**TEAM PLAY POKER**

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**ABSTRACT**
Tournament poker play proceeds on a team basis according to a modified set of rules. A tournament poker play table is configured for head-to-head competition between at least two teams. The poker play table includes a plurality of transparent windows enabling the video capture system to view hole cards held by the teams. A video capture system is used for the selection and arrangement of video images that are broadcast to a viewing audience.
TEAM PLAY POKER

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims the benefit of Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/789,761, titled TEAM PLAY POKER, and filed on Apr. 6, 2006, which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present disclosure pertains to the field of games, and more particularly card games such as poker and the like. More specifically, the rules of the game are enhanced to permit teams to compete against one another in a tournament, and to provide a system to enhance the presentation of the tournament for the enjoyment of a viewing audience.

BACKGROUND

[0003] In the past few years, the game of poker has attracted a widespread following that extends largely to tournament play before a television audience. Video systems may be used to enhance the viewer presentation, for example, by presenting images of ‘hole’ cards that are dealt to an individual player but are not available to other players as the play proceeds. Thus, the audience is able to see who is bluffing and to speculate as to what cards a particular player hopes to receive with each new draw. The well-known game of Texas Hold ‘Em is one such game in which each player is dealt hole cards that are not revealed to other players, while the dealer reveals community cards that are available for common use by all players to assemble a winning hand. Other card games that may lend themselves to tournament play include for example, among other well-known poker games, five card draw, five card stud, and seven card stud.

[0004] Although card games like poker essentially pertain to a calculation of odds, a measure of success may be achieved by players who credibly bluff by betting on poor or unwinnable hands. Audiences particularly enjoy viewing this type of action where, for example, they can speculate how they would play a particular hand, or witness a player who has an otherwise winning hand fold the cards simply for lack of willingness to contest the bluff.

[0005] A wide variety of poker games are known in the art. In just one example, the conventional rules of Texas Hold ‘Em Poker games provide that two players to the left of the dealer put a predetermined amount of money into the pot before any cards are dealt. This ante assures that there is interest in playing each and every hand.

[0006] This process is commonly called ‘posting the blinds.’ Most often, the ‘first blind,’ i.e., the player to the immediate left of the dealer, puts up half the minimum bet, and the ‘second blind’ puts up the full minimum bet. Each player is dealt two cards, face down. These are known as the hole cards. At this point, betting begins with the player to the left of the two who posted the blinds. Players can call, raise, or fold when it is their turn to bet. This first round of betting ceases when those players who have not folded have contributed equally to the pot as a result of the first round bets.

[0007] The next round of betting is preceded by ‘the flop.’ After the first betting round, the dealer discards the top card of the deck. This is called burning the card and is done to help prevent cheating (for example to insure that no player accidentally saw the top card). The dealer then flips the next three cards face up on the table. These cards are called the ‘flop.’ Eventually, a total of five community cards will be placed face up on the table. Players may use any combination of the community cards and their own two hole cards to form the best possible five-card poker hand. At this stage, however, only three such cards are available. After the flop, another round of betting takes place, beginning with the player to the left of the dealer who is sometimes also called the button. During this and all future rounds of betting, players may check, call, raise, or fold when it is their turn to bet. Betting proceeds as with the first round, except that once a player has folded he or she may not reenter the play process until after the pot has been collected and a new round begins.

[0008] Upon completion of this second round of betting, the dealer burns another card and plays one more card face up onto the table. This, the fourth community card, is alternatively called the ‘turn’ or ‘Fourth Street’. Following the turn, the player to the left of the dealer begins the third round of betting. This proceeds as before with the options to check, call, raise or fold.

[0009] With completion of the third round of betting, the dealer burns another card before placing the final face-up card on the table. This card is called the ‘river’ or ‘Fifth Street’. Final betting occurs on the basis of each player using any combination of seven cards. These cards include the five community cards that the dealer has turned face-up and the two hole cards known only to an individual player. Each player selects from the seven available cards to provide the best possible five-card poker hand. As is well-known, poker hands have the following hierarchy in descending order of preference:

1. Royal Flush: Ace, King, Queen, Jack and Ten—of the same suit.
2. Straight Flush: Nine, Ten, Jack, Queen, King (best straight flush) though to Ace, Two, Three, Four, Five (worst straight flush)—of the same suit.
3. Four of a kind: i.e., any four matching cards such as four Aces.
4. Full House: two of a kind and three of a kind in the same hand, for example—Queen, Queen, Ace, Ace, Ace.
5. Flush: Any five cards of the same suit.
6. Straight: Any five connecting cards, for example—Four, Five, Six, Seven, Eight.
7. Three of a kind: i.e., any three matching cards such as three Kings.
8. Two pairs: for example—Ace, Ace, King, King.
9. One pair: i.e., any two matching cards.
10. High card: i.e., the highest card in your hand.

[0020] A tie at any level is resolved by the highest hand at that level, for example, where a pair of Sevens beats a pair of Fives. It is possible for the winning hands to tie, such as where two players may each produce a pair of Eights. This sort of tie is resolved by reference to the next highest card in the player’s hand. If the tie is absolute, the two winners may split the pot or cut cards to determine the winner of a particular pot.

[0021] With the river, the fourth and final round of betting starts. The player to the left of the dealer commences betting.
This betting process proceeds as before, and the winner is selected as the remaining player with the best hand at the conclusion of betting. After the final betting round, all players remain in the game reveal their hands. By convention, either the player who made the initial bet or the player who made the last raise shows their hand first. The player with the best hand wins.

[0022] Heretofore, poker has been viewed as an individual sport or game. Players are particularly noted for their individual styles and habits when bluffing or when they have a winning hand. For this reason it is common for many players to hide their emotions by engaging in routine patterns, and to wear sunglasses in order to avoid perceptions that other players may be able to make by looking into one’s eyes.

SUMMARY

[0023] In general terms, this patent is directed to a system and method involving team play poker, such as for a poker tournament. In one possible configuration, and by non-limiting example, the system includes a specially configured table and electronics to aid in tournament play. In another possible configuration, video broadcast electronics are used to broadcast the tournament game to an audience. In another possible configuration, special rules are provided for tournament play.

[0024] One aspect is a system for the play of a tournament poker comprising a seating arrangement that provides for face-offs between individual players among respective teams; a system of rules that permit discernment of a team victory on the basis of the individual face-offs; and a video capture system that permits a viewing audience to ascertain hole cards at issue among the individual face-offs.

[0025] Another aspect is a system for team poker play, the system comprising a table having a surface and a plurality of seat locations; a plurality of transparent windows located in a surface of the table, wherein each transparent window is located adjacent one of the seat locations; and wherein the table is configured for head-to-head competition between at least two teams.

[0026] Yet another aspect is a system for team poker play comprising a table having a surface and a plurality of seat locations; a plurality of transparent windows located in a surface of the table, wherein each transparent window is located adjacent one of the seat locations; and wherein the table is configured for head-to-head competition between at least two teams.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0027] FIG. 1 shows an example arrangement for team tournament play of poker.

[0028] FIG. 2 is a block diagram showing an example system for electronic enhancement of video presentation of team tournament poker play to a viewing audience.

[0029] FIG. 3 is another example arrangement for team tournament play poker.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0030] There will now be shown and described a seating arrangement for team tournament play of poker. FIG. 1 is a top plan view of an example seating arrangement 100.

[0031] In the illustrated example, four teams are seated. In the example, the four teams include UCLA 102, Michigan 104, USC 106 and Ohio State 108, each having three players. In another embodiment, more or less than four teams may participate in the tournament play. For purposes of this illustration, the names of various colleges have been selected, but the teams could be organized by other such affiliations as city, state, country, company, or any other group or geographical affiliation. Each seating position, such as positions 110, 112, 114 for Michigan, is occupied by an individual who is a member of that team. In other embodiments, each team may be composed of two or more players located at two or more seating positions. In another embodiment, one or more teams may have one or more players.

[0032] In addition, some embodiments include additional seating for team members on the “bench,” such as bench 115 for team Michigan or bench 133 for team Ohio State. In one embodiment, the players are seated on the bench from each team while they await their chance to participate in tournament play. In another embodiment, players on the bench are allowed to collaborate with other team players.

[0033] In a possible embodiment, each player is provided with a transparent glass window, such as windows 116, 118, 120, which are respectively allocated to positions 110, 112, and 114. These windows are for players to place cards in a face-down position. In some embodiments, video cameras, such as 117, 119, and 121, are located below each glass window such that when cards are placed face-down on one of the windows, such as 116, 118, or 120, the respective video camera will receive and transmit video images of the cards. This type of video capture system is used to feed live video images to a control room where such images may be selected for display to a viewing audience. Broadcast may be delayed so as not to broadcast the game in a timely way such that players may be able to derive useful information from the broadcast of these images. Systems for the video capture of these images are already in widespread use for tournament poker.

[0034] In the illustrated embodiment, seating arrangement 100 differs from conventional seating arrangements in common use for tournament poker play. Where conventional tournament play occurs on a round table, tables 122 and 124 have an elongate ovaloid shape that allow individual face-offs between members of the respective teams. In this manner, position 110 faces off against position 126, position 112 against position 128, and position 130 against position 130. Dealer 132 is allocated to table 122, and dealer 134 to table 124. However, it is recognized that various other table shapes may also be used. In another embodiment, multiple small tables may also be used.

[0035] Conventional tournament poker play seats a total of nine individuals at a round table, and play proceeds until a single victor emerges with the combined stakes at issue. Embodiments according to the present disclosure are not so limited. As shown in FIG. 1, any number of players may seat themselves at a single table. Although the seating arrangement 100 shows a 3x3 seating at each of Tables 122, 124, seating may alternatively be 1x1, 2x2, 4x4, 5x5 and so on. Other possible embodiments have teams composed of unequal numbers of players. In one embodiment, each player has a dealer 132 and 134. In other possible embodiments, any number of dealers 132, 134 may be present to attend individual matches, or dealing may be done by an automated dealer.

[0036] It is notated that table 124 is preferably arranged and configured similarly to table 122. Accordingly, the details of
In one embodiment, play proceeds as individual matches. A player at position 110 proceeds in an individual match-up against a player at position 126. Position 112 proceeds against position 128, and position 114 proceeds against position 130. These individual match-ups proceed according to the conventional rules of poker. The extent of play may proceed for a specified time limit or until one player has exhausted the other of all available stakes. At the conclusion of play, the team with the most points wins over the opposing team, such as where the combined stakes of Michigan 104 may exceed the combined stakes of Ohio State 108, or vice-versa. Generally, in the seating arrangement shown in FIG. 1, any team to win two of the three individual matches may advance to the next round. Advancement may be bracketed on a conventional tournament ladder, where preferred teams may be seeded for positioning on this ladder according to their rankings on the basis of past performance. Advancement may also be based on pool play or other known tournament formats.

In another embodiment, play proceeds in a more conventional way until one player has eliminated all others at the table, or until one team has eliminated all players from the other team. In yet another embodiment, play may proceed for a specified duration of time, and the winning team is determined as the one that possesses the most stakes at the end of this time.

In one embodiment, the stakes at issue are money. In another embodiment, any other item or thing of value may be at stake. In another possible embodiment, the stakes include points or chips that are allocated a point value. The points may be used to purchase scholarships or other items of benefit or value for a particular team. In one embodiment, a college team may acquire points that may be converted into scholarships, charitable donations or facilities improvements by prearrangement with event sponsors. In a possible embodiment, a team may decide to retire from tournament play at any time, so as not to place cumulatively acquired stakes at risk. In another possible embodiment, a team may be given new stakes at the commencement of each round, with the cumulatively acquired stakes not being placed at risk.

In a possible embodiment, the teams present at a particular poker tournament are selected from a round robin tournament. In one embodiment, the round robin tournament is held on college campuses and includes college teams. Each college holds a tournament, and the winning players are selected to represent the team in the final poker tournament. In one embodiment, the number of players selected to represent the team is in a range from about 3 to about 9 players. In other embodiments, the teams are composed of non-college students, and may instead represent a city, company, club, or any other group, location, or organization.

In one embodiment, at the commencement of play each player is provided with an equal amount of stakes as all other players at the table. This equalizes guarantees that each team enters each new match-up with another team on a fair competitive basis with all three players on each team taking part at each new tournament level. However, in another embodiment one or more teams are given a handicap on the basis of prior performance at the preceding tournament level. Thus, if a particular team has won only two out of three matches at the preceding level, for example, an individual player who lost in the preceding round, or the entire team, may proceed to the next round with only the winning stakes from the prior round.

In a possible embodiment, tournament play extends to the quarterfinals, the semifinals, and the finals until one team emerges victorious. Other possible embodiments may include a consolation ladder through which a team that has once lost may regain access to the principal ladder.

In another possible embodiment, each team may designate a team captain. The team captain is a playing participant in team play and is assigned to any one of the seating positions, or is alternatively provided with an additional seat position (best seen in FIG. 3 at 326 and 328). In the case of team Michigan 104 if the captain plays on of the face offs, for example, this is suitable one of positions 110, 112, or 114. In one embodiment, the team captain takes the middle position (e.g., 112). In one embodiment, the team captain has power to substitute one player on the team for another. Thus, the team Michigan captain has power to substitute a player on the bench for seating in place of another player at one of positions 110, 112, 114. This may be done to provide a more competitive match-up on the basis of the team captain's subjective preference.

Alternatively, the team captain does not take part in actual play and participates as an observer. In one embodiment the team captain is not a player but an observer, visual signaling devices are provided below windows 116, 118, 120. In another embodiment, a visual signaling device is provided nearby windows 116, 118, or 120, but is shielded from view by the opposing team members. Examples of visual signaling devices include light emitting diodes (LEDs), a display such as a computer monitor, liquid crystal display, and the like, or any other visual display. The display enables the team captain to discreetly interact with individual players on the team. In one example of this, a green LED indicates a recommendation to raise,amber to check, and red to fold. Where such interaction is provided, the team captain may be prevented from viewing the hole cards by use of the video imaging system. In another possible embodiment, the video imaging system enables the team captain to view the hole cards.

In possible embodiments, the team captain is allowed to make decisions for the team regarding who should play in any particular round. For example, the team captain may decide to replace one player with another who is better suited to face off against a particular opponent. In another example, the team captain may decide to replace himself or substitute himself for another player. In one embodiment, the team captain is, for example, a person who finished first in a poker tournament at his or her particular school. In another embodiment, the team captain is the team coach.

In another possible embodiment, the team captain participates as an observer at the table or in a separate production booth facility (best shown in FIG. 3 at 380 and 382). From the production booth, the team captain is provided access, for example, to direct observation or historical information regarding the play for each of the team members. In one example of this, statistics or other information may be provided, as captured electronically in the production booth or from prior matches, to facilitate the team captain's decision whether to make a substitution or call a time-out to discuss strategy.
In one embodiment, each team is allowed a fixed number of time-outs, such as three time-outs for the match. During a time-out, a player may huddle away from the table to consult with fellow teammates on any issue, for example, on how to play his or her cards. In another embodiment, the team players can consult with players on the bench during a time-out.

In some embodiments, these conferences are captured on-camera to provide the viewing audience with an inside view of the personalities and processes within a particular team. This enables the audience, for example, to later assess whether the strategy in place turned out to be the correct strategy or an unsuccessful one.

Play among the respective face-offs may proceed simultaneously or serially. In the case of simultaneous play, viewer enjoyment may be enhanced by stopping all play whenever a player in a face-off goes ‘all-in.’ This is the final step before a player loses the face-off because, once the player places all remaining chips on a bet, loss of the hand by that player means loss of the face-off.

FIG. 2 shows an example electronic system 200 used to enhance the presentation of tournament play for a viewing audience. The video imaging systems 117, 119, 121, 202, 207, 209 are for the imaging of hole cards as shown and described in context of FIG. 1. The video imaging system feed imaging data generally to a production booth 210, which is set up for television broadcast of such images on a selective basis. The video imaging systems 117, 119, 121, 203, 207, 209 are each allocated individual memory space in a video imaging buffer, which may be a magnetic memory. Video selection electronics permit the use of operator station 218 to select a combination and arrangement of video images through the use of video selection electronics 214. One or more television cameras provide camera feed 216, which is also allocated to space in the video capture buffer 212. This is selected, arranged and combined through the video selection electronics 214 and operator station 218 for output through broadcast electronics 220. An audio feed 222 may accept commentator voice signals to enhance viewer perception and enjoyment of the tournament play.

The operator station may be provided with one or more data input terminals and video display units (not shown). The data input stations may be used to combine video input signals in a mixed format, such as a combined display from camera feed 216 to show the tournament play in progress, together with picture-in-picture subwindows of the bidding information, the hole cards for individual face-offs, and the available community cards as they progressively develop from the flop, turn and river stages of dealing. One or more additional data input terminals may be used to compile statistics regarding the play of individual players in a team, and this information may be provided to the team captain to facilitate a decision whether to make a player substitution or to call a time-out for purposes of discussing strategy.

The team captain may in some embodiments reside in the production room, where computer processing may provide statistics as to the play of individual team members. A useful statistic may, for example, be the number of ‘chokes’ or ‘tilts’ that occur when a player with a superior hand is bluffed into folding. The team captain may consult with individual members of the team to determine if the team member should be replaced by another team member or by the team captain. Accordingly, the production booth electronics are not limited to telecasting for the audience, but also provide the team and for team captain with relevant information to make decisions regarding the substitution of fellow team members. For example, where a player’s history indicates that he has consistently lost while holding superior hands, the team captain may decide to replace or substitute the poor-playing player with another player. The electronics may automatically flag or disqualify a poorly playing player who meets a predetermined number of “choked” hands (hands that, statistically, the player should have won), and by this automated means automatically require substitution of a new player.

It will be appreciated that production booth electronics may be quite varied in their nature. Components for a video mixing system of the type described above may be purchased on commercial order and assembled for use as described above.

FIG. 3 is a top plan view of another example embodiment of a seating arrangement for team play poker. Seating arrangement 300 includes table 124 and seats 110, 112, 114, 126, 128, and 130. One team, such as Team Michigan 104 is seated on one side of table 124, such as at seats 110, 112, and 114. Another team, such as Team Ohio State 108 is seated on the other side of table 124, such as at seats 126, 128, and 130.

Various possible embodiments are illustrated in the example of FIG. 3. There is no requirement that any particular embodiment include all of the features illustrated.

In one possible embodiment, table 124 is equipped with various equipment that assists with gameplay. Table 124 includes transparent windows 116, 118, 120, 202, 204, and 206, each window being associated with a respective seat location. In one embodiment, windows 116, 118, 120, 202, 206, and 208 are a transparent sheet of material, such as glass, plastic, or a combination of glass and plastic. Below each of windows 116, 118, 120, 202, 204, and 206 are video cameras 117, 119, 121, 202, 204, and 206 respectively. As described herein, the video cameras capture video images of cards placed face-down on the respective window.

Another possible embodiment includes a display 302, 304, 306, 308, 310, and 312 located underneath windows 116, 118, 120, 202, 204, and 206 respectively. In one embodiment, the display is a computer monitor. In other possible embodiments, the display is an LED display, a liquid crystal display, a television monitor, or any device capable of displaying information to a player. In another possible embodiment, the displays are located on top of table 124, rather than being located below a window. Display 302, 304, 306, 308, 310, and 312 displays information to the respective player relating to gameplay. For example, the display can be used to graphically display the flop, to display player statistics, or for communication between team players. Any other desired information may also be displayed on the display.

In the illustrated embodiment, a team captain from each team takes a seat at one end of table 124. For example, the team captain from Team Michigan 104 is seated at seat 326 and the team captain from Team Ohio State 108 is seated at seat 328. Located nearby seats 326 and 328 are team captain tools. One possible team captain tool is production booth 210, as described herein. In one embodiment, production booth 210 includes a display that is located below a transparent window located in the surface of table 124. Input
devices such as a keyboard, mouse, or other input devices are used by the team captain to interact with production booth 210. In another embodiment, production booth 210 includes a display that is located on top of table 124. In another embodiment, production booth 210 is located adjacent to table 124. During a time-out, the team may gather in a huddle near the production booth to discuss play strategy. In yet another embodiment, production booth 210 is located in a separate room from table 124.

[0059] Another possible team captain tool is time-out buttons 332 and 334. In one embodiment, time-out buttons 332 and 334 are large red buttons located on top of table 124 and within reach of the team captain seated at seats 326 or 328. In another embodiment, time-out buttons 332 and 334 have a translucent cover, such as a red-tinted cover and an interior light that illuminates the button. The team captain presses the respective time-out button 332 or 334 when the team captain wants to initiate a time-out for the team. In one possible embodiment, time-out buttons 330 and 332 are electrically coupled to production booth 210 or another processing device. In another possible embodiment, time-out buttons 330 and 332 are electrically coupled to lighted rim 332, described herein, to control the activation of lighted rim 332.

[0060] In an alternative embodiment the team captain is seated at one of production booth facility 380 and 382. The production room facility may be a separate room, a cubic, or other enclosure. Production room facilities 380 and 382 may also be elevated to enable the team captain to better view game play. In one embodiment, production room facilities 380 and 382 include team captain tools, such as time-out buttons 332 and 334 and production booths 210. In one embodiment, table 124 includes lighted rim 332 that extends around the outer edge of table 124. Lighted rim 332 includes lights, such as LEDs, that are illuminated when a particular event has occurred. Illuminating lighted rim 332 draws attention to table 124 to alert players and the audience that the event has occurred. Lighted rim 332 is electrically coupled in one embodiment to at least one of production booths 210. In another embodiment, lighted rim 332 is electrically coupled to time-out buttons 330 and 332 or another processing device. In one embodiment, the lights are beneficial in adding a dramatic effect to the game. In another embodiment, speakers or other sound generators are also used to generate sounds when lighted rim 332 is activated.

[0062] In some embodiments, table 124 includes automatic shufflers 320. One example of an automatic shuffler is the ShufflePro™ automatic shuffler sold by VendingData Corporation of Las Vegas, Nev. In the illustrated embodiment, a separate shuffler is provided for each head-to-head match. For example, seats 110 and 126 are paired with a single shuffler. In another embodiment, a dealer distributes the cards. For example, the dealer may deal a separate deck of cards to each heads-up match, including a separate flop for each match. In another embodiment, all players are dealt cards from the same deck, and play from the same flop. In another embodiment, only a single shuffler is used for the entire table 124.

[0063] In some embodiments, table 124 includes dealer button 322. Dealer button 322 is a chip that is passed back and forth between teams at table 124 to indicate who makes the first bid. In another embodiment, dealer button 322 is a light or LED that illuminates on table 124. In this embodiment, each team has their own dealer button which is electrically coupled to production booth 210 or another processing device.

[0064] In some embodiments, table 124 includes a set of tilt lights 340, 342, 344, 346, 348, and 350 that are each associated with one of seats 110, 112, 114, 126, 128, and 130 respectively. In the illustrated example, the set of tilt lights each include five lights or LEDs. An LED is illuminated whenever the associated player tilts on a hand (e.g., when a player loses a hand that they statistically should have won). In one embodiment, a player is taken out of the game if the player tilts five times, such that each tilt light is illuminated. In addition, rim lights 332 may be illuminated when a player tilts. Tilt lights are electrically coupled to production booth 210 or another processing device.

[0065] In another embodiment, table 124 is configured for a single head-to-head competition, where teams go head-to-head by having all team mates share a single hand. In this embodiment, team members collaboratively make decisions as to how to play a particular hand. In this manner of play, each team is assigned a separate production booth, located in a separate room, where they discuss their strategy. The discussions are video taped to enable the audience to witness the strategy, enabling the audience to eventually see whether the strategy was successful or unsuccessful. After deliberation, the team members (or a single team representative) join the table at which time one team member makes the appropriate play. In the case of disagreement, a vote is used to determine the play to make. Alternatively, the team captain has the final say on game play.

[0066] An alternative method of play is referred to herein as “Best Hand.” In one embodiment of Best Hand play, all players are individually dealt hole cards. Each team then huddles together to discuss and debate which hand is the best hand of the team. For example, the team may gather around the production booth 380, 382. Alternatively, the team may gather next to the table to quietly discuss their best option. The teams each select a single hand to be the team’s “best hand” and then return to the table. The team player holding the best hand remains in the game, and the other team players fold their hands. The remaining player from each team competes head-to-head with the remaining player of the other team.

[0067] An alternative embodiment utilizes video imaging systems, such as 116, 118, and 121 and displays, such as 302, 304, and 306 to view the cards of other team members and to select the best hand to play. For example, video imaging systems record the hole cards of each team member. The hole cards are then displayed to the other team members on the displays at the table. In one embodiment, the display is a touch sensitive display. Each player views the hole cards available for the team and places a vote for which hand should be designated the “best hand” by selecting the desired hand on the screen. Other input devices may also be used, such as a mouse, keyboard, and the like. Should there be a debate over which hand to select, the team has the option of calling a time-out to discuss the decision.

[0068] In a preferred embodiment, the best hand is selected by each team prior to the flop, but in alternate embodiments the best hand is selected some time after the flop. In a possible embodiment, after selection of the best hand, the other team members retire to the team’s production booth where they watch the unfolding of the rounds of betting. In this embodiment, the team member with the best
hand plays without input from the other team members. Alternative embodiments, however, allow the teams to continue to strategize and debate throughout game play.  

A possible benefit of the best hand approach is that it enables the viewing audience to witness the internal dynamics of a team as that team discusses and debates the merits of each hand. In possible embodiments, team decisions are tracked statistically as a record of their intelligence and/or presence in choosing each hand. Other information may also be tabulated and presented to the viewing audience, such as how often winning hands were folded in favor of a non-winning hand.

If the team determines during the huddle that none of the team's hands are likely to be winning, an embodiment includes the option of “folding the side.” Folding the side means that the entire team folds. In such an embodiment, however, there may be limits to the number of times that the team can fold. In this way, teams are forced to think carefully about the decision of whether to play or whether to fold their side.

The above specification, examples and data provide a complete description of the manufacture and use of the composition of the invention. Since many embodiments of the invention can be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention, the invention resides in the claims hereinafter appended.

What is claimed is:

1. A system for the play of tournament poker comprising: a seating arrangement that provides for face-offs between individual players among respective teams; a system of rules that permit discernment of a team victory on the basis of the individual face-offs; and a video capture system that permits a viewing audience to ascertain hole cards at issue among the individual face-offs.

2. The system of claim 1, wherein the system of rules permit a team captain to make player substitutions.

3. The system of claim 1, wherein the system of rules permit teams to call for a limited number of time-outs.

4. The system of claim 1, wherein the video capture system comprises electronics for selection and arrangement of captured images in combination with camera feed of the players at play in the tournament.

5. The system of claim 1, further comprising means for compiling information that characterizes a history of play for individual players on a team and for presenting the information to a team captain who has power to substitute players as 20 facilitated by presentation of the information.

6. A method for the play of tournament poker, the method comprising: seating a plurality of players with a team association for play against a corresponding plurality of other players with a different team association to provide for face-off play between individual players among respective teams; proceeding with poker play according to the face-offs to ascertain a winner of each face-off; capturing video images that permit a viewing audience to ascertain hole cards at issue among the individual face-offs as the poker play proceeds; and discerning a team victory on the basis of the individual face-offs.

7. The method of claim 6, further including a step of substituting players on the basis of selection by a team captain.

8. The method of claim 6, further including a step of halting the play of poker when a team member calls a time-out.

9. The method of claim 6, where the method further includes a step of using electronics to select and arrange captured video images for broadcast to a viewing audience.

10. The method of claim 6, further comprising: compiling information that characterizes a history of play for individual players on a team, and presenting the information to a team captain who has power to substitute players as facilitated by presentation of the information.

11. The method of claim 10, further comprising the team captain substituting a player after review of the information.

12. The method of claim 6, wherein the players for each team are selected through a collegiate competition.

13. A system for team poker play, the system comprising: a table having a surface and a plurality of seat locations, wherein the table is configured for head-to-head competition between at least two teams; and a plurality of transparent windows located in a surface of the table, wherein each transparent window is located adjacent one of the seating locations.

14. The system of claim 13, further comprising: a video capture device located below at least one of the transparent windows to enable a video to be taken of hole cards held by a player; and a display located below at least one of the transparent windows to display information pertaining to game play.

15. The system of claim 13, further comprising rim lights around an outer edge of the table that illuminate to indicate the occurrence of an event at the table.

16. The system of claim 13, further comprising a plurality of sets of tilt lights on the surface of the table, wherein each of the sets of tilt lights are associated with one of the seat locations, the sets of tilt lights configured to illuminate to indicate the number of times that a player at the associated seat location has tilted.

17. The system of claim 13, further comprising means for dealing cards at the table.

18. The system of claim 13, further comprising a team captain seating location associated with the table.

19. The system of claim 18, further comprising a time-out button on the surface of the table and associated with the team captain seating location, to enable the team captain to declare a time-out.

20. The system of claim 18, further comprising a production booth at the table and associated with the team captain seating location.

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