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Parham(10) **Pub. No.: US 2013/0072290 A1**(43) **Pub. Date: Mar. 21, 2013**(54) **MULTI-PLAYER SECONDARY GAMING
METHOD AND SYSTEM**

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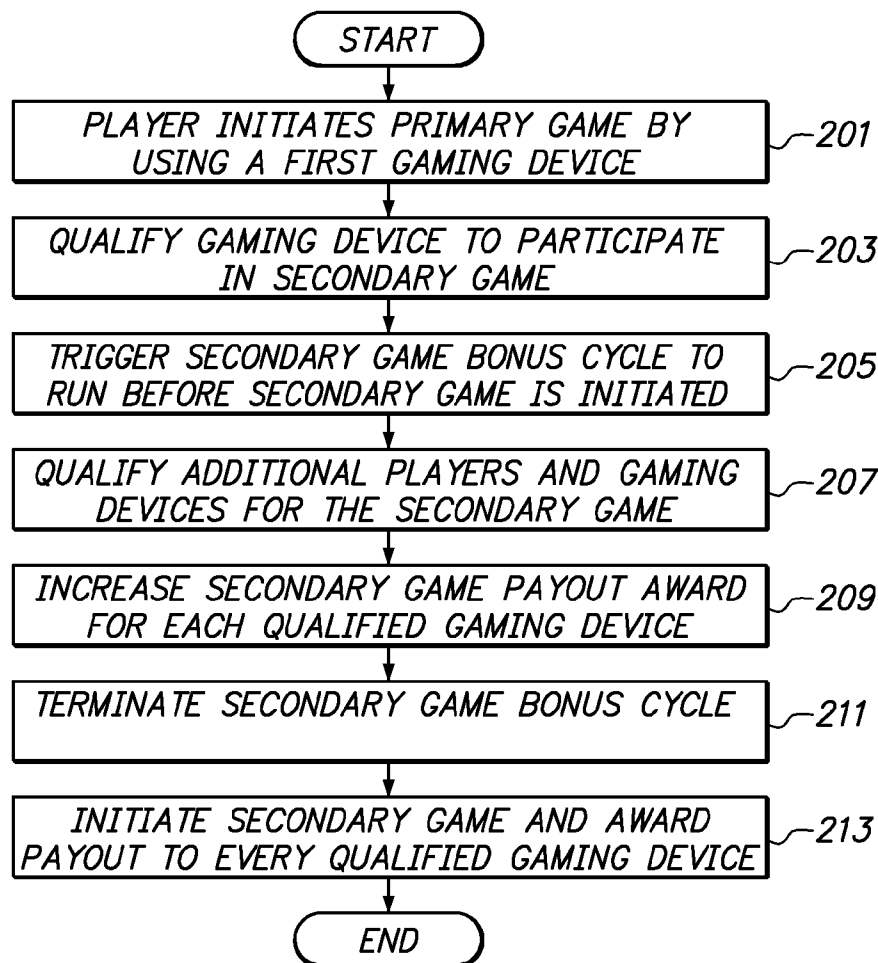
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A63F 9/24 (2006.01)(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC **A63F 9/24** (2013.01)(57) **ABSTRACT**

A multi-player secondary gaming method and system. The method enables multiple networked gaming devices to participate in a secondary game. In accordance with this method, a gaming device is provided by which a player can initiate a primary game. The primary game may be a table game, poker, video slot, and traditional slot such as rotatable reels, wheel of fortune or the like. The gaming device is qualified to participate in a secondary game by using a predetermined primary game outcome or indicia, such as a SPIN symbol on the popular wheel of fortune game. Once the gaming device is qualified, a secondary game indication cycle is triggered after qualification of the gaming device. Additional gaming devices are qualified to participate in the secondary game by using at least one predetermined primary game outcome, and the additional gaming devices are qualified during the secondary game indication cycle. For each additional gaming device that is qualified, the secondary game payout award is increased by a value. Thereafter, the secondary game is initiated and the selected secondary game payout award is awarded to every gaming device qualified to participate in the secondary game.



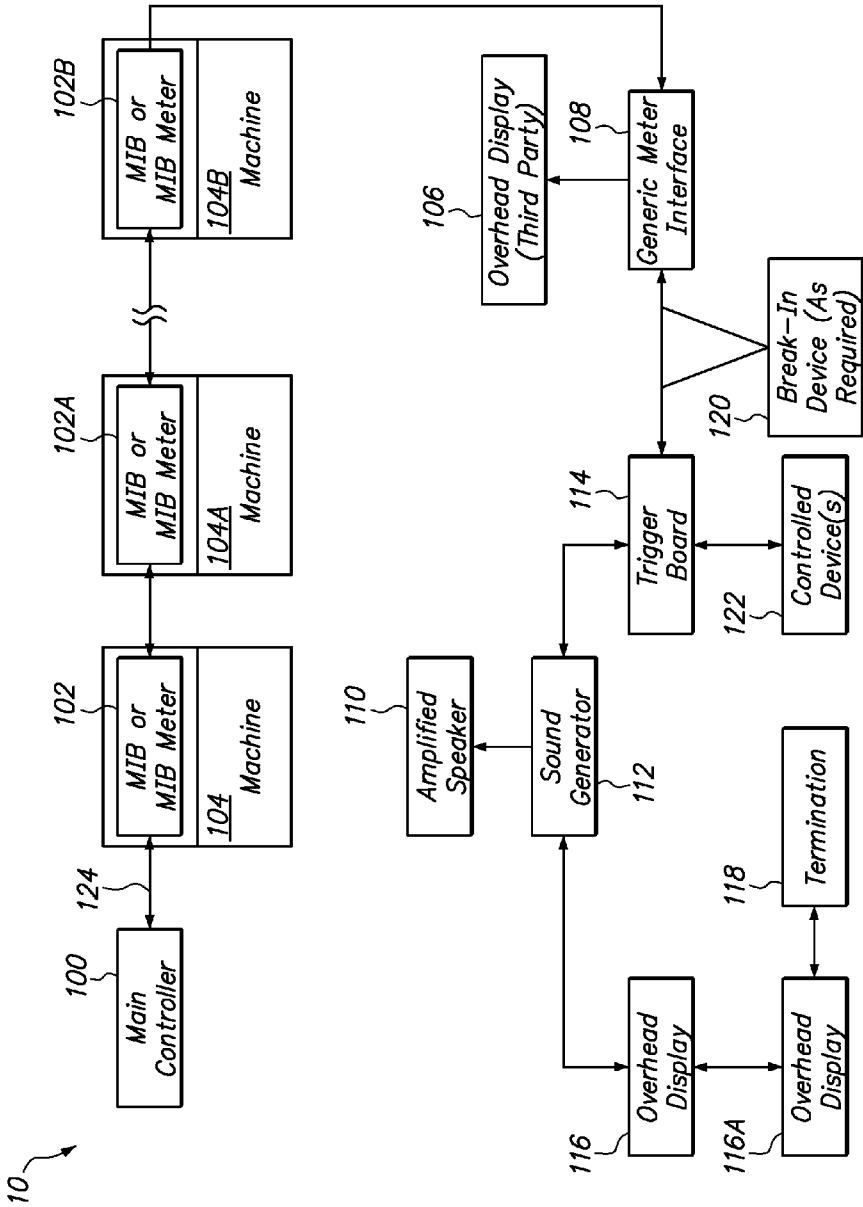
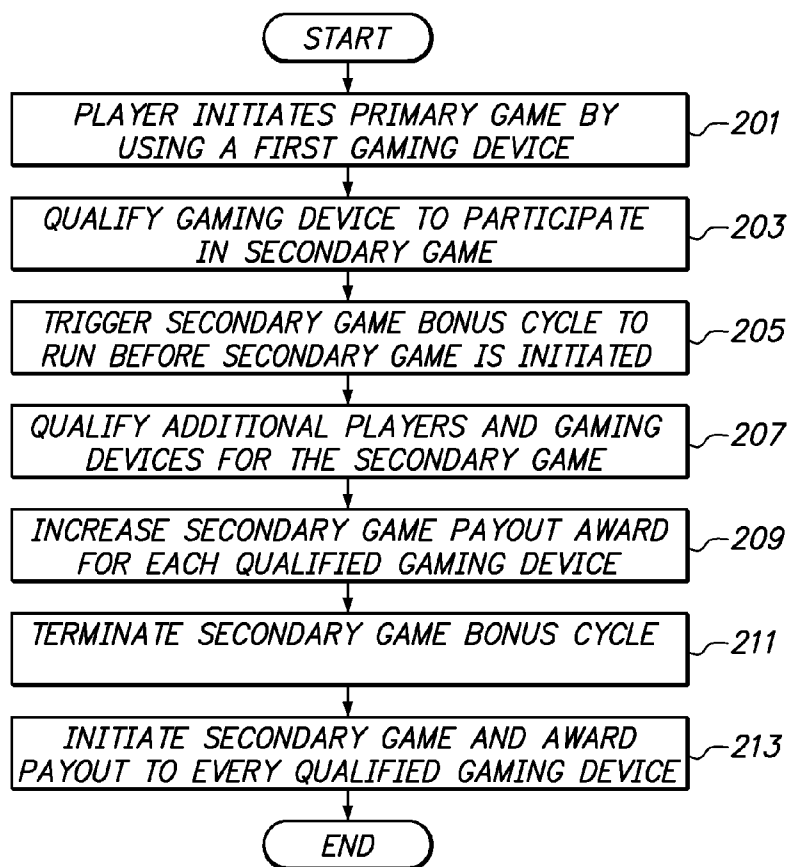


FIG. 1 (PRIOR ART)

**FIG. 2**

MULTI-PLAYER SECONDARY GAMING METHOD AND SYSTEM

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] The present invention is a divisional of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 10/712,628, filed Nov. 11, 2003, entitled “Multi-Player Secondary Gaming System and Method,” and claims priority from U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/424,814, filed Nov. 12, 2002, entitled “Multi-Player Value Wheel Game Method and Apparatus,” all of which are hereby incorporated by reference as if fully set forth in the present specification.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention is related generally to gaming systems and more particularly to gaming systems and methods allowing secondary gaming for multiple players.

[0003] Gaming systems continue to become popular among casino gaming players. In part, this is attributable to the ever-increasing game varieties available on the market. Players appreciate new game varieties they have never played particularly when “gaming” is involved. Here, the term “gaming,” “gaming devices,” “gaming systems,” indicates that wagering or a wagering variant is involved so players can bet money or currency equivalents (e.g., token, credit, etc.) to win more money.

[0004] Slot machines are examples of gaming systems that remain popular among gaming enthusiasts. A slot machine can receive money (or other value items) from a player for a chance to win more money. After the wager amount is deposited into the slot machine, the player spins the slot machine reels to display a random combination of indicia, such as numbers or symbols.

[0005] If a pre-selected winning combination of indicia is displayed, the machine releases money into a payout chute or onto a credit meter for collection by the player. Returns can vary depending upon the initial wager amount. For example, if a player initially wagered two coins and that player won a high payout, that player may receive fifty coins of the same denomination in return.

[0006] Another popular game of chance is the wheel of fortune. It typically includes a rotating disk or wheel having numbers, symbols or other indicia on the wheel's face. A stationary pointer, such as a flexible resilient flipper can point to the winning numbers when the wheel becomes stationary (after spinning).

[0007] A number of games incorporating a wheel of fortune have been devised including a televised game titled “Wheel of Fortune,” which combines a spin of a wheel of fortune with players' attempts to complete and/or guess at a hidden phrase by choosing, winning or buying letters of the alphabet which are revealed to the players if contained in the hidden phrase.

[0008] Those familiar with gaming and game shows will appreciate that players and observers typically experience a heightened level of anticipation and excitement as they observe one or more moving objects approaching a winning position.

[0009] Although not a game by itself, another popular game type is the “bonus feature” used in conjunction with existing games. Because the development of diversions and new games is costly and time consuming without certainty as to

whether the game will be accepted by the gaming public, use of bonus features on established and accepted games is becoming popular.

[0010] For example, one U.S. patent discloses a bonus feature, wherein a player may qualify for a bonus game on a gaming machine after achieving a predetermined winning outcome. Since this bonus feature is only available to those players who achieve the predetermined winning outcome, other players can become bored and are likely to cease playing the game. There is, therefore, a need to provide bonus games in which a bonus or winning outcome creates a socially exhilarating group win environment around the game.

[0011] Regardless of the game being played or the venue in which it is presented for wagering, there is a need for new gaming methods that will attract new entrants to wagering games. Moreover existing games need to hold the attention of existing entrants and spectators so that such games remain attractive relative to the many new game types and diversions constantly being developed.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0012] Various aspects of the present invention can be found in a multi-player secondary system and method. According to a first aspect, a method for enabling multiple networked gaming devices to participate in a secondary game is disclosed. In accordance with this method, a gaming device is provided by which a player can initiate a primary game.

[0013] The primary game may be a table game, poker, video slot or a traditional slot machine such as rotatable reels, wheel of fortune or the like. The gaming device is qualified to participate in a secondary game by using a predetermined primary game outcome or indicia, such as a SPIN symbol on the popular wheel of fortune game.

[0014] Once the gaming device is qualified, a secondary game indication cycle is triggered for a predetermined duration, for example, after qualification of the gaming device. However, the duration of the secondary game indication cycle can be determined by other events.

[0015] As another example, duration of the secondary game indication cycle can be determined by a predetermined number of primary game plays, or even a predetermined number of predetermined primary game play outcomes. Thereafter, additional gaming devices are qualified to participate in the secondary game by using predetermined primary game outcomes during the secondary game indication cycle.

[0016] For each additional gaming device that is qualified, the secondary game payout award is increased by a value. Thereafter, the secondary game is initiated and the selected secondary game payout award is awarded to every gaming device qualified to participate in the secondary game.

[0017] More specifically, once a player bets the proper wager and initiates primary game play on any participating gaming device connected to a network, the player becomes eligible to win and to increase payout awards. The payout awards can be displayed as indicia (e.g. \$10.00, \$20.00, \$30.00, \$40.00) on a secondary game display.

[0018] The secondary game display may be separate or the same as the primary game display. The primary game player qualifies for the secondary game when a predetermined primary game outcome (e.g., a \$ indicia) is randomly received. When the player and other players playing eligible gaming devices receive another predetermined primary game outcome, they are provided with an opportunity (for a random or

predetermined number of game plays, time frames, or any combination of, etc.) to increase and win a prize award in the secondary game.

[0019] As additional predetermined primary game outcome are received during primary game play, the value of the prize awards displayed are increased. Once the predetermined number of game plays and/or time frame runs out for each player playing a primary gaming device, prize award amounts are displayed for the secondary game. And, during the secondary game, at least one displayed prize award is randomly selected and awarded to all of the participating gaming devices connected to the network.

[0020] According to another embodiment of the present invention, before or after primary game play of an eligible gaming device, players can select a predetermined primary or secondary game outcome that they believe will be the next primary or secondary game outcome.

[0021] When the next predetermined primary game and/or secondary game outcome is determined, if the player(s) selection is the same, the player wins at least one prize determined by the wager placed and the predetermined odds associated with the selected predetermined primary game and/or secondary game outcome.

[0022] If the next predetermined primary game and/or secondary game outcome achieved is not the same as at least one of the predetermined primary game and/or secondary game outcomes selected by the player, the play is terminated. An advantage of the present invention is the provision of a simple game enhancement that can be used in combination with existing games to generate and sustain player interest by offering a socially exhilarating group win environment around multiple games.

[0023] A further understanding of the nature and advantages of the present invention herein may be realized by reference to the remaining portions of the specification and the attached drawings. References to “steps” of the present invention should not be construed as limited to “step plus function” means, and are not intended to refer to a specific order for implementing the invention. Further features and advantages of the present invention, as well as the structure and operation of various embodiments of the present invention, are described in detail below with respect to the accompanying drawings. In the drawings, the same reference numbers indicate identical or functionally similar elements.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0024] FIG. 1 is a block diagram of a conventional gaming system for awarding payouts and prizes, the system being modifiable as proves necessary for implementing the various embodiments of the present invention.

[0025] FIG. 2 is a flow chart of a method for using the present invention in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0026] FIG. 1 is a block diagram of a conventional gaming system 10 for awarding payouts and prizes.

[0027] Among other components, gaming system 10 comprises a programmable controller 100 and one or more gaming devices 104, 104A, 104B. Gaming system 10 further comprises programmable Machine Interface Boards 102, 102A, 102B; overhead displays 116, 116A or an existing display 106 with a generic display interface 108; an optional

sound units 112; trigger board units 114; and one or more “break in” devices 120 for system programming (on a casino floor, for example). Gaming system 10 may be utilized for implementing the present invention with various modifications as proves necessary to implement the invention.

[0028] The present invention may be implemented as part of any novel programmable electronic or computer-controlled gaming devices that offer a game payout that can be used in conjunction with a typical networked gaming system. The novel gaming device preferably has various output devices, which may include a display screen for displaying aspects of the invention as described more thoroughly below. Other output devices may include audio outputs such as speakers, bells, whistles and the like, and signaling devices such as controllable lights and the like.

[0029] A number of types of input devices can be used by which the user can place wagers and/or play the game, including touch screen input devices, joysticks, mouse input devices, keyboards, buttons, levers and the like as well as coin or currency acceptors and/or validators, card readers such as credit card readers or other encoded-card readers. Also, gaming terminals may be provided with communication devices, e.g., for purposes for accounting, maintenance, management, security, controls, updating and the like.

[0030] In an alternate embodiment, the invention is implemented on one or more existing electronic or computer-controlled gaming devices. One or more gaming devices 104, 104A are coupled to a programmable controller 100 over a communication network 124, which could be any suitable serial or parallel bus arrangement.

[0031] Indeed, any communication link 124 could be utilized under the method of the present invention and a programmable (controller) 100 could be located remotely from or within the gaming devices 104, 104A. At each gaming device 104, there may be a programmable machine interface board 102 that interfaces between the conventional electronic circuitry of gaming device 104 and the communication network 124.

[0032] With a need for no more than relatively minor modifications, any conventional electronic or computer-controlled gaming device (e.g. video games, spinning reel slot games, keno games, live card games with tables interfacing with electronic equipment, Internet and/or networked games, etc.) that receive bets in order to play a game at the machine can be used for the methods of the present invention.

[0033] The design and operation of gaming devices is well known and conventional gaming machines are available such as from International Gaming Technology™ and Bally™. Modifications to previous gaming devices for use in accordance with embodiments of the present invention can include, e.g., providing graphics, instructions, harnessing, prize indications and the like to inform players how to play the game, meter displays, etc. The controller 100 can also be any suitable computer-based controller.

[0034] The controller 100 can be any one of different controllers and computer based processing systems. How the controller 100 communicates with each gaming machine 104 over the communication network 124 is a matter of design choice and the protocols of communication are determined by the nature of the communication network 124 and the corresponding interface circuits.

[0035] The controller 100 may optionally be connected over communication link 124 to another computer system, not shown. Furthermore, the network 124 in some embodi-

ments is a telecommunications network such as a phone link, Intranet, Internet, satellite, etc. In such embodiments, the gaming devices are implemented as game software in personal computers which are located in remote locations such as hotel/motel rooms, homes, etc.

[0036] In an embodiment of the present invention, once a player bets the proper wager and initiates a primary game play on any participating gaming device **104**, **104A**, **104B** connected to a communication network **124**, the player becomes eligible to win and to increase (e.g., by 1×, 2×, 3× or through other traditional means that are well known in the art) at least one discernible indicia (e.g., fixed or progressive prize award e.g. \$10.00, \$20.00, \$30.00, \$40.00) displayed **116** in a secondary game. Any conventional eligibility requirements such as rate of play, wager, max wager, insertion of player cards, one or more predetermined indicia, separate wager bet, etc. can be used.

[0037] Any traditional means of displaying **116** discernible indicia for a secondary game or any combination of maybe utilized under the method of the present invention which will be appreciated by those skilled in the art, such as on gaming device **104** and/or on the video screen (not shown) of gaming device **104** and/or showcased on a display **116** or **106** above the individual gaming device **104** or a group of gaming devices **104**.

[0038] When a player playing an eligible gaming device **104** receives a predetermined primary game outcome, the player and other players playing eligible gaming devices **104**, **104A**, **104B** are provided with at least one opportunity (for a random or predetermined number of game plays, predetermined number of predetermined primary game play outcomes, time frames, or any combination of, etc) to increase 1× and win at least one prize award displayed **116** in a secondary game by receiving another predetermined primary game outcome through primary game play.

[0039] Whenever another predetermined primary game outcome is received during primary game play on at least one of the eligible gaming device **104A** during the predetermined number of game plays, the value of the prize awards displayed **116** are increased 2× e.g., \$20.00, \$40.00, \$60.00, \$80.00.

[0040] Once the predetermined number of game plays run out for each player playing the eligible gaming devices **104**, **104A**, **104B**, at least one of the prize award amounts displayed **116** that has been multiplied e.g., 20.00, \$40.00, \$60.00, \$80.00 is then randomly selected (e.g., \$60.00) in the secondary game and awarded to all of the participating gaming devices connected to the network that received at least one predetermined primary game outcome **104** (e.g., \$60.00) and **104A** (e.g., \$60.00).

[0041] According to another embodiment of the present invention, before or after primary game play of an eligible gaming device **104**, the player(s) are provided with an opportunity to wager on and select (through traditional means) at least one predetermined primary game and/or secondary game outcome that the player(s) believes will be the next predetermined primary game and/or secondary game outcome from at least one gaming device **104**, **104A**, **104B** connected to the communication network **124**.

[0042] When the next predetermined primary game and/or secondary game outcome is determined, if the player(s) selection is the same, the player wins at least one prize that has been determined by the wager placed and the predetermined odds associated with the selected predetermined primary game and/or secondary game outcome. If the next predeter-

mined primary game and/or secondary game outcome achieved is not the same as at least one of the predetermined primary game and/or secondary game outcomes selected by the player, the player loses.

[0043] In an embodiment of the present invention, all the gaming devices **104**, **104A**, **104B** connected to the network **124** have the same primary game e.g., Jacks or Better Poker. The player can select from e.g., (FOUR OF A KIND pays 10 to 1, FULL HOUSE pays 5 to 1, FLUSH pays 4 to 1, STRAIGHT pay 4 to 1 and THREE OF A KIND pays 2 to 1) as the next predetermined primary game outcome.

[0044] All other game outcomes in this embodiment are not used but may be used in other embodiments. The player on gaming device **104** wagers \$1.00 and selects a FLUSH as the next predetermined primary game outcome. The next predetermined primary game outcome is THREE OF A KIND on gaming device **104A** and the player loses.

[0045] FIG. 2 is a flow chart of a method for using the present invention in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention.

[0046] Briefly, the method employs gaming system **10**, described above, which is a gaming network having a plurality of gaming devices **104**, **104A**, **104B**. By using such gaming devices, multiple players can become involved in a secondary type game to increase play excitement and appeal.

[0047] The method includes a number of steps, namely, initiating a primary type game by using gaming device **104**, and then using this device to qualify for participation in a secondary type game. When gaming device **104** is qualified for the secondary type game, a secondary game indication cycle is triggered to run before the secondary type game is initiated.

[0048] Note that, in one embodiment, the secondary game indication cycle is capable of running for a predetermined duration. During the predetermined duration of the secondary game indication cycle, additional gaming devices are qualified to participate in the secondary type game. Further, for each qualified gaming device, the payout award for the secondary type game is increased by a value.

[0049] Upon conclusion of the secondary game indication cycle, the secondary type game begins and is played by every gaming device previously qualified to participate in the secondary type game. Thereafter, payout awards are then awarded to all of the qualified gaming devices.

[0050] In more detail, at block **201**, the method of the present invention begins when a player uses gaming device **104** to initiate a primary type game. A primary type game is an initial or main game, such as the main game of wheel of fortune. The primary game can be initiated by inserting a dollar amount into a currency acceptor, placing a wager and initiating game play.

[0051] Next, at block **203**, gaming device **104** is qualified to participate in a secondary type game. As implied by its name, the secondary type game is a game subsequent to the primary game. Secondary games provide additional entertainment value to create player appeal, raise coin-in, and increase playing time on casino gaming devices, for example. A subsequent wheel of fortune game is an example of a secondary type game.

[0052] Gaming device **104** can become qualified for the secondary game by randomly receiving a predetermined primary game outcome or indicia. For example, in a primary type wheel of fortune game, gaming device **104** becomes

qualified when the player places max wager, initiates game play and receive a predetermined indicia (e.g. a SPIN symbol on the third reel).

[0053] At block 205, a secondary game indication cycle is triggered to run before the secondary type game is initiated. It is during this secondary game indication cycle that additional players can become eligible for the secondary type game play (block 207). Here is another advantage of the present invention.

[0054] Within the available window of the secondary game indication cycle, other gaming devices 104A, 104B can qualify to play the secondary type game in order to increase the number of players, which creates more excitement compared to having a solo player participating individually in the secondary type game. Qualifying the players within the secondary game indication cycle further creates a “rush” in which players become excited knowing that a limited opportunity to continue game play has been presented.

[0055] Once the available window of opportunity created by the secondary game indication cycle is gone (block 211), additional players can no longer be added. Such a window of opportunity may be such that the secondary game indication cycle is capable of running only for a predetermined duration.

[0056] For example, the secondary game indication cycle can be set to run only for 30 seconds, after which additional players can no longer be added. Within the 30 seconds, other gaming devices 104A, 104B can qualify by “hitting” or receiving a predetermined primary game outcome or indicia, similar to the manner in which gaming device 104 qualified for the secondary type game.

[0057] In fact, even gaming device 104 (and other gaming devices) can qualify, as many times as possible, for additional secondary bonuses or games during the pendency of the secondary game indication cycle. In an alternate embodiment, the secondary game indication cycle pendency is determined by a designated number of primary plays (e.g. 3 plays), after gaming device 104 is initially qualified for the secondary type game. For example, in the case of wheel of fortune, the secondary game indication cycle can be terminated after the primary game has been played three additional times following the initial qualification of gaming device 104 for the secondary type game.

[0058] At block 209, for each additional gaming device that is qualified for the secondary game, the payout award for the secondary game is increased by a multiple value. For example, if gaming device 104 qualifies for two secondary type bonuses, the payout award is increased by 2x. If gaming device 104B further qualifies for three secondary type bonuses, then the payout award is increased by 3x for a total of 5x.

[0059] Here is a further advantage of the present invention. Unlike the prior art, the present invention not only allows multiple gaming devices to participate in a secondary type game within a secondary game indication cycle duration, it further permits the payout awards to be increased for each qualified player or gaming device. In this manner, player excitement and appeal continue to remain at significantly high levels.

[0060] At block 211, the secondary game indication cycle is terminated. As discussed, the above process of qualifying and multiplying the payout award continues until the secondary game indication cycle is terminated.

[0061] At block 213, upon conclusion of the secondary game indication cycle, the secondary type game is initiated

and the payout award is awarded to every gaming device qualified to participate in the secondary type game. This is another novel aspect of the present invention hereto not seen in the prior art.

[0062] All qualified players or gaming devices are awarded payout amounts determined by the total number of qualifications for the secondary game. For example, assuming that the payout award has reached a 5x multiple, all players receive five times (or other randomly selected) the original payout award upon conclusion of the secondary type game.

[0063] While the above is a complete description of exemplary specific embodiments of the invention, additional embodiments are also possible. Thus, the above description should not be taken as limiting the scope of the invention, which is defined by the appended claims along with their full scope of equivalents.

I claim:

1. A method for playing a multiplayer secondary bonus game in a gaming network having multiple gaming devices including a first gaming device and a second gaming device, the method comprising:

receiving a wager amount from a player and allowing the player on the first gaming device to select one of a plurality of possible game outcomes of a subsequent game to be played on the second gaming device;

initiating the subsequent game on the second gaming device and playing the game to its conclusion to determine the actual game outcome; and

awarding one or more prizes to the player if the game outcome selected by the player on the first gaming device and the actual game outcome on the second gaming device are the same.

2. The method of claim 1 further comprising

providing an option for the player on the first gaming device to wager and select a possible outcome for each subsequent game on the second gaming device.

3. In a networked gaming system having multiple gaming devices including a first gaming device associated with a first player and a second gaming device associated with a second player, said gaming devices adapted to play primary and secondary bonus games, a method for playing a game, said method comprising:

accepting a player input on the first gaming device to select an outcome for a game to be played on the second gaming device;

initiating the game on the second gaming device and playing the game to conclusion to determine an actual outcome for the game;

comparing the outcome selected by the player on the first gaming device and the actual outcome of the game on the second gaming device; and

if said selected outcome and the actual outcome are the same, awarding one or more prizes to the first player on the first gaming device.

4. The method of claim 3 wherein the game is a primary game.

5. The method of claim 3 wherein the game is a secondary bonus game.

6. The method of claim 3 further comprising

receiving a wager amount from a player on the second gaming device and allowing the player to bet on one of a plurality of outcomes on a subsequent primary game on the first gaming device.

7. A method for enabling the gaming devices to wager on game outcomes in a multi-player primary and secondary bonus game network, the method comprising:

using a first gaming device to select a potential outcome for a game played on a second gaming device;

initiating game play on the second gaming device until an outcome is generated; and

awarding one or more prizes to the first gaming device if the potential outcome selected by using the first gaming device matches the outcome of game play on the second gaming device.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein the game is a primary game.

9. The method of claim 7 wherein the game is a secondary bonus game.

10. A networked gaming system comprising:

a controller;

a first gaming device having a display device, an input device and a computer processor; and

a second gaming device having a display device, an input device and a computer processor, wherein the computer

processor of the first gaming device is configured with the display device and the input device to:

(a) accept a player input on the first gaming device;

(b) use the first gaming device to select an outcome for a game to be played on the second gaming device, wherein the computer processor of the second gaming device is configured with the display device and the input device to:

(c) initiate the game and play the game to conclusion on the second gaming device to determine an actual outcome for the game, wherein said controller is configured to:

(d) compare the outcome selected by the player using the first gaming device and the actual outcome of the game on the second gaming device; and

(e) if said selected outcome and the actual outcome are the same, award one or more prizes to the player on the first gaming device.

11. The system of claim 10 wherein the processor of the first gaming device is configured to provide an option for the player on the first gaming device to wager and select a possible outcome for each of subsequent game on the second gaming device.

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