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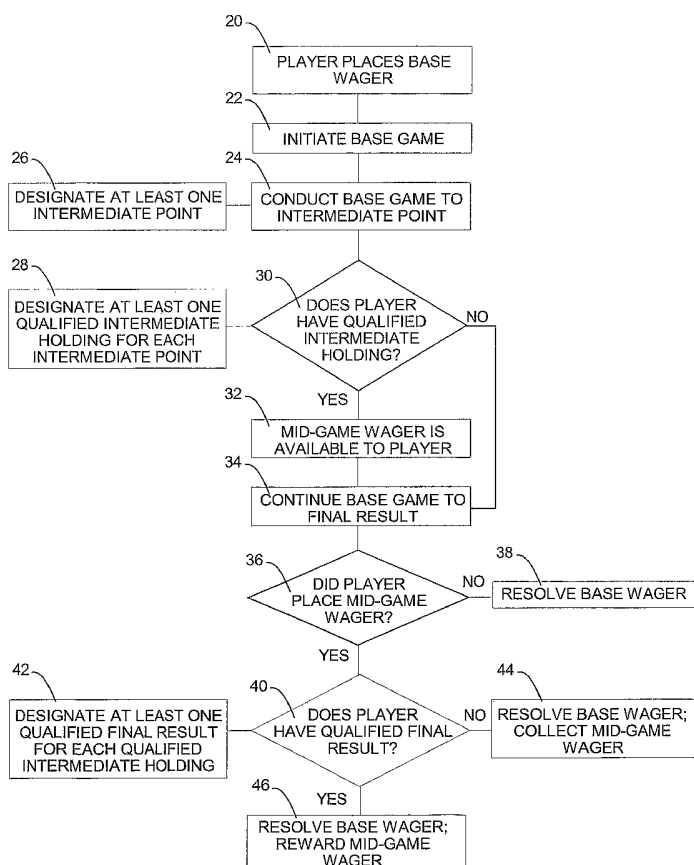
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(54) Title: METHOD AND DEVICE FOR CONDUCTING A WAGERING GAME



(57) Abstract: A game method for providing a mid-game wager for a base game includes designating at least one intermediate game point and at least one qualifying intermediate holding corresponding to at least one qualifying final result. Players optionally place a base game wager and initiate the base game. The base game is played until an intermediate game point is reached. A player holding a qualifying intermediate holding at the intermediate game point may place an optional mid-game wager. The base game is played to completion. Players with a final holding that is a qualifying final result are rewarded based on the mid-game wager. A multiple hand embodiment of the game method is also disclosed in which a separate hand may be conducted for each qualifying final result corresponding to a qualifying intermediate holding at an intermediate game point.

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METHOD AND DEVICE FOR CONDUCTING A WAGERING GAME

Field of the Invention

5 The present invention relates to wagering games. Specifically the present invention is a game method that may be applied to a variety of wagering games to permit a separate mid-game wager during game play for qualifying intermediate holdings. The present invention may optionally be directed a game method in which a player may place multiple mid-game wagers and play multiple hands.

Background of the Invention

10 A game well known in the gambling industry is video poker. In the conventional game of video poker known in the art, a gaming machine with an incorporated data processor and display is provided. The gaming machine receives a
15 player's wager thereby prompting the data processor to randomly select a hand of cards from a data structure containing data representing a deck of playing cards. The hand of cards, typically five cards, is displayed face up to represent an initial hand.

 The player selects which, if any, of the five cards of the initial hand to hold and prompts the processor, through an input device, to discard the remaining cards.

20 The data processor replaces the discarded cards with cards selected from the data structure containing data representing a deck of cards depleted of the initial hand. The replacements along with the held cards form a final hand.

 The video poker device compares the final hand to a set of pre-determined winning combinations stored in the data structure. Typically, these combinations
25 represent the conventional ranked Poker hands such as a pair of Jacks or better, two

pair, three of a kind, and so forth. If the player's final outcome matches a winning combination, the player is rewarded according to a predetermined fixed pay table.

Otherwise, the final outcome is deemed to be a loss and the player's wager is

retained by the gaming machine. Multiple hand versions of video poker exist in

5 which the cards held in a main hand are copied into one or more auxiliary hands which are completed from the same depleted deck of cards. Such a video poker game is intended to give the player multiple opportunities to play the same hand using the same playing cards, but drawing replacements from what the player hopes to be a differently constituted deck.

10 It is known in the art that players are attracted to games in which a larger payout is possible. Thus, several methods have been developed to improve pay outs for video poker, slot machines, and other wagering games. Two of these methods are secondary games and jackpots.

Secondary games are separate games which are activated by some triggering
15 event occurring during or after the play of a primary game. For example, one secondary game for slot machines is triggered by a designated symbol appearing on the display. Upon triggering, a bonus screen appears in which the gaming machine randomly selects, or a player selects, one or more bonus symbols from a bonus symbol set. Depending on the bonus symbols selected, a bonus is awarded. Rather
20 than a fixed bonus, it is also known to provide a bonus multiplier that multiplies the winnings of the primary game.

Secondary games have also been developed for video poker. For example, one secondary game developed for video poker is triggered if the player has a winning combination. The secondary game is optional and requires no additional
25 wager in exchange for the chance to double the player's winnings.

In the secondary game, one dealer card is displayed face up and four player cards are displayed face down. The player is rewarded when the player selects a player card with a higher value than the dealer card. When the player selects a player card with a lower value than the dealer card, the player loses the amount won
5 from the primary game. The drawbacks of this system are that the player must risk the player's winnings to play the secondary game and the outcome of the secondary game is not tied to the outcome of the primary game.

Progressive jackpots also encourage continued play by making the game exciting, suspenseful, and entertaining. In such a jackpot, a portion of each primary
10 wager is allocated to a progressive jackpot. The prize is generally awarded based on the ultimate outcome of the primary game. However, the odds of obtaining a progressive jackpot are very low.

Thus, it can be seen that there is a need in the art for a method for increasing the pay outs of a game such as video poker, slot machines, and other wagering
15 games.

Summary of the Invention

The present method may be applied to any gaming game. The game method begins with designating an intermediate game point, a qualifying intermediate
20 holding, and a qualifying final result.

In one optional embodiment, a player makes a base game wager and initiates the base game. In another optional embodiment, a base game wager is not required. The base game is played according to the rules governing play of the base game until reaching a predefined intermediate game point. If the player possesses at least one

predefined qualifying intermediate holding at the intermediate game point, the player is permitted to place a mid-game wager.

If the player does not place a mid-game wager, or the player does not have an intermediate holding, the base game is played to completion. In an embodiment in which the player placed a base game wager, the player is rewarded, if at all, based on his base game wager for his or her final holding.

If the player places a mid-game wager, at least one game hand is conducted according to the base game rules to form a final holding. Optionally, multiple game hands may be conducted if the player's hand at the intermediate game point correspond to multiple qualifying final results. The mid-game wager could be handled in many different ways in such an optional embodiment. For example, a player may place a single mid-game wager, place separate mid-game wager for separate game hands, place a single mid-game wager and allocate the wager among game hands, or the like. In one optional embodiment, a separate game hand is conducted for each qualifying final result corresponding to each of the qualifying intermediate holdings possessed by the player. In another optional embodiment, the player selects one or more qualifying final results corresponding to a qualifying intermediate holding possessed by the player. The player obtains a final holding for each game hand. If the final holding is a qualifying final result, the player is also rewarded based on his or her mid-game wager.

In an embodiment directed to video card games, such as video draw poker, the present method utilizes electronic representations of playing cards to obtain a final holding of playing cards. An intermediate game point is designated. Optionally, multiple intermediate game points are designated. At least one qualifying intermediate holding of one or more playing cards is designated for the

intermediate game point and at least one qualifying final result of one or more playing cards corresponding to the qualifying intermediate holding are designated.

In an optional embodiment, a player places a base game wager. In an alternate optional embodiment, a base game wager is not required. The base game is initiated and at least one playing card is dealt to the player. The base game is conducted according to the rules of the game until an intermediate game point is reached. In one optional embodiment directed to video draw poker, an intermediate game point may include a point after an initial holding of playing cards is dealt to a player but before the player discards and replaces selected playing cards.

If, at the intermediate game point, the player has a qualifying intermediate holding, the player is permitted to place a mid-game wager. As above, in an optional embodiment, multiple separate game hands may be conducted if the player's qualifying intermediate holding corresponds to multiple qualifying final results. In one optional embodiment, a separate game hand is conducted for each qualifying final result; in another optional embodiment, the player selects one or more qualifying final results and a separate game hand is conducted for each selected qualifying final result. The base game continues until the player obtains a final holding. For example, in video draw poker, the base game continues for each game hand by holding the playing cards of the corresponding intermediate holding and replacing the playing cards not held.

In an optional embodiment in which a base wager is placed, the base wager is resolved. For example, in video draw poker, resolving the base wager may include comparing the final holding to a schedule of winning poker hands and rewarding the player based on his base wager if the final holding is a winning poker hand.

If the player placed a mid-game wager, the player is rewarded for each game hand based on the mid-game wager if the player's final holding for a game hand matches a qualifying final result corresponding to a qualifying intermediate holding possessed by the player when the mid-game wager was placed.

5 Any number of optional variations could be conducted including if the player has a winning holding and a qualifying intermediate holding at an intermediate point, rewarding the player on the winning holding prior to the player continuing play to obtain a corresponding qualifying final result. The reward may optionally be paid to the player, or the player may have to option to use the reward to place a mid-
10 game wager or supplement a mid-game wager.

 In another optional variation, at an intermediate point, the player's holding is examined and the strategies needed to obtain final holdings possible based on the player's holding are projected. One of the strategies is designated an optimal strategy. If the player places a mid-game wager and, by doing so, deviates from the
15 designated optimal strategy, the player is rewarded with a supplemental award to a mid-game wager reward if the player receives a qualifying final result corresponding to the player's qualifying intermediate holding. It is noted that the supplemental award may be grouped with, or separate from, any other award.

 A device for conducting a video draw poker game includes a data processor
20 communicating with a display, an input device, a bet receiver, and a data storage structure. The data storage structure stores electronic representations of playing cards, a schedule of winning poker hands, at least one qualifying intermediate holding, at least one qualifying final result corresponding to the qualifying intermediate holding, and instructions executable by the data processor to conduct
25 the video draw poker game. The instructions include randomly selecting an initial

holding of playing cards in response to the bet receiver receiving a base wager. The display displays the initial holding.

If the player does not possess a qualifying intermediate holding, the input device receives input from the player selecting to hold zero or more playing cards from the initial holding. A final holding is formed by discarding playing cards not held and replacing discarded playing cards.

If the playing cards of the initial holding include one or more qualifying intermediate holdings, the player is permitted to place a mid-game wager at the bet receiver. As above, in an optional embodiment, multiple separate game hands may be conducted if the qualifying intermediate holding(s) of the playing cards initially dealt correspond to multiple qualifying final results. In one such optional embodiment, a separate game hand is conducted for each qualifying final result. In another such optional embodiment, the player selects through the input device one or more qualifying final results and a separate game hand is conducted for each selected qualifying result. In each game hand, the playing cards of the corresponding qualifying intermediate holding are held and playing cards not held are discarded and replaced to form a final holding.

The data processor examines final holdings and rewards the player based on the base wager if the player has a winning poker hand according to the stored schedule of winning poker hands. If the player placed a mid-game wager at the bet receiver, the data processor rewards the player based on the mid-game wager if the player's final holding matches a qualifying final result corresponding to the qualifying intermediate holding possessed by the player when the mid-game wager was placed.

The optional variations and additions previously described may be included in the method conducted by the data processor.

Brief Description of the Drawings

5 FIG. 1 is a flowchart of a gaming method according to an optional embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a block diagram of a gaming device according to an embodiment of the present invention;

10 FIG. 3 is a front view of a display of an example video draw poker game conducted according to an embodiment of the present invention before initiation;

FIG. 4 is a front view of a display of the example video draw poker game of FIG. 3 after an initial deal;

FIG. 5 is a front view of a display of the example video draw poker game of FIG. 4 after playing cards are selected to be held;

15 FIG. 6 is a front view of a display of the example video draw poker game of FIG. 5 after replacement playing cards are dealt;

FIG. 7 is a front view of a display of an alternate example video draw poker game of FIG. 5 after replacement playing cards are dealt;

20 FIG. 8 is a flowchart of a gaming method according to an optional embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 9 is a flowchart of a gaming method according to an optional embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 10 is a flowchart of a gaming method according to an optional embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 11 is a front view of a display of an example multiple hand video draw poker game conducted according to an embodiment of the present invention after an initial deal;

FIG. 12 is a front view of a display of the example video draw poker game of FIG. 11 after playing cards are selected to be held;

FIG. 13 is a front view of a display of the example video draw poker game of FIG. 11 after replacement playing cards are dealt.

Description

Reference is now made to the figures wherein like parts are referred to by like numerals throughout. The game method of the present invention could be applied to any of a variety of base games including, but not limited to, video card games, slot machines, Keno machines, or the like. Likewise, it is contemplated that the present invention could be applied to games played via computer network, such as the Internet, as well as to live games and gaming machines. Thus, it should be noted that the description of the optional embodiments below is exemplary of the claims rather than limiting.

Referring to FIG. 1, the broad game method includes designating at least one intermediate point 26 for the game, at least one qualifying intermediate holding 28 for each intermediate point 26 designated, and at least one qualifying final result 42 for each qualifying intermediate holding 28 designated. The selection of the intermediate point, a qualifying intermediate holding, and a qualifying final result may be fixed and predetermined by the rules of the game, may vary in some fashion, including random, from play to play, or may depend in whole or in part upon player input prior to initiating game play.

The intermediate point 26 or intermediate points 26 depend upon the base game. It is contemplated that an intermediate point could be any predetermined point in the game between wagering and resolution. It is further contemplated that in an optional embodiment, more than one intermediate point may be designated.

5 For example, for a video draw poker machine, the intermediate point may be after the initial deal but before cards are discarded and replaced. Likewise, for a slot machine, the intermediate point may be after some, but fewer than all, the slot reels have stopped spinning. It is noted that the intermediate point may be fixed or may vary depending upon game play of a specific game. Thus, for some symbols, the
10 intermediate point may be when one symbol appears, for other symbols, the intermediate point may be when two symbols appear. Similarly, in a Keno machine, the intermediate point may be after some, but fewer than all, the numbers have been drawn.

 A qualifying intermediate holding is also designated 28. The qualifying
15 intermediate holding is the holding required at the predetermined intermediate point to participate in the mid-game wager of the present invention. It should be noted that more than one qualifying intermediate holding may be designated. Again, the qualifying intermediate holding will vary depending on the base game. However, the qualifying intermediate holding forms the basis for a recognized outcome.

20 For example, in video poker the qualifying intermediate holding may be any one, two, three, four, or five card hand such as three or four cards to a Royal Flush, a three of a kind, four cards to a straight, or the like. In fact, the qualifying intermediate holding may be a hand that is dissimilar to a hand with a high poker ranking. For example, a qualifying intermediate hand may have no significance at
25 all, except that it is designated a qualifying intermediate hand. Similarly, in a slot

machine, the qualifying intermediate holding may be any designated number of reels with any designated symbols in a designated position such as two reels with matching symbols on a pay line or a symbol and a multiplier on a pay line. In an optional embodiment for Keno, a qualifying intermediate holding may be any catch
5 out of the quantity of numbers selected after a quantity of numbers have been drawn, such as a catch of four numbers out of seven selected after ten numbers have been drawn.

With continued reference to FIG. 1, a qualifying final result is also designated 42 for each qualifying intermediate holding. The qualifying final result is
10 the final holding required at the end of the base game that results in a payout to the player based on a mid-game wager as discussed below. The qualifying final result is related to the corresponding qualifying intermediate holding in that the qualifying final result is the successful completion of the qualifying intermediate holding held at the intermediate point or intermediate points.

15 In one optional embodiment, only one qualifying final result is designated for each qualifying intermediate holding. For example, in a video draw poker machine embodiment, if the qualifying intermediate holding is four to a Royal Flush, the qualifying final result is a Royal Flush. Similarly, if the qualifying intermediate holding is three of a kind, the qualifying final result is four of a kind.

20 It is also contemplated that multiple qualifying final results may correspond to each qualifying intermediate holding. For example, in one optional video draw poker embodiment, the player may be prompted to select the qualifying final result he wishes to wager upon based upon his qualifying intermediate holding. In such an alternate embodiment, a player with four to a Royal Flush may be prompted to select
25 a qualifying final result from a Royal Flush or a straight flush with a corresponding

adjustment in payout. Alternatively, the game rules themselves may account for the likelihood of each qualifying final result occurring based on the corresponding qualifying intermediate holding. In such an optional embodiment, a set of poker hands, such as Royal Flush, a straight flush, a straight, and a flush, may all be
5 designated as qualifying final results with corresponding adjustments in pay outs, for a qualifying intermediate holding of four to a Royal Flush. In yet another optional embodiment in which a qualifying intermediate holding corresponds to multiple qualifying final results, or in the case where one hand may possess multiple qualifying intermediate holdings, separate game hands may be conducted for
10 different qualifying final results. Such an optional embodiment is described in greater detail below.

Turning to an optional slot machine embodiment, if the qualifying intermediate holding is two matching symbols on a pay line, the qualifying final result may be a matching third symbol on a pay line. Similarly, in a slot machine
15 embodiment with multiple pay lines, the qualifying intermediate holding could be two matching symbols on one or more pay lines and the qualifying final result could be a matching third symbol on one or more pay lines. For a Keno machine, if the qualifying intermediate holding is a catch of four of seven selected after ten drawn, the qualifying final result may be six of seven selected.

20 Referring again to FIG. 1, in an optional embodiment the player begins game play by placing 20 a base game wager and initiating 22 the base game. However, it is contemplated that in an optional embodiment, a base game wager may not be required. The base game is conducted in conventional fashion 24 until the predetermined intermediate point is reached. Upon reaching the intermediate point,
25 the player's holding is compared 30 to the qualifying intermediate holding. If the

player possesses a qualifying intermediate holding, an optional mid-game wager becomes available 32 to the player. The mid-game wager is a wager that the player will receive a qualifying final result corresponding to the qualifying intermediate holding he possessed at the intermediate point. It is contemplated that in the rare
5 instance that a player possesses a qualifying intermediate holding that is also a qualifying final result, the player may be allowed to place a mid-game wager or, alternatively, not be allowed to place a mid-game wager as determined by the game rules.

Relating to this, in an optional embodiment shown in FIG. 7, specific
10 provisions may be made for a player who obtains an qualifying intermediate holding that is a winning hand according to the base rules and, consequently, would qualify the player for a reward on any base wager amount. In one optional embodiment, such a winning hand would be mutually exclusive of the qualifying intermediate holding. For example, if a player holds K♦ 9♣ J♦ 10♦ Q♦, the player holds a
15 winning hand of a straight but also holds four cards to a Royal Flush. Since the player cannot hold both, these hands are mutually exclusive. In such a case, the player may be rewarded on his base wager for the winning hand, i.e. the straight in the example, at the intermediate point before the player forms a final holding rather than after forming a final holding. In such an optional embodiment the player would
20 be able to place a mid-game wager and attempt to obtain the Royal Flush, already having been rewarded for the dealt straight. In a further optional embodiment, the reward on the base wager for the winning hand dealt may be automatically or at the player's option rolled into the mid-game wager so no additional wager need be made. Alternatively, the reward may be added to any mid-game wager so that a

player winning the mid-game wager would be paid on the mid-game wager supplemented by the reward.

The size of the mid-game wager is not subject to any express limits other than those set by the house depending on the pay outs and the desired house advantage. However, it is contemplated that the mid-game wager limit may be adjusted to make the wager attractive to the player.

The base game continues and the player obtains a final holding. In one embodiment of the method, the base wager and mid-game wager are rewarded separately. In such an embodiment, the player is rewarded based his base wager for his final holding according to the rules of the base game. If the player made the optional mid-game wager, the player's final holding is then compared to the qualifying final results corresponding to the player's intermediate holding. If the player's final holding matches a qualifying final result, or a selected qualifying final result in an optional embodiment, the player is also rewarded based on his mid-game wager. It is contemplated that the mid-game wager reward could be any form including a fixed reward, a progressive reward, or any other type of reward. Conversely, if the player's final holding does not match a qualified final result, the player's mid-game wager is collected.

In an optional embodiment, a winning mid-game wager acts to multiply the reward on the base wager. Put another way, a multiplier applied to the base wager reward is the reward associated with the mid-game wager.

It should be noted that it is not enough that the player win the base wager to win the mid-game wager. Rather the player must receive a qualifying final result. For example, in a video draw poker embodiment, if an intermediate qualifying holding is four to a Royal Flush and, at the intermediate point, the player's hand

comprises 10♥ J♥ Q♥ K♥ 5♠ and places a mid-game wager with the goal of obtaining a Royal Flush, he will not be rewarded on his mid-game wager for discarding the 5♠ and drawing a K♠ even if he is rewarded on his base wager for a pair of Kings. He will only be rewarded for obtaining a qualifying final result, or a
5 selected qualifying final result in an optional embodiment, corresponding to his qualifying intermediate holding. Players rewarded for obtaining a qualifying final result may be paid at any rate including true odds or more.

This will, under some circumstances, cause a player to follow a strategy that may not be the optimal strategy for a game. In an optional embodiment, the player's
10 holding at an intermediate point is examined and the final holdings that can be formed from the player's holding are projected. The strategy or strategies required for the player to obtain those projected final holdings are also projected. At least one of those strategies is designated an optimal strategy. More than one strategy may be designated an optimal strategy and the designation may be random or based
15 on any factor or factors including the odds of obtaining the projected final holding, the payout of the projected final holding, or any other factor.

For example, in an embodiment directed to video draw poker, a player may be dealt a hand of 4♥ 5♠ 6♥ 7♥ J♥. Depending upon the playing cards held and the replacement cards dealt, such a hand could become a straight (by discarding the J♥
20 and attempting an 8 or 3), flush (by discarding the 5♠ and attempting to obtain a heart), or straight flush (by discarding the 5♠ and J♥ to obtain the 5♥ and either the 3♥ or 8♥). In this case, holding the four hearts and attempting to obtain a flush would be the strategy most likely to produce a winning outcome and, thus, may be designated an optimal strategy. Holding the consecutive cards has a similar, albeit
25 slightly lower, probability of success and may, or may not, be designated an optimal

strategy, depending upon whether the particular embodiment allows for multiple optimal strategies (although the present invention contemplates single or multiple optimal strategies) and the factors, if any, used to designate the optimal strategy. For the sake of the example, however, the flush is optionally designated the optimal strategy. For a player in such an example game who places a mid-game wager and holds playing cards that implement a strategy different from the optimal strategy, and succeeds in winning the mid-game wager, a supplemental reward may be issued. This supplemental reward may be issued in any fashion including a separate reward or an increased reward on the mid-game wager amount.

An alternate embodiment to the present method, as shown in FIGS. 9 and 10, contemplates the player not needing to make such a decision by permitting the player to play multiple separate game hands. In such an optional embodiment, the game method is conducted similarly up to the intermediate point. That is, a player may place a base wager although such a base wager may not be required in certain optional embodiments to initiate the base game. The base game is conducted according to the base game rules up to a designated intermediate point.

Similarly, if the player does not have a qualifying intermediate holding, the base game is continued to a final holding for resolution of the base game wager.

However, if the player possesses a hand that corresponds to more than one

qualifying final result when the mid-game wager becomes available, multiple separate game hands may be conducted so that the player can attempt to obtain multiple qualifying final results rather than being required to choose just one. It is noted that this optional method for conducting multiple separate hands could be triggered if the player possesses a qualifying intermediate holding that

corresponds to multiple qualifying final results, if the player possesses a hand that

contains multiple qualifying intermediate holdings, or a combination thereof. For example, in the video poker embodiment shown in FIGS. 11–13, the player is dealt 9♦ 10♦ J♦ Q♦ A♦. This hand could correspond to a qualifying intermediate holding of four-to-a-straight-flush (9♦ 10♦ J♦ Q♦) which could be completed by obtaining 8♦ or K♦ and four-to-a-Royal-Flush (10♦ J♦ Q♦ A♦) which could be completed by obtaining K♦ and, thus, could be the basis for triggering the optional multiple game hand embodiment.

Returning to FIGS. 9 and 10, the player in such a case may opt to place a mid-game wager. The mid-game wager itself could take the form of a single wager, separate wagers on separate game hands, a single wager allocated to separate game hands, or the like. That is, in one optional embodiment, the present method could call for a player may simply make a single mid-game wager. In another optional embodiment, the present method could call for a player to make an equal mid-game wager on each game hand. In yet another embodiment, the player could be permitted to make different mid-game wagers on different game hands, e.g. wagering five units on a game hand directed to a straight flush and one unit on a game hand directed to a Royal Flush. In yet another optional embodiment, the player could place a mid-game wager, then be permitted to allocate the mid-game wager differently to different hands, e.g. placing a five unit mid-game wager with three units allocated to a game hand directed to a straight flush and two units allocated to a game hand directed to a Royal Flush.

Separate game hands are conducted for separate qualifying final results. In an optional embodiment, shown in FIG. 9, a separate game hand is conducted for each possible qualifying final result. Thus, for example, if a particular holding at an intermediate point could become any of three possible qualifying final results, three

game hands could be conducted. It is contemplated, however, that in certain embodiments discussed above, the player may optionally be allowed to allocate zero, or place a zero wager, on any game hand.

5 In another optional embodiment, shown in FIG. 10, the player may be allowed to select 45 the qualifying final results for which a game hand will be conducted 49. For example, a video draw poker embodiment could optionally include such qualifying intermediate holdings as four-to-a-straight, four-to-a-flush, four-to-a-straight-flush, three-to-a-Royal-Flush, or the like. In such an example embodiment, the dealt playing cards 7♣ 9♥ J♣ Q♣ K♣ would correspond to at least
10 three qualifying intermediate holdings (four-to-a-straight: 9♥ J♣ Q♣ K♣; four-to-a-flush: 7♣ J♣ Q♣ K♣; three-to-a-Royal-Flush: J♣ Q♣ K♣). In an optional embodiment permitting selection, a player may select to play for flush and the Royal Flush, but may choose not to play for the straight because it would require an inside draw of a 10-spot card.

15 Referring generally to FIGS. 9 and 10, each game hand to be conducted is completed according to the rules of the base game to obtain a final holding for each game hand. Thus, for example, if three game hands are conducted, three final holdings will be obtained. It is noted that rules for completing the game hands could be completed in the same fashion as the optional single hand embodiment discussed
20 above or could use different rules. For example, in an optional video poker embodiment, each game hand could be completed using the same deck of playing cards. Alternatively, each game hand could be completed using a separate deck of playing cards. In yet another embodiment, each game hand is completed using a separate deck of playing cards that is depleted of the initial hand. Thus, in such an
25 optional embodiment, there would not be duplicates of playing cards within a game

hand, e.g. it would not be possible to have two A♣ in a game hand, but the same card could be dealt to different hands, e.g. an A♣ could be dealt to both a first game hand and a second game hand, because each hand is dealt from a deck of playing cards that is complete except for the initially dealt cards. For each game hand, if the
5 final holding is a qualifying final result corresponding to a qualifying intermediate holding possessed by the player at an intermediate point, the player is rewarded based on a mid-game wager. An example of an optional multiple hand embodiment of a video poker game is shown in FIGS. 11–13 and described in greater detail below.

10 The present invention also embraces a gaming machine for conducting the gaming method described above. With reference to FIG. 2, a gaming machine according to the present invention includes a display 54, a data processor 50 communicating with the display 54, a data storage structure 52 communicating with the data processor 50, an input device 58 communicating with the data processor 50,
15 and a bet receiver 56 communicating with the data processor 50. The data storage structure 52 may be any type including optical, magnetic, ROM, EPROM, EAROM, RAM, or any other type of storage. The data storage structure 52 stores instructions embodying the method described above, images used during game play, and any other data that may be necessary to make the gaming machine operable.

20 The data processor initiates game play in response to receiving a wager at the bet receiver 56. The data processor conducts game play and prompts the display 54 to display images according to the conduct of the base game. Upon reaching an intermediate point, the data processor 50 examines the player's holding and determines whether the mid-game wager is available to the player. If the mid-game
25 wager is available, the data processor 50 prompts the player, such as through

displaying a message at the display 54, to place a mid-game wager if desired. The data processor monitors to determine whether the mid-game wager was received at the bet receiver 56.

Again, the base game is conducted by the data processor 50 to a final holding
5 according to the base game rules stored at the data storage structure 52. Upon reaching a final holding, the data processor 50 compares the player's final holding to the qualifying final result corresponding to the qualifying intermediate holding possessed by the player at the intermediate point at which the mid-game wager was placed. If the player's final holding is a qualifying final result, the data processor 50
10 directs a reward to be issued to the player based on the mid-game wager.

Turning to FIGS. 3–8, an example game of the present invention as applied to video draw poker played on a gaming machine of the present invention is shown. With reference to FIGS. 1–8, an optional base game wager is placed 20 at a bet receiver 56. In an optional embodiment, touchscreen buttons 72, 74, 76 on the
15 display 54 or push buttons (not shown) may be used to place a base wager using a BET 1 button 72 or BET MAX button 74. As shown in FIG. 3, prior to initiating the game, the display may optionally show overturned playing cards and a schedule 78 of winning poker hands along with pay outs. In the example of FIGS. 3–7, the schedule shows final holdings that will result in a payout and the pay outs associated
20 with the final holdings for one through five coin wagers. It is noted that this is an example only and that the particular pay outs, the particular final holdings, and the particular quantity of coin wagers for which pay outs are given, as well as the information displayed and the way the information is displayed, may vary.

Referring generally to FIGS. 3–8, the video draw poker game is initiated 22,
25 optionally by using a DRAW button 76, and a hand 60 of playing cards is dealt 25 to

the player. While the hand 60 could be of any size, in this example of an optional embodiment five playing cards 62, 64, 66, 68, 70 are dealt. In this example of an optional embodiment, shown in FIG. 4, the player has been dealt a hand 60 consisting of K♥ K♣ Q♥ 10♥ K♦.

5 The player may select to hold zero or more playing cards and discard and replace 35 the remaining playing cards. In this case, the player may hold the K♥ K♣ K♦ to guarantee a payout for three of a kind and possibly improve to four of a kind or full house. Alternatively, the player may hold the K♥ Q♥ 10♥ to possibly improve to a Royal Flush.

10 As discussed above, in an optional embodiment, the player may be rewarded at this point for the three of a kind dealt. However, this is entirely optional and it is contemplated that the method could be conducted without such a step.

 As discussed above, in another optional embodiment, the data processor may determine an optimal strategy at this point, such as holding the K♥ K♣ K♦. A
15 player who does not follow the optimal strategy by placing a mid-game wager and holding the K♥ Q♥ 10♥ may receive a supplemental reward if the player succeeds in obtaining a Royal Flush (or straight flush depending upon the qualifying final result associated with this qualifying intermediate holding). However, this too is entirely optional and the method may be conducted with or without such a step.

20 With particular reference to FIGS. 5 and 8, the player elects to hold K♥ Q♥ 10♥. Assuming for this example that three cards to a Royal Flush is designated 30 a qualifying intermediate holding, the mid-game wager becomes available 32 if the player holds these playing cards. This is also reflected in the additional line 80 on the pay schedule 78 that indicates a payout for each coin of the mid-game wager

placed by the player if the final qualifying hand (Royal Flush in this case) is obtained.

Turning to FIGS. 6 and 8, the discarded $K\clubsuit K\heartsuit$ have been replaced 35 by $A\heartsuit$ and the player has obtained a final holding of Royal Flush. Assuming that the
5 player in this example game wagered five coins as a base wager and five coins as a mid-game wager, the player in such a situation is rewarded 46 with 4000 coins for obtaining a Royal Flush for his base wager and an additional 5405 coins for obtaining a Royal Flush for his mid-game wager. If the player had held the $K\heartsuit Q\heartsuit$
10 $10\heartsuit$ but not placed a mid-game wager, the player would have only been rewarded 38 with 4000 coins for obtaining a Royal Flush for his base wager. Similarly, if the player had placed a four-coin base wager and a two-coin mid-game wager, the player would have been rewarded 46 with 3200 coins for his base wager plus 2162 coins for his mid-game wager.

Turning to FIGS. 7 and 8, an alternate outcome for the hand of FIG. 5 is
15 illustrated. In this case, the player has discarded the same cards, $K\clubsuit K\heartsuit$, but the replacement cards $Q\clubsuit 10\clubsuit$ only give the player a final holding of two pair. The player in this example would be rewarded 44 for obtaining two pair, i.e. paid 10 coins for a five-coin wager, for example, but the player would not be rewarded on his mid-game wager, if any, because the final qualifying result, in this case a Royal
20 Flush, was not obtained.

Turning to the multiple hand example of FIGS. 11–13, as noted above, in an optional embodiment, a base wager may not be required. In an optional embodiment in which a base wager is required, a base wager may be placed by inputting bills, coins, tickets, vouchers, or the like, or by using a “Bet 1” button 112 or “Bet Max”
25 button 114 to deduct stored game credits. In an optional embodiment, the player

may initiate the game automatically by making a maximum wager using the “Bet Max” button 114 or by pressing a “Deal” button 116.

In the example of FIG. 11, a player is dealt an initial hand 100 of 9♦ 10♦ J♦ Q♦ A♦. Since this initial hand 100 corresponds to a straight flush and to a Royal Flush, optionally illustrated in a pay table 118 in additional pay lines 120 showing the qualifying final results and associated pay outs, the player is presented with the option to place a mid-game wager. As discussed above, the mid-game wager could be handled in many different ways including allowing the player to separately wager on different game hands or allocate a wager among game hands. As for the mid-game wager itself, it could be inputted into the game through a receiver, such as a bill, coin, ticket, or voucher receiver, or could be deducted from game credits using the “Bet 1” button 112 and “Bet Max” button 114.

If the player opts to place the mid-game wager, the player is presented with multiple game hands 130, 140, as shown in FIG. 12. It is noted that the multiple game hands 130, 140 need not be presented simultaneously as shown in FIG. 12, but could be shown serially, or in any other fashion. It is also noted that the entire initial hand could be presented, as shown in the optional embodiment of FIG. 12, or only the qualifying intermediate holding may be shown.

In an optional embodiment in which the player selects which game hands to play, it is noted that the presentation of game hands may be preceded by the player selection. In an alternate version of such an optional embodiment, the game hands may be presented to the player and any non-selected game hands would be removed or otherwise visually distinguished from the selected game hands.

Assuming then, that the player elects to proceed with both game hands 130, 140, and has placed the necessary mid-game wager(s), each game hand is conducted.

As with the display of the game hand discussed above, each game hand may be conducted serially, simultaneously, or in any other order or fashion. The completion of each game hand proceeds according to the rules of the base game. In the case of the optional video poker embodiment shown in FIGS. 11–13, playing cards
5 corresponding to the qualifying initial holding are held and playing cards that are not held are discarded and replaced.

In the case of the example of FIG. 12, the game hand 130 directed to a Royal Flush has held the playing cards 10♦ J♦ Q♦ A♦ to attempt to draw K♦. Similarly, the game hand 140 directed to a straight flush has held the playing cards 9♦ 10♦ J♦
10 Q♦ to attempt to draw 8♦ or K♦. It is noted that the player may be required to affirmatively act to hold the cards of the qualifying initial holding or, in an alternate optional embodiment, the cards of the qualifying initial holding may be automatically held when the mid-game wager is placed.

Turning to FIG. 13, in the optional embodiment for video poker, cards that
15 are not held are discarded and replaced. Optionally, the replacements may be drawn from the same deck for all cards. Alternatively, the replacements may be drawn from one or more separate decks for each game hand. In the example of FIG. 13, the replacements for each game hand are drawn from a separate deck that excludes the initially dealt hand, 9♦ 10♦ J♦ Q♦ A♦. In the example, the player receives a final
20 holding 132 of 10♦ J♦ Q♦ K♠ A♦ in the game hand directed to a Royal Flush and a final holding 142 of 8♦ 9♦ 10♦ J♦ Q♦ in the game hand directed to a straight flush.

The game hands 132, 142 are examined and the player is rewarded based on the mid-game wager or mid-game wagers if the final holding matches the qualifying final results corresponding to the qualifying intermediate holding possessed when
25 the mid-game wager or mid-game wagers are placed. In the example of FIG. 13, the

player has obtained final holding 132 of a straight in a game hand directed to a qualifying final result of Royal Flush. According to this optional embodiment, the player is not rewarded on the mid-game wager for this game hand, although the player may be rewarded on a base wager for this hand in an optional embodiment.

- 5 Conversely, the player has obtained a final holding 142 of a straight flush in a game hand directed to a qualifying final result of straight flush. Thus, the player is rewarded on the mid-game wager for this game hand, along with a reward on a base wager in an optional embodiment.

10 While certain embodiments of the present invention have been shown and described it is to be understood that the present invention is subject to many modifications and changes without departing from the spirit and scope of the claims presented herein.

I CLAIM:

1. A method for conducting a base game played by a player according to a set of rules using electronic representations of playing cards to obtain a final holding of playing cards, comprising:

5 designating an intermediate game point, a qualifying intermediate holding of one or more playing cards for said intermediate game point, and a qualifying final result of one or more playing cards corresponding to said qualifying intermediate holding;

initiating the base game;

10 dealing at least one playing card to said player and conducting said base game according to said set of rules until reaching an intermediate game point;

permitting said player to place a mid-game wager if the player possesses at least one qualifying intermediate holding at said intermediate game point;

15 if the player placed a mid-game wager, conducting a separate game hand according to said set of rules for each qualifying final result corresponding to said qualifying intermediate holdings possessed by said player such that the player obtains a final holding for each said game hand; and

20 rewarding said player based on said mid-game wager for each final holding only if the player's final holding matches a qualifying final result corresponding to the qualifying intermediate holding possessed by the player when said mid-game wager was placed.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein said base game is video draw poker in which a player is dealt an initial holding of playing cards, discards zero or more playing

cards, and receives replacements for the discarded cards, and an intermediate point includes the point prior to discarding zero or more cards.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein said player separately places a mid-game
5 wager for one or more game hands conducted.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein said player places a single mid-game wager and allocates said mid-game wager among one or more game hands conducted.

10 5. A method for conducting a base game played by a player according to a set of rules using electronic representations of playing cards to obtain a final holding of playing cards, comprising:

designating an intermediate game point, a qualifying intermediate holding of one or more playing cards for said intermediate game point, and a qualifying final
15 result of one or more playing cards corresponding to said qualifying intermediate holding;

initiating the base game;

dealing at least one playing card to said player and conducting said base game according to said set of rules until reaching an intermediate game point;

20 permitting said player to place a mid-game wager if the player possesses at least one qualifying intermediate holding at said intermediate game point;

if the player placed a mid-game wager, said player selecting at least one qualifying final result corresponding to a qualifying intermediate holding possessed by said player and conducting a separate game hand for each selected qualifying
25 final result such that the player obtains a final holding for each said game hand; and

rewarding said player based on said mid-game wager for each final holding only if the player's final holding matches a qualifying final result corresponding to the qualifying intermediate holding possessed by the player when said mid-game wager was placed.

5

6. The method of claim 5 wherein said base game is video draw poker in which a player is dealt an initial holding of playing cards, discards zero or more playing cards, and receives replacements for the discarded cards, and an intermediate point includes the point prior to discarding zero or more cards.

10

7. The method of claim 5 wherein said player separately places a mid-game wager for one or more game hands conducted.

15

8. The method of claim 5 wherein said player places a single mid-game wager and allocates said mid-game wager among one or more game hands conducted.

20

9. A method of conducting a video draw poker game, comprising:
designating at least one qualifying intermediate holding of one or more playing cards and at least one qualifying final result of one or more playing cards corresponding to said qualifying intermediate holding;
dealing an initial holding of playing cards to said player;
permitting said player to place a mid-game wager if the player possesses at least one qualifying intermediate holding in the player's initial holding of playing cards;

if the player places a mid-game wager, conducting a separate game hand for each qualifying final result corresponding to said qualifying intermediate holdings possessed by said player by holding the playing cards of the corresponding qualifying intermediate holding and replacing cards not held such that the player
5 obtains a final holding for each said game hand;

if said player placed a mid-game wager, rewarding said player based on said mid-game wager for each final holding only if the player's final holding matches a qualifying final result corresponding to the qualifying intermediate holding possessed by the player when said mid-game wager was placed.

10

10. The method of claim 9 wherein said player separately places a mid-game wager for one or more game hands conducted.

11. The method of claim 9 wherein said player places a single mid-game wager
15 and allocates said mid-game wager among one or more game hands conducted.

12. A method of conducting a video draw poker game, comprising:
designating at least one qualifying intermediate holding of one or more playing cards and at least one qualifying final result of one or more playing cards
20 corresponding to said qualifying intermediate holding;

dealing an initial holding of playing cards to said player;

permitting said player to place a mid-game wager if the player possesses at least one qualifying intermediate holding in the player's initial holding of playing cards;

if the player places a mid-game wager, said player selecting at least one qualifying final result corresponding to a qualifying intermediate holding possessed by said player and conducting a separate game hand for each selected qualifying final result by holding the playing cards of the corresponding qualifying intermediate holding and replacing cards not held such that the player obtains a final holding for each said game hand;

if said player placed a mid-game wager, rewarding said player based on said mid-game wager for each final holding only if the player's final holding matches a qualifying final result corresponding to the qualifying intermediate holding possessed by the player when said mid-game wager was placed.

13. The method of claim 12 wherein said player separately places a mid-game wager for one or more game hands conducted.

14. The method of claim 12 wherein said player places a single mid-game wager and allocates said mid-game wager among one or more game hands conducted.

15. A device for conducting a video draw poker game, comprising:
a data processor;
a display communicating with said data processor;
an input device communicating with said data processor;
a bet receiver communicating with said data processor; and
a data storage structure communicating with said data processor, said data storage structure storing electronic representations of playing cards, a schedule of winning poker hands, at least one qualifying intermediate holding, at least one

qualifying final result corresponding to said qualifying intermediate holding, and instructions executable by said data processor to conduct said video draw poker game, comprising:

- 5 in response to said bet receiver receiving a base wager, said data processor randomly selecting an initial holding of playing cards;
- said display displaying said initial holding of playing cards;
- if the player does not possess a qualifying intermediate holding in the player's initial holding of playing cards, receiving input from said player at said input device selecting to hold zero or more playing cards from said
- 10 initial holding and forming a final holding by discarding the playing cards not selected to be held and replacing the discarded playing cards;
- permitting said player to place a mid-game wager at said bet receiver if the player possesses at least one qualifying intermediate holding in the player's initial holding of playing cards;
- 15 if a mid-game wager was received at said bet receiver, said data processor conducting a separate game hand for each qualifying final result corresponding to said qualifying intermediate holdings possessed by said player by holding the playing cards of the corresponding qualifying intermediate holding, discarding the playing cards not held, and replacing the
- 20 discarded playing cards such that the player obtains a final holding for each said game hand;
- said data processor examining the final holding and rewarding the player based on said base wager if the player has a winning poker hand or collecting the player's base wager if the player does not have a winning
- 25 poker hand; and

if a mid-game wager was received at said bet receiver, said data processor rewarding said player based on said mid-game wager only if the player's final holding matches a qualifying final result corresponding to the qualifying intermediate holding possessed by the player when said mid-game
5 wager was placed.

16. The device of claim 15 wherein said player separately places a mid-game wager for one or more game hands conducted.

10 17. The device of claim 15 wherein said player places a single mid-game wager and allocates said mid-game wager among one or more game hands conducted through said input device.

15 18. A device for conducting a video draw poker game, comprising:
a data processor;
a display communicating with said data processor;
an input device communicating with said data processor;
a bet receiver communicating with said data processor; and
a data storage structure communicating with said data processor, said data
20 storage structure storing electronic representations of playing cards, a schedule of winning poker hands, at least one qualifying intermediate holding, at least one qualifying final result corresponding to said qualifying intermediate holding, and instructions executable by said data processor to conduct said video draw poker game, comprising:

in response to said bet receiver receiving a base wager, said data processor randomly selecting an initial holding of playing cards;

said display displaying said initial holding of playing cards;

if the player does not possess a qualifying intermediate holding in the

5 player's initial holding of playing cards, receiving input from said player at said input device selecting to hold zero or more playing cards from said initial holding and forming a final holding by discarding the playing cards not selected to be held and replacing the discarded playing cards;

permitting said player to place a mid-game wager at said bet receiver

10 if the player possesses at least one qualifying intermediate holding in the player's initial holding of playing cards;

if a mid-game wager was received at said bet receiver, receiving input from said player selecting at least one qualifying final result corresponding to a qualifying intermediate holding possessed by said player;

15 if a mid-game wager was received at said bet receiver, said data processor conducting a separate game hand for each selected qualifying final result by holding the playing cards of the corresponding qualifying intermediate holding, discarding the playing cards not held, and replacing the discarded playing cards such that the player obtains a final holding for each

20 said game hand;

said data processor examining the final holding and rewarding the player based on said base wager if the player has a winning poker hand or collecting the player's base wager if the player does not have a winning poker hand; and

if a mid-game wager was received at said bet receiver, said data processor rewarding said player based on said mid-game wager only if the player's final holding matches a qualifying final result corresponding to the qualifying intermediate holding possessed by the player when said mid-game
5 wager was placed.

19. The device of claim 18 wherein said player separately places a mid-game wager for one or more game hands conducted.

10 20. The device of claim 18 wherein said player places a single mid-game wager and allocates said mid-game wager among one or more game hands conducted through said input device.

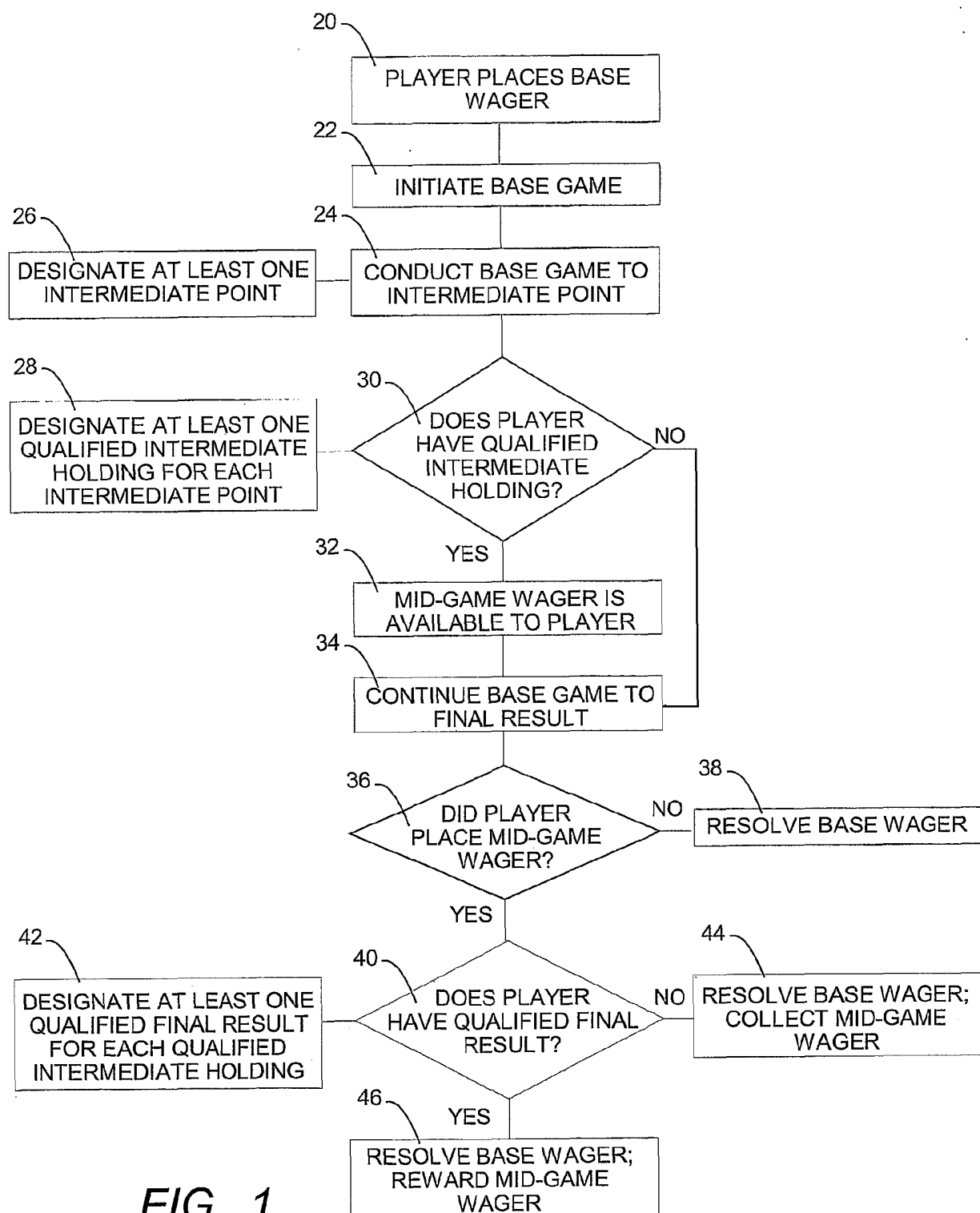
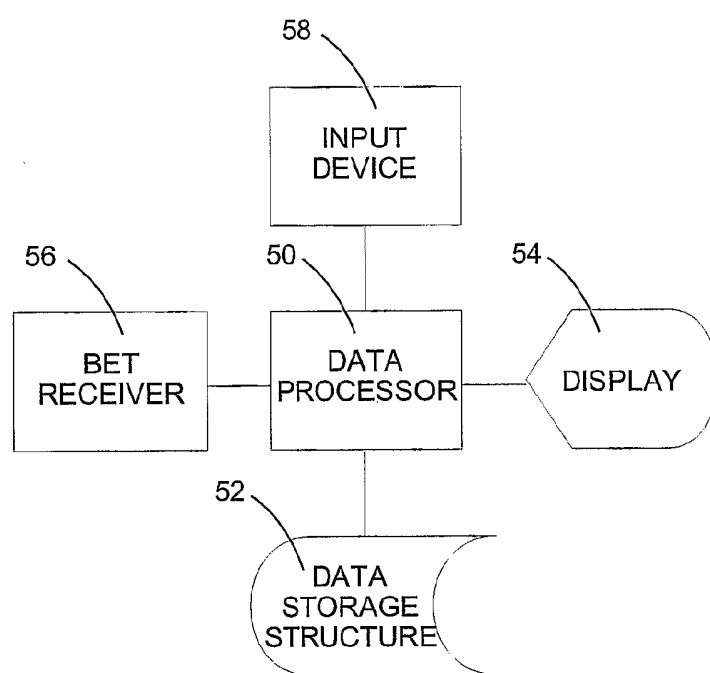


FIG. 1

**FIG. 2**

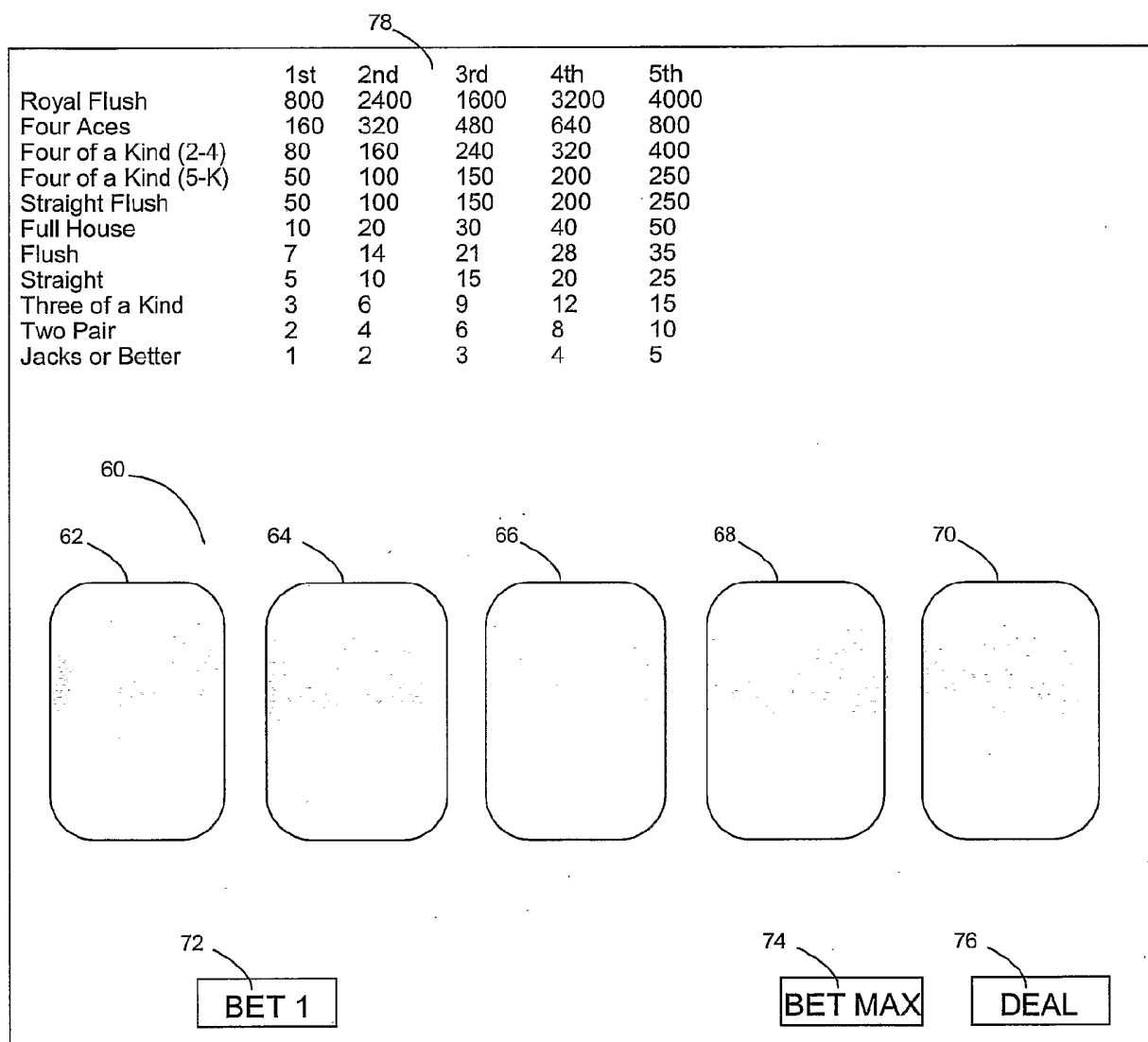


FIG. 3

78

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Royal Flush	800	2400	1600	3200	4000
Four Aces	160	320	480	640	800
Four of a Kind (2-4)	80	160	240	320	400
Four of a Kind (5-K)	50	100	150	200	250
Straight Flush	50	100	150	200	250
Full House	10	20	30	40	50
Flush	7	14	21	28	35
Straight	5	10	15	20	25
Three of a Kind	3	6	9	12	15
Two Pair	2	4	6	8	10
Jacks or Better	1	2	3	4	5

60

62

64

66

68

70

72

BET 1

74

BET MAX

76

DEAL

FIG. 4

78

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Royal Flush	800	2400	1600	3200	4000
Four Aces	160	320	480	640	800
Four of a Kind (2-4)	80	160	240	320	400
Four of a Kind (5-K)	50	100	150	200	250
Straight Flush	50	100	150	200	250
Full House	10	20	30	40	50
Flush	7	14	21	28	35
Straight	5	10	15	20	25
Three of a Kind	3	6	9	12	15
Two Pair	2	4	6	8	10
Jacks or Better	1	2	3	4	5
Mid-Game-Royal Flush	1081	2162	3243	4324	5405

80

60

62

64

66

68

70

K

K

Q

10

K

♥

♣

♥

♥

♦

HOLD

HOLD

HOLD

72

BET 1

74

BET MAX

76

DEAL

FIG. 5

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Royal Flush	800	2400	1600	3200	4000
Four Aces	160	320	480	640	800
Four of a Kind (2-4)	80	160	240	320	400
Four of a Kind (5-K)	50	100	150	200	250
Straight Flush	50	100	150	200	250
Full House	10	20	30	40	50
Flush	7	14	21	28	35
Straight	5	10	15	20	25
Three of a Kind	3	6	9	12	15
Two Pair	2	4	6	8	10
Jacks or Better	1	2	3	4	5
Mid-Game-Royal Flush	1081	2162	3243	4324	5405

60	62	64	66	70
K	J	Q	10	A
♥	♥	♥	♥	♥
HOLD		HOLD	HOLD	
72			74	76
BET 1			BET MAX	DEAL

FIG. 6

78

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Royal Flush	800	2400	1600	3200	4000
Four Aces	160	320	480	640	800
Four of a Kind (2-4)	80	160	240	320	400
Four of a Kind (5-K)	50	100	150	200	250
Straight Flush	50	100	150	200	250
Full House	10	20	30	40	50
Flush	7	14	21	28	35
Straight	5	10	15	20	25
Three of a Kind	3	6	9	12	15
Two Pair	2	4	6	8	10
Jacks or Better	1	2	3	4	5
Mid-Game-Royal Flush	1081	2162	3243	4324	5405

80

60

62

64

66

70

K

Q

Q

10

10

HOLD

HOLD

HOLD

72

BET 1

74

BET MAX

76

DEAL

FIG. 7

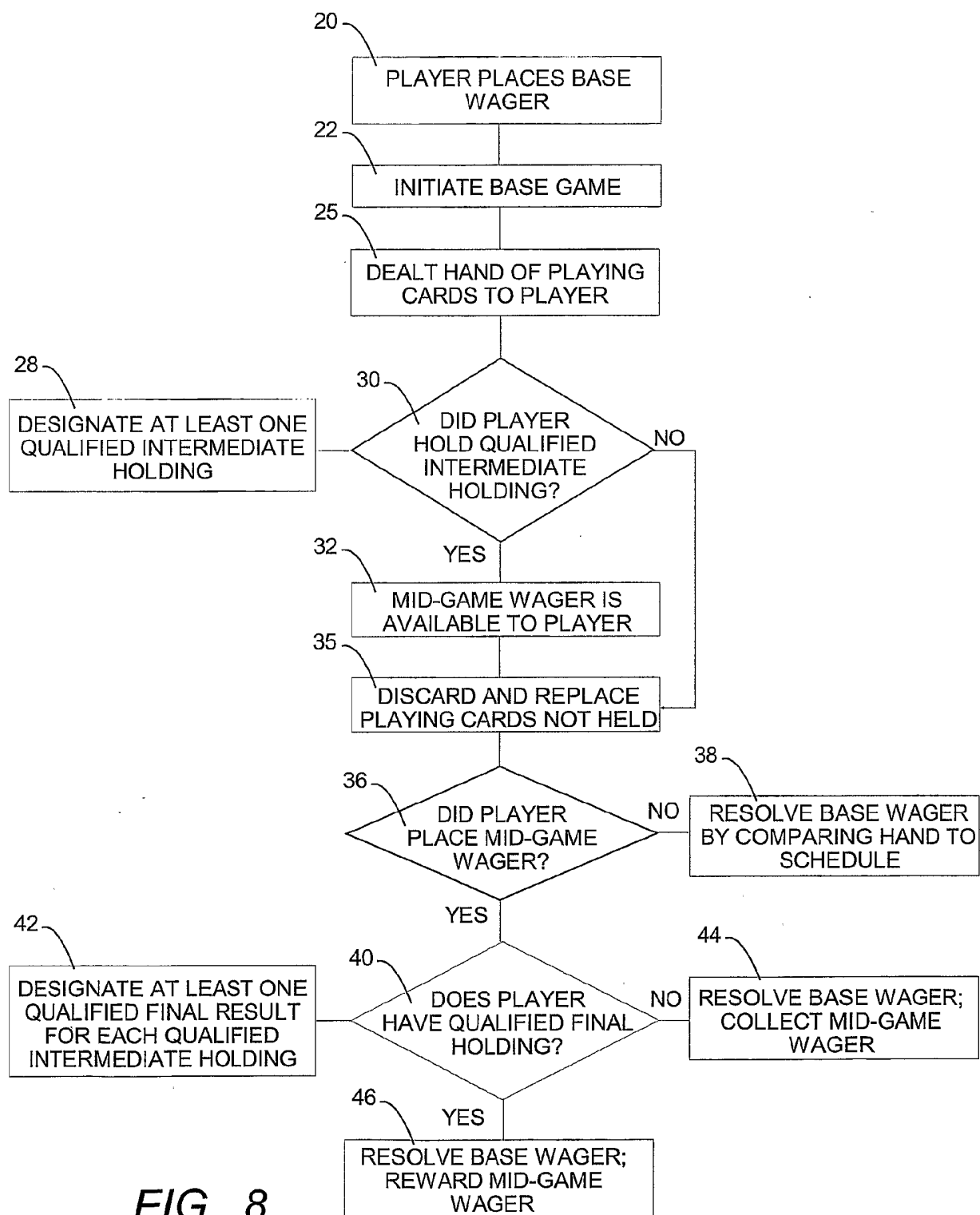


FIG. 8

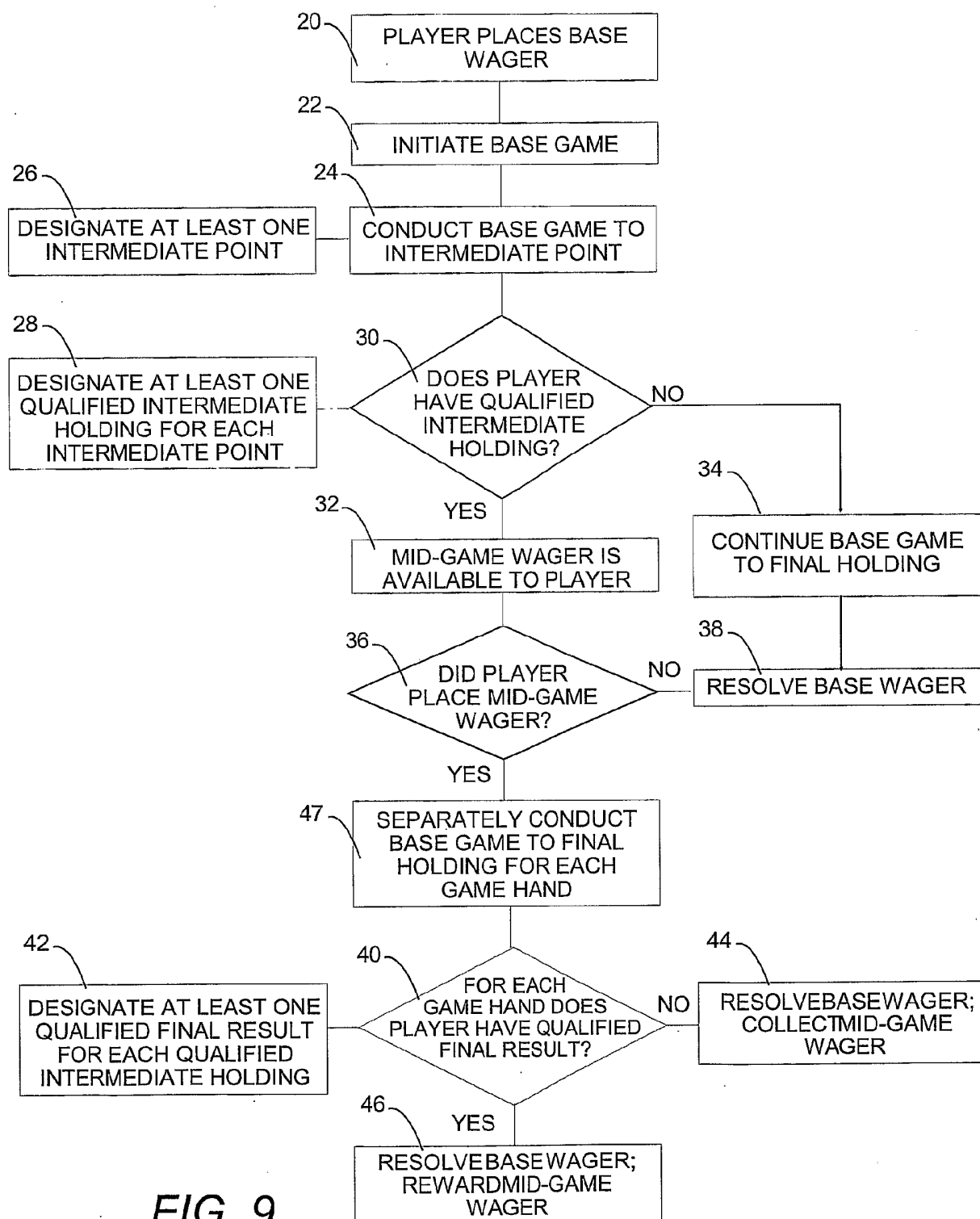


FIG. 9

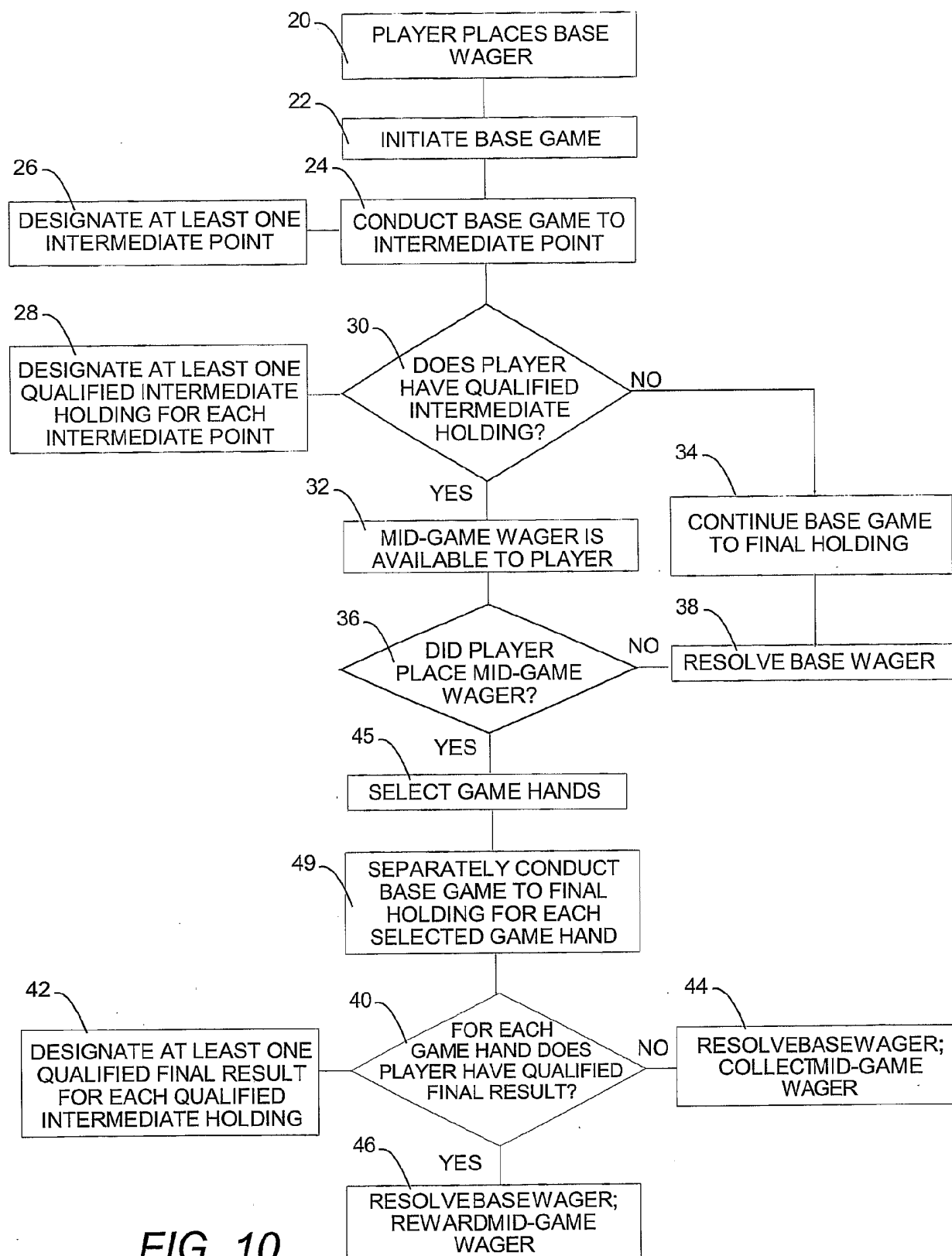


FIG. 10

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Royal Flush	800	2400	1600	3200	4000
Four Aces	160	320	480	640	800
Four of a Kind (2-4)	80	160	240	320	400
Four of a Kind (5-K)	50	100	150	200	250
Straight Flush	50	100	150	200	250
Full House	10	20	30	40	50
Flush	7	14	21	28	35
Straight	5	10	15	20	25
Three of a Kind	3	6	9	12	15
Two Pair	2	4	6	8	10
Jacks or Better	1	2	3	4	5
Mid-Game-Royal Flush	47	94	141	188	235
Mid-Game-Straight Flush	23	46	69	92	115

100	102	104	106	108	110
	9	J	Q	10	A
	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦

112	114	116
BET 1	BET MAX	DEAL

FIG. 11

118

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Royal Flush	800	2400	1600	3200	4000
Four Aces	160	320	480	640	800
Four of a Kind (2-4)	80	160	240	320	400
Four of a Kind (5-K)	50	100	150	200	250
Straight Flush	50	100	150	200	250
Full House	10	20	30	40	50
Flush	7	14	21	28	35
Straight	5	10	15	20	25
Three of a Kind	3	6	9	12	15
Two Pair	2	4	6	8	10
Jacks or Better	1	2	3	4	5
Mid-Game-Royal Flush	47	94	141	188	235
Mid-Game-Straight Flush	23	46	69	92	115

120

130

140

112

BET 1

114

BET MAX

116

DEAL

FIG. 12

118

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Royal Flush	800	2400	1600	3200	4000
Four Aces	160	320	480	640	800
Four of a Kind (2-4)	80	160	240	320	400
Four of a Kind (5-K)	50	100	150	200	250
Straight Flush	50	100	150	200	250
Full House	10	20	30	40	50
Flush	7	14	21	28	35
Straight	5	10	15	20	25
Three of a Kind	3	6	9	12	15
Two Pair	2	4	6	8	10
Jacks or Better	1	2	3	4	5
Mid-Game-Royal Flush	47	94	141	188	235
Mid-Game-Straight Flush	23	46	69	92	115

120

132

142

112

BET 1

114

BET MAX

116

DEAL

FIG. 13