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(54) **SIDE BETS IN CASINO WAGERING "WAR" GAME**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

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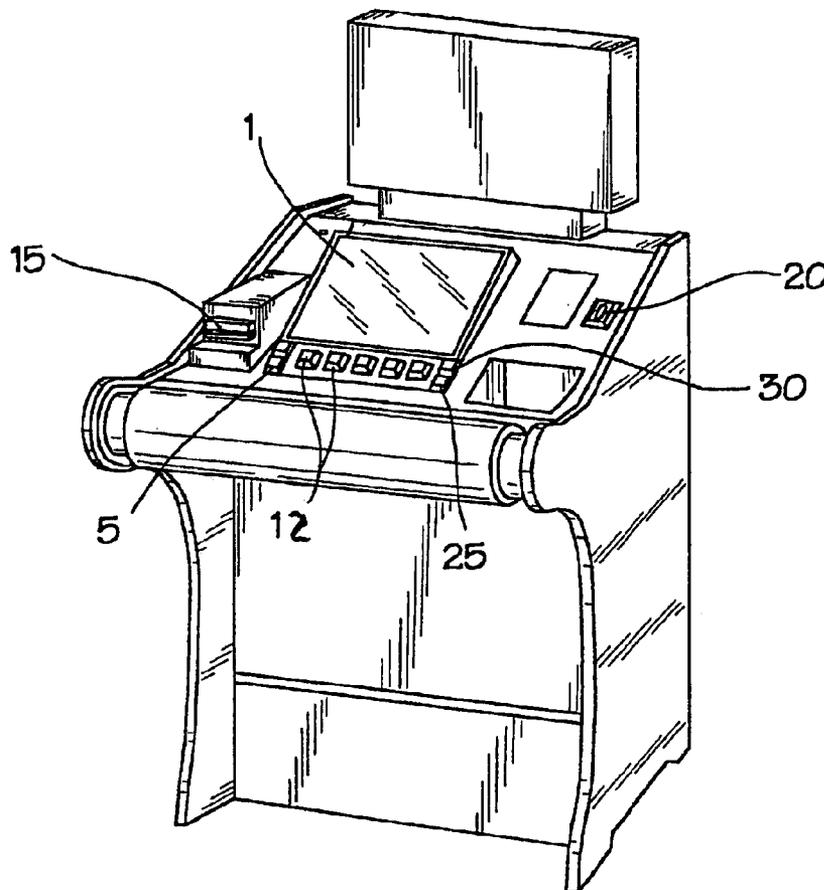
A casino game is played with playing cards in a live or electronic virtual format. A player places at least an ante wager. The ante wager for each player is resolved on the basis of the relative rank of a first playing card dealt to the player and a first playing card dealt to the dealer. The player wins on the ante wager if the player's first card relative rank is higher than the dealer's first card rank, the player loses the ante wager if the player's first card relative rank is lower than the dealer's first card rank, and the player enters a tie hand competition event if the player's first card rank and the dealer's first card rank are the same. The player has the ability to place at least one side bet wager before seeing both the dealer's first card and the player's first card on an event in which: a) the total point count for the player's first card and the dealer's first card are within a player selected range of at least three total point count ranges from which the player may select; and b) that the point spread between the dealer's first card and the player's first card will exceed a minimum difference.

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Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation-in-part of application No. 10/764,827, filed on Jan. 26, 2004, which is a continuation-in-part of application No. 10/624,994, filed on Jul. 22, 2003, now abandoned, which is a continuation-in-part of application No. 10/624,995, filed on Jul. 22, 2003.



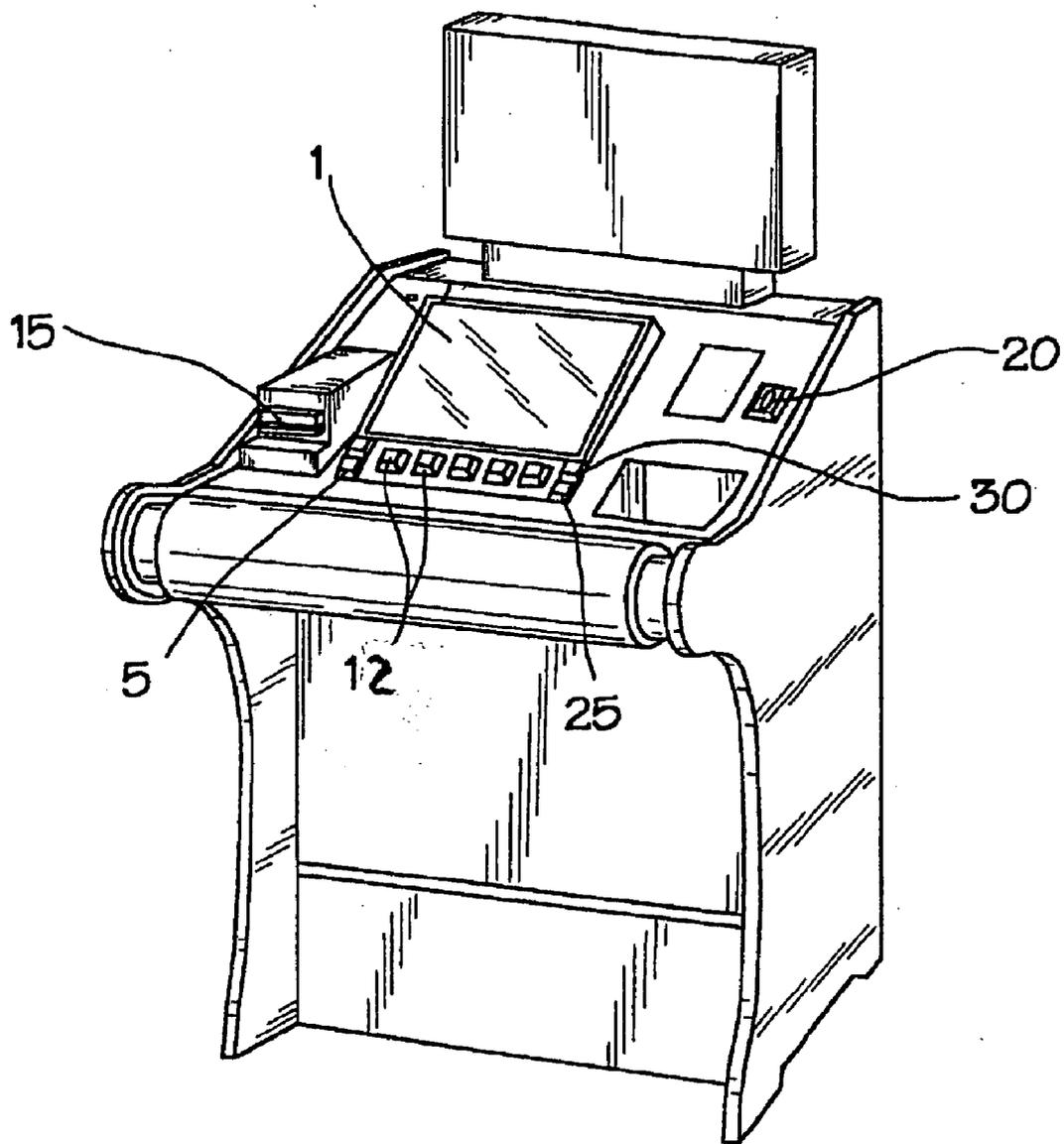


Fig. 1

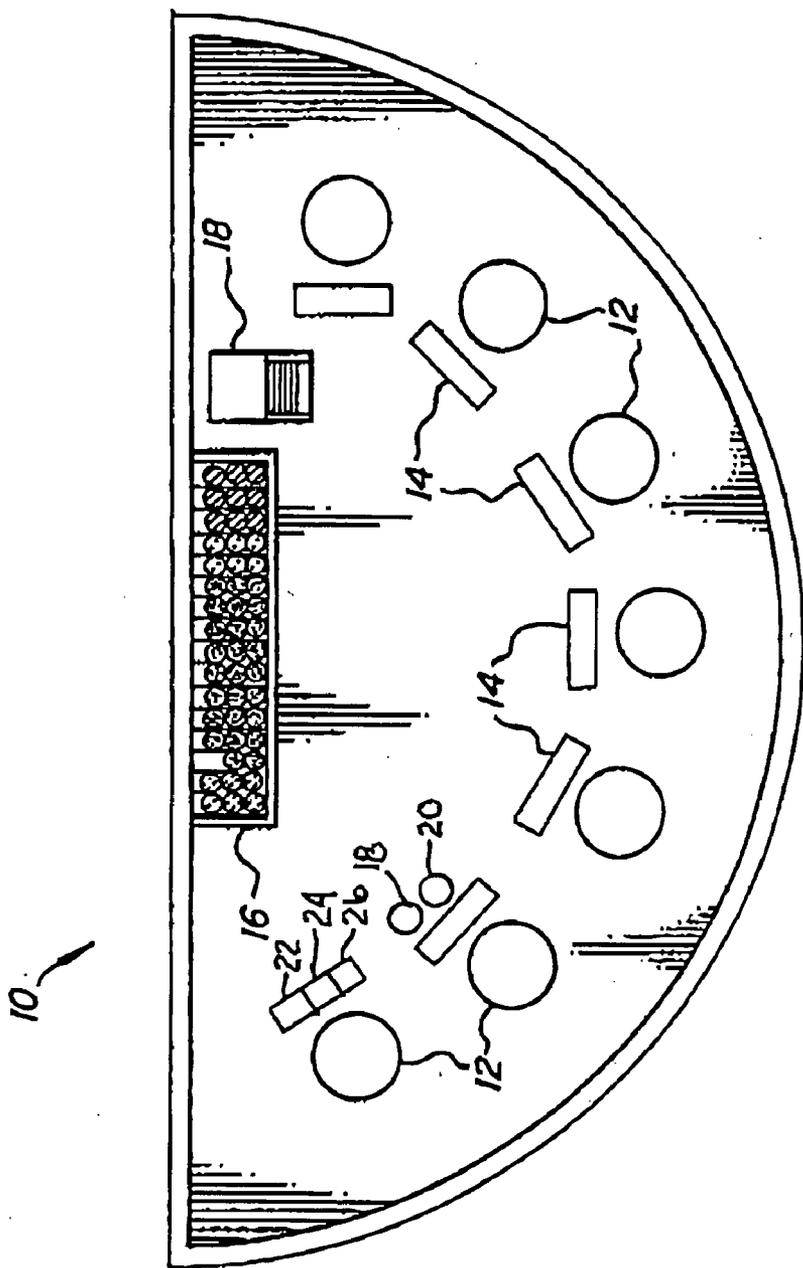


Fig. 2

SIDE BETS IN CASINO WAGERING "WAR" GAME

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

RELATED APPLICATIONS DATA

[0001] This application is a Continuation-In-Part of U.S. patent application Ser. Nos. 10/764,827; 10/624,994; and 10/624,995, all filed on Jan. 26, 2004.

BACKGROUND OF THE ART

[0002] 1. Field of the Invention

[0003] The present invention relates generally to a wagering card game and more particularly to a wagering "war" type game in which ties are possible and the ties result in further wagering. The present invention also relates to video gaming systems that support play of the wagering card game.

[0004] 2. Background of the Art

[0005] The card game "war" is a well known parlor game. Players divide a standard deck of cards in two and play head-to-head, one card at a time; until the players run out of cards. This form of the game is not suitable as a casino game since the outcome is generally not determined until completion of a set of cards or until one competitor has possession of all the cards. Further, the game is not suited for use as a casino type game which requires a house advantage and which also generally requires fast-paced action and frequent betting.

[0006] U.S. Pat. No. 5,324,041 (Boylan) describes a casino variant of the game of war in which there are defined rules of play, including at least a method of playing a wagering game between a player or a group of respective players and a dealer. The outcome of the game is determined by randomly generated playing cards having various values. The game begins by providing a set of playing cards. Each player makes an ante bet. The player(s) and the dealer are each dealt one card successively from the set of the playing cards. The player cards and dealer cards are compared individually to determine whether the card of the dealer has a greater rank, a lesser rank or an equal rank to that of the or each player. The antes are paid off to each player if the value of the player card is greater than the value of the card of the dealer, or (b) the dealer if the value of the card of the dealer is greater than or equal to the value of the card of the or each player. If the value of the card of the dealer equals that of any player, and a "war" is played, there may be wagering of a war bet by the tied player. The war game proceeds by dealing successively from the stack at least one further card only to tied player(s) and to the dealer. The last cards are compared to determine whether the further card of the dealer has a greater value, a lesser value or an equal value to the further card of the or each tied player. The war is resolved by paying off of the war bet to (a) the or each tied player if the value of the further card of the tied player is greater than the value of the card of the dealer, or (b) the dealer if the value of the card of the dealer is greater than the value of the card of the or each tied player. Boylan also teaches a side bet wager on the occurrence of a tie, much like the tie bet wager in the game of Baccarat.

[0007] In many non-war games, alternative side bet events are known. U.S. Pat. No. 5,895,047 teaches a game with a range of value bet. Wagering in non-war games on a range of point values is also taught in U.S. Pat. No. 6,644,666.

[0008] In accordance with the present technology and game rules described herein, a method of playing a wagering game based broadly on the "war" card game is provided. The game is efficiently provided on a stand-alone video gaming format, multi-player bank of terminals, on the internet in a live game format and in other electronic formats. The wagering game is played between a player or a group of respective players and a dealer, with the outcome determined by randomly generated playing cards having various values (i.e., a standard deck or a plurality of decks of playing cards with ranks of 2 through Ace). In the method, an ante bet is first made by each of one or more players and a card is then dealt to each individual player and to the dealer by the dealer (or by an electronic virtual card system making random selections from a virtual deck of cards). It is then determined whether the card of the dealer has a greater value (rank), a lesser value (rank) or an equal value (rank) to that of each player. The ante bet is then immediately paid off to (a) each player if the value (rank) of the card of the player is greater than the value (rank) of the card of the dealer, or (b) the dealer if the value (rank) of the card of the dealer is greater than or equal to the value (rank) of the card of each player. Additional side bets are provided, and additional tie events games are provided that may allow for additional wagers.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a typical video gaming system that can support play of the novel game disclosed herein.

[0010] FIG. 2 is a schematic representation of a betting display surface for a live or simulated live wagering game according to the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0011] With reference now to the drawings in which like numerals represent like elements, the wagering game of the present invention is preferably played on the video gaming terminal of FIG. 1 or the casino type display table layout 10 as depicted in FIG. 2. However, while the present invention is explained in the context of a casino game hereinbelow, it will be appreciated that the wagering game is adaptable for home use, as an electronic game or in a multiplayer casino wagering format using the principles discussed. It will also be appreciated that although the wagering game is designed to have the highest rank card designated the winner, it could instead be the lowest card or there could be other means of designating the winning card besides rank.

[0012] FIG. 1 illustrates the front of a traditional video poker machine, including a screen display 1, draw/deal button 5, side bet buttons, surrender buttons, and other event specific buttons 12, credit card or ticket or player card reader 15, coin slot 20, bet maximum coins button 25 and bet one coin button 30. In addition to the external features illustrated in FIG. 1, the present invention requires a processor (not shown) with game logic, game rules, random number generator, and where there is external monitoring, and external I/O port as to a central processor or financial data bank or comping system for players. Although a touch screen is the

preferred means of selection for player data and game input, other means, including selection buttons, joy sticks, mouse, and he like may be used.

[0013] The table top layout display **10** of FIG. **2** includes, for each of a plurality of players (in this case 7), an area **12** for placing an ante bet and an area **14** for placing of a tie bet. The dealer is located adjacent a settling means or bank **16**, with a shoe **18** containing a plurality of decks (such as eight) of regular playing cards located adjacent thereto. Of course, special cards or a different mechanism for displaying regular cards (such as electronic) could be used if desired. A similar player position could be virtually displayed on a touch screen in the terminal system of FIG. **1**, and the player enters amounts and positions of wagers and selections by contacting appropriate regions on the screen.

[0014] To play a round of the wagering game, each player initially makes an ante bet by placing a suitable token (chip, money, etc.) or tokens on area **12**. Obviously, each player participating must place some ante bet, with a minimum (and possible maximum) ante bet or set ante bet typically designated. At the same time, or alternatively, each player may also choose to place a tie bet on area **14**, also as designated in the Figure. Additional side bet wagering areas **18**, **20** are shown, for convenience, at only one players area. An alternative format for placing the available side bets is shown as areas **22**, **24**, **26**, again at a single player position for convenience in presenting the figure.

[0015] After all (mandatory) ante bets and (optional) tie bets or other side bets are placed by the players, the dealer then deals one card, face up, to each of the players as well as a face up card to himself. Taking each player in turn, the dealer then determines whether the numerical rank of the card of the player is greater than, less than, or equal to the rank of the dealer's card. If the rank of the card of the player is less than or equal to that of the dealer, the player loses the ante bet which is immediately collected from area **12** by the dealer. In other words, all ties are won by the house. On the other hand, if the rank of the card of the player is greater than that of the dealer, the player wins and the dealer immediately pays the player an amount which in this embodiment is equal to the ante bet of that player. In other embodiments, greater than or less than a 1:1 payout is made. Using eight decks in shoe **18**, it will be appreciated that the dealer hold percentage on ante bets (the amount the dealer will be expected to win in view of the odds being in his favor, due to the dealer winning all ties) will be about 7.47%.

[0016] Additionally, if the value of the card of the dealer equals that of any player, or as an option after the ante wager is lost, the tied player then (optionally) may wager a further "war" bet that is followed by the dealing of at least one further card to the tied player making the additional or further bet and at least one further card to the dealer. Then, as before with the originally dealt card, it is determined whether the further card of the dealer has a greater value (rank), a lesser value (rank) or an equal value (rank) to the further card of each tied player making a further wager. Depending on this relative rank determination, the further bet is paid off to (a) the tied player if the value (rank) of the further card of the tied player is greater than the value (rank) of the card of the dealer, or (b) the dealer if the value (rank) of the card of the dealer is greater than the value (rank) of the card of the tied player who has made the further wager.

[0017] The paying off of the further bet (after the tie or war event) also preferably includes one of the following steps, depending on the method of play desired for the wagering game where the rank of the further card of the player is equal in rank to that of the dealer further card. In one embodiment, there is the further step of dealing additional further cards to each tied player who has made the further wager and dealer until one or the other has a card of greater rank than the other in a deal and therefore wins the further bet. In a second embodiment, favoring the player, there is the step of paying off of the further bet to each tied player so that each tied player therefore wins the further bet when the further cards tie. As a third embodiment, favoring the dealer, there is the step of paying off of the further bet to the dealer so that the dealer therefore wins the further bet when the further cards tie.

[0018] In one embodiment of playing the wagering game of the present disclosure, the wagering of the further bet step includes the step of accepting only further wagers of equal or lesser value than the ante wager of the particular player. With such a step, the paying off of the ante bet to the player step preferably includes the step of paying back to the player an amount equal to the ante bet of that player and the paying back to the player a payoff of at least 1.5:1 of any further bet which is won by the player.

[0019] To provide for further betting, the method of the present game may also include the step of wagering a tie bet by the player at the same time that the ante bet is wagered. Then, after the first determining step, the tie bet is paid off to the player if the rank of the card of the dealer is equal to the rank of the card of the player making the tie bet. Preferably, the paying off of the tie bet includes the step of paying back to the player a payoff of at least 8:1 of the tie bet.

[0020] To add more suspense to the game, the dealing of at least one further card step includes the step of dealing at least one burn or face down card before dealing the further card to each player and the dealer. In addition, the dealing of at least one further card step includes the step of selecting the number of burn cards to deal by use of a chance generating mechanism, such as the randomly displayed numbers generated for Pai Gow poker by an automated system disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 5,275,411 (Breeding). That format can be used, with fewer numbers than 7 numbers preferred, such as 0, 1, 2, 3 or 4) to indicate how many cards will be burned before dealing the at least one further card to the player and/or the at least one further card to the dealer.

[0021] If desired, the wagering game could also include the step of wagering an association bet (either a mandatory or optional bet) by any player at the same time that the ante bet is wagered. Then, after the first determining step, there would be a step of paying off of the association bet to the player if there is a predetermined association between the card of the dealer and the card of the player making the association bet, such as the same suit, the same rank, a straight, a pair, a 2-card 20 or 21 or a straight flush. It is an aspect of the present game to provide additional opportunities for new wagers in addition to those found in the existing Casino War® games.

[0022] In addition, as the dealer determines whether the player wins or loses the ante bet, the dealer also determines

if the player made a tie bet. If a tie bet was made and the rank of the card of the player and dealer are equal (note that the player loses the ante bet as described above), the player wins the tie bet and the dealer immediately pays off the tie bet. The payoff of the tie bet is preferably set at a relatively high amount in view of the low odds of winning such a bet by the player, with a minimum of about 8:1 and preferably about 10:1 used in accordance with the present invention. With odds of 10:1, the dealer hold percentage on tie bets would be about 17.83%, as ties would only occur about 7.47% of the time.

[0023] When a tie does occur, and after all of the ante bets and tie bets are paid off, the dealer will then also offer the tying player(s) the option of making a further bet in area **12** (now cleared). This offer of a further bet is made regardless of whether a tie bet was made by the tying player. The further bet is limited to an amount equal to or less than the ante bet, and has a payoff at least equal to about 1.5:1. It will be appreciated that any payoff greater than 1:1 (or 1:0747:1 if ties go to the dealer) on the further bet will mean that the odds are in the favor of the player. Thus, a payoff of at least 1.5:1 significantly encourages the players to make further bets and stimulates interest in the game.

[0024] The player may be prompted to make a selection between SURRENDER and WAR, adding wagered amounts, if desired, on the second event. The system may default to a continued bet on the amount originally wagered after the time period has elapsed, or default to a SURRENDER or WAR at a fixed additional amount (an increase of one more of the initial wager or more) and the game automatically continues. The amount of time for wagering may be set by the house, or the player may have control within limits (e.g., 5 to 20 seconds) for setting the time between events. Less time is likely too short a time period and longer times decrease house revenues.

[0025] To determine the winner of the further bet, the dealer then deals an additional face up card to each player making such a further bet and to himself. As is traditional with the "war" game, the face up card can be dealt after first "burning" or dealing three (or some other predetermined number) face down cards. After dealing the further cards, the dealer then determines whether the further card of each player has a rank greater than, less than, or equal to that of the dealer. If the rank of the further card of the player is less than that of the dealer, the player loses and the dealer collects the further bet from area **12**. On the other hand, if the rank of the card of the player is greater than that of the dealer, the player wins and the dealer immediately pays the player an amount which in this embodiment is equal to at least 1.5 times the further bet of that player.

[0026] It will be appreciated that it is also possible for the further cards of the player and the dealer to be tied. In such situations, three choices are possible and the one chosen will depend on how the dealer (or casino owner) wants to have the method of the game proceed. If it is desired to speed up play, the tie of the further cards can be designated as a win to the player (to increase the odds for the player winning a further bet), or to the dealer (to lower the odds for the player winning the further bet, but with the overall odds still much in the player's favor). As a third option, another round of further cards could be dealt and the winner determined by that round, or succeeding rounds (in case of further ties)

until either the player or dealer is a winner. While accommodations could be made for receiving further bets after a tie on a first further bet, this would probably complicate the game to a greater degree than desired and also slow up play that would not be desired. Therefore, the preferred embodiment of the wagering game of the present invention would provide for only one further bet. After more than one tie, the player may elect to surrender his cards and withdraw an amount of his wager that is less than the entire wager. Ordinarily, a surrender bet in blackjack must always be exactly one-half the total wager originally placed, but the mathematics are different in Casino War® games. It would be advantageous to the house to allow the player to surrender and forfeit less than half, but at least some of the original ante wager or the total wager can be made at that point, such as 51%-99% of those wagers. Most likely, the player may be allowed to withdraw percentages in steps of 5% such as 95%, 90%, 85%, 80%, 75%, 70%, 65%, 60% 55% or 50% of the wager, leaving the remainder for the house to collect. This surrender, or any surrender wager, must be made before the dealer's card and/or the player's card is exposed.

[0027] As the odds are in the favor of the player when a further bet is made (due to the increased payoff), this will lower the overall dealer hold percentage. However, as the opportunity for further bets will be available only infrequently (i.e., about 7.47% of the time) and even though such further bets will almost always be made when the opportunity presents itself (in view of the odds being in favor of the player for that wager), there is only a relatively small reduction in the overall dealer hold percentage for the dealer. For example, in the situation where the further bet payoff is 2:1 and the dealer wins and/or ties on the further bet, the player hold percentage for the further bet itself is about 38.9%. However, as this occurs only infrequently, the overall dealer hold percentage is only reduced by about 2.9% (i.e., 38.9% times 7.47%). Therefore, using the dealer hold percentage of 7.47% mentioned above, there is obviously still a definite advantage of about 4.6% to the dealer.

[0028] Depending on the desires of the dealer, or if used in a casino the casino owner (or gaming commission which controls the overall hold percentage of the casino), the odds can be adjusted as desired. For example, while the minimum payoffs for the tie wager have been suggested as 8:1, and preferably 10:1, this payoff could be made as high as desired (even positive for the player, such as 15:1). Similarly, the payoffs for the further bets could be some other ratio, besides the 1.5:1 or 2:1 mentioned, such as or 2.5:1. The only limiting factor would have to be that the payoffs for all bets remains in the favor of the dealer or house (assuming that having an overall winning amount is desired).

[0029] While the determination of the number of face down cards dealt for each further bet can be predetermined, it would also be possible for the number to be determined each time a further bet (or round of further bets) is made. For example, some suitable chance generating mechanism such as a six-faced die could be used to chose between zero to five face down cards or between one to three (with each number appearing on two faces). If desired, there could even be a separately colored die for the tied player or players each round and one for the dealer so that the number of face down cards of the players could be different from those of the dealer. In such a situation, the first tied player would throw both dies to determine the number of face down cards for the

player(s) and the dealer. Such a chance generating mechanism also adds an additional security feature into the play of the game which may be important for casino operators.

[0030] In addition to the bets noted above, it would also be possible to provide additional no-rank cards to the shoe so that a separate wager could also be made on whether a (or two) no-rank card would be dealt (to a player, to any player, to the dealer, or to any participant). Such a wagering method is disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 5,098,107, which is hereby incorporated by reference. This patent also discloses the use of an association wager that could be used with the present game where the bet would be that there would be some predetermined association of the cards between the player and the dealer. For example, that the cards would be of the same suit or in order. Similarly, the use of a progressive jackpot as disclosed in the patent could also be adapted to the present wagering game if desired.

[0031] As another variation, the present wagering game could also be played as a player banked card game with a kind of poker betting. In this embodiment, each player would initially wager an ante and the dealer (chosen on a rotating basis) would deal each player one card face down. Then, the first player to the dealer's left for example, would have the option of making an initial wager. If an initial wager were not made, then each player in turn would have the option of making an initial wager. After an initial wager is made, each succeeding player would then either call, fold or raise the previous wager in the same manner as in poker games. At the conclusion of the betting, the remaining players would disclose their cards with the highest rank card being the winner. Any ties for the highest rank (winning) card would be played out in a further deal or "war" between the tied players, including further betting in the same manner as noted above for the initial deal.

[0032] There are side bet features additionally provided herein to increase the interest in the Casino War® game that are not disclosed in the prior art. Those features are:

[0033] 1) Surrender feature on at least the first cards—either upon seeing one of the dealer's card and the player's card or after a tie.

[0034] 2) Victory Bonus wager—A bet that a player will win by a significant margin. If the player making the wager beats the dealer by at least a predetermined minimum spread (e.g., at least 5 or at least 6 or more points) without going to war then the player making the wager wins this side bet. The larger the spread, the more the player wins.

[0035] 3) Fortune of War™ bet—that the total point count of the first player and dealer cards are within a specific range of ranks. This may be played without regard to a player winning, losing or tying, or odds may be adjusted to apply only when winning, only when losing, only when tying, or specific combinations of these.

These side bets may be mandatory but in one example are optional, and are in addition to the possibility of wagering on the basic game and on tie events. It is also possible to use specialty cards or jokers for additional side events such as described herein. For example, with one or more jokers inserted into a set of cards, a joker dealt to the dealer as a first card may immediately result

in a dealer win, while a joker on the first player or dealer card will always result in a tie game in which the player is required to place an additional wager for the tie event. In the tie competition, a joker to either player or dealer may automatically result in a push or another tie event. If both the dealer and player receive jokers, it may be declared a win for the player at any stage of competition and even require a 3/2 payout to the player on at least the ante wager and possibly all wagers at that stage of play, or some other event outcome required as a game rule.

[0036] The following information on the play of this game could be provided in the following format as a rack card or rule sheet for the game. The odds provided may be varied to adjust the house advantage or player advantage in the game, and minor variations in the rules may be made for a like result.

Casino War® Casino Game

[0037] Casino War® casino game is an exciting card game which is fast and easy to understand. Simply place a bet and if your card is higher than the dealer's you win even money. It also comes with a variety of interesting side bets, some paying as much as 50:1. You can bet that you'll win by a significant margin with Victory Bonus™ wagers, that the dealer's card and your own will be a pair with "Bet the Set" wagers, and on the total of those two cards with Fortunes of War side bet wager.

[0038] The Return to Player for Casino War® casino game and its side bets range from 86.743% to 97.123%.

[0039] Playing the Game

[0040] 1. Casino War is played with 1 to 6 or more standard decks, shuffled before each game.

[0041] 2. The player places at least an ante bet to begin the game.

[0042] 3. The player and the dealer each receive a face up card. If the player's card is higher than the dealer's then the player wins even money. If the dealer's card is higher then the player loses the ante bet.

[0043] 4. If the cards tie then the player has the following options:

[0044] Surrender—Forfeit half or less than half the player's Ante bet.

[0045] Go to War—Double (or otherwise increase, within a predefined range, such as 0.5 to 5x) the player's ante bet. The player places the additional war wager and the dealer and player will each receive another card.

[0046] If the new card is higher than or ties with the dealer's new card, the player recovers the ante bet and additional wager at 1:1 odds (or other special adjusted odds for tie events pre-established by the casino) wins an amount equal to the original bet. If the dealer's new card is higher than the player's new card, then the player loses both the Ante and War bets.

Because the player wins on a tie after going to war, the player will win more often than he loses. The overall Return to Players for Casino War with these rules ranges from about 96.302% to 97.123%.

Victory Bonus

[0047] This is a side bet that the player will win (or alternatively, that the dealer will win) by a significant, predefined margin or spread. If the player beats the dealer by 6 or more points without going to war, then the player wins this side bet. The larger the spread, the more the player wins.

[0048] To determine the margin, an Ace is equal to 14, a King is equal to 13, a Queen is equal to 12, and a Jack is equal to 11.

Won by	Pays
6	1:1
7	2:1
8	4:1
	6:1
10 or more	10:1

The Return to Player of this bet is 89.636%

“Bet the Set” Side Bet Wager

[0049] This is a side bet that the dealer’s card and the player’s card will be a pair (i.e., will tie). A pair of the same suit receives a higher prize. This bet does not apply to cards received after going to war.

Hand	Pay
Pair	10:1
Pair of same suit	15:1

The Return to Player of this bet is 89.389%

“Fortunes of War” Side Bet Wager

[0050] This side bet wager adds the ranks of the first card the player and the dealer receive together and the player selects a range from among a number of ranges covering a total range of at least a total point number between 4 and 28. The player places a bet on one of the ranges below to win the corresponding prize if the total rank of the two cards falls in that range. To determine the total rank or total point count, the following ranks are used: Ace=14, King=13, Queen=12, and Jack=11. If a joker or specialty card is used, that card may be given any predetermined value, with 0, 7 or 14, being preferred values for the joker or specialty card.

Total rank	Pays
4-5	50:1
6-7	20:1
8-9	13:1
10-11	9:1
12-14	4:1
15-17	3:1
18-20	4:1
21-22	9:1
23-24	13:1
25-26	20:1
27-28	50:1

The Return to Player on these bets ranges from 86.743% to 91.071% with the ranges applying to all game outcomes, such as wins, losses, ties and war events. This side bet may be played without regard to a player winning, losing or tying, or odds may be adjusted to apply only when winning, only when losing, only when tying, or specific combinations of these. For example, the ranges may apply to only tying and winning (Player) events, and in this instance, the odds could be increased. Odds would be adjusted for each type of combination event allowed within the definition of winning events.

[0051] The games of the present invention may be implemented as a live table game, as a television or cable game show game, as a video poker gaming machine game, as a hand-held game for play, as a game executed on a multiple player interactive wagering platform game (with kiosk formats, single player screens, community screens, and/or banks of seats for players with a common dealer screen), as a cell phone game, as a game downloadable from the internet, as a parlor game, as a game executed on a personal computer, as a palm pilot game, as a play station game, and the like. Each of the above game applications is contemplated by the present invention.

[0052] An alternative electronic gaming system that can be used to practice the method of the present invention comprises a table and a dealer “virtual” video display system positioned for view by players seated at the table. One such system is marketed under the name Table Master™. The table may seat at least two players up to the amount of players that can be configured about the table and have a view of the dealer video display system. Typically each gaming system will have at least four player available positions, with space determinations considered as to whether there would be 4, 5, 6 or 7 player positions. It is possible to have a completely circular dealer display (e.g., holographic display in a cylindrical centerpiece) and have players distributed around the entire periphery, but this is too dissimilar to standard play arrangements and could slow the game down, as play should approximate that of a live game, with players playing in sequence. A surface of the table will include a common display surface for showing all player hands, community cards, dealer hands and any other cards used to play the game for any purpose. The common display may also include credits wagered, side bet wager placement, betting limits, and the like. A large portion of the table surface comprises a video monitor in one example of the invention. The table surface may also include individual player screens with touch screen controls and/or player control panels at each player station near the common display surface. Cards on the common display surface may be readily viewed by other players at a table, which is standard in table games and adds to player enjoyment. The use of a large common display screen display also allows for better animation to be provided, such as displaying virtual images of cards moving to the player and “virtual” chips being placed on the table when wagers are indicated. For purposes of this disclosure, the term “virtual” means a graphical video representation of a real object or person, such as a dealer, cards and chips, for example.

[0053] The individual player positions preferably have a separate intelligence at each player position that accepts player input and communicates directly with a game engine (main game computer or processor). The intelligence is

preferably an intelligent board that can process information. For purposes of this disclosure the term "intelligent" refers to the ability to execute code, either provided in the form of software or hardware circuits. Such processing may at least comprise some of signal converting (e.g., signals from player card readers, credit deposit, currency readers, coin readers, touch screen signals, control panel signals) into a signal that can be included in an information packet and interpreted by the main game computer when the signal is sent. Communication between the intelligence at each player position is direct to the main game computer and may be by self-initiated signal sending, sequenced polling by the main game computer (e.g., each position communicates directly to the main game computer in turn), timed communication, or any other order of communication that is direct between the intelligence and the main game computer.

[0054] One preferred form of communication between the main game computer and player station computers is by means of self-initiated signal sending. There is essentially a single main game computer that contains video display controls and programs for both the dealer display and the table top display, audio controls and programs, game rules (including storage of multiple games if intended to be available on the machine), random number generator, graphic images, game sequence controls, security systems, wager accounting programs, external signaling and audit functions, and the like. In other forms of the invention, the above functions are divided between a main processor and one or more additional processors. The intelligence at each player position speeds up the performance of all aspects of the game by being able to communicate directly with the main game computer and being able to process information at the player position rather than merely forwarding the information in raw form to the main game computer. Processing player information at player positions frees up resources for use by the main processor or processors.

[0055] A card game system may also include a suitable data and control processing subsystem that is largely contained within a main control module supported beneath the tabletop. The control and data processing subsystem includes a suitable power supply for converting alternating current from the power main as controlled by a main power switch. The power supply transforms the alternating line current to a suitable voltage and to a direct current supply. Power is supplied to a power distribution and sensor/activity electronics control circuit. Commercially available power switching and control circuits may be provided in the form of a circuit board which is detachable, and plugs into a board receptacle of a computer mother board or an expansion slot board receptacle. A main game controller motherboard may include a central microprocessor and related components well-known in the industry as computers using Intel brand Pentium® microprocessors and related memory or intelligence from any other manufacturing source. A variety of different configurations and types of memory devices can be connected to the motherboard as is well known in the art. Of particular interest is the inclusion of two flat panel display control boards connected in expansion slots of the motherboard. Display control boards are each capable of controlling the images displayed for the dealer video display and for each of the player position display areas on the continuous display screen on the table and other operational parameters of the video displays used in the gaming system. More specifically, the display control boards are connected to player bet interfaces circuits for the player stations. This arrangement also allows the display control boards to pro-

vide necessary image display data to the display electronic drive circuits associated with the dealing event program displays and the dealer display.

[0056] The motherboard and/or the individual player intelligent boards also includes a serial port that allows stored data to be downloaded from the motherboard to a central casino computer or other additional storage device. In one example, each player board communicates directly with the casino computer system. This allows card game action data to be analyzed in various ways using added detail, or by providing integration with data from multiple tables so that cheating schemes can be identified and eliminated, and player tracking can be maintained. Player performance and/or skill can be tracked at one table or as a compilation from gaming at multiple tables, as by using Bloodhound™ security software marketed by Shuffle Master, Inc., which may be incorporated into this automated gaming system. Additionally, player hand analysis can be performed. The motherboard and/or individual player intelligent boards may also have a keyboard connection port that can be used to connect a larger format keyboard to the system to facilitate programming and servicing of the system.

[0057] Although the preferred system shown does not require features illustrated for receiving automated player identification information, such features can alternatively be provided. Card readers such as used with credit cards, or other identification code reading devices can be added in the system to allow or require player identification in connection with play of the card game and associated recording of game action by one of the processors. Such a user identification interface, for example a card reader located at each player station, can be implemented in the form of a variety of magnetic card readers commercially available for reading user-specific identification information. The user-specific information can be provided on specially constructed magnetic cards issued by a casino, or magnetically coded credit cards or debit cards frequently used with national credit organizations such as VISA, MASTERCARD, AMERICAN EXPRESS, casino player card registry, banks and other institutions. The information could also be provided on other writable media, such as an RFID chip with writable memory, or bar coding, as just a few examples.

[0058] Alternatively, it is possible to use so-called smart cards to provide added processing or data storage functions in addition to mere identification data. For example, the user identification could include coding for available credit amounts purchased from a casino. As further example, the identification card or other user-specific instrument may include specially coded data indicating security information such as would allow accessing or identifying stored security information which must be confirmed by the user after scanning the user identification card through a card reader. Such security information might include such things as file access numbers which allow the central processor to access a stored security clearance code which the user must indicate using input options provided on displays using touch screen displays. A still further possibility is to have participant identification using a fingerprint image, eye blood vessel image reader, or other suitable biological information to confirm identity of the user that can be built into the table. Still further it is possible to provide such participant identification information by having the pit personnel manually code in the information in response to the player indicating his or her code name or real name. Such additional identification could also be used to confirm credit use of a smart card or transponder. All or part of the functions dedicated to

a particular player station are controlled by the player station intelligence in one form of the invention. Additionally, each player station intelligence may be in communication with a casino accounting system.

[0059] It should also be understood that the continuous screen can alternatively be provided with suitable display cowlings or covers that can be used to shield display of card images from viewing by anyone other than the player in games where that is desirable. This shielding can also be effected by having light-orientation elements in the panel, and some of these light-orientation elements are electronically controllable. In this manner, the processor can allow general viewing of cards in games where that is desirable or tolerated, and then alter the screen where desired. These types of features can be provided by nanometer, micrometer or other small particulate or flake elements within a panel on the viewing area that are reoriented by signals from the processor. Alternatively, liquid crystal or photo chromatic displays can be used to create a screening effect that would allow only viewers at specific angles of view from the screen area to view the images of cards. Such an alternative construction may be desired in systems designed for card games different from blackjack, where some or all of the player or dealer cards are not presented for viewing by other participants or onlookers. Such display covers or cowlings can be in various shapes and configurations as needed to prevent viewing access. It may alternatively be acceptable to use a player-controlled switch that allows the display to be momentarily viewed and then turned off. The display can be shielded using a cover or merely by using the player's hands. Still further it is possible to use a touch screen display that would be controlled by touch to turn on and turn off. Similar shielding can be used to prevent others from viewing the display.

[0060] While the present invention has been described with respect to exemplary embodiments thereof, it will be understood by those of ordinary skill in the art that other variations and modifications can be effected within the scope and spirit of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A method of playing a casino game with playing cards comprising:

a player placing at least an ante wager;

the ante wager for each player being resolved on the basis of the relative rank of a first playing card dealt to the player and a first playing card dealt to the dealer;

the player winning on the ante wager if the player's first card rank is higher than the dealer's first card rank, the player losing the ante wager if the player's first card relative rank is lower than the dealer's first card rank, and entering a tie hand competition event if the player's first card rank and the dealer's first card rank are the same;

wherein the player has the ability to place at least one side bet wager before seeing both the dealer's first card and the player's first card on an event selected from the group consisting of:

a) the total combined point count for the player's first card and the dealer's first card is within a player selected range of at least two total point count ranges from which the player may select; and

b) that the spread in point count between the dealer's first card and the player's first card will exceed a minimum difference.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the player places a side bet that the total point count for the player's first card and the dealer's first card are within a player selected range of at least three total point count ranges from which the player may select.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein the player places a side bet that the spread in point count between the dealer's first card and the player's first card will exceed a minimum difference.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein multiple decks of playing cards are used to provide the player's cards and the dealer's cards and a side bet is available that includes a winning outcome if the player's card and the dealer's card have the same rank and suit.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein in the tie event the player places an additional wager at risk in the game and a second card is provided to the player and a second card is provided to the dealer and the player winning on the additional wager and the ante wager if the player's second card relative rank is higher than the dealer's second card rank, the player losing the additional wager and the ante wager if the player's second card relative rank is lower than the dealer's second card rank, and entering a tie hand competition event if the player's second card rank and the dealer's second card rank are the same.

6. The method of claim 5 wherein a tie event on the player's second card is resolved by allowing the player to surrender at most 50% of total player wagers.

7. The method of claim 5 wherein the tie event on the second player's card is resolved by declaring a push on all wagers.

8. The method of claim 5 wherein the tie event on the second player's card is resolved by allowing the player to surrender less than 50% of total player wagers.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein a player has another side bet available in which a wager may be made that the player's card and the dealer's card will be the same rank, and the wager offering odds on the wager of at least 6:1.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein the another side bet available includes an award when the player's first card and the dealer's first card are the same rank and suit.

11. A method of playing a wagering game between a player or a group of respective players and a dealer whose outcome is determined by randomly generated playing cards having various values comprising the steps of:

arranging only one single stack of playing cards;

wagering an ante bet by the or each player;

dealing of only one card successively from the single stack of playing cards only to the or each player and to the dealer by the dealer;

determining whether the card of the dealer has a greater value, a lesser value or an equal value to that of the or each player;

paying off of the ante bet to (a) the or each player if the value of the card of the or each player is greater than the value of the card of the dealer, or (b) the dealer if the value of the card of the dealer is greater than or equal to the value of the card of the or each player; and

if the value of the card of the dealer equals that of any player,
 wagering of a further bet by the or each tied player,
 dealing successively from the stack at least one further card only to the or each tied player and to the dealer, and

determining whether the further card of the dealer has a greater value, a lesser value or an equal value to the further card of the or each tied player, and

paying off of the further bet to (a) the or each tied player if the value of the further card of the or each tied player is greater than the value of the card of the dealer, or (b) the dealer if the value of the card of the dealer is greater than the value of the card of the or each tied player;

wherein the player has the ability to place at least one side bet wager before seeing both the dealer's first card and the player's first card on an event selected from the group consisting of:

- a) the total point count for the player's first card and the dealer's first card are within a player selected range of at least two total point count ranges from which the player may select; and
- b) that the spread in point count between the dealer's first card and the player's first card will exceed a minimum difference.

12. The method of claim 11 wherein the player places a side bet that the total point count for the player's first card and the dealer's first card are within a player selected range of at least three total point count ranges from which the player may select.

13. The method of claim 11 wherein the player places a side bet that the margin of difference in point count between the dealer's first card and the player's first card will exceed a minimum difference.

14. The method of claim 11 wherein multiple decks of playing cards are used to provide the player's cards and the dealer's cards and a side bet is available that includes a winning outcome if the player's card and the dealer's card have the same rank and suit.

15. The method of claim 11 wherein in the tie event the player places an additional wager at risk in the game and a second card is provided to the player and a second card is provided to the dealer and the player winning on the additional wager and the ante wager if the player's second card rank is higher than the dealer's second card rank, the player losing the additional wager and the ante wager if the player's second card rank is lower than the dealer's second card rank, and entering a tie hand competition event if the player's second card rank and the dealer's second card rank are the same.

16. The method of claim 1 wherein available playing cards include at least one joker and the presence of a joker as the player's first card or the dealer's first card can cause a game ending result.

17. The method of claim 1 wherein available playing cards include at least one joker and the presence of a joker as the player's first card or the dealer's first card can cause a game ending result.

18. The method of claim 1 played on an electronic system using a processor to determine cards dealt and winning outcomes.

19. The method of claim 1 played on a casino table with physical cards and a live dealer.

20. A gaming apparatus comprising a processor, video monitor and player input controls wherein the processor enables play of a method comprising

a player placing at least an ante wager;

the ante wager for each player being resolved on the basis of the relative rank of a first playing card dealt to the player and a first playing card dealt to a dealer hand;

the player winning on the ante wager if the player's first card relative rank is higher than the dealer's hand first card rank, the player losing the ante wager if the player's first card relative rank is lower than the dealer's hand first card rank, and entering a tie hand competition event if the player's first card rank and the dealer's hand first card rank are the same;

wherein the player has the ability to input at least one side bet wager through the player input controls before seeing both the dealer's first card and the player's first card on the monitor in an event selected from the group consisting of:

- a) the total point count for the player's first card and the dealer's first card are within a player selected range of at least two total point count ranges from which the player may select; and
- b) that spread in point count between the dealer's first card and the player's first card will exceed a minimum difference.

21. A multi-player platform that provides multiple player positions for live players to engage in an interactive casino table card game with a virtual dealer and virtual cards comprising at least two player positions that enable live players to place wagers on an underlying card game, a display system for showing a virtual dealer, a display system for showing at least the virtual cards used in play of the underlying card game, and a processor that contains the rules of the underlying card game, the processor enabling play for each player on the underlying card game according to the method of play of claim 1.

22. A multi-player platform that provides multiple player positions for live players to engage in a casino table card game with a virtual dealer and virtual cards comprising at least two player positions that enable live players to place wagers on an underlying card game, a display system for showing a virtual dealer, a display system for showing at least the virtual cards used in play of the underlying poker-type game, and a processor that contains the rules of the underlying card game, the processor enabling play for each player on the underlying card game according to the following rules with a virtual single, typical fifty-two card poker deck, the cards having standard rank and value, said game played according to the method of claim 1.