such as tablet computers or laptops and access the home game service via a common network. Such configuration differences are immaterial to the present discussion unless noted otherwise herein.

[0023] Further, although the system is illustrated as executing with a standalone server computer 120, in some embodiments it may be permissible to provision one of the client devices 110 to act as a server 120 and manage gameplay. In such an embodiment, the functions of the server 120 and one of the client terminals 110 may be performed by a common computing device, such as one of the club participant's laptop computer.

[0024] The client 110 may send a request over the network 130 for a home game or software application from the server 120. In response to the request, the server 120 may provide a set of instructions to the client 110 comprising application modules that may be installed on the client 110. The application modules may provide an interface to data stored on the server 120 and to virtual poker games managed by the server 120.

[0025] Referring to FIG. 1 (b), the client 110 may include a lobby module 111, a statistics module 112, a gameplay module 113, and a game management module 114 in an embodiment of the present invention. The client 110 may be any computing system that facilitates a user accessing the interface modules 111-114, for example a personal computer, laptop, tablet device, or mobile handheld computing device. The home game modules 111-114 may be implemented with a program or application including instructions stored on a computer-readable storage medium that, when executed by client 110, may provide and manage a user interface or may otherwise comprise middleware that acts as a frontend to the home game module 125. The player may interact with the user interface of the client 110 through an input device, such as by providing input as with a mouse or a keyboard. Additionally, the player may interact with some computing systems, such as a tablet device or mobile handheld computing device, using a touch screen display interface. The player may observe the system output on an output device or display. In accordance with an aspect of the invention, the interface modules 111-114 may run in a browser window controlled by the user. In another aspect of the invention, the interface modules 111-114 may run in an application window installed on the client 110 and controlled by the user.

[0026] The lobby module 111 may manage the display of a home game lobby and a club lobby to the player. The home game lobby may provide access to the general home game information and functions for registered users. The club lobby may provide access to the home game club specific information stored on the server 120 and home game club functions. The game management module 114 may facilitate home game management by displaying a window or application interface that may provide access to the management functions of a club home game. As will be further described, game management functions may include creating and scheduling a game, or defining the parameters of a game.

[0027] The statistics module 112 may provide an interface for statistics information stored on the server 120 for the player and the home game club. The statistics that may be collected for the player may include, for example, the player's rank within the home game club, the number of qualified games played by the player, the points accumulated by the player, the average points per game accumulated by the player, the best and worst finish by the player, the number of times the player finished in the top three (in the money), and the number of knockouts achieved (the number of players knocked out of the game on a hand won by the player). Club statistics and other game results information may be stored at the server 120, in a memory device or database 128 accessible to the home game module 125. The founder or administrator may select a game for inclusion in the statistics at the time the game is created by indicating that the game is a qualified game. However, other limitations may be imposed in order for a game to qualify, for example, there may be a minimum player requirement or qualified games may be limited to a game style.

[0028] Points may be awarded according to several different award schemes. In an exemplary embodiment, points may be earned based on the player's finish order and the number of players in the game. For example, the total points awarded for a game may vary with the number of players at the tournament start, the players that finished in the top third may be awarded points, and the difference in the number of points awarded may be greater between the first place and the second place players than any other pair of finishers. In an embodiment of the present application, the points awarded to players who finish a game may be determined in accordance with Equation 1, where n=the number of players in the tournament, k=the place of finish (e.g. k=1 for first place, k=2 for second place, etc.), and p=Integer(n*0.34):

For n = 4, points = 2.0 for first place. Equation 1

For n = 5, points = 3.0 for first place.

$$\text{For } n > 5, \text{ points} = n * \frac{\sqrt{n}}{\sqrt{k}} - \sum_{k=1}^{k=p} \frac{\sqrt{n}}{\sqrt{k}}$$

[0029] The gameplay module 113 may manage the display of a game in progress to the player. The gameplay module 113 may facilitate game play by displaying a window or application interface that may contain a visual representation of a poker game being played by members of the home game club over the network 130. The operation of the poker game may be managed by the server 120 and communicated over the network 130 to the gameplay module 113 on the client 110. The gameplay module 113 may display decorative and technical elements of the game including icons or avatars representing each player, the cards in play, the chips in play, the pot and bet sizes, a counter indicating the time until the next blind increase, and text fields for entering discussion or other social interaction information. The game play module 113 may display additional elements, including logos or other decorative elements, informative text, links to other modules on the server 120 accessible from the client 110, and other interface input mechanisms.

[0030] The club management module 115 may facilitate home game club management by displaying a window or application interface that may provide access to the management functions of a home game club. As will be further described, club management functions may include managing membership, setting club game limits, or defining other settings of a club.

[0031] The server 120 may execute the home game module 125, which manages game play for the gaming session. The server 120 may include a database 128 that may store profile data of each club and each club member. Thus, for clubs, the database 128 may store data identifying club members and club administrators, any applicable club rules, performance data and further identifying games that have been scheduled and/or completed as part of club operation. For system members, the database may store data identifying the members, the clubs to which they belong and applicable performance data. The database 128 also may store data representing individual games that have been scheduled or completed.

[0032] The server 120 may additionally have access to a limit tool 122. The club limit tool, as will be further described, may allow access to set global default limits in the home game module 125 for the maximum number of clubs a player may create, the maximum number of members in a club, the maximum number of clubs a player may join, the stakes limits, and other limits.

[0033] In an embodiment, the server 120 may be part of an on-line gaming system that supports other types of games. For example, the gaming system may support game play by members of a general public in addition to games executed as between members of a social club.

[0034] An anonymous player may be granted restricted or guest access to the home game module 125 via the client 110. Restricted access may allow the player to explore the functions of home game module 125, to learn about the registration options and benefits, to register for the regular access to the home game module 125, to download or otherwise acquire the applications and interface modules 111-114 that may be installed on the client 110, or to try an exemplary but limited feature set on a trial basis. Access to any individualized or advanced features of the home game module 125 may be limited to players registered with the system 100. Registration may comprise providing a user name, a password, and a contact email for example. With a registered user name and password, a player may access the personalized or advanced functions of the home game module 125 via the interface modules 111-114 of the client 110. Registration and other user information may be stored at the server 120, in a memory device accessible to the home game module 125.

[0035] In accordance with an embodiment of the present invention, access to the home game module 125 may be split into multiple registration levels. For example, with different access levels assigned during registration, players may have different access to a limited number of features or games. For example, a player with a first level of access permission may not have the same game restrictions as a player with a second level of access permission. A player with a first level of access permission may play in games that use either real money or play money. A player with a first level of access permission may create or join a limited number of clubs and play in a limited number of games, defined by predetermined thresholds. Or a player with a first level of access permission may

have no limitations on the home game clubs they may create or join, or the number of games they may play in a given time period.

[0036] A player with a second level of access permission may be entitled to a more restricted number of features or games. For example, a player with a second level of access permission may be restricted to playing in games using only play money. A player with a second level of access permission may create or join a limited number of home game clubs or may play in a limited number of home games per day where such limited number is less than the number of games to which a player with a first level of access permission may be entitled. Additionally, a player with a first level of access permission may play in games with a designated second level of access permission but a player having a second level of access permission may not play in games with a designated first level of access permission.

[0037] FIG. 2 is a simple block diagram illustrating components accessible from an exemplary lobby module 111 according to an embodiment of the present invention. A player having access to the home game module 125 via the client 110 may initially have access to a home game lobby 210 via the lobby module 111. The lobby module 111 may manage the display of the home game lobby 210 to the player. The home game lobby 210 may include options for creating, joining, or accessing a home game club, for viewing scheduled home games the player is registered for or invited to play, and for viewing currently running home games that have open seats accessible to the player. The home game lobby 210 may display additional elements, including logos or other decorative elements, informative text, messages from members or founders of the player's home game clubs, and links to other modules on the server 120 accessible from the client 110. For example, a home game logo, the number of players currently playing a poker game on the system 100, explanatory text providing an introduction to the features of the home game module 125, links to additional information or other game modules, a link to allow players to register or registered users to login to the home game module 125, or an advertisement for upcoming games or tournaments.

[0038] From the home game lobby 210, a player may access a create module 211 to create a home game club. The create module 211 may facilitate club creation by displaying a window or application interface that may contain text fields for entering the information necessary for club creation, including a club name, club passcode, and a passcode confirmation. The passcode may be referred to as an invitation code to distinguish it from a player's personal password. The interface may additionally contain a link to or otherwise display club terms and conditions and provide a check box or other input format that indicates that the founder accepts the terms for creating and managing a home game club. The create module 211 interface may display additional elements, including logos or other decorative elements, informative text, and other interface input devices. For example, a home game logo, explanatory text providing instructions for creating a home game club, links to additional information, or buttons to apply for or to cancel home game club creation.

[0039] Once the club name and passcode have been selected, the create module 211 may facilitate the creation of the home game club with the home game module 125. The server 120 may manage the creation of the club by storing club information and data in the database 128. The club founders may then have access to game management func-

tions. Creating a home game club may allow the club founder to invite friends, family or other acquaintances to a home game, and to schedule and manage home games with approved players. The club passcode may be shared with the potential members of the home game club to provide each member access to the game club. Once membership in a home game club is approved, a member may access home game club functions and scheduled club games.

[0040] From the home game lobby **210**, a player registered with the system **100** may access a join module **212** to join a home game club. With the club name and club passcode, a player may apply for membership to a home game club. The join module **212** may facilitate joining a club by displaying a window or application interface that may contain text fields for entering the information necessary to identify a club and request membership, including the club name and the club passcode. Other information that may be submitted with the membership request, including identifying information. The player may have a user name by which the player is recognized in the system that may or may not be recognizable to the club founder, thus the player may also enter a given name or other identifying comment so that the club founder may recognize and approve the player applying for membership. Once the club founder approves the player's membership, the player may have access to the home game club. The number of home game clubs that the player can join may be restricted by a predetermined threshold, for example by a minimum or maximum number of home game club memberships. The predetermined threshold may vary for a player having a first level of access permission and a player having a second level of access permission.

[0041] Some players may be granted guest membership in a home game club for a limited period of time. Guest members may not need to join a home game club via the join module **212** to play in a home game. For example, professional players may join specific home games or tournaments as part of a promotion or award, but may not be members in the hosting home game club. Other limited membership opportunities may include temporarily allowing home game clubs to compete against each other or other tournament style play.

[0042] From the home game lobby **210**, a player may access the membership data stored by the server **120** at the database **128** with a clubs module **213** to view the home game clubs with which the player is associated. The clubs module **213** may facilitate viewing a list of home game clubs by displaying a window or application interface that may contain all the clubs for which the player is a registered member. The list may also include any clubs for which the player's membership status is pending the approval of the club founder. When the player selects one of the home game clubs listed in the clubs module **213** display, additional information about the club may be displayed, for example the club standings, the players associated with the home game club, or the result of the most recent club game. Through the home game club list, the player may additionally access the club lobby for a selected home game club.

[0043] From the home game lobby **210**, a player may access a games module **214** to view the player's upcoming or scheduled home games. After a player has joined a club, the player may register for home games organized by the club founder. The games module **214** may facilitate viewing a list of scheduled home games by displaying a window or application interface that may contain all the games for which the

player is registered. The display may also include any games that the player is eligible to play in but for which the player has not yet registered including tournament style games and ring style games, as described in further detail below. When the player selects one of the home games listed in the games module **214** display, additional information about the game may be displayed, for example the game type style and other parameters or a list of the players scheduled to play in the selected game. Through the list of scheduled games, a player may register for an open seat in an eligible game, may access the game lobby for the selected game, or may access the club lobby of the home game club hosting the selected home game.

[0044] A player registered with a home game club may have access to a club lobby **220** via the lobby module **111**. The lobby module **111** may manage the display of the club lobby **220** to the player. The club lobby **220** may include options for creating, joining, or accessing a home game, for viewing scheduled club home games, for viewing currently running home games that have open seats accessible to the player, for viewing the home game club statistics, and for viewing the results of recent completed home games. The club lobby **220** may display additional elements, including logos or other decorative elements, informative text, messages from members or the founder of the club, and links to other modules on the server **120** accessible from the client **110**. For example, explanatory text providing an introduction to the features of the club lobby **220**, the user name or identifying name of the club founder, the date the club was established, the number of players with membership in the club, links to additional information or other game modules, or an advertisement for upcoming games or tournaments. The founder may have the option to set or adjust the display features, for example, by providing a personalized logo for the club or by setting background colors and images.

[0045] From the club lobby **220**, a founder or another player with administrative access may access the game management module **114**. The club lobby interface **223** to the game management module **114** may facilitate home game management by displaying a window or application interface to the club information stored by the server **120**, and may provide access to the management functions of a home game provided by the server **120**. Access to the functions of the game management module **114** may be provided by an interface having text fields, check boxes or other input mechanisms for setting and adjusting game parameters. The interface may display additional elements, including logos or other decorative elements, and informative text.

[0046] From the game management module **114**, founders and administrators may create, reschedule or cancel a home game. The number of games that can be scheduled for a home game club **310** may be restricted by a predetermined threshold, for example by a minimum or maximum number of games per period or a maximum number of games running concurrently. The predetermined threshold may vary for a home game club with a founder having a first level of access permission and a home game club with founder having a second level of access permission. The time period for determining a maximum number of games per period may be set per day, per week, per month, or other limited time period. Each scheduled game may have a game lobby, a window or application interface that may contain game information, where home game club members can view game details and register to play in the scheduled game. Registered players may also receive a notification, for example by email or

through a message in a pop-up window, indicating that a home game has been created, canceled or rescheduled and providing scheduling and other game details. The notification may additionally provide a link to access the club lobby 220 or game lobby for easy game registration. A message may be transmitted in advance of the scheduled game date to the players registered for a home game to remind the players of upcoming games.

[0047] An administrator or founder may have the ability to limit the home game club members that are eligible to register for and play in a home game. From the game management module 114, the administrator may be able to select members in the home game club from a displayed list identifying the active members of the home game club. The list may be sortable, individual or multiple members may be selected at one time, and the status of each member may be identified. In an exemplary embodiment, the member status identification may be achieved with highlighting or color-coding. For example, an inactive player or a suspended player may be grayed out or may not appear in the list at all. An active player that the administrator has indicated is ineligible to play in the home game may be identified with a red dot or icon, and the players that have registered for the home game may be identified with a green dot or icon.

[0048] From the club lobby 220, a member may access a schedule module 221 to view the club's scheduled home games. The schedule module 221 may facilitate viewing a list of scheduled home games by displaying a window or application interface that may contain all the home games available to club members or the home games for which the member is registered. When the member selects one of the home games listed in the schedule module 221 display, additional information about the game may be displayed, for example the game type and other game parameters or the players scheduled to play in the selected game. The display may include multiple lists, one for each style of game scheduled. For example, there may be separate lists for tournament games and ring games, or for scheduled Texas Hold'em games and Omaha games.

[0049] From the club lobby 220, a member may access a results module 222 to view the club's recent home game results. The results module 222 may facilitate viewing a list of played home games by displaying a window or application interface that may contain all the club home games recently played. The played home games may be restricted to those home games in which the member participated, or may include all the recently played club games regardless of the participants. The display may include multiple lists, one for each style of game scheduled. For example, there may be separate lists for tournament games and ring games, or for scheduled Texas Hold'em games and Omaha games.

[0050] From the club lobby 220, a member may access a club options module 225 to view and set options for the club. Club options may be player specific, for example, a player can resign from the club, change the background or other aesthetic feature of the club as displayed on the client such as hiding the hold cards as shown on the client, or opt in or out of some or all of the automatic notifications, etc. As part of the options 225, the player may set social networking options to share his club affiliations and game results by posting to a social networking site, facebook for example. The shared information may include notifications that the player has created a new home game club, has joined a new home game club, has added a new member to his home game club, has

scheduled a new game, has finished a home game club tournament, won a home game club tournament, his rank at the end of a home game club season, or other relevant events that may occur during the course of his home game club play.

[0051] When the player selects one of the listed home games, additional information about the game may be displayed, for example the game parameters and the game results. The displayed game results may include the finish order and player rank, an identification of all the players who played in the game, the prize pool payout, the number of knockouts, and a summary of the hands played.

[0052] When the player selects one of the listed players, additional information about the selected player's statistics or profile may be displayed, for example the number of qualified games the selected player has played in, the points the selected player has accumulated, the average points per game the selected player has been awarded, or other relevant results details.

[0053] A player may have the option to share the game results displayed with the results module 222. The player may share his club affiliations and game results by selecting links that may make a post to a social networking site, facebook for example. The player may also receive a notification, for example by email or through a message in a pop-up window, summarizing the home game results.

[0054] From the club lobby 220, a founder may access a club management module 224 to manage the membership of the home game club. The club management module 224 may facilitate home game club management by displaying a window or application interface that may provide access to the management functions of a home game club. Club management functions may include approving or suspending a player's membership or adjusting the club settings. Access to the functions of the club management module 224 may be provided by an interface having text fields, check boxes or other input mechanisms for adjusting game parameters. The interface may display additional elements, including logos or other decorative elements, informative text, and other interface input mechanisms.

[0055] Through the club management module 224, a founder may manage club membership by approving or denying pending membership requests, or assigning administrator status to a club member. The approved players may receive a notification, for example by email or through a message in a pop-up window in an application interface, indicating that their membership request has been approved and providing home game club details. Founders may grant any active member, or all members, administrator status, allowing them to schedule games and tournaments. The founder may later revoke administrator status as needed.

[0056] Through the club management module 224, a founder may block member access to the club lobby 220. A blocked member may be removed from the club and further access to the club lobby 220 may be denied. Any pending or current registrations for home games by the blocked member may be revoked. However, club statistics and game results may be preserved such that blocked members may continue to show up in standings and statistics for the remainder of the current season. If a member is removed in error, the founder may have the option to unblock a blocked member. In order to preserve fair play and avoid the possibility of abuse, a member cannot be blocked while playing in a club game; no action may be taken against a member marked to be blocked until any running games are completed.

[0057] Through the club management module 224, a founder may suspend member access to the club lobby 220. A suspended member may be still have access to the club lobby 220 but may not register for any home club games. Any pending or current reservations for home games by the suspended member may be revoked. In order to preserve fair play and avoid the possibility of abuse, a member cannot be suspended while playing in a club game; no action may be taken against a member marked to be suspended until any running games are completed. The club founder may suspend a member in order to investigate accusations of misconduct.

[0058] Through the club management module 224, a founder may have additional control over club operations. For example, the founder may enable or disable the statistics accumulation or the display of the club standings, change the club currency, change the club name, change the public name for the club founder, or change the frequency or content of the automatic notices that may be sent to club members.

[0059] FIG. 3 is a simple block diagram illustrating elements of an exemplary home game club 310 according to an embodiment of the present invention. The number of clubs a player can create may be limited. If the player has reached that limit, the system may present an error message to the player or otherwise disallow new club creation, for example by denying the player further access to the create function. If the player has not reached that limit, the player may create a new home game club. To create a home game club 310, the player may select a valid club name 312 and passcode 313. The club name 312 may be an identifier that the home game module 125, club members 314, or other players may use to identify the home game club 310. A player's selected club name and passcode may be rejected for various reasons, for example, if the selected club name is not unique, if the selected club name contains inappropriate words or phrases, if selected club name contains invalid characters, etc. A selected club name 312 and passcode 313 may be validated through an automated, computerized process, for example using filters for profanity or trademarked terms, or through a manual review process by an administrator of the home game module 125. The selection of a club name 312 may have additional restrictions, for example with a minimum or maximum length. If a selected club name 312 or passcode 313 fails the validation process, an error message may be displayed and the player may adjust the selected club name and passcode accordingly.

[0060] When a club name 312 and passcode 313 are validated, and a new home game club 310 is created, the club founder 311 and club ID 315 may be associated with the home game club 310. A unique club ID 315 may be assigned to the home game club 310 for efficient identification of data associated with the home game club 310 within the home game module 125. The founder 311 may receive a notification, for example by email or through a message in a pop-up window, indicating that the home game club 310 has been successfully created. The notification may additionally provide a link to access the home game module 125 or otherwise download the relevant interface modules. Such message may then be easily forwarded to potential members to aid in the join process.

[0061] The founder 311 may be responsible for managing the membership of the home game club 310. The founder 311 may invite other players to join the home game club 310 by distributing the club name 312 and passcode 313 to potential members. The number of members that the home game club 310 can maintain may be restricted by a predetermined threshold, for example by a minimum or maximum number of

members. The predetermined threshold may vary for a home game club 310 with a founder having a first level of access permission and a home game club 310 with a founder having a second level of access permission.

[0062] When a player requests club membership, the founder 311 may have the option to approve or deny the new player membership. An approved player may be included as a member 314 of the home game club 310 and have access to the game features of the home game club 310. The founder 311 may additionally block or suspend a player's home game club membership. A suspended member may still have access to the home game club lobby, to view club statistics for example, but may be restricted from registering for and playing in home game club games.

[0063] The founder 311 may additionally customize the home game club 310 by adjusting game settings and parameters, the game season 318 for example, or by customizing the club lobby settings 316. The adjustable club lobby settings 316 may include, for example, creating a personalized logo or by setting background colors and images. The game season 318 may establish limits for collecting member statistics and establishing leaderboards. In one embodiment, the limits of the game season 318 may be defined by standard calendar-based divisions of time. In another embodiment, the game season 318 may establish a game limit, based on a set number of games, for collecting member statistics and establishing leaderboards. After the season completes, the leaderboard may be cleared and the club statistics 319 may be reset. Then, a player may join an established club and still be able to achieve a position on the leaderboard despite the club having potentially years of game play and related accumulated member statistics. The founder 311 may set the game season 318 for a recurring period, for example a year, quarter, or month, or for a number of games, for example 10, 20 or 100 games.

[0064] FIG. 4 is a simple block diagram illustrating elements of an exemplary home game 410 according to an embodiment of the present invention. A founder or a player with administrative access may create a new club home game 410 by setting and managing the game elements 411-423. Each of the game elements 411-423 may have default values that may be changed by the administrator during creation of the new home game 410. The administrator may edit some game elements after the home game 410 has been created.

[0065] To create a new home game 410, the administrator may set a game name 411. The game name 411 may be a descriptive phrase used to identify the game in the game list displayed by the club lobby. For example, 'weekly show-down' or 'labor day challenge'. A selected game name 411 may be subject to certain limitations, for example the selected game name may not contain inappropriate words or phrases, may not contain invalid characters, or may be restricted with a minimum or maximum length. Additionally, a game name 411 may not be valid if a game with the same game name 411 and scheduled date 412 and time 413 already exists in the home game club. Then an error message may be displayed and the administrator may correct the error. The described or similar limitations may be enforced with a validation check as previously described.

[0066] The home game 410 may be scheduled as a recurring game. For example, the administrator may indicate that the home game 410 should be scheduled every week or every month. A home game club member may register for a single instance of the recurring home game 410, or for each scheduled game of the recurring home game 410.

[0067] To create a home game 410, the administrator may additionally set the scheduled date 412 and time 413 of the home game 410. When displayed to the player, the scheduled time 413 may appear appropriately adjusted for the player's time zone. The administrator may then set the game type 414, game style 415, money type 416, and limit type 417. The game type 414 may be any available game on the system. For example the game type 414 may be set as Texas Hold'em, Omaha, Stud, HORSE, etc. The game type 414 may then restrict the options for limit type 417. For some game types, limit type 417 may include fixed limit, pot limit, or no limit options.

[0068] The game style 415 may be tournament style or ring style. Ring style games, conventionally known as cash games, are games for which no payout awards schedule is determined because players may join or leave the game at any time, without being knocked out. Registered players for a ring game may commit to a minimum buy-in, but need not commit to a minimum length of play. If a registered player is late for a scheduled ring game, the player's seat may be saved for a period, for example a period of time, a period of rounds dealt or a period of hands dealt. If a ring game is in progress and there are open seats, new players (club members) may join the ring game by submitting the minimum buy-in. A ring game in progress may be accessible from a game lobby, a window or application interface that facilitates the display of the game status, the registered players, and the open seats.

[0069] The money type 416 may be real money or play money. With play money, each player is playing with an amount of play money that may be designated as belonging to the player upon registering with the home game module 125, upon applying for membership to the home game club, upon winning a game, or upon beginning the home game 410. In one embodiment, administrators having a second level of access permission may only create home games 410 with play money as the money type 416. Administrators having a first level of access permission may have the option to create play money games or real money games.

[0070] The administrator may set a play speed 418 or other time limit for the home game 410. Options for play speed 418 may include normal and fast. In tournament style games, additional period settings, for example a turbo speed, may be set for the period or round before the blinds increase. If a tournament style game needs to be completed within a certain time frame, the home game 410 may adjust the rate of increasing blinds in order to ensure timely completion. Blinds may be raised on a set schedule, or the home game 410 may monitor the rate of play and dynamically adjust the blinds over time to ensure timely completion.

[0071] The administrator may select a buy-in option 419 for the home game 410. The founder may set a variety of buy-in options 419 as part of the game management functions, or the buy-in options 419 may be set by default and may not be configurable. There may be predefined restrictions for the buy-in options 419, such as a minimum or a maximum buy-in. Then the administrator may select one of the predefined buy-in options 419 for the new home game 410. For example, for a buy-in level, a micro buy-in level may be as low as \$1.10, a low buy-in level may be \$5.50, a medium buy-in level may be \$11 and a high buy-in level may be \$22. The number of re-buys or add-ons a player may have in a game may also be set as part of the buy-in options 419. The chips received for each buy-in may also be set as part of the buy-in options. Changing the number of chips received for

each buy-in or the number of re-buys available may alter the game duration. In an embodiment, the buy-in options 419 may be limited to tournament style games only.

[0072] The administrator may also set stakes options 420 for the home game 410. The founder may set a variety of stakes options 420 as part of the game management functions, or the stakes options 420 may be set by default and may not be configurable. There may be restrictions on the stakes options 420, such as a minimum or a maximum value. Then the administrator may select one of the pre-defined stakes options 420 as set by default or by the founder. For example, a micro stakes level may be as low as \$0.05/\$0.10, a low stakes level may be \$0.25/\$0.50, a medium stakes level may be \$1/\$2 and a high stakes level may be \$2/\$4. In an embodiment, the stakes options 420 may be limited to ring style games only.

[0073] The administrator may select seat options 421 for the home game. The seat options 421 may be set by default and may not be configurable or may be set by the administrator during creation of the home game 410. There may be restrictions on the seats options 421, such as a minimum or a maximum number of seats for the home game 410.

[0074] The administrator may select blinds options 422 for the home game 410. The administrator may set the minimum or maximum blind, or, four tournament style games, the rate at which the blinds increase in order to control the rate play and affect the duration of the game. For example, in a tournament style game, the blinds rate may be set as slow, normal, fast, or turbo. There may be predefined restrictions on the blinds options 422, such as a minimum or a maximum blind or minimum rate of change.

[0075] The administrator may select payout options 423 for the home game 410. The founder may set a variety of predefined payout options 423 as part of the game management functions. The administrator may change the payout options during creation of the home game 410 by selecting one of the pre-defined payout options 423 for the new home game 410. For example, the number of players that will receive a payout may be adjusted. The default number of players to receive a payout may be set to three, for first, second, and third place players. However, the administrator may set the number of players to receive payout to a different number, for example only the first place player may receive a payout, or the first through fifth place players may receive a payout. The percentage of the prize pool awarded to each player may additionally be adjusted. There may be additional restrictions on the payout options 423, such as a minimum or a maximum number of players that may receive a payout or the maximum or minimum percentage of the prize pool that may be awarded. In an embodiment, the payout options 423 may be limited to tournament style games only.

[0076] The administrator may similarly set other home game options, for example whether to enable, disable, or adjust the timing and length of an intermission. The administrator may also determine if the home game 410 is a qualified game to be included in the home game club statistics. The home game 410 may be qualified automatically subject to predefined limitations, for example, a minimum player requirement, qualified games may be restricted to tournament style games only, or may be qualified only upon selection of the administrator.

[0077] The administrator may have the option to save the settings of the home game 410 to be used as the base configuration for future home games. There may be a limit on the number of saved configurations for a home game club. The

configuration may be saved under the game name **411** but without a game date. If an error occurs in saving the configuration, for example if the game name **411** already exists in the saved configurations, then an error message may be displayed. The administrator may have the option to overwrite the older configuration or to correct the error, for example by renaming the new configuration. An administrator may manage the saved configurations, for example by deleting or editing earlier saved configurations.

[0078] FIG. 5 is a simple block diagram illustrating an exemplary system **500** according to an embodiment of the present invention. As shown in FIG. 5, system **500** may include a number of clients **510.1-510.N** accessing a server **520** via a network **530**. The server **520** may be a network server connected to the clients **510.1-510.N** via the network **530**. The server **520** may have game modules to manage the backend of a variety of poker games including a home game module **525** that may manage the backend for home games played by players via the clients **510.1-510.N**. The network **530** may be a wired or wireless network that may include a local area network (LAN), a wireless area network (WAN), the Internet, or any other network available for accessing the server **520** via the clients **510.1-510.N**.

[0079] In conventional distributed poker systems, in order to prevent fraud and collusion among players, the system may restrict access to a game to a single player from an IP address. Then, multiple players playing at the same time from the same IP, for example multiple players on different devices connecting to the Internet via the same network cannot play in the same game together. This substantially avoids the risk associated with multiple players working together against the other players in the game.

[0080] In the home game system **500**, multiple players may be intentionally gathered together to play a friendly, automated, home game. Or multiple players may be gathered together while a missing friend, perhaps a player that couldn't get away from other obligations for the length of a home game, or a player that is playing from a distance, may still join the home game. Then, multiple players may be allowed to play in the same game from the same IP address. Here, the founder may manage fraud and collusion concerns. Where the founder may grant or deny membership, the founder may have the control to limit fraud if membership was granted only to known or trusted acquaintances. Additionally, with the ability to suspend or cancel membership in the home game club, the founder may handle disputes and fraud concerns.

[0081] FIG. 6 illustrates a method **600** for creating a home game club according to an embodiment of the present application. As shown in FIG. 6, a player having access to a virtual home game system may create a home game club from which the player can organize virtual home games with friends and family. Initially, the player may access a home game lobby (block **605**). If the player accessing the home game lobby is a registered user of the virtual home game system (block **610**) the player may then have the option to create a home game club (block **620**). If the player is not a registered user (block **610**), the player may login or register with the virtual home game system (block **615**). After login or registration, the player may be returned to the home game lobby.

[0082] The number of home game clubs a player may create may be restricted. When a player attempts to create a home game club (block **620**), the virtual home game system may determine whether the player has already created the maximum number of home game clubs (block **625**). If the player

has already created the maximum number of home game clubs, a message may be displayed informing the player that the club limit has been reached and returning to the home game lobby. If the player has not already created the maximum number of home game clubs, the player may create a new home game club (block **630**).

[0083] To create a new home game club, the player may select a club name (block **635**) and a club passcode (block **645**). The selected club name and passcode may then be tested for validity, for example by checking for invalid characters, a non-unique club name, or inappropriate terms (block **640** and block **650**). Other input may be required to successfully complete home game club creation, for example the player may be required to accept the terms and conditions for creating a home game club. If the home game club creation was not successful (block **655**), the player may be returned to the home game lobby. Once a home game club has been successfully created (block **655**), the player may access the club lobby (block **660**). The player, now the founder and manager of the successfully created home game club may access club management features, schedule home games, and invite friends and family to join the home game club.

[0084] FIG. 7 illustrates a method **700** for joining a home game club according to an embodiment of the present application. As shown in FIG. 7, a player having access to a virtual home game system may join a home game club to play home games with friends and family. Initially, the player may access a home game lobby (block **705**). If the player accessing the home game lobby is a registered user of the virtual home game system (block **710**) the player may then have the option to join a home game club (block **720**). If the player is not a registered user (block **710**), the player may login or register with the virtual home game system (block **715**) via a home game client. After login or registration, the player may be returned to the home game lobby.

[0085] The number of home game clubs a player may join may be restricted. When a player attempts to join a home game club, the virtual home game system may determine whether the player has already joined the maximum number of home game clubs (block **720**). If the player has already joined the maximum number of home game clubs, a message may be displayed informing the player that the club limit has been reached and returning to the home game lobby. If the player has not already joined the maximum number of home game clubs, the player may join a new home game club (block **725**).

[0086] The home game founder or another home game club member may invite the player to join the home game club by communicating the club name and passcode for the home game club. The player may submit the club name and passcode information to join the home game club (block **730**). Other input may be required to successfully join the home game club, for example the player may be asked to provide a name or other identifying information so that the club founder may recognize and approve the request for membership. The entered club name and passcode may then be tested for validity, for example by determining whether the entered club name and passcode match the club name and passcode of an existing home game club (block **735**). If the club name and passcode combination are not valid, an error message may be presented and the player may correct the problem by entering the club name and passcode again (block **730**). If the club name and passcode combination are valid, the home game club founder may be notified of the membership request

(block 740). The home game club founder may approve or deny the player's home game club membership request. If the home game club founder approves the membership request (block 745), the player may be notified that his membership request has been approved (block 750). Then, when the player returns to the home game lobby (block 755) the new club may be displayed in the home game club list (block 760) and the player may have access to the club lobby.

[0087] FIG. 8 illustrates a method 800 for displaying a home game club lobby according to an embodiment of the present application. As shown in FIG. 8, a player having access to a virtual home game system may access a home game club lobby to explore the home game club to play home games with friends and family. Initially, the player may access a home game lobby (block 805). If the player accessing the home game lobby is a registered user of the virtual home game system (block 810) the home game lobby may include an option for displaying a list of home game clubs with which the player is associated (block 820). If the player is not a registered user (block 810), the player may login or register with the virtual home game system (block 815). After login or registration, the player may be returned to the home game lobby. From the displayed list of home game clubs, the player may select a home game club (block 825). The club lobby for the selected home game club may then be displayed (block 830).

[0088] FIG. 9 illustrates a method 900 for joining a home game according to an embodiment of the present application. As shown in FIG. 9, a player having access to a virtual home game system may have access to a home game club through the display of the club lobby (block 905). A list of the home games scheduled for home game club members may then be displayed as part of the club lobby (block 910). From the displayed list of scheduled home games, the player may select a home game (block 915). The game lobby for the selected home game may then be displayed (block 920). The game lobby may include details about the selected home game including game type, game style, game date, the buy-in options and the payout options.

[0089] The game lobby may indicate whether all of the available seats have been filled or if there is room for additional players to register for the game (block 930). If no seats are available, the player may return to the club lobby. If seats are available, and the player is not already registered for the home game (block 935), then the player may have the opportunity to register for the home game (block 940).

[0090] FIG. 10 illustrates a method 1000 for accessing features of a home game club according to an embodiment of the present application. As shown in FIG. 10, a player having access to a virtual home game system may have access to a home game club through the display of the club lobby (block 1005). As previously noted, a list of the home games scheduled for home game club members may then be displayed as part of the club lobby (block 1010). Additionally, home game results and home game club statistics may be displayed as part of the club lobby (block 1015). Then, if the player is the home game club founder (block 1020), the player may have access to club management functions (block 1025). The founder, or a player that is not the home game club founder, but that is an administrator (block 1030), may have access to game management functions (block 1035).

[0091] FIG. 11 illustrates a method for creating a home game according to an embodiment of the present application. As shown in FIG. 11, a player having access to a virtual home

game system may have access to a home game club through the display of the club lobby and further to the game management functions if the player is a club founder or club administrator (block 1105). Then the player may first select a ring style game or a tournament (block 1110) and then the game may be created (block 1115). The number of home games that may be created in a home game club may be restricted. Different maximums may be applied to ring games and to tournaments. When a player attempts to create for a new home game, the virtual home game system may determine whether the club has already created the maximum number of home games of that type (block 1120). If the club has already created the maximum number of home games of that type, a message may be displayed informing the player that the game limit has been reached and returning to the club lobby (block 1125).

[0092] If the player has not already registered for the maximum number of home games. The player may then set the game options as previously discussed (block 1130). A successfully completed game may then be shown in the list of the home games scheduled for home game club members (block 1135). Club members may then be notified that the new game has been scheduled (block 1140).

[0093] FIG. 12 illustrates exemplary records 1200 for storing home game club information according to an embodiment of the present invention. This information may be stored in a database or other memory device managing operation of the virtual home game system. Each player may have a record 1210 in the database comprising a system ID 1211 or unique user name, personal information provided during registration and related demographics 1212, and information about the home game clubs the player is associated with 1213. Club membership data 1213 may include the clubs for which the player is a founder, and administrator or a member. Information about the player's home game clubs and scheduled games may contain references to the records of the associated home game clubs 1220 and game records 1230 stored in the database. The types of information stored in a home game club record 1220 may contain additional information not shown here.

[0094] Each home game club may have a record 1220 in the database comprising a club ID 1221 or unique club name, information identifying the founder 1222, information identifying the club administrators 1223 if any, information identifying the club members 1224, and information about each of the scheduled games 1225. Information about players and games may contain references to the records of the player profiles 1210 and game records 1230 stored in the database. The types of information stored in a home game club record 1220 may contain additional information not shown here. For example, personalized club lobby settings, club parameters such as the defined season, and statistic information including the leaderboard data.

[0095] Each scheduled home game may have a record 1230 in the database comprising a game ID 1231 or unique game name, the game type 1232, the scheduled time and date 1233, the scheduled duration 1234 if any, and any other parameters associated with the scheduled game 1235.

[0096] FIG. 13 illustrates an exemplary home games global settings management page 1300 for the management of global settings according to an embodiment of the present invention. Global setting or individual setting information may be stored in a database or other memory device, such as a server, managing operation of the virtual home game system. The

management of global settings may be used for fraud prevention and to manage the number of players using a home game club feature and the growth of a home game system. By developing a two-tiered system, it may be possible to easily tighten or loosen restrictions globally based on meta-data analysis of risks and performance, yet still be able to accommodate exceptions on individual case-by-case basis where merited due to analysis of individual club or player risk profiles.

[0097] A graphical user interface window **1310** may include one or more settings available to a system administrator responsible for the administration of a home games system. Global settings may apply to all home games clubs within a home games system. For example, global club specific settings such as global club size, global number of concurrent tables, global number of tournaments scheduled and global number of ring games may be customizable within window **1310**. Player specific options, such as global number of clubs created or global number of clubs joined may also be customizable within graphical user interface window **1310**. Further, these global settings may distinguish between multiple registration levels. For example, with different access levels assigned during registration, players or clubs may have different access to a limited number of features or games. For example, a player with a first level of access permission may not have the same game restrictions as a player with a second level of access permission. A player with a first level of access permission may play in games that use real money and a player with a second level of access permission may play in games that use play money. The default levels assigned to global settings may be differentiated between different permission levels or clients, such as between real money and play money clients. The default global settings may differ based upon the client.

[0098] In an embodiment of the present invention, a system administrator may grant individual levels of access that differ from global settings. Individual settings may differ from global settings and may apply to players or clubs. These settings may include global club size, global number of concurrent tables, global number of tournaments scheduled, global number of ring games, global number of clubs created or global number of clubs joined. Individual settings may be granted based upon factors such as customer loyalty, sponsorship, fraud detection, risk profiles or the frequency of a player's or club's play time.

[0099] In an embodiment of the present invention, an individual player may be granted a higher number of global clubs joined, which may allow that player to join more home games clubs than another member who only has global default settings. Individual settings may also fluctuate with changes to global settings. For example, individual settings may stay at a level equal to the greater of the individual setting or the global settings. By way of example, a club size may be globally limited to 50 members. A club may be granted an individual setting of 100 members by a system administrator. If the global setting were later changed to 200 members, the individual setting would also increase to 200 members. If the global setting were to later decrease to 50 members from 200 members, the individual setting would decrease to the original individual setting of 100 members. This functionality may be available to all global settings.

[0100] In an embodiment of the present invention, a global club size may set the default club size for new clubs or existing clubs. If a global club size is reduced to a number

below what it was previously set at, existing clubs may be grandfathered such that they wouldn't automatically cut out existing members. The global club size setting may be used to limit loss of main lobby player liquidity by regulating growth of club memberships.

[0101] In an embodiment of the present invention, individual club size may allow a system administrator to increase or decrease maximum number of members on an individual club basis. Inputs to a system may include Club Manager User ID, Club ID or Max Players, for example. Individual club size settings may allow regulation of club growth on individual club basis where such growth won't impact main lobby player liquidity.

[0102] In an embodiment of the present invention, a global number of clubs created setting allows a system administrator to increase or decrease the default maximum number of clubs players can create. The global number of clubs created setting may limit loss of main lobby player liquidity by regulating growth of club memberships. Additionally, the global number of clubs created setting may limit losses due to fraud by regulating how many clubs players can create.

[0103] In an embodiment of the present invention, a individual clubs created setting may allow a system administrator to increase or decrease the maximum number of clubs a player can create on an individual player basis. Inputs to a system may include User ID or Max Clubs Create, for example. The individual clubs created setting may affect creation of new clubs, so if number is set below an existing global setting, players may not be forced to close existing clubs. However, players may be prevented from creating additional clubs.

[0104] In an embodiment of the present invention, a global number of clubs joined setting may allow a system administrator to increase or decrease the maximum number of clubs an individual player can join, applied globally to all players. The global number of clubs setting may limit loss of main lobby player liquidity by regulating growth of club memberships. Additionally, the global number of clubs setting may limit losses due to fraud by regulating how many clubs players can join.

[0105] In an embodiment of the present invention, an individual number of clubs joined setting may allow a system administrator to increase or decrease the maximum number of clubs an individual player can join. Inputs to a system may include User ID or Max Clubs Join, for example.

[0106] In an embodiment of the present invention, settings may include a global max stakes/buy-in, which may allow a system administrator to adjust the default maximum ring game stakes or tournament buy-in and may be applied globally to all basic clubs. Clubs that may have been allowed greater individual limits would not be affected by lower global changes. The global max stakes/buy-in setting may limit loss of main lobby player liquidity and losses due to fraud by regulating amount that can be wagered in home games. An individual club stakes/buy-in override may allow a system administrator to adjust the maximum ring game stakes or tournament buy-in, applied to specific clubs based upon a club ID, for example.

[0107] In an embodiment of the present invention, a global number of games/tournaments scheduled may allow a system administrator to adjust the maximum number of ring game or tournaments allowed per day. Clubs that have been allowed greater individual limits may not be affected by lower global changes. This setting may limit loss of main lobby player

liquidity and losses due to fraud by regulating amount that can be wagered in home games. An individual club number of games override may allow a system administrator to adjust the maximum number of ring games or tournaments applied to specific clubs based upon a club ID, for example.

[0108] FIG. 14 illustrates an exemplary home games stake management portal 1400 for the management of global game stakes according to an embodiment of the present invention. Global stakes setting or individual stakes setting information may be stored in a database or other memory device, such as a server, managing operation of the virtual home game system. In an embodiment of the present invention, a graphical user interface 1410 may be used by a system administrator to set stakes levels for fixed limit ring games, no limit ring games, pot-limit ring games or tournaments. Graphical user interface 1410 may include a series of tiers, such as low, medium, high or nosebleed, to indicate a level of stakes for selection. Within each tier, one or more stakes levels may be present. For example, a system administrator may choose stakes level low for no limit/pot limit ring games. Users of the system constrained by the global settings would then be able to choose any of the four exemplary stakes present within the low setting.

[0109] FIG. 15 illustrates an exemplary home game country restriction portal 1500 for the management of countries that are allowed to use a home game system. Country restriction settings may be stored in a database or other memory device, such as a server, managing operation of the virtual home game system. In an embodiment of the present invention, a graphical user interface 1510 may be used by a system administrator to set permitted and restricted countries. The country restriction portal may allow a system administrator to establish which country locations would be restricted from access to a home game system. Players from restricted countries may not see a home games feature in their client software, and thus would not be able to participate in home games online. A player's country may be identified by registration information or using IP address information or other network information. If either registration information, IP address information, or other network information indicates that a player is currently within a restricted country, the player may be limited from using a home games system. The country restriction portal may enable compliance with regulations in specific jurisdictions and may reduce risk of fraud in areas where other controls are inadequate.

[0110] The foregoing discussion identifies functional blocks that may be used in virtual home game systems constructed according to various embodiments of the present invention. In practice, these systems may be applied in a variety of devices, such as personal computing systems and/or mobile devices. In some applications, the functional blocks described hereinabove may be provided as elements of an integrated software system, in which the blocks may be provided as separate elements of a computer program. Some embodiments may be implemented, for example, using a computer-readable storage medium or article which may store an instruction or a set of instructions that, if executed by a processor, may cause the processor to perform a method in accordance with the embodiments.

[0111] Other applications of the present invention may be embodied as a hybrid system of dedicated hardware and software components. Moreover, not all of the functional blocks described herein need be provided or need be provided as separate units. For example, although FIG. 1 illustrates the

components of an exemplary computing system, such as the lobby module 111, the statistics module 112, the gameplay module 113, and the game management module as separate units, in one or more embodiments, they may be integrated. Such implementation details are immaterial to the operation of the present invention unless otherwise noted above.

[0112] While the invention has been described in detail above with reference to some embodiments, variations within the scope and spirit of the invention will be apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art. Thus, the invention should be considered as limited only by the scope of the appended claims.

We claim:

1. A computer implemented method for the delivery of a software application comprising the steps of:

receiving, at a server computer, a request to download a software application over a network;

in response to the request, providing by the server computer over the network a software application including instructions that, when executed by a processor, perform the steps of:

receiving input from an input device creating a home game club;

receiving a membership request to join the home game club from a plurality of members, wherein at least one of the plurality of members has a first level of access permission and at least one of the plurality of members has a second level of access permission;

receiving input from the input device approving the membership request for at least one of the plurality of members;

receiving input from the input device scheduling a virtual poker game accessible to the at least one member having the first level of access permission; and
executing the virtual poker game over the network.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the virtual poker game is accessible over the network to the at least one member having a second level of access permission.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein access to the virtual poker game is denied to the at least one member having a second level of access permission.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein a user requesting said software application has a second level of access permission.

5. The method of claim 1 further comprising creating a plurality of home game clubs, wherein a maximum number of home game clubs created is less than a predetermined threshold.

6. The method of claim 5 wherein for a first user requesting said software application having a first level of access permission, the predetermined threshold is greater than the predetermined threshold for a second user requesting said software application having a second level of access permission.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein if a member requests membership in a plurality of home game clubs, the maximum number of approved membership requests is limited by a predetermined threshold.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein for the at least one member having a first level of access permission, the predetermined threshold is greater than the predetermined threshold for the at least one member having a second level of access permission.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein said approving a membership request is limited to a maximum number of members according to a predetermined threshold.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein for a first user requesting said software application having a first level of access permission, the predetermined threshold is greater than the predetermined threshold for a second user requesting said software application having a second level of access permission.

11. The method of claim 1 further comprising receiving input from an input device creating a virtual poker game and setting a plurality of parameters for the virtual poker game.

12. The method of claim 11 wherein said plurality of parameters includes a time limit for executing the virtual poker game.

13. The method of claim 1 wherein said scheduling is limited to a maximum number of virtual poker games according to a predetermined threshold.

14. The method of claim 13 wherein for a first user requesting said software application having a first level of access permission, the predetermined threshold is greater than the predetermined threshold for a second user requesting said software application having a second level of access permission.

15. The method of claim 12 wherein the time limit is met by adjusting a plurality of blinds during said executing.

16. The method of claim 15 wherein said plurality of blinds are adjusted according to a predetermined blind schedule.

17. The method of claim 15 wherein said plurality of blinds are adjusted according to a dynamic determination of the rate of play calculated during said executing.

18. The method of claim 1 further comprising: recording, at the server, statistic data updated during said executing; and displaying in a graphical user interface (GUI), a summary of the recorded statistic data.

19. The method of claim 18 wherein said statistic data is reset after a predefined season.

20. A client device comprising: a processor; an input device; a display device; and a computer readable storage medium storing instructions that, when executed by the processor, perform the steps of: receiving input from the input device creating a home game club; receiving a membership request to join the home game club from a plurality of members, wherein at least one of the plurality of members has a first level of access permission and at least one of the plurality of members has a second level of access permission; receiving input from the input device approving the membership request for at least one of the plurality of members; receiving input from the input device scheduling a virtual poker game accessible to the at least one member having the first level of access permission; and executing the virtual poker game over the network.

21. The client device of claim 20 wherein said processor creates a plurality of home game clubs such that a maximum number of home game clubs created is less than a predetermined threshold.

22. The client device of claim 21 wherein if the client device is associated with a first level of access permission, the predetermined threshold is greater than if the client device is associated with a second level of access permission.

23. The client device of claim 20 wherein if a member requests membership in a plurality of home game clubs, the maximum number of approved membership requests is limited by a predetermined threshold.

24. The client device of claim 23 wherein for the at least one member having a first level of access permission, the predetermined threshold is greater than the predetermined threshold for the at least one member having a second level of access permission.

25. The client device of claim 20 wherein approving a membership request is limited to a maximum number of members according to a predetermined threshold.

26. The client device of claim 25 wherein if the client device is associated with a first level of access permission, the predetermined threshold is greater than if the client device is associated with a second level of access permission.

27. The client device of claim 20 wherein the processor further performs the steps of creating a virtual poker game and setting a plurality of parameters for the virtual poker game.

28. The client device of claim 27 wherein scheduling a plurality of virtual poker games is limited to a maximum number of virtual poker games according to a predetermined threshold.

29. The client device of claim 28 wherein if the client device is associated with a first level of access permission, the predetermined threshold is greater than if the client device is associated with a second level of access permission.

30. The client device of claim 29 wherein said plurality of parameters includes a time limit for executing the virtual poker game.

31. The client device of claim 30 wherein the time limit is met by adjusting a plurality of blinds during the said executing.

32. The client device of claim 31 wherein said plurality of blinds are adjusted according to a predetermined blind schedule.

33. The client device of claim 31 wherein said plurality of blinds are adjusted according to a dynamic determination of the rate of play calculated during said executing.

34. The client device of claim 20 further comprising updating collected statistic data during said executing, and displaying a summary of the statistic data with the display device.

35. The client device of claim 34 wherein the statistic data is reset after a predefined season.

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