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(54) **GAMING METHOD AND DEVICE INVOLVING PROGRESSIVE WAGERS**

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(71) Applicant: **IGT, Las Vegas, NV (US)**

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(72) Inventors: **Ernie M. Lafky, San Francisco, CA (US); Mark C. Nicely, Daly City, CA (US)**

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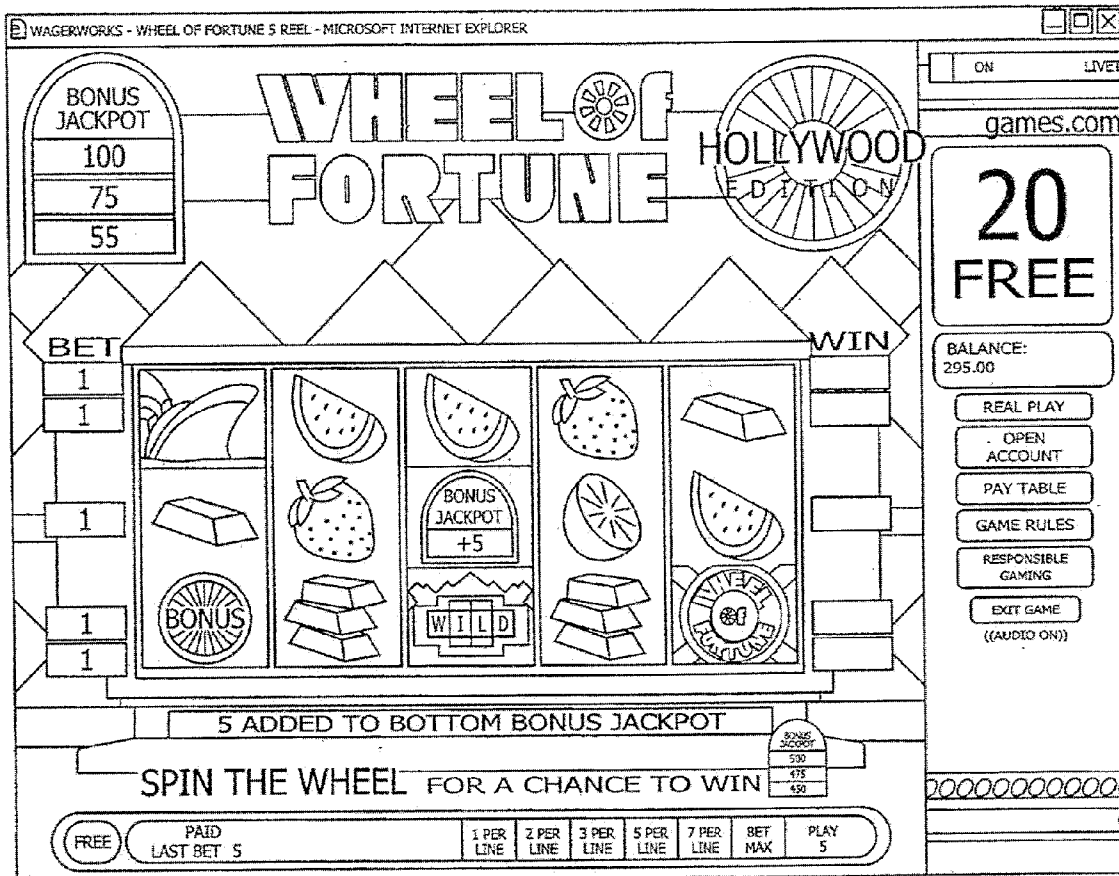
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A method of gaming is disclosed wherein progressive award values may be increased in response to certain pre-established game outcomes, wager amounts or random events. The increased progressive award values may be based on a primary game or secondary game outcome. Another innovation is the resetting of progressive awards upon completion of a bonus event whether or not award actually won in said bonus event. Player tracking systems permit progressive award values to be linked to a particular player such that the progressive award values remain personal to the player. Re-setting increased progressive award values is also disclosed.

Related U.S. Application Data

(60) Continuation of application No. 14/450,898, filed on Aug. 4, 2014, now Pat. No. 9,202,338, which is a continuation of application No. 13/793,746, filed on Mar. 11, 2013, now Pat. No. 8,801,520, which is a continuation of application No. 12/684,355, filed on Jan. 8, 2010, now Pat. No. 8,408,993, which is a division of application No. 11/196,645, filed on Aug. 2, 2005, now Pat. No. 7,666,093.



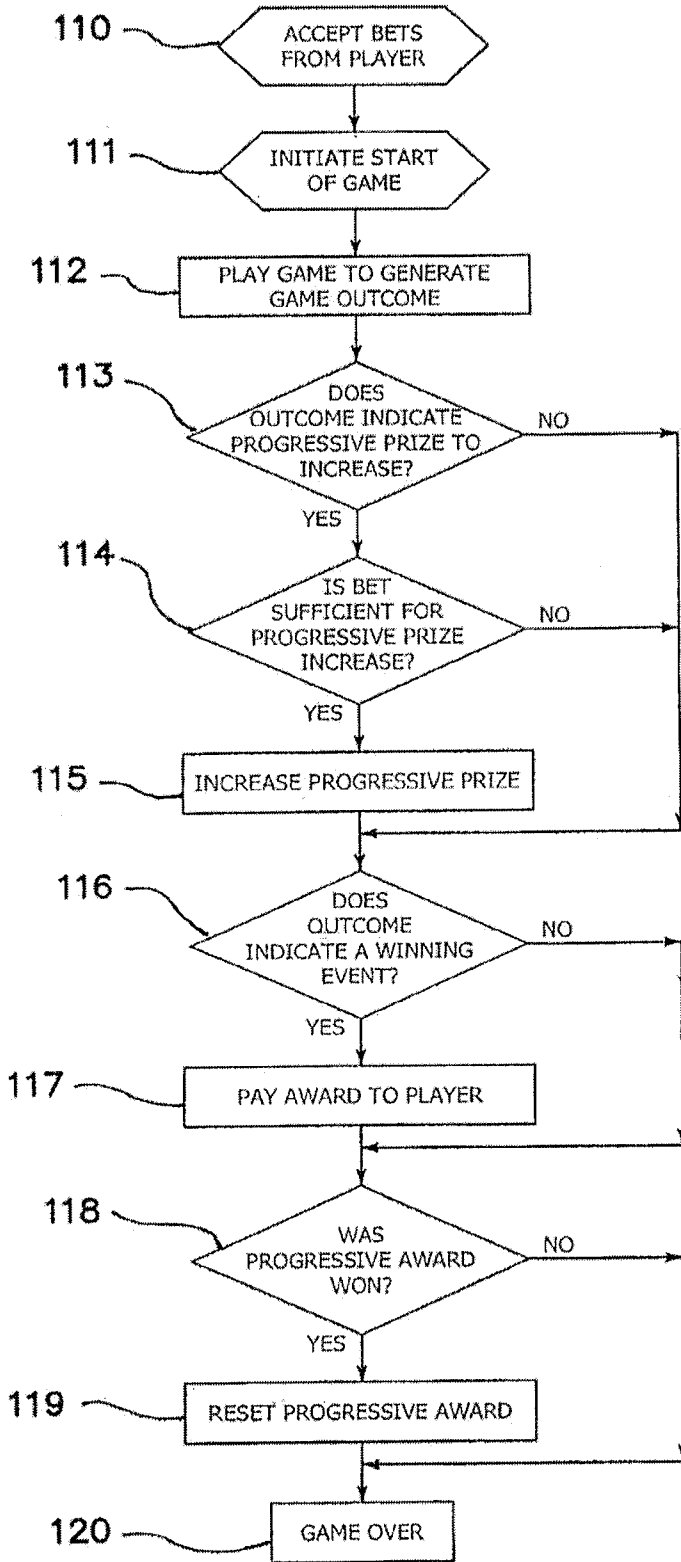


FIG. 1

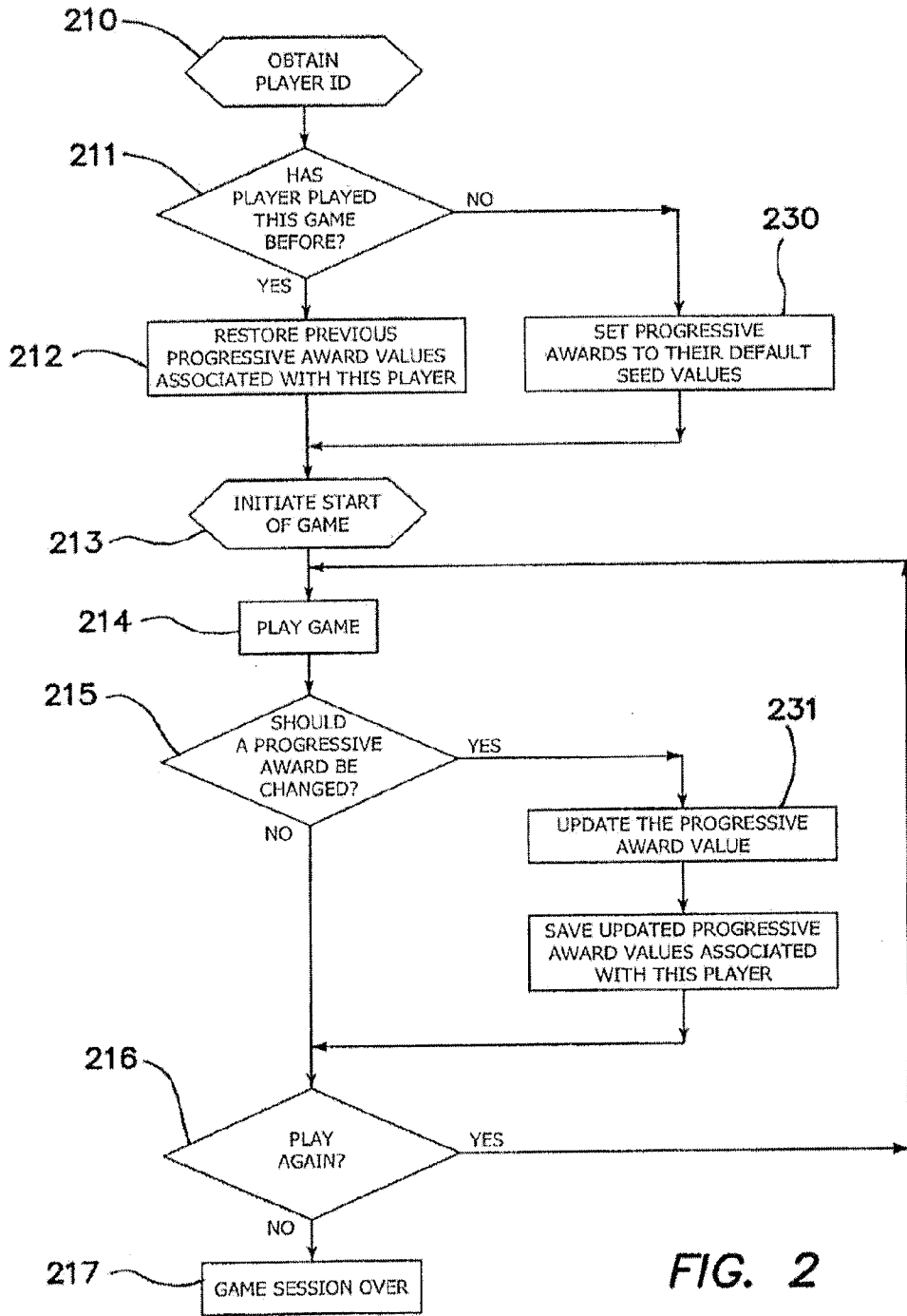


FIG. 2

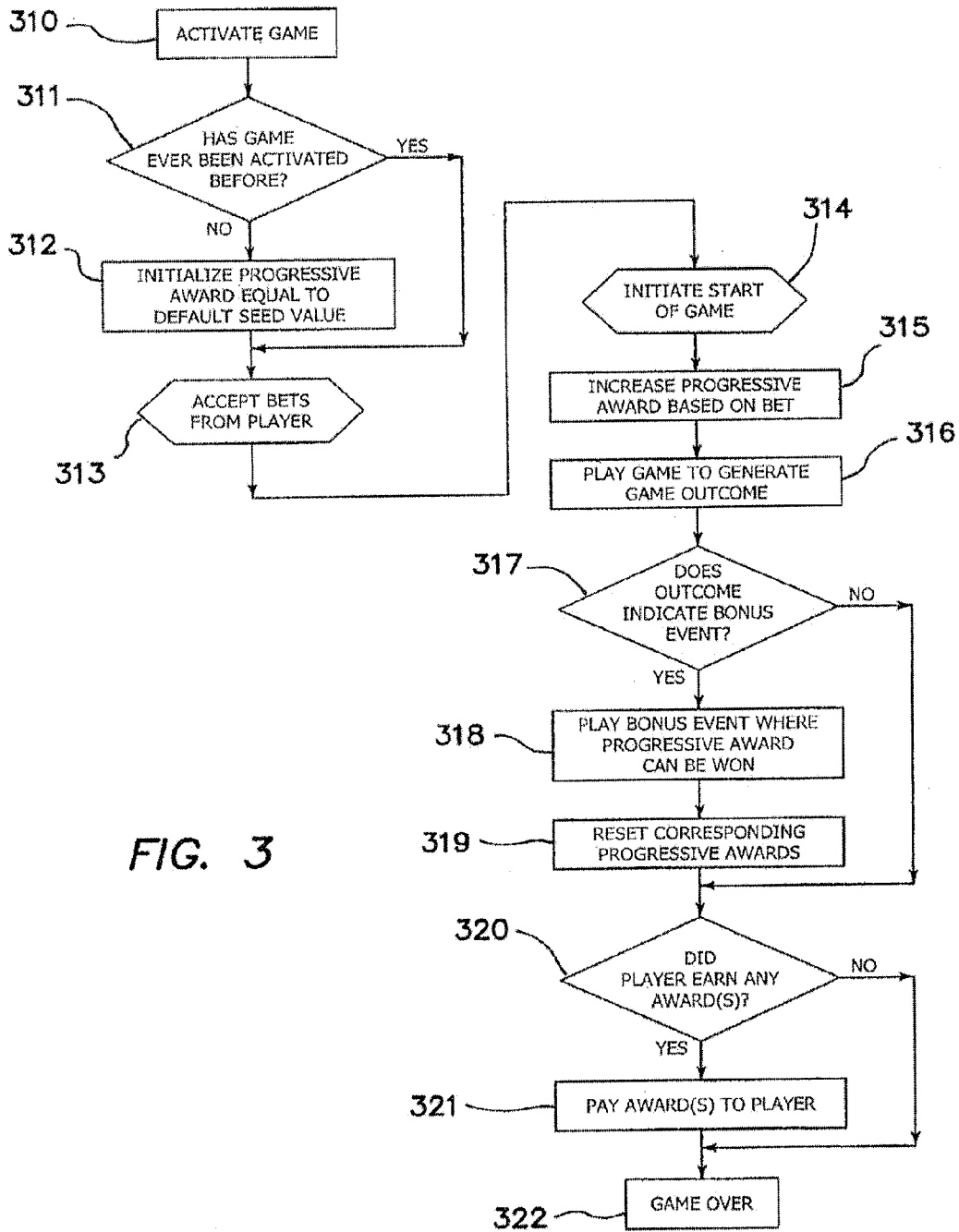


FIG. 3

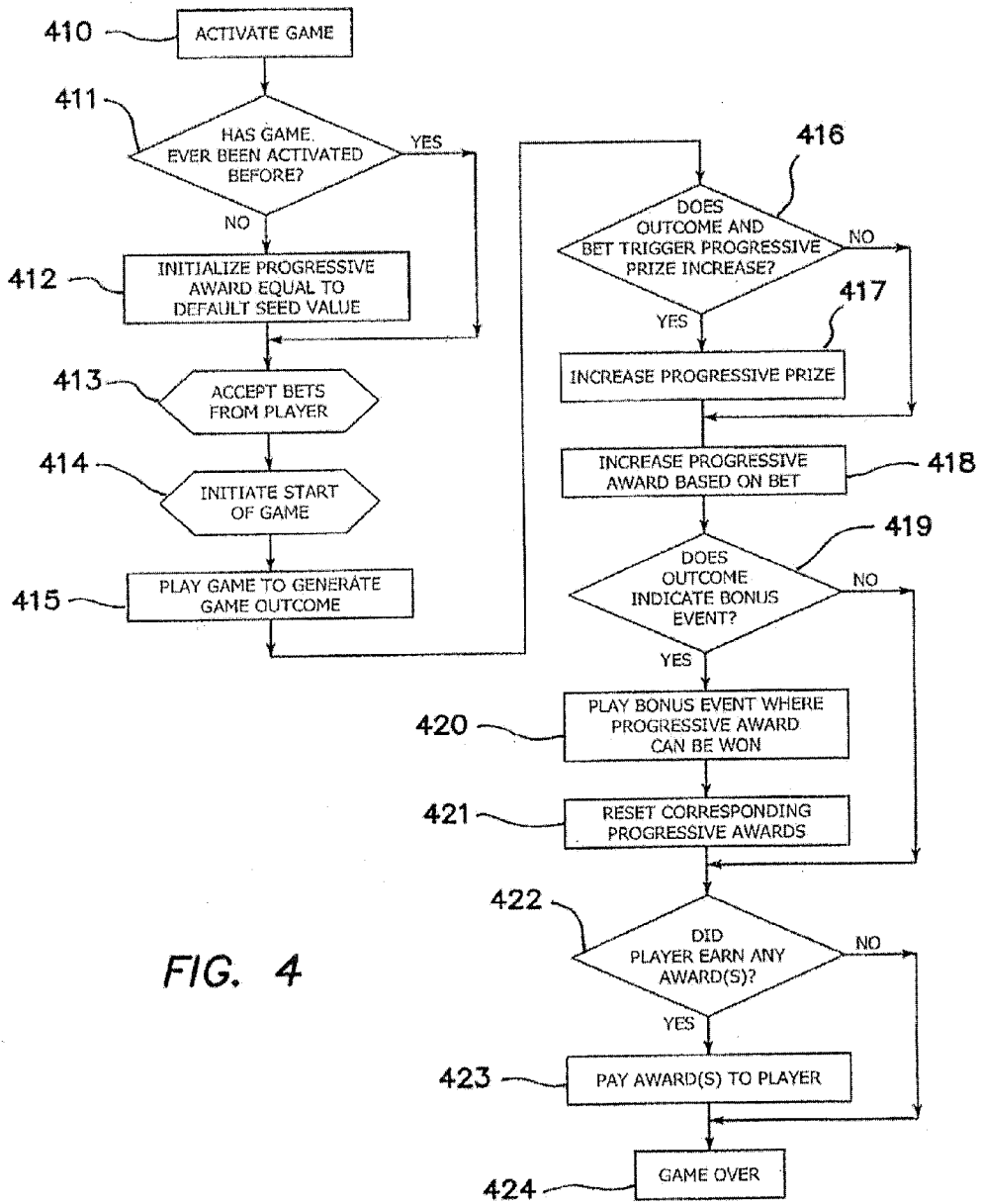
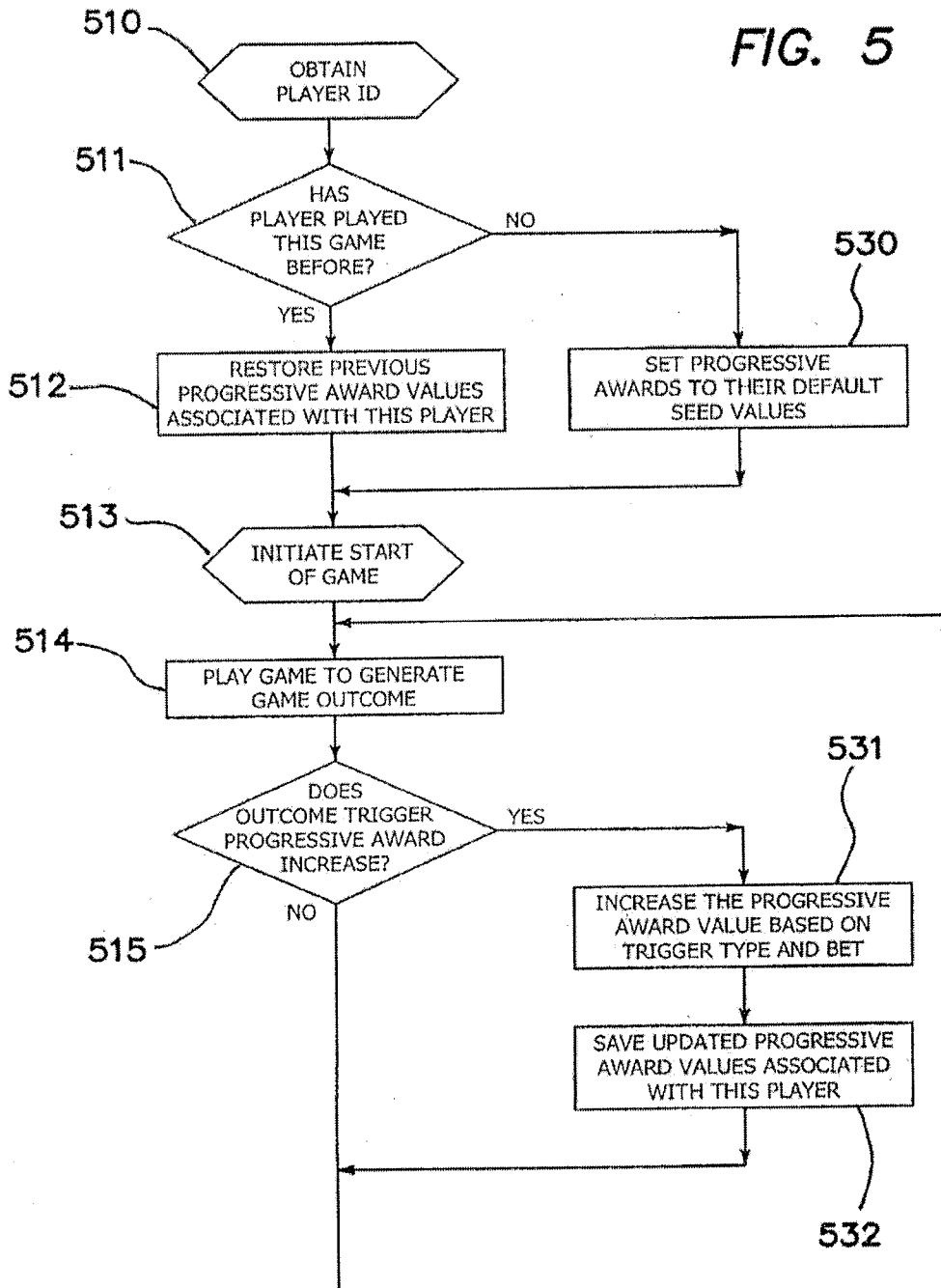


FIG. 4

FIG. 5



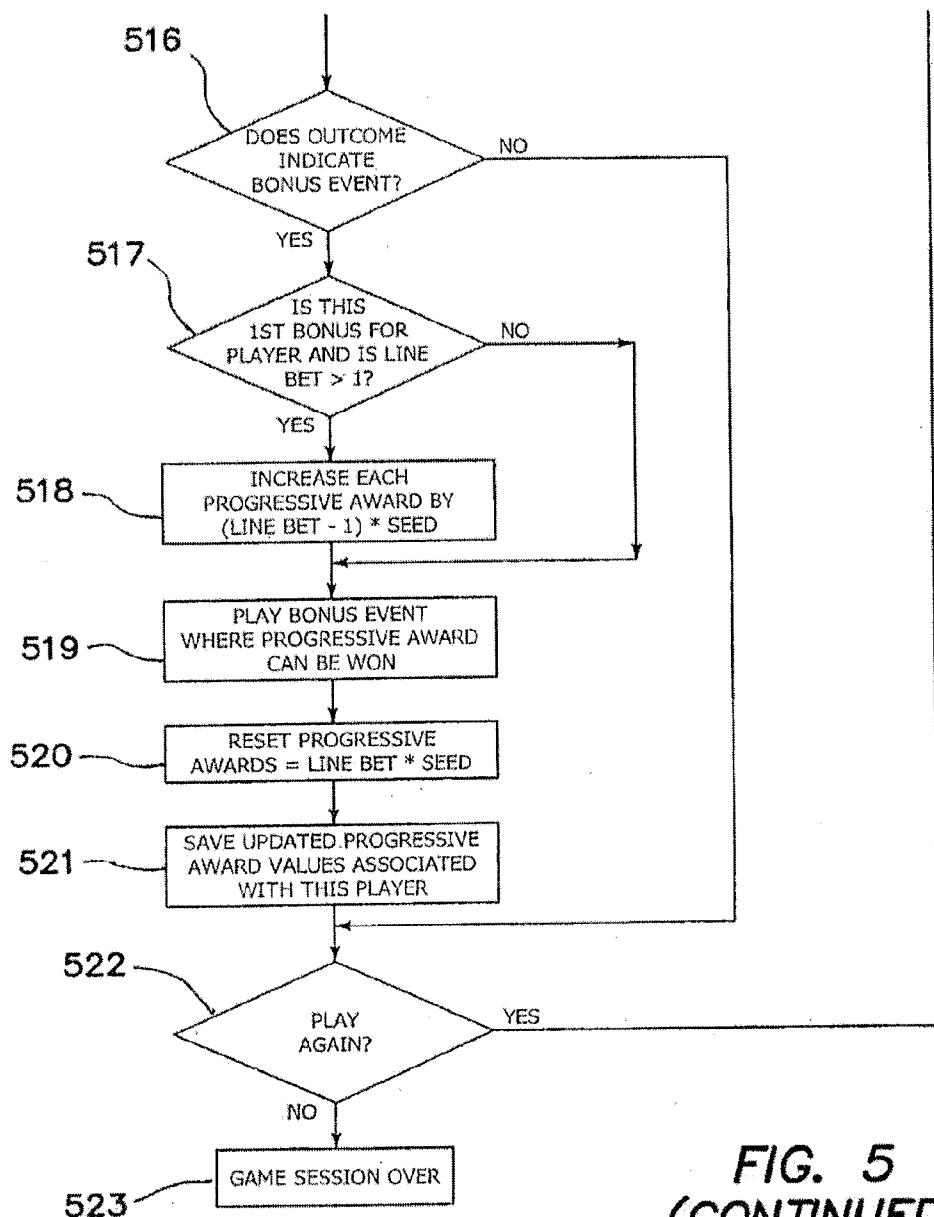


FIG. 5
(CONTINUED)

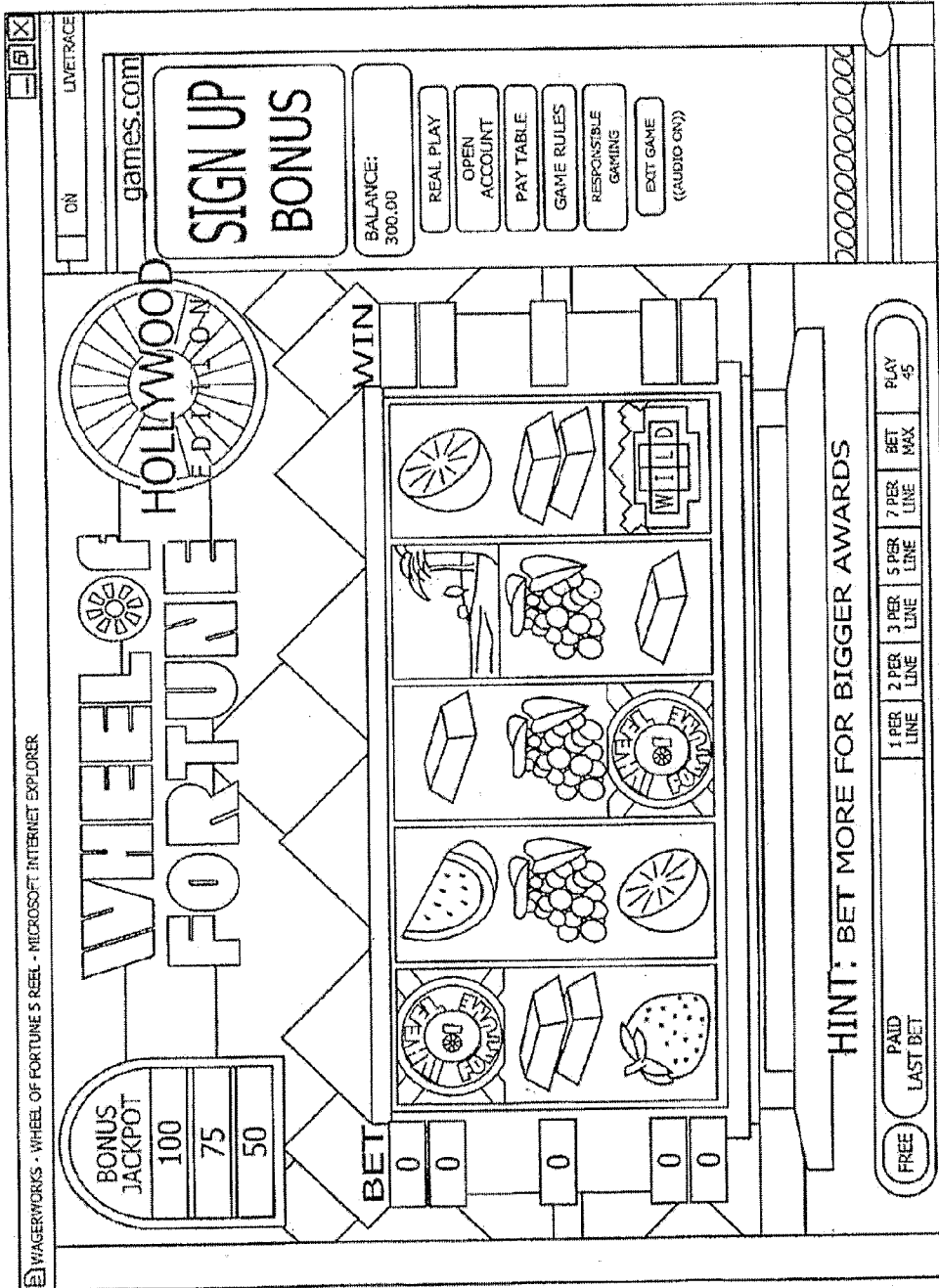


FIG. 6

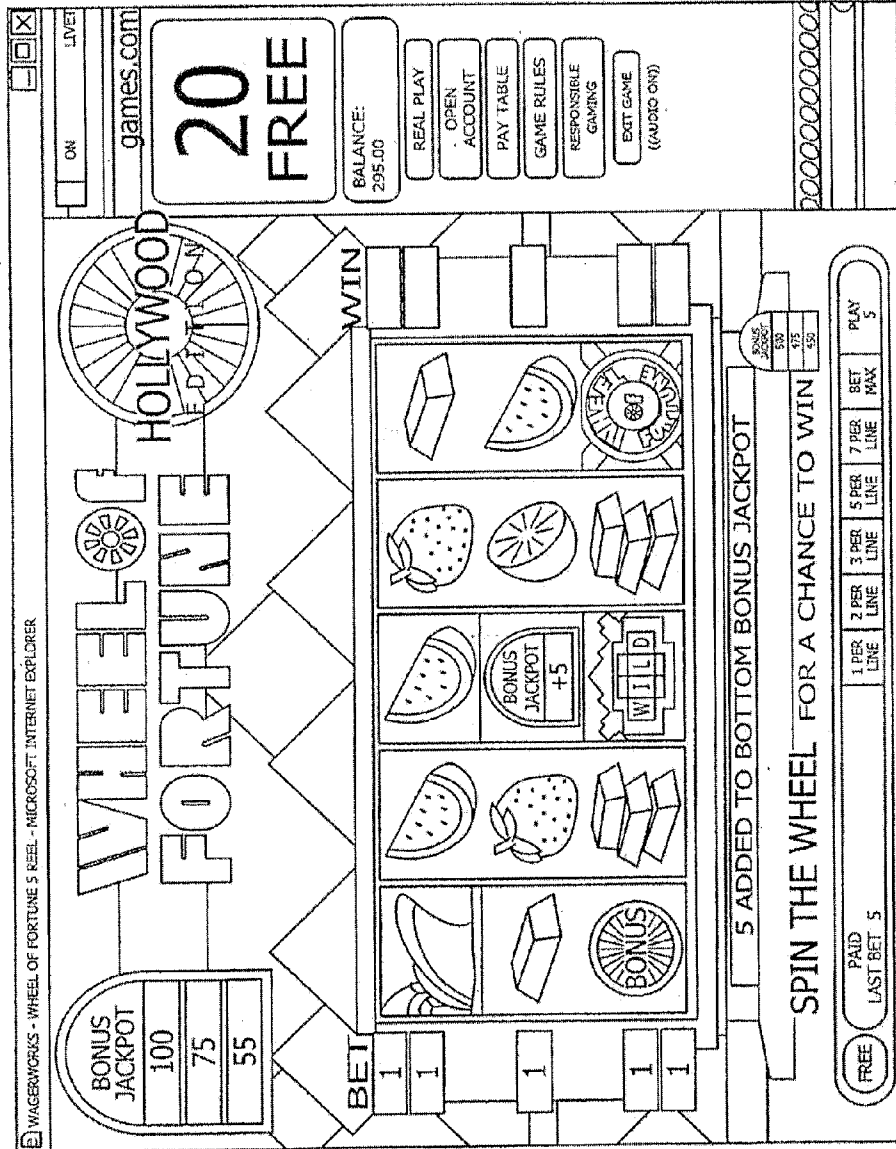


FIG. 7

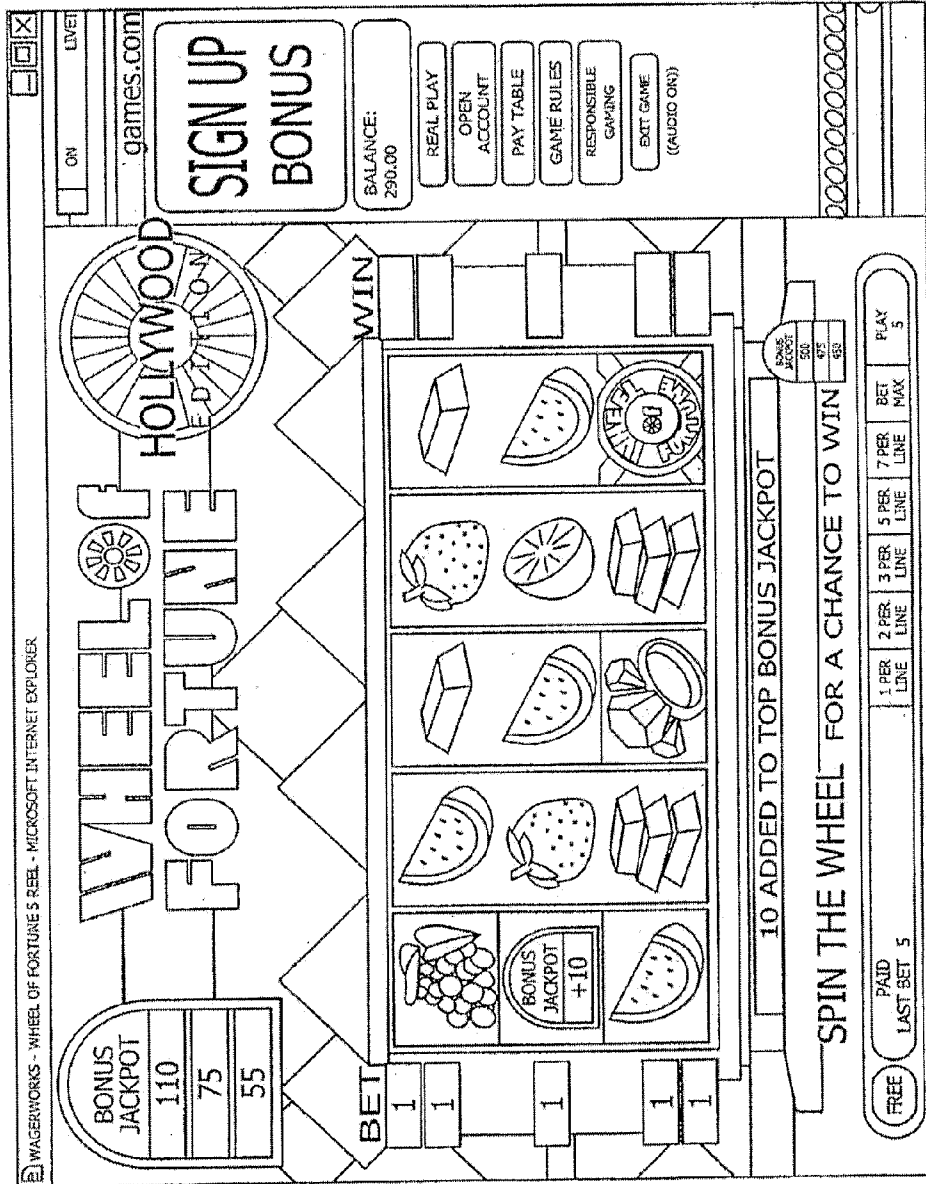


FIG. 8

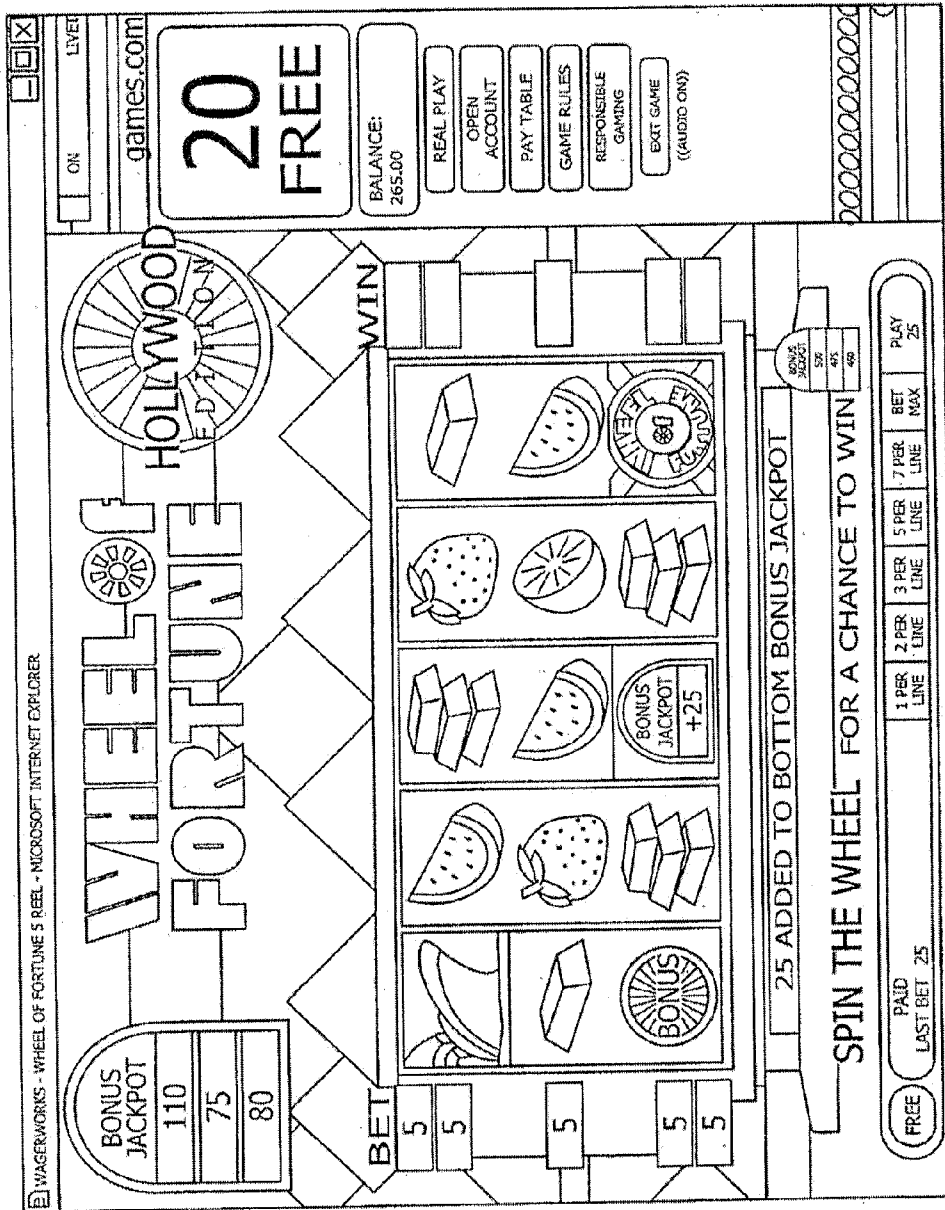


FIG. 9

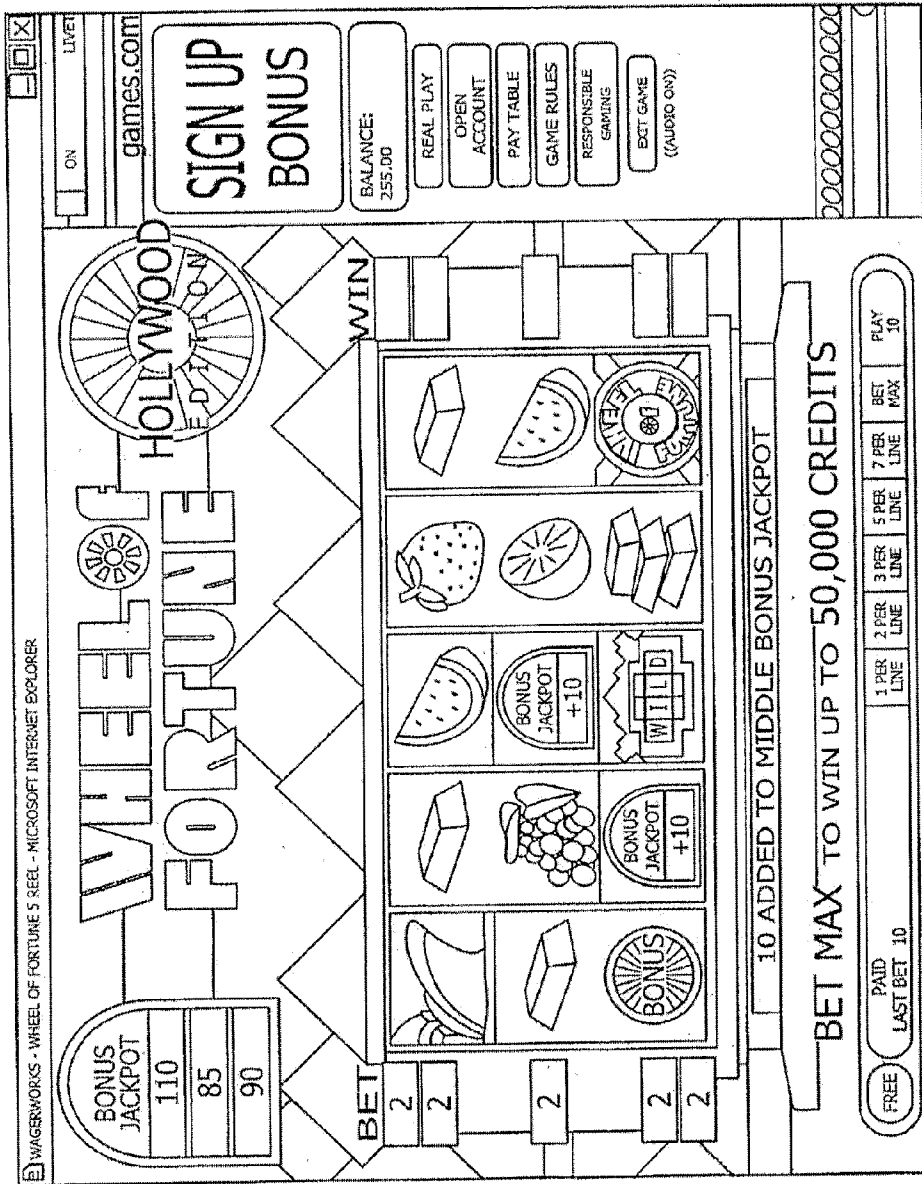


FIG. 10

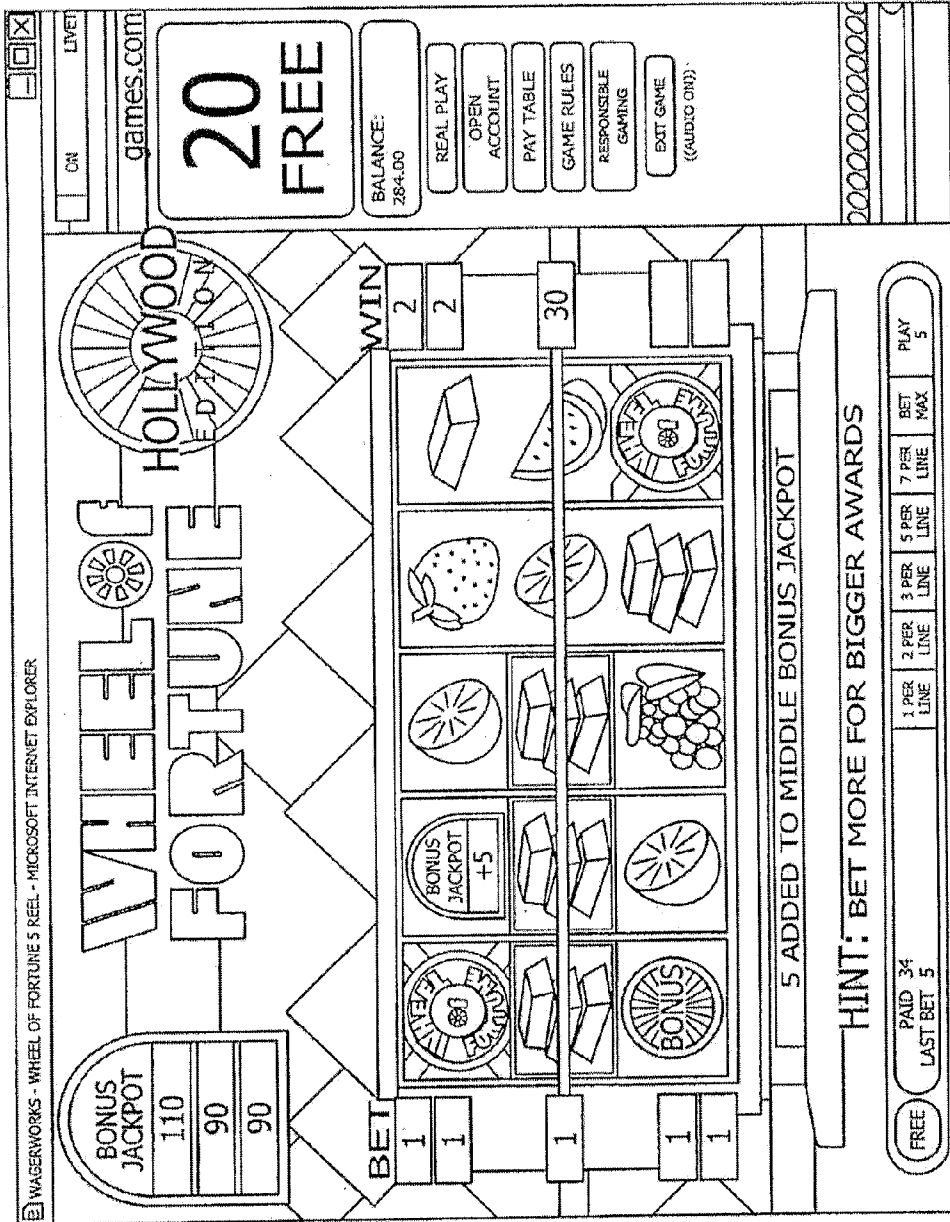


FIG. 11

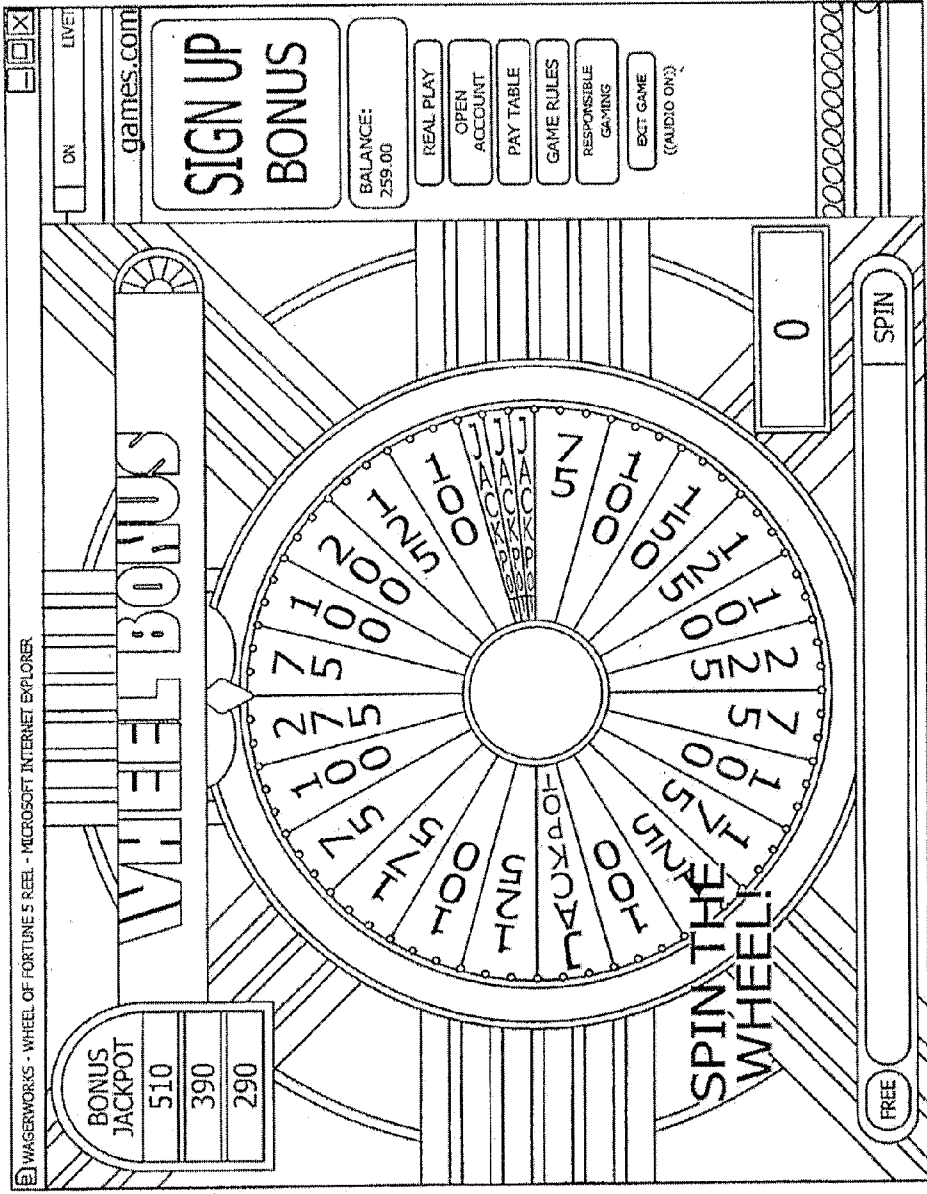


FIG. 12

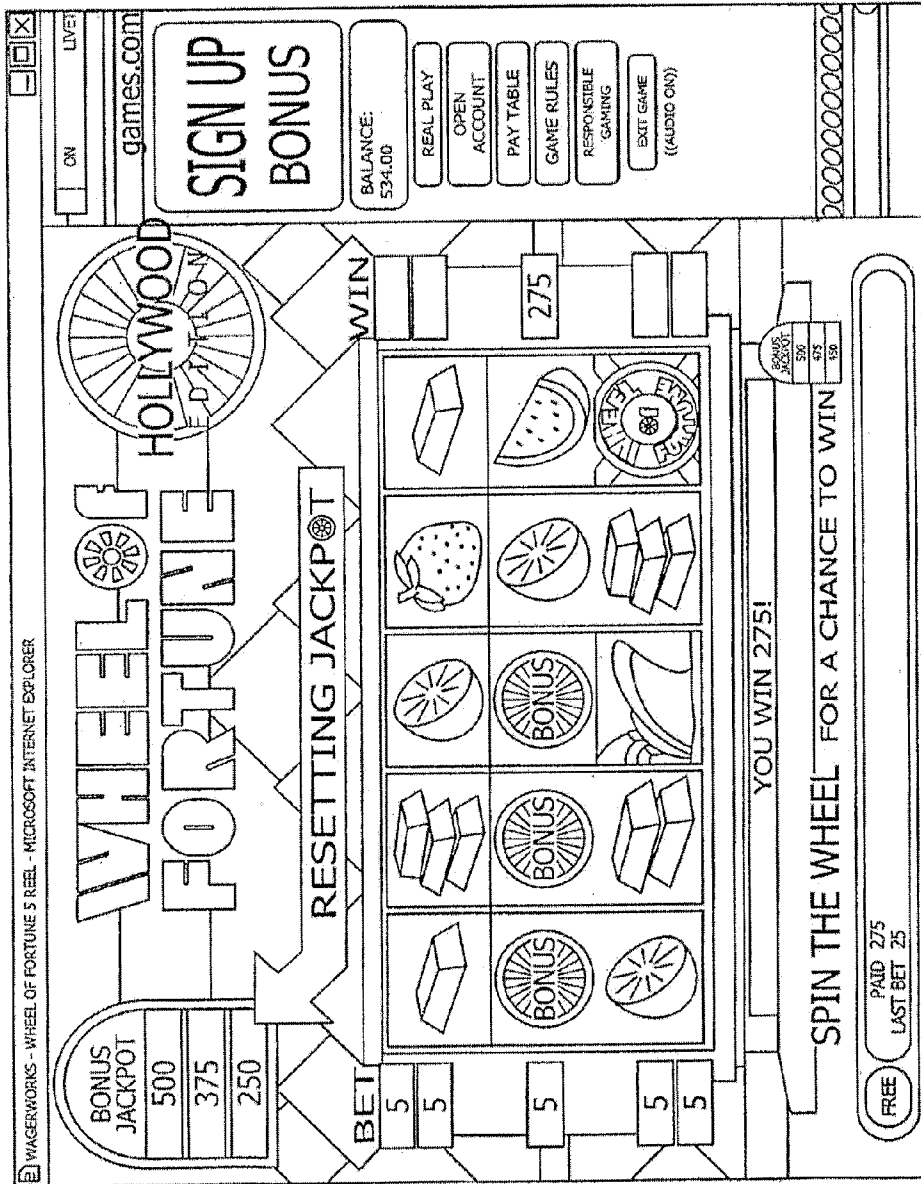


FIG. 13

GAMING METHOD AND DEVICE INVOLVING PROGRESSIVE WAGERS

PRIORITY CLAIM

[0001] This application is a continuation of, claims priority to and the benefit of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 14/450,898, filed on Aug. 4, 2014, which is a continuation of, claims priority to and the benefit of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/793,746, filed on Mar. 11, 2013, now U.S. Pat. No. 8,801,520, which is a continuation of, claims priority to and the benefit of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 12/684,355, filed on Jan. 8, 2010, now U.S. Pat. No. 8,408,993, which is a divisional of, claims priority to and the benefit of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 11/196,645, filed on Aug. 2, 2005, now U.S. Pat. No. 7,666,093, which claims priority to and the benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/598,305, filed on Aug. 3, 2004, the entire contents of which are each incorporated by reference herein.

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FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0003] The embodiments of the present invention relate to casino wagering games with one or more progressive awards that increase in value based on a random event, or other pre-established event or outcome, and/or reset if not won during a bonus event.

BACKGROUND

[0004] A number of wagering games feature awards which increase in value over time. Such awards are known as progressive awards. Typically progressive awards begin at a specific value known as a seed value or reset value and then increase over time based upon the number of eligible placed wagers. Usually, progressive awards increase by utilizing a specified fraction of each eligible placed wager. The phrase “eligible wager” refers to a pre-established wager amount, typically the maximum possible wager, required for a progressive award to be won. Furthermore, some gaming jurisdictions mandate that only wagers which can result in a progressive award can be used to fund progressive award increases.

[0005] A common progressive award works as follows: When the game is first offered, or after the prior progressive award is won, the progressive award value is set to a specific value. Thereafter, a set percentage of each eligible wager is added to the progressive award value until a game outcome occurs resulting in a player winning the progressive award.

[0006] A progressive award can involve wagers and play from a single machine or a number of machines. In the latter case, known as linked progressives, machines are configured in a bank of adjacent machines, or a plurality of machines across multiple banks within a casino, or across a plurality of casinos within a regional geographic area or across a plurality of casinos across a plurality of regional geographic areas. In many games with progressive awards, especially with linked

progressive awards, increases in the progressive award are cached such that the award value may be displayed as continuously and smoothly increasing rather than jumping up in rapid, varied amounts. The progressive award is often displayed in a manner reminiscent of a car odometer to better give the impression of continual and smooth jackpot growth.

[0007] One notable exception to the common practice of increasing a progressive award for each eligible wager is evident in Silicon Gaming’s video poker game, “Phantom Belle Playoff”, that offers a discrete progressive award increase of a certain size after a certain number of eligible wagers have been placed. In this case, the progressive award increases after a specific number of maximum wagers has been placed.

[0008] Most games with progressive awards are configured to pay the progressive award based upon a primary game outcome. For example, in a slot machine game, a progressive award is won in response to a certain set of symbols, typically the top-most symbol(s), aligned along a certain pay line when a maximum wager has been placed. However there are some slot games that pay a progressive award as the outcome of a bonus event. Another example relates to a card game wherein a certain hand outcome occurs, such as a royal flush outcome.

[0009] Many casino games offer bonus events or bonus rounds beyond the primary game. Such a bonus can be triggered in response to an outcome of the primary game. For example, in a slot machine game the outcome may be based on certain symbols appearing in a certain configuration. Other games can be offered whereby the bonus is triggered based on a secondary event. For example, in the video poker game, Phantom Belle Playoff, the appearance of a special card from the deck has no effect on the primary game but causes a bonus round to be launched.

[0010] In a bonus event, the player typically is awarded a prize based upon a secondary outcome selection different from the primary game outcome. In slot games, like “Wheel of Gold” or “Wheel of Fortune”, for example, the bonus round is triggered when a bonus symbol appears in a pre-established manner (either on the pay line on the last reel or on all positions on the pay line, based upon the game definition) and the player has placed a maximum wager. During the bonus round, the player initiates the spinning of the bonus wheel. Eventually the wheel slows to a stop. The wheel is separated into segments, each depicting an award. The player wins the award depicted on the wheel segment identified by a single pointer at an edge of the wheel after the wheel stops.

[0011] A bonus event typically involves the following features:

- [0012]** results in the player receiving an award;
- [0013]** the actual award amount is often unknown to the player until bonus event is played;
- [0014]** uses prize reveal and/or selection mechanisms beyond the main game outcome;
- [0015]** player input is required to initiate the start of the bonus game;
- [0016]** in some cases, a bonus event may require increased player interactivity such as the player identifying selection spots to reveal hidden symbols; and/or
- [0017]** in some cases, a bonus event may involve actual player decisions such as whether to accept the current bonus award or forgo the same in lieu of the opportunity to seek a larger bonus award.

SUMMARY

[0018] One embodiment of the present invention comprises a method of conducting a wagering game, accepting a player wager, generating a game outcome, resolving the player wager by paying the player an award in response to the game outcome matching a predefined winning outcome, and in response to the game outcome matching a predefined outcome, increasing an associated progressive award value.

[0019] The embodiments of the present invention include a method and device for offering a casino game with one or more progressive awards with some or all of the following features:

[0020] the progressive award only increases based upon some primary or secondary game outcome;

[0021] for a non-linked progressive award corresponding to a game linked to a player tracking system, any progressive award gains follow the player between play sessions; and/or

[0022] the progressive award can only be won during a bonus round and whether or not the bonus award is won, the bonus award is reset after the bonus game ends.

[0023] Thus, instead of increasing the progressive award for every eligible wager, the progressive jackpot only increases in response to a certain primary or secondary game outcome. Such a scheme increases player excitement and interest by making jackpot increases a special event instead of the standard routine, automatic event. The jackpot increase can become a psychological reward which does not have an immediate negative financial impact on the casino offering the game. The feature may also help encourage players to play a given game more often since the players may feel more directly responsible for the increased progressive awards based upon their actual play.

[0024] Examples of primary progressive award increase triggers include (but are not limited to);

[0025] appearance of certain symbol(s), perhaps in certain location(s), during play of a slot machine game;

[0026] appearance of certain card(s), perhaps in certain hand positions, during play of a card game;

[0027] the occurrence of certain defined winning outcomes; and/or

[0028] the occurrence of a non-winning outcome, especially in a very high hit frequency game.

[0029] The most basic example of a secondary progressive award increase trigger is increasing the progressive award randomly and independent of the primary game outcome. In one example, it involves the display of a secondary gaming element such as a wheel or other display. Another secondary event example involves the use of a special feature reel in addition to standard game reels. Then, if a certain symbol appears on the special feature reel, perhaps in conjunction with certain primary game outcomes, it may trigger an increase of the progressive award.

[0030] As with standard games having progressive awards, a game may be configured to allow only progressive award increases when a certain betting requirement is met, for example, when a maximum wager is placed. Alternately, a game can be configured where all placed wagers are eligible.

[0031] When a progressive award is increased, there are a few methods to define the amount of the increase. A game can be configured to add the same amount for the same trigger. For games that allow for progressive award increases for a multiplicity of wager amounts, the award increase can be scaled based upon the actual wager amount. Another game definition can result in different types of progressive award

increase triggers that result in different progressive award increase amounts. Another game definition can result in the progressive award increase being randomly selected, perhaps from a distribution of possible awards. Such variable progressive award increases can be part of a bonus round event. Another game definition can allow for different triggers that cause an increase in different progressive award values. Furthermore, different triggers can cause different increases in the progressive award value. Moreover, a game definition can allow for multiple simultaneous triggers, each of which causes a progressive award increase, possibly of the same progressive award and/or different progressive awards.

[0032] Another aspect of the embodiments of the present invention is the concept of a personal progressive award following a player. Specifically, some game devices allow for individual player tracking, usually initiated by having the player insert his or her unique player identification card into a card reader installed in the machine. Player tracking is also possible in games offered via the Internet wherein the player is required to provide a user ID and password in order to play. A gaming system that can provide player tracking can also be designed to maintain progressive awards between play sessions for the same player. For example, if a given player is able to increase his personal progressive award to a certain amount, the progressive award remains at the same value the next time the player returns to play the game.

[0033] Another aspect of the embodiments of the present invention is the concept that a progressive award can only be won during a bonus round, and if the progressive award is not won, the progressive award is reset. For example, when a player initially starts a game having such a feature, the progressive award is set at a certain level which can increase as the player plays, either through traditional progressive award growth mechanisms or through the random increase mechanism aspect of the embodiments of the present invention. The player can only win a progressive award during play of a bonus round. Whether or not the player wins such a progressive award, all such progressive awards are reset upon exiting the bonus round.

[0034] There are additional aspects of the embodiments of the present invention related to setting and adjusting the progressive award value based upon the wager amount. One such aspect involves selecting the progressive award reset value based upon the amount of the wager. For example, a progressive jackpot value can be reset to the value of $S \times W$, where S is the base seed value and W is the relevant wager amount placed during the game play when the bonus game or round is activated. Alternatively, a progressive award boost can be applied if a wager in excess of a minimum wager is placed during the game play when the bonus game or round is activated. For example, the jackpot value may be reset to the value S , but if the player's wager W is greater than 1 unit, the jackpot value is increased by $S \times (W - 1)$ at the start of the bonus round. In a more specific example, the progressive award is reset to 100 units. Then, if during play of the game, the progressive award value is increased by 60 units, with a 5 unit wager in place, and a game outcome triggers a bonus round or game, the progressive award of 160 units is boosted by 400 units calculated as follows: $100 \times (5 - 1) = 400$ units to a total progressive award value of 560 units which the player has the opportunity to win during the bonus round.

[0035] The above disclosed two jackpot adjustments can both be offered in the same game. Specifically, for a game linked to a player tracking system, the progressive award

value is set to S for the first time that a given player plays the game. The first time said player enters the bonus round and the player's wager is greater than 1 unit, a boost of $S \times (W - 1)$ is added to the progressive award value. The boost only occurs on the first bonus round event for said player. Upon exiting a bonus round the first time or any subsequent time, the progressive award value is reset to $S \times W$.

[0036] All of the above described game features can also apply to game methods and devices which involve a plurality of progressive awards. Other variations, embodiments and features of the present invention will become evident from the following detailed description, drawings and claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

[0037] FIG. 1: Block diagram of a game embodiment having a random progressive advancement;

[0038] FIG. 2: Block diagram of a game embodiment having a personal progressive award;

[0039] FIG. 3: Block diagram of a game embodiment having a bonus round progressive award (constant advance);

[0040] FIG. 4: Block diagram of game embodiment having a bonus round progressive award (random advance);

[0041] FIG. 5: Block diagram of one exemplary game play;

[0042] FIG. 6: Screen shot of exemplary game with said screen displaying initial Jackpot seed related to 1st game play;

[0043] FIG. 7: Screen shot of exemplary game with said screen displaying wager amount added to bottom award;

[0044] FIG. 8: Screen shot of exemplary game with said screen displaying $2 \times$ wager amount added to top award;

[0045] FIG. 9: Screen shot of exemplary game with said screen displaying correspondence between larger wager amount and larger award increases;

[0046] FIG. 10: Screen shot of exemplary game with said screen displaying multiple award increases;

[0047] FIG. 11: Screen shot of exemplary game with said screen displaying a winning outcome and corresponding award increase;

[0048] FIG. 12: Screen shot of exemplary game with said screen displaying a start of a bonus game w/pay line wager of 5 units causing one time awards boost; and

[0049] FIG. 13: Screen shot of exemplary game with said screen displaying reset pf awards after bonus game concludes.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0050] For the purposes of promoting an understanding of the principles in accordance with the embodiments of the present invention, reference will now be made to the embodiments illustrated in the drawings and specific language will be used to describe the same. It will nevertheless be understood that no limitation of the scope of the invention is thereby intended. Any alterations and further modifications of the inventive feature illustrated herein, and any additional applications of the principles of the invention as illustrated herein, which would normally occur to one skilled in the relevant art and having possession of this disclosure, are to be considered within the scope of the invention claimed.

[0051] Turning to the drawings, FIG. 1 shows a block diagram 100 detailing one game embodiment of the present invention, namely a game having a random increase in a progressive award value based upon a game outcome. In the block diagram 100, a player first places a wager 110, initiates

the game 111 and the game generates an outcome 112. Then, it is determined whether the outcome causes the progressive award value to increase 113. If yes, it is determined whether the player's wager amount is sufficient to cause the progressive award value to increase 114. In other words, increasing the progressive award amount is dependent upon the game outcome and the amount of the player wager. If the answer to the questions at steps 113 and 114 is positive, at step 115, the progressive award value is increased. If the answer to either one of the questions at steps 113 and 114 is negative, the progressive award value is not increased. It is next determined whether the game outcome is a winning outcome 116. If so, the player is paid an award 117. At step 118, it is determined whether the progressive award was won. If not, the game ends 120. If yes, the progressive award value is re-set 119.

[0052] It is noted that in block diagram 100, the nature of the game outcome required to cause a progressive award increase is not explicitly stated in accordance with the ability of the embodiments of the present invention to apply to either primary game outcomes and/or secondary game outcomes.

[0053] FIG. 2 shows a block diagram 200 detailing another embodiment of the present invention, namely a game having a non-linked progressive award whereby progressive award gains carry over between play sessions. In such an embodiment, a player tracking system maintains the carry over of the progressive award in a player the and/or database. To that extent, block diagram 200 details a player playing one or more games (e.g., machine, device or Internet interface) during a single gaming session where each of the games played during the gaming session are associated with the same identified player.

[0054] Initially a player tracking system in communication with the game identifies the player 210 and determines whether the player is a repeat player or first time player 211. If the player is a repeat player, the progressive award values are set to the previous values after a last gaming session 212. If the player is not a repeat player, the progressive award values are set to their default seed values 230. The game is then initiated 213 and a game outcome generated 214. Based on the game outcome generated at step 214, it is then determined whether a progressive award should be increased 215. If so, the progressive award value is increased 231 and saved in association with the identified player 232. The player then elects to play the game again 215 or end the game 217. In this configuration the progressive award values are personal to the player and are maintained by a player tracking system.

[0055] FIG. 3 shows a block diagram 300 detailing another embodiment of the present invention, namely a game having a progressive award that can only be won in a bonus round, and whether or not the progressive award is won, it is reset after the bonus round concludes. The block diagram 300 also takes into account the initial establishment of the progressive award value. It is based on a standard method of increasing the progressive award as a percentage of every eligible wager.

[0056] The game is first activated 310 and it is then determined if the game has been activated previously 311. If not, the progressive award value is set at the initial/default seed value 312. Wagers are then accepted from a subject player 313 and the game is initiated by the player 314. Based on the wager amount, the progressive award value is increased 315 and the game is played 316 thus generating a game outcome. It is then determined if the game outcome triggers a bonus event 317. If the game outcome does trigger a bonus event, a bonus game is played during which the progressive award(s)

may be won 318. After the bonus game is played, the progressive award values are reset 319. R is then determined whether the player earned any awards 320 and if so, the awards are credited to the player 321. The game ends at step 322.

[0057] FIG. 4 shows a block diagram 400 similar to block diagram 300. However, it details an innovative method of randomly increasing the progressive award as described in the embodiments of the present invention.

[0058] The game is first activated 410 and it is then determined if the game has been activated previously 411. If not, the progressive award value is set at the initial/default seed value 412. Wagers are then accepted from a subject player 413 and the game is initiated by the player 414 and a game outcome is generated 415. It is then determined if the game outcome triggers a progressive award value increase 416. If yes, the progressive award value is increased 417 and then the progressive award value is increased based on the wager amount 418. It is then determined whether the game outcome triggers a bonus event 419. The bonus game is then played 420 and after the bonus game is played, the progressive award values are reset 421. It is then determined whether the player earned any awards 422 and if so, the awards are credited to the player 423. The game ends at step 424.

[0059] FIG. 5 shows a block diagram 500 detailing an exemplary gaming system and game which combines a number of inventive components in a single game. The player ID is obtained 510 and it is determined whether the player has played previously 511. If the player has not played previously, the progressive award values are set to their default seed values 530, else the progressive award values are restored to their values corresponding to their values the last time said player played said game 512. The player initiates the game 513 which generates a game outcome 514. If the game outcome matches required outcome necessary to trigger a progressive award increase 515, the corresponding progressive award value is increased 531 and the updated value is saved 532. Block diagram 500 applies whether the progressive award increase triggering outcome is based on the primary game outcome or based on a secondary game outcome. It is then determined whether the game outcome triggers a bonus outcome 516. If the game outcome triggers a bonus round, the pay line wager which activated the bonus round is examined to determine if it is greater than one unit 517. If the activating pay line wager is greater than one unit, the progressive awards are increased based upon a difference between the activating pay line wager and one unit 518. Then, the bonus event is played during which the player has the chance of winning at least one of the progressive awards 519. When the bonus event concludes, whether or not any progressive award is earned by the player, the progressive awards are reset 520 and stored 521. The player can then play again 522 or can end his or her play session 523.

[0060] FIG. 6 shows a screen shot from an exemplary game featuring some of aspects of the embodiments of the present invention. The screen shot shows three progressive awards, referred to as top progressive 610, middle progressive 620 and bottom progressive 630. When the game is played by a player for the first time, the progressive awards are, for example, set to 100 units, 75 units and 50 units, respectively.

[0061] FIG. 7 shows a successive screen shot which follows from FIG. 6. A jackpot symbol 640 appears on the third reel, which in one embodiment of the present invention causes the bottom progressive award 630 to increase by a total amount of

the wager such that the new value becomes 55 units (i.e., 50 units+5 units=55 units.). FIG. 8 shows another screen shot. A jackpot symbol 650 appears on the first reel, which in one embodiment of the present invention causes the top progressive award 610 to increase by twice a total amount of the wager such that the new value becomes 110 units (i.e., 100 units+2*5 units=110 units).

[0062] FIG. 9 shows another screen shot. A jackpot symbol 660 appears on the third reel, which in one embodiment of the present invention causes the bottom progressive award 630 to increase by a total amount of the wager. Since in this screen shot, the wager size is 25 units, the new value becomes 80 units (i.e., 55 units+25 units=80 units). FIG. 10 show another screen shot demonstrating that multiple progressive award increase triggering events may occur simultaneously. As shown, two different progressive awards are increased. The jackpot symbol 670 on the 2nd reel causes the middle progressive award 620 to increase while the jackpot symbol 680 on the 3rd reel causes the bottom progressive award 630 to increase. A game message area 680 shown in the screen shot indicates that "10 Added to Middle Bonus Jackpot", however, this is a dynamic display area which also displays other messages which, in this example, would also include "10 Added to Bottom Bonus Jackpot".

[0063] FIG. 11 shows another screen shot demonstrating that progressive award increase triggers and primary game winning outcomes may occur simultaneously. As shown 32 units 690 are won based on the game outcome defined by the symbols on the reels and the middle progressive award value 620 has been increased.

[0064] FIG. 12 shows another screen shot. A primary game has triggered a bonus event with a wager of 5 units on the pay line which activated the bonus. The progressive award values, which were 110 units, 90 units and 90 units, respectively, prior to the start of the bonus round have been boosted. At the start of the bonus round, the progressive award values 610-630 have been boosted to 510 units, 390 units and 290 units, which corresponds to a boost of 400 units, 300 units and 200 units, respectively, which is based on the fact that the activating wager was 5 units. Therefore, each boost was calculated as Activating Pay Line Wager-1 unit)*Seed, or (5-1)*Seed, or specifically, 4*100 units=400 units, 4*75=300 units and 4*50 units=200 units. The screen shot also indicates that the progressive awards can be won within this bonus round as noted by the color coded slices 700 on the bonus wheel labeled "Jackpot".

[0065] FIG. 13 shows another screen shot. The screen shot shows the status if the game after the completion of the bonus round with a 5 unit activating pay line wager. The progressive award values are therefore set to values calculated as Activating Pay Line Wager*Seed or 5*Seed, or specifically, 5*100 units=500 units, 5*75 units=375 units and 5*50 units=250 units

[0066] Although the invention has been described in detail with reference to several embodiments, additional variations and modifications exist within the scope and spirit of the invention as described and defined in the following claims.

The invention is claimed as follows:

1. A gaming system comprising:
 - at least one input device;
 - at least one display device;
 - at least one processor; and
 - at least one memory device which stores a plurality of instructions, which when executed by the at least one

processor, cause the at least one processor to operate with said at least one display device and said at least one input device to:

- (a) display a plurality of reels,
- (b) receive a wager amount placed on a play of a game, and
- (c) for the wagered on play of the game:
 - (i) cause each of the plurality of reels to display at least one randomly determined symbol, wherein for each of at least one payline, the randomly determined symbols displayed along said payline form one of a plurality of different symbol combinations,
 - (ii) if the displayed randomly determined symbols include a first designated symbol displayed at any symbol display position associated with one of the reels and a second, different designated symbol displayed at any symbol display position associated with a different one of the reels, increase an award value associated with one of the plurality of different symbol combinations,
 - (iii) if the displayed randomly determined symbols include the first designated symbol displayed at any symbol display position associated with one of the reels and do not include the second, different designated symbol displayed at any symbol display position associated with the different one of the reels, not increase the award value associated with the one of the plurality of different symbol combinations,
 - (iv) if the displayed randomly determined symbols include the second, different designated symbol displayed at any symbol display position associated with the different one of the reels and do not include the first designated symbol displayed at any symbol display position associated with one of the reels, not increase the award value associated with the one of the plurality of different symbol combinations, and
 - (v) for each formed symbol combination:
 - (A) determine any award values associated with said formed symbol combination, and
 - (B) display any determined award values associated with said formed symbol combination.

2. The gaming system of claim 1, wherein when executed by the at least one processor for the wagered on play of the game, the plurality of instructions cause the at least one processor to, if the displayed randomly determined symbols include a first designated symbol displayed at any symbol display position associated with one of the reels and a second, different designated symbol displayed at any symbol display position associated with a different one of the reels, increase at least two award values associated with at least two of the different symbol combinations.

3. The gaming system of claim 1, wherein when executed by the at least one processor for the wagered on play of the game, the plurality of instructions cause the at least one processor to, if the displayed randomly determined symbols include the first designated symbol displayed at a first symbol display position associated with one of the reels and the second, different designated symbol displayed at a second, different symbol display position associated with the different one of the reels, increase the award value associated with the one of the plurality of different symbol combinations.

4. The gaming system of claim 1, wherein when executed by the at least one processor for the wagered on play of the game, the plurality of instructions cause the at least one processor to, if the displayed randomly determined symbols include the first designated symbol displayed at any symbol display position associated with one of the reels and a third, different designated symbol displayed at any symbol display position associated with the different one of the reels, increase an award value associated with another one of the plurality of different symbol combinations.

5. The gaming system of claim 4, wherein when executed by the at least one processor for the wagered on play of the game, the plurality of instructions cause the at least one processor to, if the displayed randomly determined symbols include the first designated symbol displayed at a first symbol display position associated with one of the reels and the third, different designated symbol displayed at a second, different symbol display position associated with the different one of the reels, increase the award value associated with the other one of the plurality of different symbol combinations.

6. The gaming system of claim 1, wherein the plurality of reels includes five reels.

7. The gaming system of claim 1, wherein at least one of the wager amount and at least one of the award values are selected from the group consisting of: a quantity of monetary credits, a quantity of non-monetary credits, and a quantity of player tracking points.

8. The gaming system of claim 1, which includes a housing, and a plurality of input devices supported by the housing, said plurality of input devices including (i) an acceptor, and (ii) a cashout device, wherein when executed by the at least one processor, the plurality of instructions cause the at least one processor to operate with the plurality of input devices to: if a physical item is received via the acceptor, establish a credit balance based, at least in part, on a monetary value associated with the received physical item, and if a cashout input is received via the cashout device, cause an initiation of any payout associated with the credit balance.

9. A gaming system server comprising:
at least one processor; and

at least one memory device which stores a plurality of instructions, which when executed by the at least one processor, cause the at least one processor to:

- (a) cause at least one display device to display a plurality of reels,
- (b) receive data associated with a wager amount placed on a play of a game, and
- (c) for the wagered on play of the game:
 - (i) cause each of the plurality of reels to display at least one randomly determined symbol, wherein for each of at least one payline, the randomly determined symbols displayed along said payline form one of a plurality of different symbol combinations,
 - (ii) if the displayed randomly determined symbols include a first designated symbol displayed at any symbol display position associated with one of the reels and a second, different designated symbol displayed at any symbol display position associated with a different one of the reels, increase an award value associated with one of the plurality of different symbol combinations,
 - (iii) if the displayed randomly determined symbols include the first designated symbol displayed at any symbol display position associated with one of the

reels and do not include the second, different designated symbol displayed at any symbol display position associated with the different one of the reels, not increase the award value associated with the one of the plurality of different symbol combinations,

- (iv) if the displayed randomly determined symbols include the second, different designated symbol displayed at any symbol display position associated with the different one of the reels and do not include the first designated symbol displayed at any symbol display position associated with one of the reels, not increase the award value associated with the one of the plurality of different symbol combinations, and
- (v) for each formed symbol combination:
 - (A) determine any award values associated with said formed symbol combination, and
 - (B) cause the at least one display device to display any determined award values associated with said formed symbol combination.

10. The gaming system server of claim **9**, wherein when executed by the at least one processor for the wagered on play of the game, the plurality of instructions cause the at least one processor to, if the displayed randomly determined symbols include a first designated symbol displayed at any symbol display position associated with one of the reels and a second, different designated symbol displayed at any symbol display position associated with a different one of the reels, increase at least two award values associated with at least two of the different symbol combinations.

11. The gaming system server of claim **9**, wherein when executed by the at least one processor for the wagered on play of the game, the plurality of instructions cause the at least one processor to, if the displayed randomly determined symbols include the first designated symbol displayed at a first symbol display position associated with one of the reels and the second, different designated symbol displayed at a second, different symbol display position associated with the different one of the reels, increase the award value associated with the one of the plurality of different symbol combinations.

12. The gaming system server of claim **9**, wherein when executed by the at least one processor for the wagered on play of the game, the plurality of instructions cause the at least one processor to, if the displayed randomly determined symbols include the first designated symbol displayed at any symbol display position associated with one of the reels and a third, different designated symbol displayed at any symbol display position associated with the different one of the reels, increase an award value associated with another one of the plurality of different symbol combinations.

13. The gaming system server of claim **12**, wherein when executed by the at least one processor for the wagered on play of the game, the plurality of instructions cause the at least one processor to, if the displayed randomly determined symbols include the first designated symbol displayed at a first symbol display position associated with one of the reels and the third, different designated symbol displayed at a second, different symbol display position associated with the different one of the reels, increase the award value associated with the other one of the plurality of different symbol combinations.

14. The gaming system server of claim **9**, wherein the plurality of reels includes five reels.

15. The gaming system server of claim **9**, wherein at least one of the wager amount and at least one of the award values are selected from the group consisting of: a quantity of monetary credits, a quantity of non-monetary credits, and a quantity of player tracking points.

16. The gaming system server of claim **9**, wherein any determined award values causes an increase of a credit balance which is increasable via an acceptor of a physical item associated with a monetary value, and decreasable via a cash-out device configured to receive an input to cause an initiation of a payout associated with the credit balance.

17. The gaming system server of claim **9**, which transmits and receives data over a data network.

18. The gaming system server of claim **17**, wherein the data network is an internet.

19. A method of operating a gaming system, said method comprising:

- (a) causing at least one display device to display a plurality of reels,
- (b) receiving a wager amount placed on a play of a game, and
- (c) for the wagered on play of the game:

- (i) causing each of the plurality of reels to display at least one randomly determined symbol, wherein for each of at least one payline, the randomly determined symbols displayed along said payline form one of a plurality of different symbol combinations,

- (ii) if the displayed randomly determined symbols include a first designated symbol displayed at any symbol display position associated with one of the reels and a second, different designated symbol displayed at any symbol display position associated with a different one of the reels, causing at least one processor to execute a plurality of instructions to increase an award value associated with one of the plurality of different symbol combinations,

- (iii) if the displayed randomly determined symbols include the first designated symbol displayed at any symbol display position associated with one of the reels and do not include the second, different designated symbol displayed at any symbol display position associated with the different one of the reels, not increasing the award value associated with the one of the plurality of different symbol combinations,

- (iv) if the displayed randomly determined symbols include the second, different designated symbol displayed at any symbol display position associated with the different one of the reels and do not include the first designated symbol displayed at any symbol display position associated with one of the reels, not increasing the award value associated with the one of the plurality of different symbol combinations, and

- (v) for each formed symbol combination:

- (A) causing the at least one processor to execute the plurality of instructions to determine any award values associated with said formed symbol combination, and

- (B) causing the at least one display device to display any determined award values associated with said formed symbol combination.

20. The method of claim **19**, which includes, for the wagered on play of the game, if the displayed randomly determined symbols include a first designated symbol displayed at any symbol display position associated with one of

the reels and a second, different designated symbol displayed at any symbol display position associated with a different one of the reels, causing the at least one processor to execute the plurality of instructions to increase at least two award values associated with at least two of the different symbol combinations.

21. The method of claim **19**, which includes, for the wagered on play of the game, if the displayed randomly determined symbols include the first designated symbol displayed at a first symbol display position associated with one of the reels and the second, different designated symbol displayed at a second, different symbol display position associated with the different one of the reels, causing the at least one processor to execute the plurality of instructions to increase the award value associated with the one of the plurality of different symbol combinations.

22. The method of claim **19**, which includes, for the wagered on play of the game, if the displayed randomly determined symbols include the first designated symbol displayed at any symbol display position associated with one of the reels and a third, different designated symbol displayed at any symbol display position associated with the different one of the reels, causing the at least one processor to execute the plurality of instructions to increase an award value associated with another one of the plurality of different symbol combinations.

23. The method of claim **22**, which includes, for the wagered on play of the game, if the displayed randomly

determined symbols include the first designated symbol displayed at a first symbol display position associated with one of the reels and the third, different designated symbol displayed at a second, different symbol display position associated with the different one of the reels, causing the at least one processor to execute the plurality of instructions to increase the award value associated with the other one of the plurality of different symbol combinations.

24. The method of claim **19**, wherein the plurality of reels includes five reels.

25. The method of claim **19**, wherein at least one of the wager amount and at least one of the award values are selected from the group consisting of: a quantity of monetary credits, a quantity of non-monetary credits, and a quantity of player tracking points.

26. The method of claim **19**, wherein any determined award values causes an increase of a credit balance which is increasable via an acceptor of a physical item associated with a monetary value, and decreasable via a cashout device configured to receive an input to cause an initiation of a payout associated with the credit balance.

27. The method of claim **19**, which is executed through a data network.

28. The method of claim **27**, wherein the data network is an internet.

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