



(19) **United States**

(12) **Patent Application Publication**
Pade et al.

(10) **Pub. No.: US 2014/0057699 A1**

(43) **Pub. Date: Feb. 27, 2014**

(54) **WILD SYMBOL BONUS GAME CONFIGURATION**

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
USPC 463/21

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

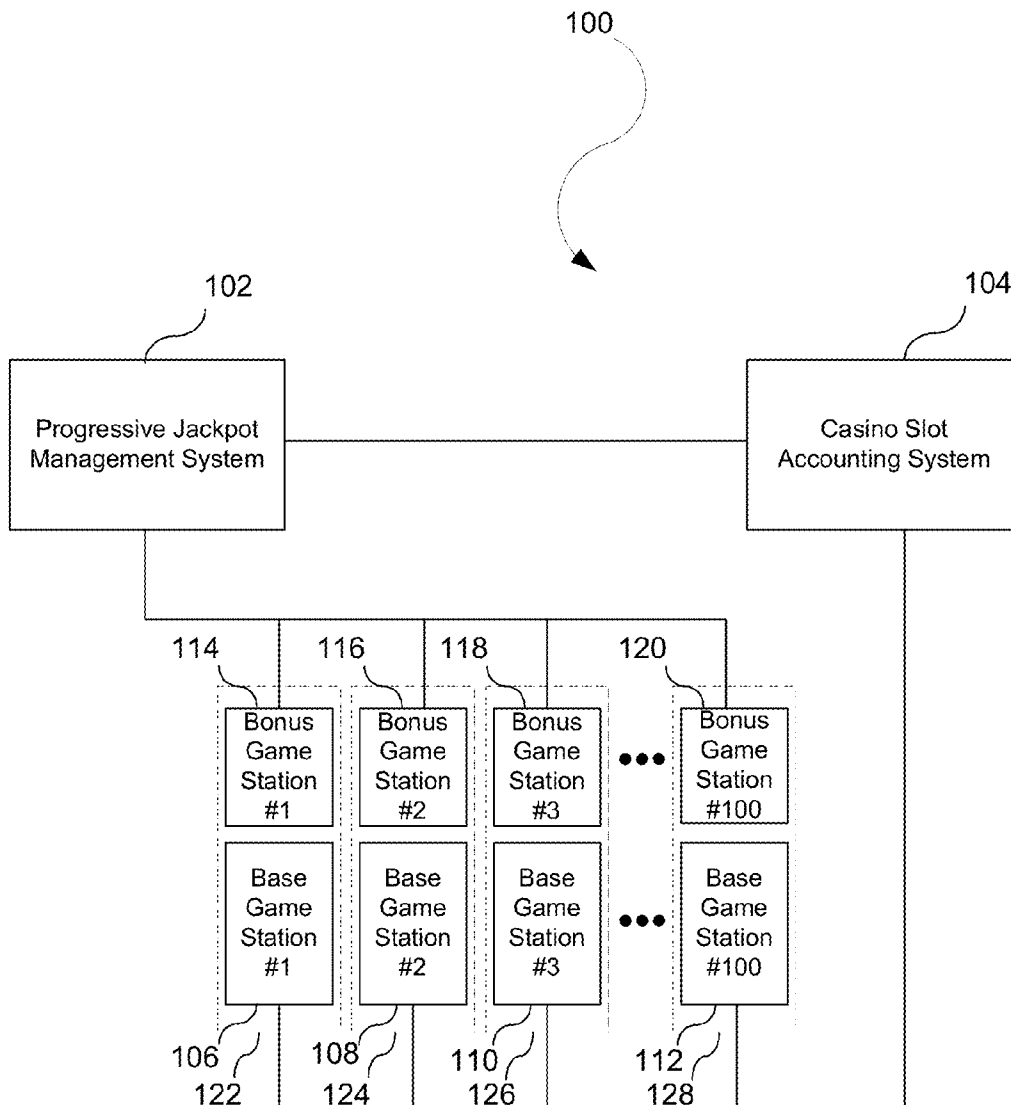
A bonus game is initiated, with a processor, based upon a predetermined criteria in a base game being met, the bonus game having a plurality of bonus game reels. Further, an initial random spinning is performed, with the processor, of the plurality of bonus game reels to obtain an initial plurality of bonus game symbols on each of the plurality of bonus game reels. In addition, the process provides a prize distribution based upon the initial plurality of bonus game symbols matching at least one of a plurality of predetermined paylines. A random determination, for each of the initial plurality of bonus game symbols that is not a wild symbol, is performed to determine a wild transformation status based upon the initial plurality of bonus game symbols not matching the at least one of the plurality of predetermined paylines.

(21) Appl. No.: **13/593,442**

(22) Filed: **Aug. 23, 2012**

Publication Classification

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



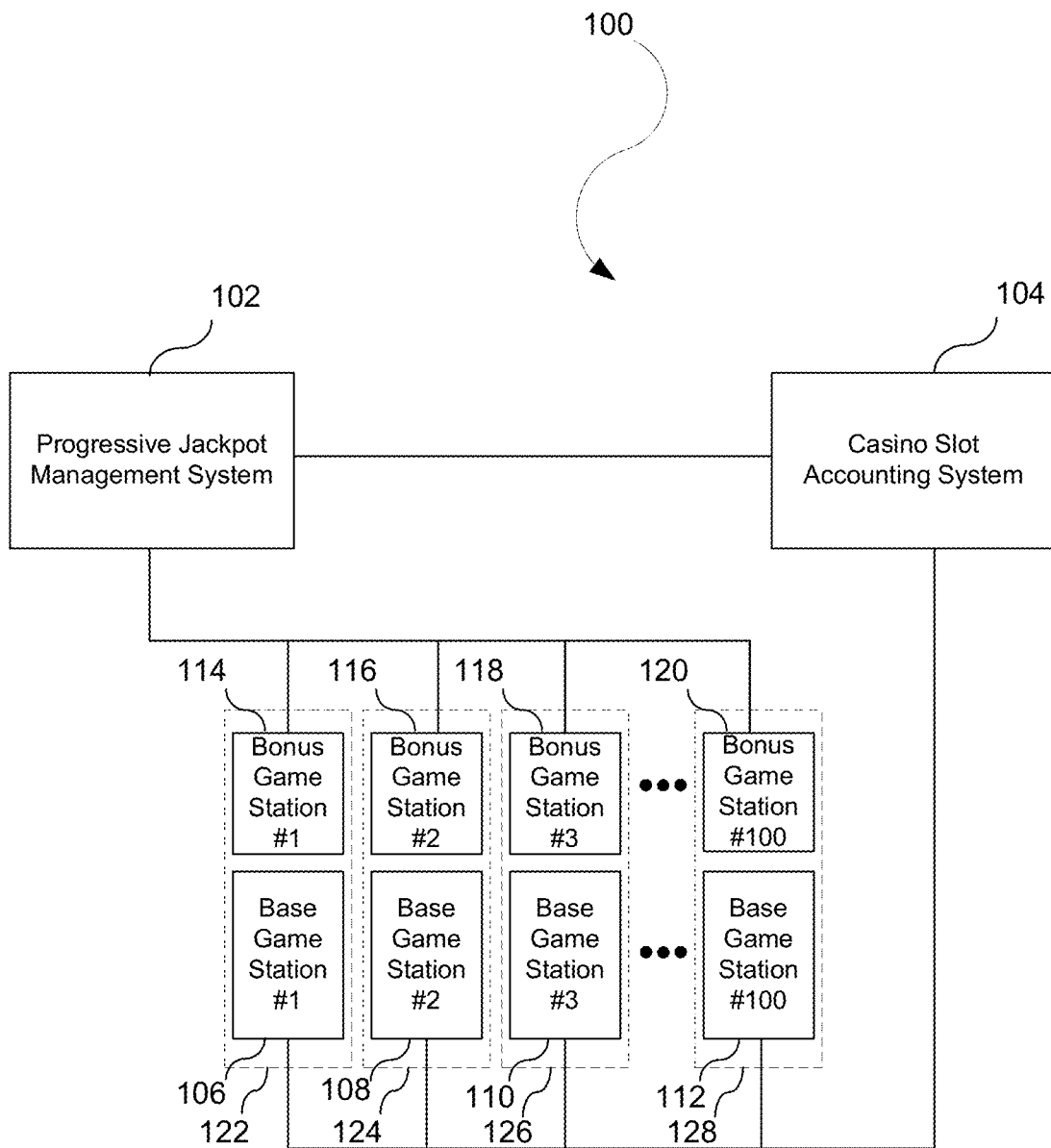


Figure 1

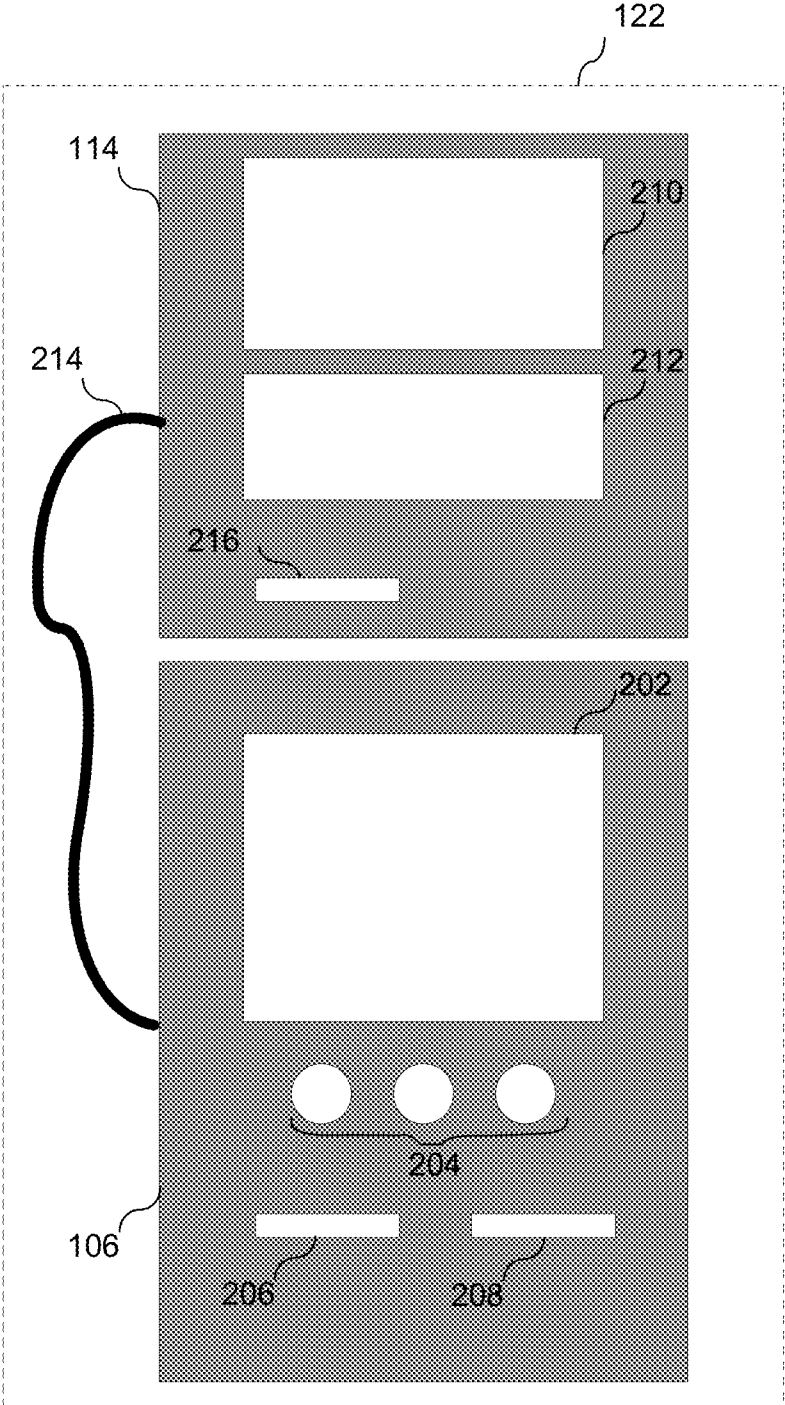


Figure 2

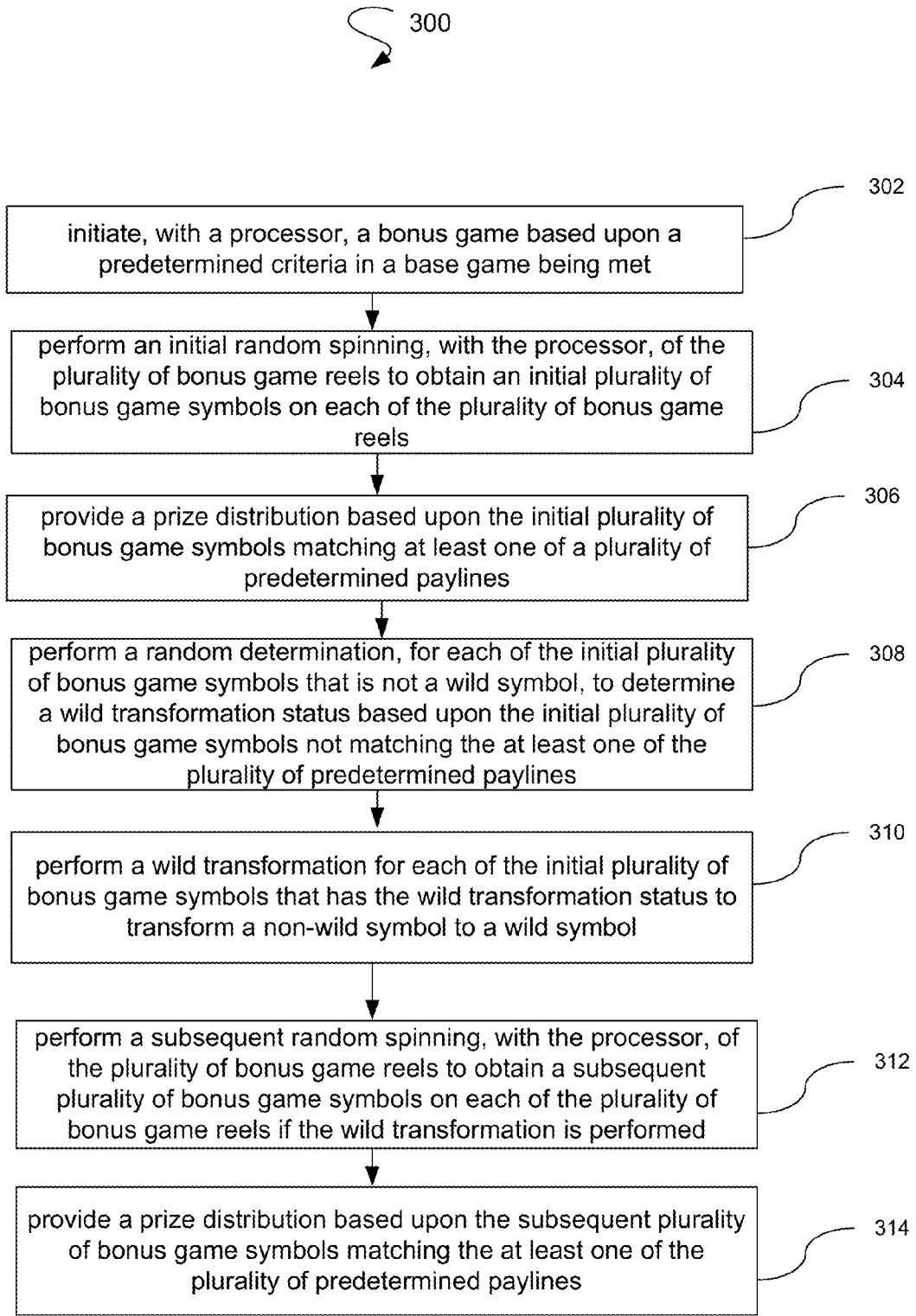


Figure 3

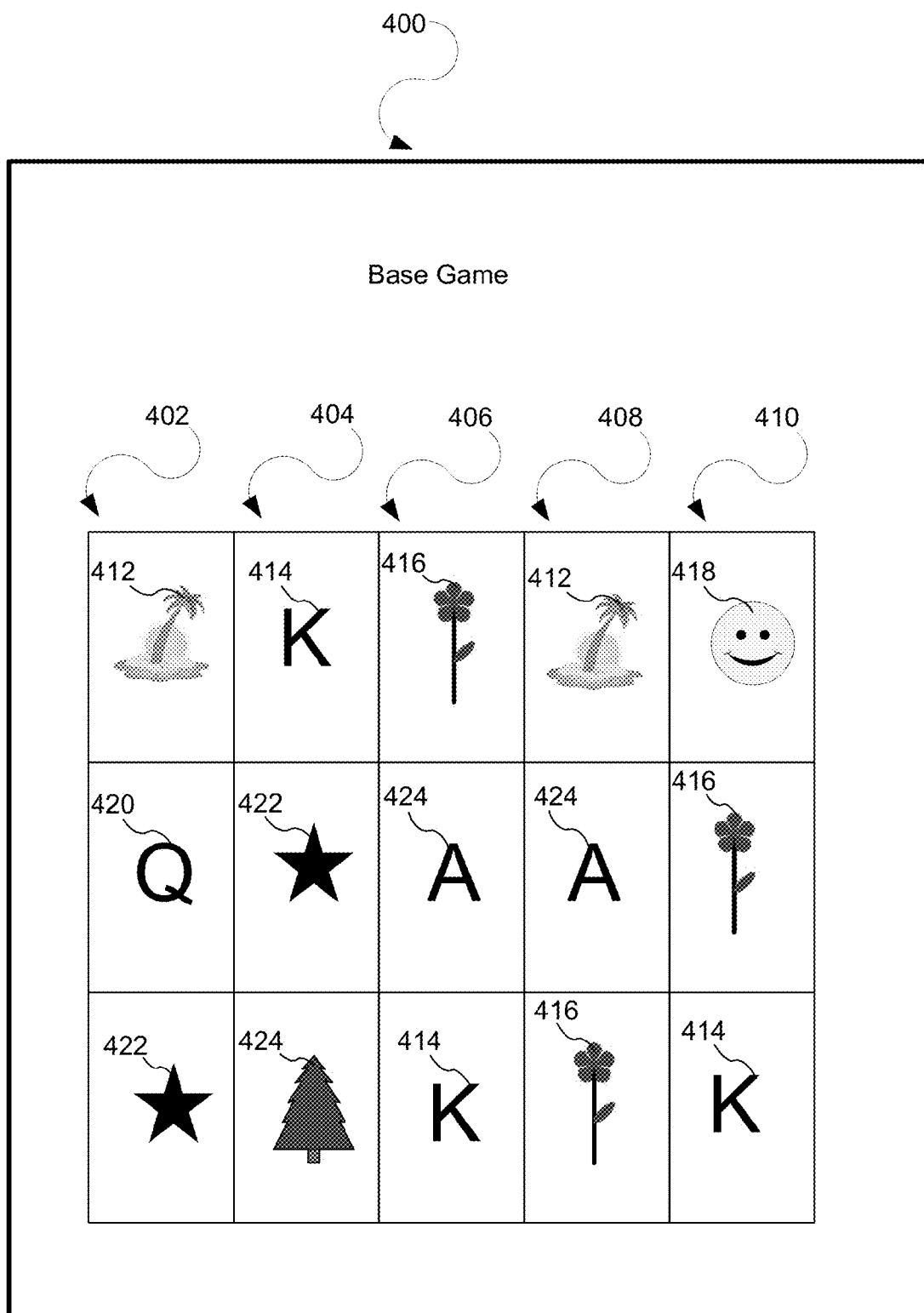


Figure 4

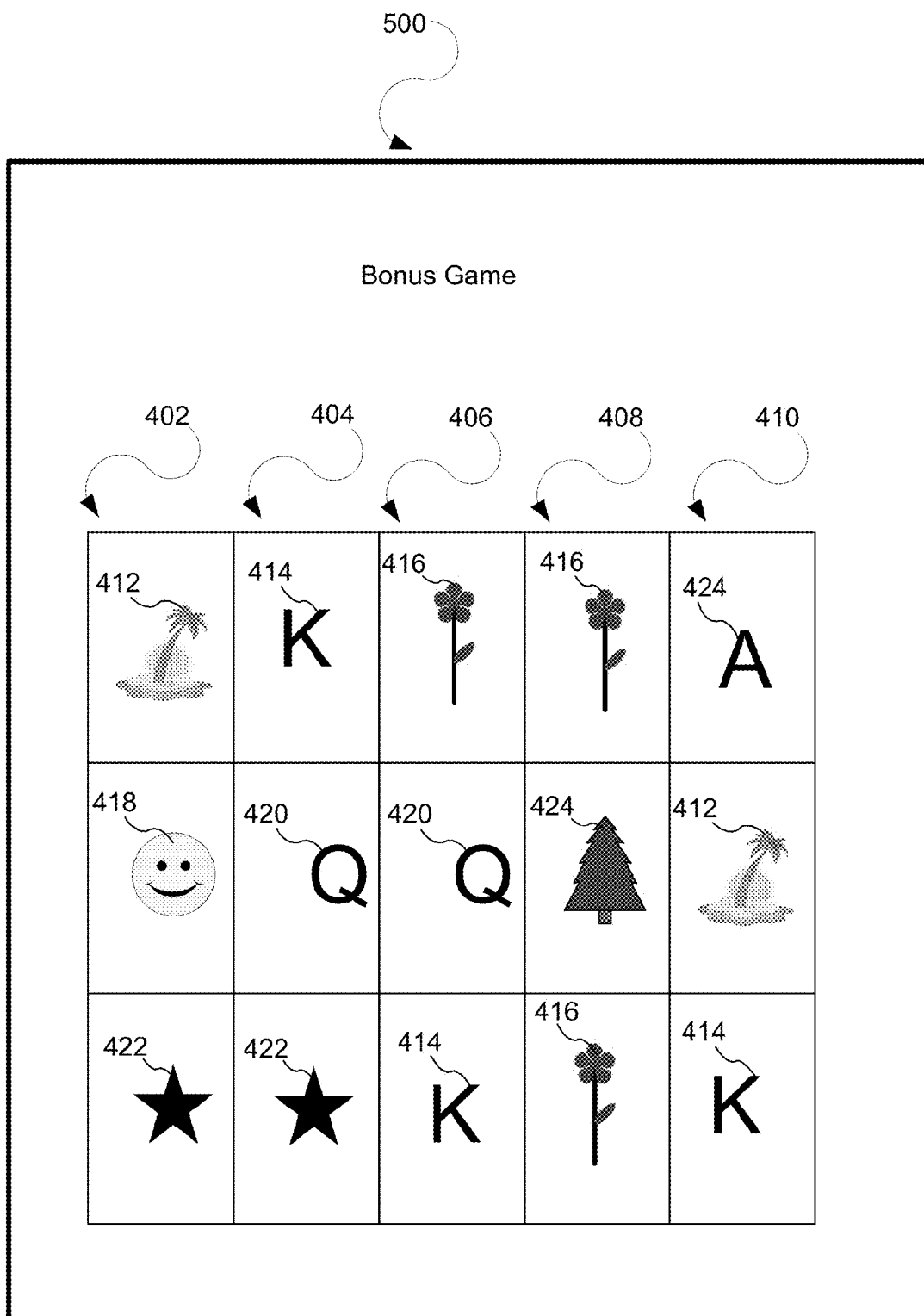


Figure 5A

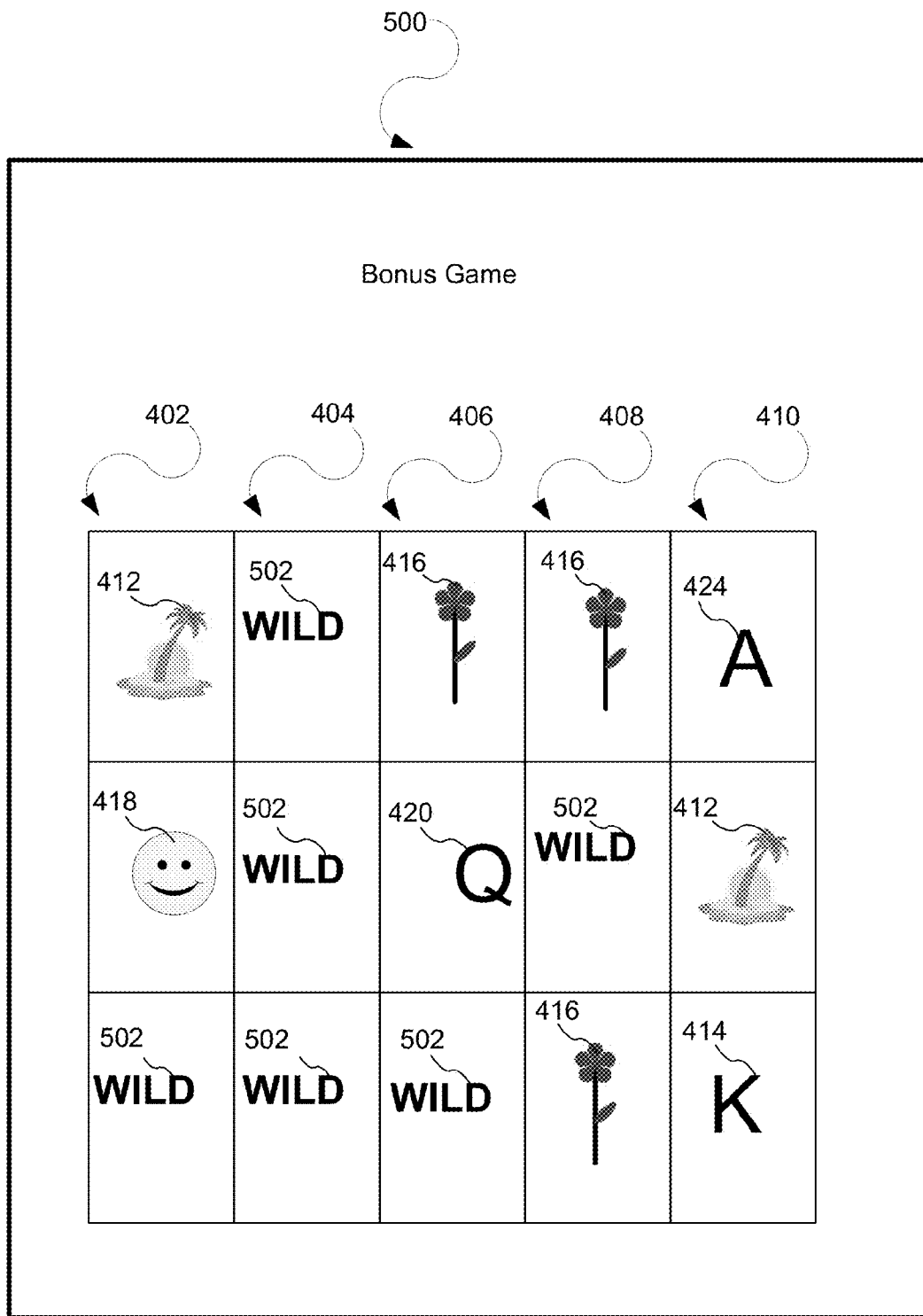


Figure 5B

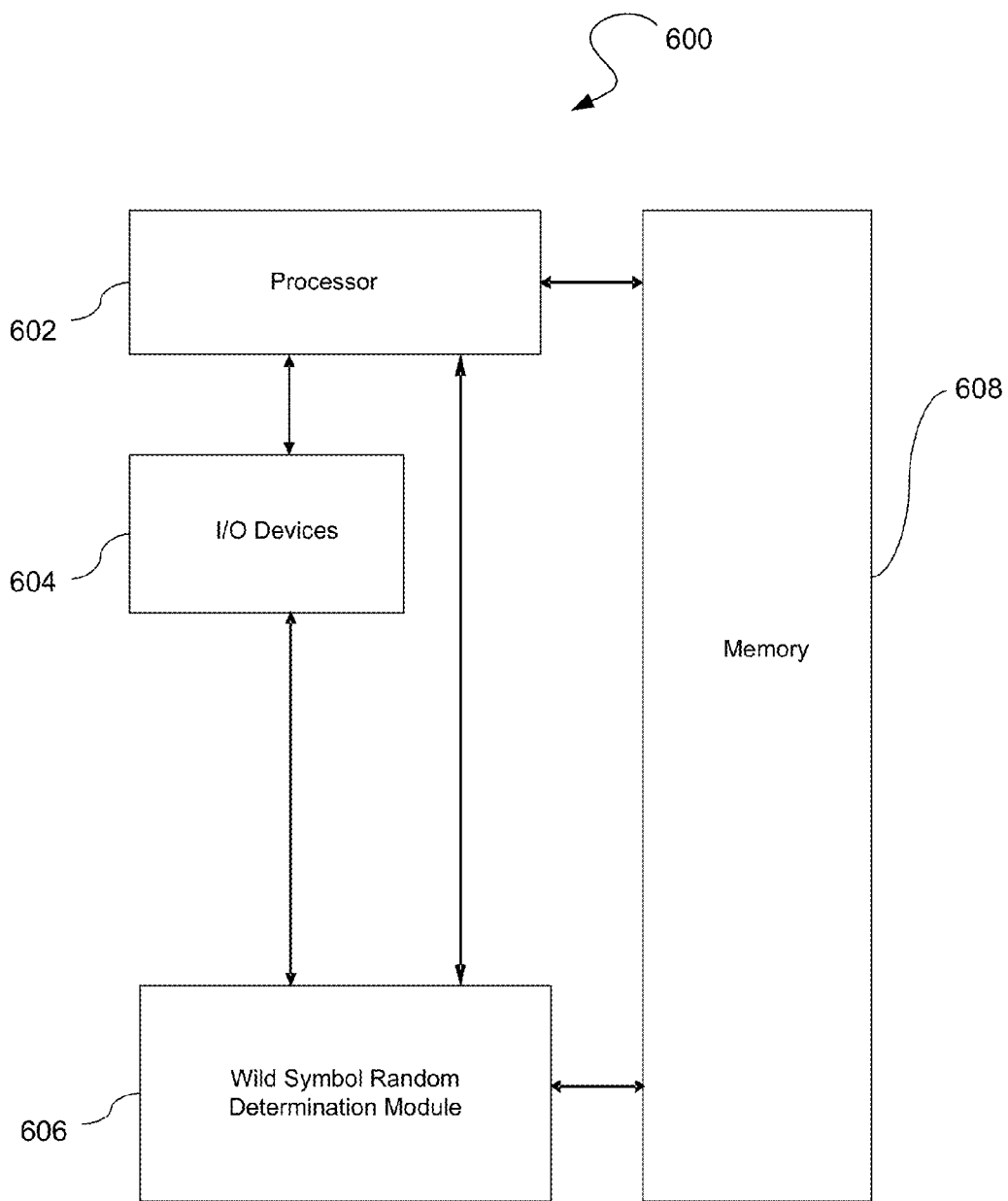


Figure 6

WILD SYMBOL BONUS GAME CONFIGURATION

BACKGROUND

[0001] 1. Field

[0002] This disclosure generally relates to the field of gaming. More particularly, the disclosure relates to games of chance.

[0003] 2. General Background

[0004] Casinos typically have reel-based games. These reel-based games are played on reel-based machines that display a plurality of reels. A player may initiate a game by providing a wager and providing an input to a reel-based machine so that the reel-based machine spins a plurality of reels. Further, the player may win a prize based on the resulting symbols matching a predetermined payline of symbols.

[0005] Some reel based games offer a bonus game that is played after a base game. Such bonus games attempt to provide an added level of excitement to reel-based games. However, maintaining excitement and suspense during a bonus game is difficult.

SUMMARY

[0006] In one aspect of the disclosure, a process is provided. The process initiates, with a processor, a bonus game based upon a predetermined criteria in a base game being met, the bonus game having a plurality of bonus game reels. Further, the process performs an initial random spinning, with the processor, of the plurality of bonus game reels to obtain an initial plurality of bonus game symbols on each of the plurality of bonus game reels. In addition, the process provides a prize distribution based upon the initial plurality of bonus game symbols matching at least one of a plurality of predetermined paylines. The process also performs a random determination, for each of the initial plurality of bonus game symbols that is not a wild symbol, to determine a wild transformation status based upon the initial plurality of bonus game symbols not matching the at least one of the plurality of predetermined paylines; Further, the process performs a wild transformation for each of the initial plurality of bonus game symbols that has the wild transformation status to transform a non-wild symbol to a wild symbol. In addition, the process performs a subsequent random spinning, with the processor, of the plurality of bonus game reels to obtain a subsequent plurality of bonus game symbols on each of the plurality of bonus game reels if the wild transformation is performed. The process also provides a prize distribution based upon the subsequent plurality of bonus game symbols matching the at least one of the plurality of predetermined paylines.

[0007] In another aspect of the disclosure, a computer program product includes a computer useable medium having a computer readable program. The computer readable program when executed on a computer causes the computer to initiate, with a processor, a bonus game based upon a predetermined criteria in a base game being met, the bonus game having a plurality of bonus game reels. Further, the computer readable program when executed on the computer causes the computer to perform an initial random spinning, with the processor, of the plurality of bonus game reels to obtain an initial plurality of bonus game symbols on each of the plurality of bonus game reels. In addition, the computer readable program when executed on the computer causes the computer to provide a prize distribution based upon the initial plurality of bonus

game symbols matching at least one of a plurality of predetermined paylines. The computer readable program when executed on the computer also causes the computer to perform a random determination, for each of the initial plurality of bonus game symbols that is not a wild symbol, to determine a wild transformation status based upon the initial plurality of bonus game symbols not matching the at least one of the plurality of predetermined paylines.

[0008] In yet another aspect of the disclosure, an apparatus is provided. The apparatus includes a processor that (i) initiates a bonus game based upon a predetermined criteria in a base game being met, (ii) performs an initial random spinning of the plurality of bonus game reels to obtain an initial plurality of bonus game symbols on each of the plurality of bonus game reels, (iii) performs a subsequent random spinning, with the processor, of the plurality of bonus game reels to obtain a subsequent plurality of bonus game symbols on each of the plurality of bonus game reels if the wild transformation is performed, (iv) performs a random determination, for each of the initial plurality of bonus game symbols that is not a wild symbol, to determine a wild transformation status based upon the initial plurality of bonus game symbols not matching the at least one of the plurality of predetermined paylines, and (v) performs a wild transformation for each of the initial plurality of bonus game symbols that has the wild transformation status to transform a non-wild symbol to a wild symbol. The bonus game has a plurality of bonus game reels. Further, the apparatus includes a prize distribution module that provides a prize distribution based upon the initial plurality of bonus game symbols matching at least one of a plurality of predetermined paylines and a prize distribution based upon the subsequent plurality of bonus game symbols matching the at least one of the plurality of predetermined paylines.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009] The above-mentioned features of the present disclosure will become more apparent with reference to the following description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings wherein like reference numerals denote like elements and in which:

[0010] FIG. 1 illustrates progressive slot system that can be utilized to implement the base game and the bonus game.

[0011] FIG. 2 illustrates an expanded view of the first base game-bonus game station shown in FIG. 1.

[0012] FIG. 3 illustrates a process that may be utilized to provide a bonus game.

[0013] FIG. 4 illustrates a base game screen display in which no matches with a payline have occurred.

[0014] FIG. 5A illustrates a bonus game screen display.

[0015] FIG. 5B illustrates the bonus game screen display having a resulting wild symbol transformation.

[0016] FIG. 6 illustrates a block diagram of a station or system that provides a random determination for wild symbol functionality.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0017] A wild bonus game configuration is provided. In one embodiment, the wild bonus game configuration is a reel-based game that is utilized in conjunction with a base game. The base game may or may not also be a reel-based game. In another embodiment, the reel-based bonus game may be initiated on a predetermined criteria in the base game being met. As an example, the predetermined criteria may be that no

prize was won in the base game, e.g., no reels matched up with a payline. Further, in one embodiment, the bonus game is a free-spin game. In other words, the player does not have to place any additional wagers to play the bonus game. In yet another embodiment, the bonus game has a set of reels that is displayed on a background that is different from the base game. Further, the symbols in the bonus game may appear with colors that are modified from the base game. In another embodiment, the free-spin bonus round does not have any scatters.

[0018] Each of the reel strips may display a plurality of predetermined symbols. A reel strip may be a row, column, diagonal, etc. of predetermined symbols. The reel strips may be implemented in a mechanical machine or in a video format.

[0019] The method, apparatus, and computer program product described herein may be utilized with a variety of games. The base game and bonus game can be selected from games such as slots, poker, blackjack, bingo, etc. Further, the base game and the bonus game can be selected from games considered Class II or Class III. In one embodiment, the same type of game is utilized for both the base game and the bonus game. In another embodiment, different types of games are utilized for the base game and the bonus game. A class III game can even be utilized for the base game while a class II game is utilized for the bonus game.

[0020] Further, the method and apparatus can be provided by a game provider in a variety of contexts. For example, the method and apparatus are utilized in a casino. The method and apparatus can also be utilized in locations, other than casinos, in which games are provided and wagers are received. The method and apparatus can even be provided virtually through a network, such as the Internet.

[0021] A win in either the base game or the bonus game is generally determined by a matching of some combination of symbols. A player combination of symbols is determined for the combination of symbols utilized by the player. The player combination may be selected by the player, randomly generated, or pre-established. Further, a winning combination of symbols is the combination of symbol that yields a win in the base game or the bonus game. The winning combination of symbols may be randomly generated or pre-established.

[0022] FIG. 1 illustrates progressive slot system 100 that can be utilized to implement the base game and the bonus game. The casino implementation is provided merely as an example and is not intended to limit use of the method, apparatus, and computer program product to that context as the method, apparatus, and computer program product may be utilized in any context in which a game provider provides games electronically, mechanically, virtually, or the like. Further, a progressive jackpot is utilized merely as an example of a type of prize structure that may be implemented, but a variety of other types of prize structures may be utilized. Mechanical slot machines, stations displaying electronic slot games, video lottery terminals (“VLTs”), computers accessing electronic versions of the game through the Internet, etc., may be utilized to play the base game in conjunction with the bonus game according to the method and apparatus described herein.

[0023] The casino may have a plurality of base game stations, e.g., a first base game station 106, a second base game station 108, a third base game station 110, . . . , a one hundredth base game station 112. These base game stations may be utilized to provide players with the base game. In a casino

setting, the base game can be any of the conventional casino games. The base game can even be a non-conventional casino game. In one embodiment, a casino slot accounting system 104 is utilized to monitor the activities of the plurality of base game stations.

[0024] Further, the casino may have a plurality of bonus game stations, e.g., a first bonus game station 114, a second bonus game station 116, a third bonus game station 118, . . . , a one hundredth bonus game station 120. These bonus game stations may be utilized to provide players with the bonus game. In a casino setting, the bonus game can be any of the conventional casino games or potentially a non-conventional casino game that is utilized for play with the conventional casino base game. Alternatively, both the bonus game and the base game can be non-conventional casino games. In one embodiment, the prize for the bonus game is a progressive jackpot, which accumulates in size based on wagers from players of the base game. A progressive jackpot management system 102 may be utilized to manage the bonus game stations.

[0025] In one embodiment, a bonus game station is operably connected to a base game station to allow for play of the base game and the bonus game. The connection may be through cable, wireless communication, network connection, or the like. In one embodiment, casinos or other game providers can utilize existing base game stations and attach the bonus game station without having to reconfigure the bonus game station. Further, each of the bonus game stations can even be attached to different types of base game stations. For example, the first bonus game station 114 and the second bonus game station 116 may both provide a bingo game and provide a prize from the same progressive jackpot, but the first bonus game station 114 may be attached to the first base game station 106, which provides a video poker game, and the second bonus game station 116 may be attached to the second base game station 108, which provides a spinning reels game. Even though the base games are different, the wagers from both of these base games are contributed to the progressive jackpot of the bonus game. In one embodiment, a separate printer is implemented in the bonus game station to allow a winner of the bonus game to cash out separately from any potential winnings in the base game. This configuration helps provide compatibility of the bonus game station with different types of base game stations.

[0026] In another embodiment, the bonus game station and the base game station can be implemented on one device. For example, a machine with a single monitor can be utilized to play electronic versions of both games. The same type of game with different prizes may even be utilized.

[0027] Irrespective of the type of configuration or connection that is utilized, a plurality of base game-bonus game stations may be utilized by a casino or other game provider to provide the combination of the base game and the bonus game. For example, a first base game-bonus game station 122 includes the first base game station 106 and the first bonus game station 114, a second base game-bonus game station 124 includes the second base game station 108 and the second bonus game station 116, a third base game-bonus game station 126 includes the third base game station 110 and the third bonus game station 118, . . . , a one hundredth base game-bonus game station 128 includes the one hundredth base game station 112 and the one hundredth bonus game station 120.

[0028] FIG. 2 illustrates an expanded view of the first base game-bonus game station 122 shown in FIG. 1. The first base game station 106 includes a display 202 in which play of the base game can be viewed. The display 202 may be an electronic display, an assortment of mechanical reels, etc. Further, the first base game station 106 has a plurality of buttons 204 that may be utilized to select a wager category, select a payline, initiate play of the base game and/or bonus game, etc. Further, the first base game station 106 has a wager acceptor 206, e.g., a bill acceptor, coin acceptor, promotional voucher acceptor, credit card acceptor, debit card acceptor, electronic wallet such as a smart card, etc., that accepts a wager from the player. In addition, the first base game station 106 has a ticket printer 208 that may be utilized to print a ticket to redeem a prize. In one embodiment, the ticket is solely for a prize won in the base game. In another embodiment, the ticket may be for a prize won in the base game and/or a prize won in the bonus game.

[0029] The display 202 may be utilized to perform functions in addition to play of the bonus game. For instance, the display 202 may display a plurality of distinct wager categories prior to play of the base game. The distinct wager categories may be multiples of a minimum wager, which may also be displayed on the display 202. For example, the wager categories may be “one x”, “two x”, “three x”, “four x”, and “five x” of a minimum wager of one dollar. The actual wager is then determined by the wager category selected by the player. For example, a wager of three dollars is made if the player selects the wager category “three x.” The wager categories may also be denominations, i.e., fractions, of a maximum wager. For example, the wager categories may be “one-fifth”, “two-fifths”, “three-fifths”, “four-fifths”, and “five-fifths” of a maximum wager of five dollars. For example, a wager of two dollars is made if a player selects the wager category “two-fifths.” The wager categories may also state the wagers directly. For example, the wager categories may be “one dollar,” “two dollars,” “three dollars,” “four dollars,” and “five dollars.” A variety of other wager displays may be utilized to provide the wager categories.

[0030] Further, the display 202 may also indicate the known jackpot prize for the bonus game. The selection of the wager category not only has an impact on the base game, but also the bonus game. The wager category corresponds to a known portion of the progressive jackpot prize that can be potentially won. The portion can be a percentage, numerical amount, etc. For instance, a wager category of “one x” may correspond to the possibility of winning twenty percent of the jackpot prize in the bonus game, a wager category of “two x” may correspond to the possibility of winning forty percent of the jackpot prize in the bonus game, a wager category of “three x” may correspond to the possibility of winning sixty percent of the jackpot prize in the bonus game, a wager category of “four x” may correspond to the possibility of winning eighty percent of the jackpot prize in the bonus game, and a wager category of “five x” may correspond to the possibility of winning one hundred percent of the jackpot prize in the bonus game. If the player becomes eligible for the bonus round, the known portion of the progressive jackpot prize associated with the wager category can be displayed.

[0031] In one embodiment, the base game offers a variety of prizes such as fixed prizes that depend on obtaining a predetermined assortment of symbols. Accordingly, a set of paylines is provided to indicate which fixed prizes are associated with particular paylines. For example, a payline may

indicate that obtaining a row of cherries yields a fixed prize of five dollars while another payline may indicate that obtaining a diagonal of oranges yields a fixed prize of ten dollars. Another function that may be performed by the display 202 is providing a display of paylines. A player may select a particular payline, some of the paylines, or all of the paylines for play in the base game. In one embodiment, the number of paylines is a multiplier of the wager determined by the selection of the wager categories and can be utilized to determine the known distinct portion of the progressive jackpot prize that can be won in the bonus game.

[0032] Functions such as the display of the plurality of distinct wager categories or display of the paylines can also be provided through other components of the first base game-bonus game station 122. For instance, a printed game glass can be positioned at on the first base game-bonus game station 122 to display this information. Alternatively, a display 210 that is utilized by the bonus game station 114 to display play of the bonus game may be utilized to display this information. In yet another alternative, a display 212, which is utilized to display jackpot prize information for the bonus game, may display this information. The display 210 and the display 212 may be provided on the same display screen or separate display screens.

[0033] In one embodiment, play of the bonus game is wager amount independent. In other words, eligibility for play in the bonus round is based on factors other than the wager amount. The wager amount has an impact on the known portion of the jackpot prize that can be won in the bonus round, but does not impact the entry into the bonus game. For example, a criterion can be established to provide that play of the bonus game is dependent on a display of particular symbols in the base game, whether or not there is a win in the base game. For instance, the criterion may be a display pattern such as two consecutive cherries displayed anywhere during play of the base game. The criterion may be a game count. In other words, every fiftieth play of the base game at a particular base game station provides eligibility into the bonus game.

[0034] If the player is eligible to enter the bonus game, the bonus game is displayed for play on the display 210. This configuration is provided as an example as the base game and bonus game could be played on the same display. In this configuration, the first bonus game station 114 is operably connected to the first base game station 106 through a cable 214. Accordingly, data from the base game, e.g., wager category selected by the player, can be provided to the first bonus game station 114. In one embodiment, the cable (or other communication medium) provides two-way communication between the first bonus game station 114 and the first base game station 106 such that the bonus game station 114 can provide information regarding the progressive jackpot to be displayed by the first base game station 106 and the first base game station 106 can provide information regarding the wager categories to the first game bonus station 114 to be displayed by the first game bonus station 114. However, in another embodiment, the one-way communication can be established such that the first bonus game station 114 only receives information from the first base game station 106. For instance, the first bonus game station 114 can receive information regarding the wager categories. Further, the first bonus game station 114 can display the progressive jackpot on the display 212 along with the wager categories. Therefore, a player can view a top display of the potential portions

of the jackpot prize corresponding to wager categories that are applicable to play in the base game and the bonus game.

[0035] After play of the bonus game is initiated, the display 212 can also display the wager categories and corresponding levels of the jackpot prize that can be won with each wager category. In addition, the display 212 can indicate the level of the jackpot prize that the player can potentially win. This indication may be provided as a percentage of the jackpot prize, the numerical amount that would be received, etc. Alternatively, only the actual level of the jackpot prize that can be potentially won, without the other levels of the jackpot prize that are no longer applicable, is displayed play of the bonus game is initiated.

[0036] The first bonus game station 116 does not need to have a wager acceptor as the wager acceptor utilized in the first base game station 106 receives a wager that is applicable to both the base game and the bonus game. In one embodiment, the first bonus game station 116 includes a ticket printer 216 to print a ticket so that the portion of the progressive jackpot prize that is won can be redeemed. In another embodiment, the ticket printer 206 utilized by the first base game station 106 may be utilized to print tickets for prize redemption in both the base game and the bonus game.

[0037] In one embodiment, one or more controllers may be utilized to perform functions such as initiating play of the games. For instance, the first base game station 106 may have a controller for initiating play of the base game, and the first bonus game station 116 may have a controller for initiating play of the bonus game.

[0038] FIG. 3 illustrates a process 300 that may be utilized to provide a bonus game. At a process block 302, the process 300 initiates, with a processor, a bonus game based upon a predetermined criteria in a base game being met. The bonus game has a plurality of bonus game reels. Further, at a process block 304, the process 300 performs an initial random spinning, with the processor, of the plurality of bonus game reels to obtain an initial plurality of bonus game symbols on each of the plurality of bonus game reels. In addition, at a process block 306, the process 300 provides a prize distribution based upon the initial plurality of bonus game symbols matching at least one of a plurality of predetermined paylines. At a process block 308, the process 300 also performs a random determination, for each of the initial plurality of bonus game symbols that is not a wild symbol, to determine a wild transformation status based upon the initial plurality of bonus game symbols not matching the at least one of the plurality of predetermined paylines. Further, at a process block 310, the process 300 performs a wild transformation for each of the initial plurality of bonus game symbols that has the wild transformation status to transform a non-wild symbol to a wild symbol. In addition, at a process block 312, the process 300 performs a subsequent random spinning, with the processor, of the plurality of bonus game reels to obtain a subsequent plurality of bonus game symbols on each of the plurality of bonus game reels if the wild transformation is performed. At a process block 314, the process 300 also provides a prize distribution based upon the subsequent plurality of bonus game symbols matching the at least one of the plurality of predetermined paylines.

[0039] In one embodiment, the random determination is based upon a fifty percent probability of the wild transformation status being wild and a fifty percent probability of the wild transformation status being inactive. As an example, a player may not win a prize in the base game, which may be

result in the player meeting the predetermined criteria for the bonus game. In one embodiment, the bonus game is displayed after a transition animation. Further, in another embodiment, the base game reels are modified to bonus game reels in the same display screen. In another embodiment, a separate display screen is utilized for the bonus game. The bonus game is initiated such that the bonus game reels are spun. If a player matches a reel combination with a bonus game payline, the player wins a prize. The bonus game is then terminated. However, if the player does not win a prize in the bonus game, then a random determination is made for each of the non-wild symbols as to whether or not to transform that non-wild symbol into a wild symbol. The random determination may be based upon a fifty percent determination, a different type of a random determination, a probabilities distribution, or the like.

[0040] Further, in another embodiment, the random determination is performed for only some of the non-wild symbols. As an example, a reel strip may be selected for the random determination. The reel strip may be randomly selected for the random determination transformation of each non-wild symbol on that particular reel strip. Various other configurations may be utilized to determine which non-wild symbols are eligible for transformation.

[0041] In addition, in another embodiment, a minimum number and/or a maximum number of transformations may be utilized. For example, a minimum number of two transformations and a maximum number of fifteen transformations may be established. Accordingly, if the minimum transformation and/or maximum transformation requirements are not met, the random determination process may be reiterated until the minimum transformation and/or maximum transformation requirements are met.

[0042] In yet another embodiment, multiple bonus rounds may be initiated until a prize is won and/or a counter has reached zero. Accordingly, a predetermined counter may be decremented subsequent to the initial random spinning being performed and prior to the subsequent random spinning being performed.

[0043] As an example, an animated character may be displayed on a display screen and express surprise that no award has been won. The animated character may then place new wild symbols on the reels. For instance, the animated character may deal a few wild symbols from a deck of cards. The cards fly from the animated character's hand to locations on the reels where they transform into wild symbols.

[0044] Further, a scatter configuration may be utilized. Different quantities of iterations may be provided based on the quantity of symbols displayed in the predetermined arrangement of base game symbols in the base game. For example, three scattered base game symbols may be associated with seven iterations, four scatter base game symbols may be associated with ten iterations, and five base game symbols may be associated with fifteen iterations.

[0045] FIG. 4 illustrates a base game screen display 400 in which no matches with a payline have occurred. In one embodiment, the predetermined criterion for eligibility for a bonus game has been met as no prize is won by the player. In another embodiment, a different predetermined criterion may be utilized such as a match of certain symbols that do not appear in a payline, certain symbols that do appear in a payline, etc.

[0046] The base game screen display 400 displays a plurality of reels. As an example, the base game screen display 400

displays a first reel **402**, a second reel **404**, a third reel **406**, a fourth reel **408**, and a fifth reel **410**. Each of the reels may be electronic, mechanical, or the like. The first reel **402** displays a palm tree **412**, a letter Q **420**, and a star **422**. Further, the second reel **404** displays a letter K **414**, a star **422**, and a tree **424**. In addition, the third reel **406** displays a flower **416**, the letter A **424**, and the letter K **414**. The fourth reel **408** displays the palm tree **412**, the letter A **424**, and the flower **416**. Finally, the fifth reel display a smiley face **418**, the flower **416**, and the letter K **414**.

[0047] FIG. 5A illustrates a bonus game screen display **500**. In one embodiment, after the predetermined criterion for bonus game eligibility is met as illustrated in FIG. 4, a spin may be performed. Accordingly, a variety of different symbols may be displayed during the bonus game. If none of the symbols match up with a bonus game payline, a random determination may be performed for each symbol to determine if that symbol should be transformed to a wild symbol.

[0048] FIG. 5B illustrates the bonus game screen display **500** having a resulting wild symbol transformation. In particular, a random determination was performed for each symbol illustrated in the bonus game screen display **500** of FIG. 5A. As a result of that random determination, a wild symbol **502** appears in place of certain symbols. If the player has a match with the wild symbols, the player wins a prize. If the player does not have a match with the wild symbols, subsequent spins may be performed with the wild symbols in the corresponding positions on the reels until the player obtains a winning match with or without the wild symbols or a counter has been decremented to zero. Further, a wild symbol transformation may or may not be performed in any of the subsequent spins if a player has not won a prize.

[0049] In another embodiment, the wild symbol transformation is performed to that a subsequent spin may utilize those wild symbols. For instance, the wild symbols appearing in FIG. 5B may not be utilized for a match until a subsequent spin is performed. The bonus game display **500** may or may not display the wild symbol positions until the subsequent spin is performed. Further, the random determinations may be performed prior to the subsequent spin or after the subsequent spin.

[0050] As another illustration, an example of the placement and transformation of symbols on the reel strips is provided herein. The numbers refer to symbols (e.g., S6 refers to Symbol 6), and W refers to a symbol with wild functionality which may substitute for any of the symbols 2 through 11. The example includes a symbol with wild functionality in the initial round of the bonus game. However, a configuration may be utilized without any symbols with wild functionality in the base game and/or initial round of the bonus game. As an example, the reel strips may be as follows:

Reel 1: S6 S9 S2 S7 S11 S4 S9 S3 S11 S7 S10 S5 W S8 S6 S5 S11 S4 S8 S1 S10 S3

Reel 2: S11 S3 S10 S6 S11 S2 S8 S7 S9 W S5 S8 S2 S7 S9 S3 S6 S4 S10 S5 S11 S6 S10 S7 S9 S4

Reel 3: S5 S9 S3 S10 S6 W S5 S11 S3 S9 S4 S10 S9 S2 S8 S11 S7 S8 S4 S6 S10 S7 S8

Reel 4: S8 S2 W S7 S8 S6 S11 S5 S10 S4 S11 S3 S9 S6 S10 S7 S8 W S11 S5 S9

Reel 5: S3 S10 S7 S4 S11 S6 S10 S5 S11 S7 S8 S6 S9 S2 S11 S4 S8 S6 S10 S3 S9 S5 S8 W S9 S4 S7 S2 S5

[0051] The processes described herein may be implemented in a general, multi-purpose or single purpose proces-

sor. Such a processor will execute instructions, either at the assembly, compiled or machine-level, to perform the processes. Those instructions can be written by one of ordinary skill in the art following the description of the figures corresponding to the processes and stored or transmitted on a computer readable medium. The instructions may also be created using source code or any other known computer-aided design tool. A computer readable medium may be any medium capable of carrying those instructions and include a CD-ROM, DVD, magnetic or other optical disc, tape, silicon memory (e.g., removable, non-removable, volatile or non-volatile), packetized or non-packetized data through wireline or wireless transmissions locally or remotely through a network.

[0052] A computer is herein intended to include any device that has a general, multi-purpose or single purpose processor as described above. For example, a computer may be a lottery terminal, a kiosk, a vending machine, a set top box ("STB"), cell phone, portable media player, or the like.

[0053] FIG. 6 illustrates a block diagram of a station or system **600** that provides a random determination for wild symbol functionality. In one embodiment, the station or system **600** is implemented utilizing a general purpose computer or any other hardware equivalents. Thus, the station or system **600** comprises a processor **602**, a memory **608**, e.g., random access memory ("RAM") and/or read only memory (ROM), a wild symbol random determination module **606**, and various input/output devices **604**, (e.g., audio/video outputs and audio/video inputs, storage devices, including but not limited to, a tape drive, a floppy drive, a hard disk drive or a compact disk drive, a receiver, a transmitter, a speaker, a display, an image capturing sensor, e.g., those used in a digital still camera or digital video camera, a clock, an output port, a user input device (such as a keyboard, a keypad, a mouse, and the like, or a microphone for capturing speech commands)).

[0054] It should be understood that the wild symbol random determination module **606** may be implemented as one or more physical devices that are coupled to the processor **602**. For example, the wild symbol random determination module **606** may include a plurality of modules. Alternatively, the wild symbol random determination module **606** may be represented by one or more software applications (or even a combination of software and hardware, e.g., using application specific integrated circuits (ASIC)), where the software is loaded from a storage medium, (e.g., a magnetic or optical drive, diskette, or non-volatile memory) and operated by the processor in the memory **608** of the computer. As such, the wild symbol random determination module **606** (including associated data structures) of the present disclosure may be stored on a computer readable medium, e.g., RAM memory, magnetic or optical drive or diskette and the like.

[0055] The station or system **600** may be utilized to implement any of the configurations herein. For example, the processor **602** may be utilized to establish a game, operate a game, perform calculations, or the like.

[0056] A virtual device may be utilized to provide any of the games provided herein. For example, a virtual lottery ticket may be sold rather than a paper ticket. For instance, a player may be able to play the base game and/or bonus game through a computing device such as a computer, laptop, kiosk, cell phone, smart phone, personal digital assistant, or the like.

[0057] A computer is herein intended to include any device that has a general, multi-purpose or single purpose processor as described above. For example, a computer may be a lottery terminal, a slot machine, a kiosk, a vending machine, a set top box (“STB”), cell phone, portable media player, or the like.

[0058] A variety of prizes may be utilized. Jackpot prizes, progressive prizes, instant prizes, secondary prizes, or the like may be utilized.

[0059] With any of the configurations provided herein, the counter begins decrementing on the initial bonus game iteration irrespective of a win by the player. Further, the counter may decrement only when a player loses rather than wins.

[0060] In one embodiment, a symbol that has already been transformed into a symbol with wild functionality is animated at the same time that the remaining symbols that are transformed undergo the transformation process. Alternatively, highlighting, different colors, or any mechanism for emphasis may be utilized. In another embodiment, the bonus game itself may have a predetermined arrangement of symbols for additional iterations in the bonus game or entry into a different game, e.g., an additional bonus game, the base game, or the like.

[0061] The base game and/or bonus game may be any type of game. For example, a game may be mechanical, video, etc.

[0062] It is understood that the processes, computer program products, systems, and apparatuses described herein may also be applied in other types of processes, computer program products, systems, and apparatuses. Those skilled in the art will appreciate that the various adaptations and modifications of the embodiments of the processes, computer program products, systems, and apparatuses described herein may be configured without departing from the scope and spirit of the present processes, computer program products, systems, and apparatuses. Therefore, it is to be understood that, within the scope of the appended claims, the present processes, computer program products, systems, and apparatuses may be practiced other than as specifically described herein.

We claim:

1. A method comprising:

initiating, with a processor, a bonus game based upon a predetermined criteria in a base game being met, the bonus game having a plurality of bonus game reels;

performing an initial random spinning, with the processor, of the plurality of bonus game reels to obtain an initial plurality of bonus game symbols on each of the plurality of bonus game reels;

providing a prize distribution based upon the initial plurality of bonus game symbols matching at least one of a plurality of predetermined paylines;

performing a random determination, for each of the initial plurality of bonus game symbols that is not a wild symbol, to determine a wild transformation status based upon the initial plurality of bonus game symbols not matching the at least one of the plurality of predetermined paylines;

performing a wild transformation for each of the initial plurality of bonus game symbols that has the wild transformation status to transform a non-wild symbol to a wild symbol;

performing a subsequent random spinning, with the processor, of the plurality of bonus game reels to obtain a

subsequent plurality of bonus game symbols on each of the plurality of bonus game reels if the wild transformation is performed; and

providing a prize distribution based upon the subsequent plurality of bonus game symbols matching the at least one of the plurality of predetermined paylines.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the random determination is based upon a fifty percent probability of the wild transformation status being wild and a fifty percent probability of the wild transformation status being inactive.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the base game has a plurality of base game reels.

4. The method of claim 3, further comprising transforming the plurality of base game reels into the plurality of bonus game reels after the predetermined criteria is met.

5. The method of claim 1, further comprising decrementing a predetermined counter upon the subsequent random spinning being performed.

6. The method of claim 1, further comprising decrementing a predetermined counter subsequent to the initial random spinning being performed and prior to the subsequent random spinning being performed.

7. The method of claim 1, further comprising performing at least one additional random spinning until at least one plurality of additional bonus game symbols matches the at least one of the plurality of predetermined paylines.

8. A computer program product comprising a computer useable medium having a computer readable program, wherein the computer readable program when executed on a computer causes the computer to:

initiate, with a processor, a bonus game based upon a predetermined criteria in a base game being met, the bonus game having a plurality of bonus game reels;

perform an initial random spinning, with the processor, of the plurality of bonus game reels to obtain an initial plurality of bonus game symbols on each of the plurality of bonus game reels;

provide a prize distribution based upon the initial plurality of bonus game symbols matching at least one of a plurality of predetermined paylines;

perform a random determination, for each of the initial plurality of bonus game symbols that is not a wild symbol, to determine a wild transformation status based upon the initial plurality of bonus game symbols not matching the at least one of the plurality of predetermined paylines;

perform a wild transformation for each of the initial plurality of bonus game symbols that has the wild transformation status to transform a non-wild symbol to a wild symbol;

perform a subsequent random spinning, with the processor, of the plurality of bonus game reels to obtain a subsequent plurality of bonus game symbols on each of the plurality of bonus game reels if the wild transformation is performed; and

provide a prize distribution based upon the subsequent plurality of bonus game symbols matching the at least one of the plurality of predetermined paylines.

9. The computer program product of claim 8 wherein the random determination is based upon a fifty percent probability of the wild transformation status being wild and a fifty percent probability of the wild transformation status being inactive.

10. The computer program product of claim **8**, wherein the base game has a plurality of base game reels.

11. The computer program product of claim **8**, wherein the computer readable medium when executed on the computer further causes the computer to transform the plurality of base game reels into the plurality of bonus game reels after the predetermined criteria is met.

12. The computer program product of claim **8**, wherein the computer readable medium when executed on the computer further causes the computer to decrement a predetermined counter upon the subsequent random spinning being performed.

13. The computer program product of claim **8**, wherein the computer readable medium when executed on the computer further causes the computer to decrement a predetermined counter subsequent to the initial random spinning being performed and prior to the subsequent random spinning being performed.

14. The computer program product of claim **8**, wherein the computer readable medium when executed on the computer further causes the computer to computer readable medium when executed on the computer further causes the computer to perform at least one additional random spinning until at least one plurality of additional bonus game symbols matches the at least one of the plurality of predetermined paylines.

15. An apparatus comprising:

a processor that (i) initiates a bonus game based upon a predetermined criteria in a base game being met, (ii) performs an initial random spinning of the plurality of bonus game reels to obtain an initial plurality of bonus game symbols on each of the plurality of bonus game reels, (iii) performs a subsequent random spinning, with the processor, of the plurality of bonus game reels to obtain a subsequent plurality of bonus game symbols on each of the plurality of bonus game reels if the wild transformation is performed, (iv) performs a random determination, for each of the initial plurality of bonus

game symbols that is not a wild symbol, to determine a wild transformation status based upon the initial plurality of bonus game symbols not matching the at least one of the plurality of predetermined paylines, and (v) performs a wild transformation for each of the initial plurality of bonus game symbols that has the wild transformation status to transform a non-wild symbol to a wild symbol, the bonus game having a plurality of bonus game reels; and

a prize distribution module that provides a prize distribution based upon the initial plurality of bonus game symbols matching at least one of a plurality of predetermined paylines and a prize distribution based upon the subsequent plurality of bonus game symbols matching the at least one of the plurality of predetermined paylines.

16. The apparatus of claim **15** wherein the random determination is based upon a fifty percent probability of the wild transformation status being wild and a fifty percent probability of the wild transformation status being inactive.

17. The apparatus of claim **15**, wherein the base game has a plurality of base game reels.

18. The apparatus of claim **15**, wherein the processor also transforms the plurality of base game reels into the plurality of bonus game reels after the predetermined criteria is met.

19. The apparatus of claim **15**, wherein the processor also decrements a predetermined counter upon the subsequent random spinning being performed.

20. The apparatus of claim **15**, wherein the processor also decrements a predetermined counter subsequent to the initial random spinning being performed and prior to the subsequent random spinning being performed.

21. The apparatus of claim **15**, wherein the processor performs at least one additional random spinning until at least one plurality of additional bonus game symbols matches the at least one of the plurality of predetermined paylines.

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