An on-line sports-based lottery which can be played over a wide area, designed to enhance consumer familiarity with icons and details relating to a sport. The invention would thus attract individuals who had previously expressed no interest in the sport, thereby increasing audience size and awareness of the sport. The game comprising two stages: a lottery draw, in which a predetermined number of registered participants are drawn at random; and a winning stage in which an icon relating to a particular sport is assigned to each draw winner. The game is played in association with the dissemination of information, including icons and any other desired sports details or statistics, relating to the sport on which the lottery is based. The association of icons with the lottery provides incentive to members of the general public who enjoy playing lotteries to become familiar with the sport.
FIGURE 1

DRAW STAGE

Receive Participant Registration Information

Close Entries For Next Race

Conduct Random Lottery

WINNING STAGE

Assign Icons To Draw Winners

Notify Draw Winners of Icon Assignments

Award Prizes Based on Achievement of Assigned Icon
SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR SPORTS-BASED LOTTERY GAME

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] This invention relates to a game in the nature of a lottery. In particular, this invention relates to a sports-based lottery game, which enhances audience exposure to a sport.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Many sports suffer from having a low profile, or appealing only to a select audience. Often this is merely the result of lack of awareness and knowledgeability on the part of the general public. Familiarity with a sport, including its rules, and its icons such as players and venues, and other details and features, enhances audience awareness and thus increases audience interest in the sport.

[0003] The relatively low profile of some sports is often due to a lack of effective marketing, which results in poor exposure and thus low audience interest. This becomes a vicious cycle: with a low audience interest, it is difficult for the sport to attract sponsors willing to expend significant amounts of money promoting the sport (along with their product or service); yet without proper funding, the sport is unable to develop and improve audience interest to the point where a sponsor would be interested in promoting the sport. Accordingly many sports, which might otherwise attract significant interest from the general public, are constrained to suffer continuously from a low profile and poor exposure.

[0004] Horse racing, for example, is ignored by a large segment of the general public. Although avidly followed by racing fans, others who are unfamiliar with the names of icons in the sport such as jockeys, horses, riding venues and industry moguls, and other features and details of the sport, remain largely disinterested and have no incentive to gain familiarity with the sport. Despite that this information is readily available and widely publicized, without any motivation or incentive to familiarize themselves with icons and other details relating to the sport, most members of the general public will remain disinterested.

[0005] If horse racing as a sport were able to attract a larger audience, it would be in turn able to attract better sponsors and more funding, which would enable the sport to quickly increase its exposure and consumer awareness. This positive cycle can develop substantial popularity in an otherwise obscure sport in a relatively short time.

[0006] It would accordingly be advantageous to provide an incentive for members of the general public who had previously failed to show any interest in a sport, to familiarize themselves with icons and other details and features relating to the sport, and thus to potentially develop a continuing interest in the sport. This would benefit the sport, by increasing the size of its audience and thereby rendering sponsorship more appealing to funding organizations, and individuals, whose interests are broadened by their participation (as spectators) in a new sport.

[0007] Lotteries, in which participants are offered an opportunity to win something of value on a purely chance basis, have become very popular and appeal to a wide segment of the general population. Technology has been developed for offering and playing lotteries over a wide area, for example over a global computer network such as the Internet.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0008] It would accordingly be advantageous to take advantage of the popularity of lotteries by associating them with icons and other details and features relating to individual sports, such as horse racing, motor racing, golf and tennis, and team sports such as Soccer, Cricket, Baseball and Football, to thereby increase the popularity of those sports.

[0009] The present invention provides an on-line lottery which can be played over a wide area, for example over a global computer network such as the Internet, which is designed to enhance consumer familiarity with the icons and other details (for example statistics) and features relating to a sport. Through the invention, individuals would be attracted from a segment of the general population that had previously expressed no interest in the sport, which would increase audience size and awareness of the sport. The invention can be implemented in connection with any sport (team or individual) and be directed to any target audience, and provides incentive for members of the target audience to familiarize themselves with icons and details relating to the sport and thus increase the popularity of the sport in general.

[0010] The invention accomplishes this by providing an on-line lottery game comprising two stages. In the first stage, or “draw” stage, participants log on to an online site on a computer network, for example a web site on the Internet, and register for a lottery draw. Registration gives the participant an opportunity to be a winner in the draw. A predetermined number of draw winners are then drawn at random. In the second stage of the game, or “winner” stage, an icon relating to a particular sport is assigned to each draw winner. For example, if the lottery is operated in association with the sport of horse racing, each draw winner could be assigned to a specific jockey or a horse. The icon may be assigned by the lottery administrator, or each draw winner may be given the opportunity to select an icon, given priority for example based on the order in which the draw winners are drawn. A draw winner would then win a prize each time the icon (jockey or horse in this example) wins a race. Optionally a consolation prize may be provided to draw winners who do not win a prize and a further draw opportunity provided for all other entrants who have not originally been drawn.

[0011] The lottery is played regularly, in association with the dissemination of information, including icons and any other desired sports details or features, relating to the sport on which the lottery is based. The ability to play the lottery so simply and potentially win a prize provides incentive to members of the general public who enjoy playing lotteries, but have never expressed an interest in the sport on which the lottery is based, to become familiar with some of the icons and other details associated with the sport. The increased familiarity with these details, facts and features of the sport increases the likelihood that a participant will be drawn to the sport and increase the size of the audience. Accordingly, in the preferred embodiment, participation in the lottery is free of charge, and prizes are funded by the lottery administrator and/or sponsors and advertisers (that may, for example, be associated with or compensated by an administrative body governing the sport), in order to maximize participation in the lottery.

[0012] In the preferred embodiment, information relating to icons and other details and features of the sport is
disseminated to lottery participants through the same site at which participants register for the lottery draw, for example at a web site accessed through the participant’s browser. In an alternative embodiment, information can also be disseminated in any other fashion, including in printed publications circulated generally or specifically to registered participants.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0013] In drawings which illustrate by way of example only a preferred embodiment of the invention,

[0014] FIG. 1 is a schematic flow diagram showing the steps in a preferred embodiment of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0015] The invention will be described in relation to the sport of horse racing. However, the invention is not intended to be limited thereby. It will be appreciated that the invention is equally applicable to other sports (individual or team), by associating draw winners with icons relating to each particular sport, which would benefit in the same fashion as the sport of horse racing.

[0016] The invention, shown in FIG. 1, relates to a system and method for conducting an on-line lottery which can be played over a wide area, for example over a global computer network such as the Internet. In the preferred embodiment, the system and method of the invention comprises two stages.

[0017] In the first or “draw” stage participants log on to an online site, for example a web site posted by the lottery administrator. The web site comprises instructions for participants and an interface into which participants can enter identifying information in order to register for the lottery draw. In the preferred embodiment the lottery draw is free to participants, who need only register and provide an email address for notifications (preferably with an agreement to accept email promotions relating to the sport), and optionally a postal code or zip code which allows the administrator to verify the geographic location of the participant. Participants logging in for the first time must enter any mandatory membership information required by the administrator, and can also supply a pseudonym which will thereafter serve as a member name which can be used in subsequent lottery draws, allowing the participant to retain anonymity if desired.

[0018] The administrator’s web site preferably also provides information, including icons and any other desired sports details or statistics, relating to the sport on which the lottery is based, in this example horse racing. Thus, in the preferred embodiment the web site serves not only as a user interface for the lottery game, but also as an information dissemination vehicle for imparting icon and other sports-based feature information to the registered participants.

[0019] Entry times may be restricted or unlimited, but with a cut-off time prior to the next upcoming event for which each draw is intended. In the case of a horse race, for example, the administrator may specify a cut-off time of 12:00 p.m. local time on the day of the races. Participants logging in after the assigned cut-off time would then be automatically entered into the next following draw. One registration per registered e-mail address per draw per day only gives the participant an opportunity to be a draw winner; prizes are awarded only in the second stage of the lottery game.

[0020] After the assigned cut-off time, a predetermined number of draw winners are drawn at random from the pool of registered participants. This may be done by computer, manually, by machine, or in any other desired manner, and commences the second or “winning” stage of the game, in which an icon relating to the featured sport is assigned to each draw winner.

[0021] For example, in the example in which the lottery is operated in association with the sport of horse racing, each draw winner might be assigned to a specific jockey or a horse. The assignment of an icon such as a jockey may be particularly beneficial in the case of horse racing, since the reputation of a popular horse is often short lived whereas the fame of a popular jockey can persist for many years. However, which particular type of icon is chosen as suitable for a particular sport is a matter of choice which may be best made by those knowledgeable in the sport, but the types of icons which can be selected is very broad and will vary from sport to sport.

[0022] The icon may be assigned by the lottery administrator, in which case the draw winners are notified of their respective icon assignments after the draw, but before the game in the sport on which the lottery is based and played; or each draw winner may be given the opportunity to select their own icon. In either case, the icons may for example be assigned or selected in priority based on the order in which the draw winners are drawn during the first stage of the game. In the second stage of the game, a draw winner wins a prize each time the icon achieves a success; for example, each time the jockey wins a race.

[0023] The linking or association of draw winners with icons related to the sport is designed to enhance consumer familiarity with the icons and other details (venues, statistics etc.) relating to the sport, by giving otherwise disinterested or indifferent consumers an opportunity to win a prize based on the performance of an icon in which they now have a stake. The invention would thus increase audience size and awareness of the sport, and interest in the sport in general.

[0024] Many variations from the basic game are available. For example, optionally a consolation prize or further draw opportunity may be provided to draw winners who do not win a prize. Information relating to icons, statistics and other details and features of the sport may be disseminated to participants through any media channel, and multiple media channels. This allows the information dissemination aspect of the invention to be most beneficially deployed through channels most appropriate for the particular sport concerned. For example, in the sport of horse racing printed periodicals, and particularly daily newspapers, are a preferred information dissemination medium, given the frequency with which and the number of local venues at which horse racing takes place. In other sports television, radio, internet and/or other media channels may be most appropriate. The ability to disseminate information through any available means offers an opportunity to provide a multi-media presence which affords saturation exposure via newspapers, radio, television, and other media channels, in addition to the Internet.

[0025] The sports based lottery according to the invention is easy to play, and the results of the post-draw portion of the
In the operation of the example relating to the sport of horse racing, during the actual draw ten registered participants can be drawn at random, if desired, by computer, for each featured racetrack. Each local racetrack may then be matched to local participants using the postal code or zip code information provided by each participant upon registration. The ten draw winners are assigned the designated icons (for example jockeys or horses, or a combination of the two), either in a particular order or at random. For example, the first participant drawn can be assigned the leading jockey at racetrack A, the second participant drawn getting the second leading jockey at racetrack A, etc. The tenth person can be awarded a “joker” which represents all other jockeys riding at that racetrack on that date. Alternatively, the icons may be selected by the winners, either in a particular order or at random.

A prize can then be awarded to the participant associated with each icon which achieves a success of some kind, for example each jockey that wins a race, either once or every time the jockey wins a race. Lesser prizes can be awarded for place and show, etc. The number of possible permutations is essentially unlimited.

Various embodiments of the present invention having been thus described in detail by way of example, it will be apparent to those skilled in the art that variations and modifications may be made without departing from the invention. The invention includes all such variations and modifications as fall within the scope of the appended claims.

We claim:
1. A method of conducting a sports-based lottery draw, comprising the steps of:
a) providing an on-line site for the receipt of registration information from participants;
b) in a first stage of the game, selecting at random a plurality of participants from the registered participants;
c) in a second stage of the game, assigning to each selected participant, an icon associated with a sport;
d) notifying the selected participants of their respective icon assignments; and
e) awarding a prize to each participant whose assigned icon is associated with one or more achievements in the course of a game played in the sport following the selection of participants.

2. The lottery of claim 1 including the step of disseminating information relating to the sport to registered participants.

3. A system for conducting a sports-based lottery draw, comprising:
   means for providing an on-line site for the receipt of registration information from participants;
   means for selecting at random a plurality of participants from the registered participants, in a first stage of the game;
   means for assigning to each selected participant an icon associated with a sport, in a second stage of the game; and
   means for notifying the selected participants of their respective icon assignments;

   whereby a prize is awarded to each participant whose assigned icon is associated with one or more achievements in the course of a game played in the sport following the selection of participants.

4. The system of claim 3 including the means for disseminating information relating to the sport to registered participants.