US 20040198481A1

(19) **United States**

(12) **Patent Application Publication** (10) **Pub. No.: US 2004/0198481 A1**

Herrington et al. (43) **Pub. Date: Oct. 7, 2004**

(54) **VIDEO POKER SYSTEM AND METHOD**

(76) Inventors: **Brian D. Herrington**, Okemos, MI (US); **Arthur O. Rogers**, Dexter, MI (US); **James R. Yee**, Rochester, MI (US)

Correspondence Address:
BRIAN D. HERRINGTON
4439 SATINWOOD
OKEMOS, MI 48864 (US)

(21) Appl. No.: **10/406,079**

(22) Filed: **Apr. 2, 2003**

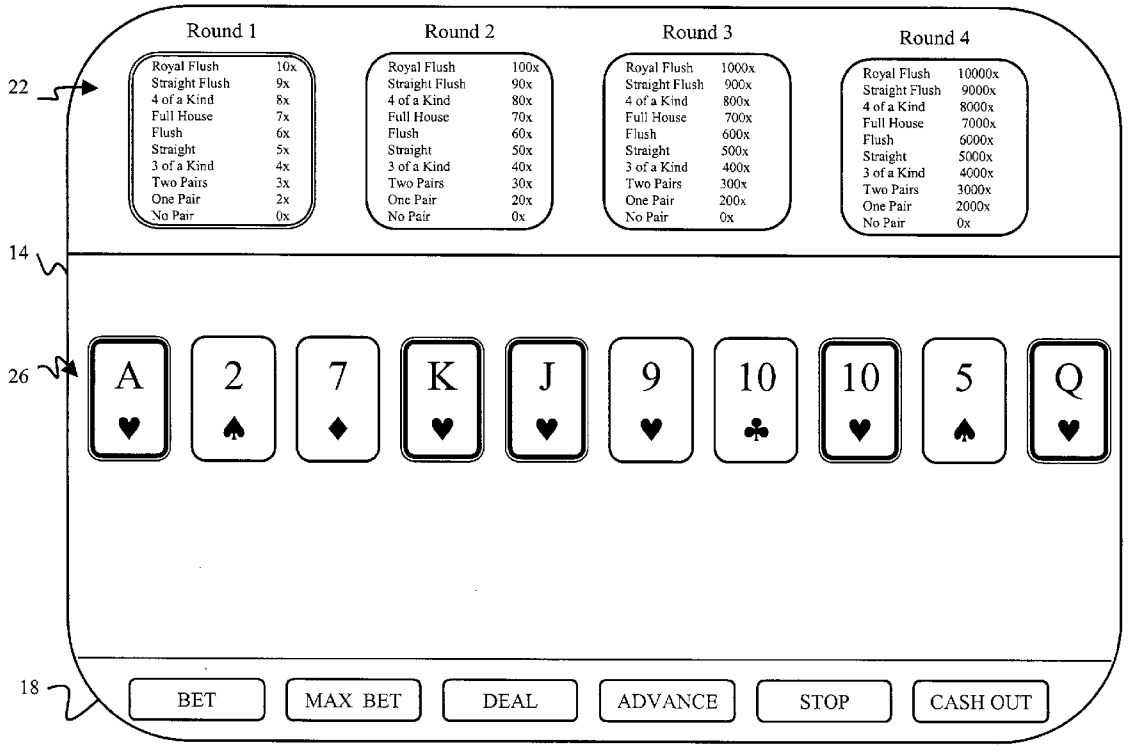
Publication Classification

(51) **Int. Cl.**[7] **A63F 9/24**

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **463/13**

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A system and method of playing a video poker game by a player. The video poker game has a hand composed of a predetermined number of cards. The method includes the steps of displaying on a video screen a number of plurality of playing cards. The number of cards being greater than the predetermined number of cards. The player is given an opportunity to stop play and receive a payout as a function of a first pay table and any winning combination of cards in the plurality of playing cards. If the player does not stop play, a first number of the plurality of playing cards is deleted and a first remaining plurality of playing cards is displayed.



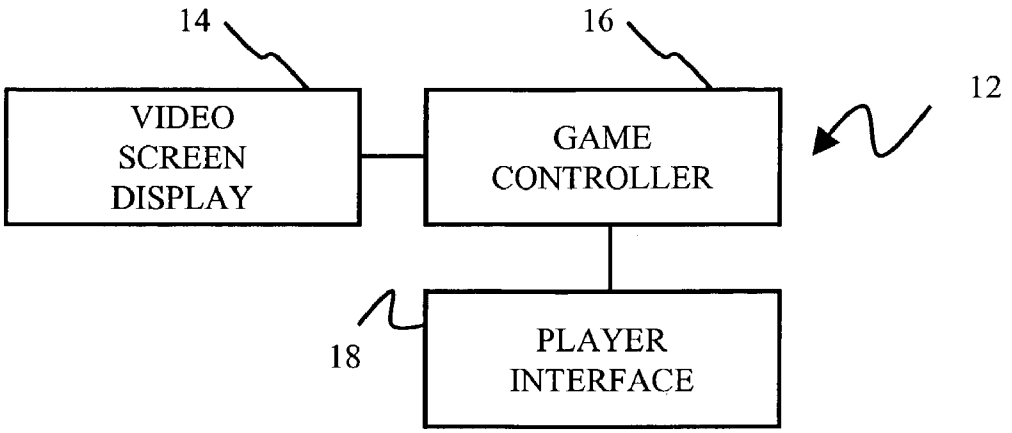


Figure 1

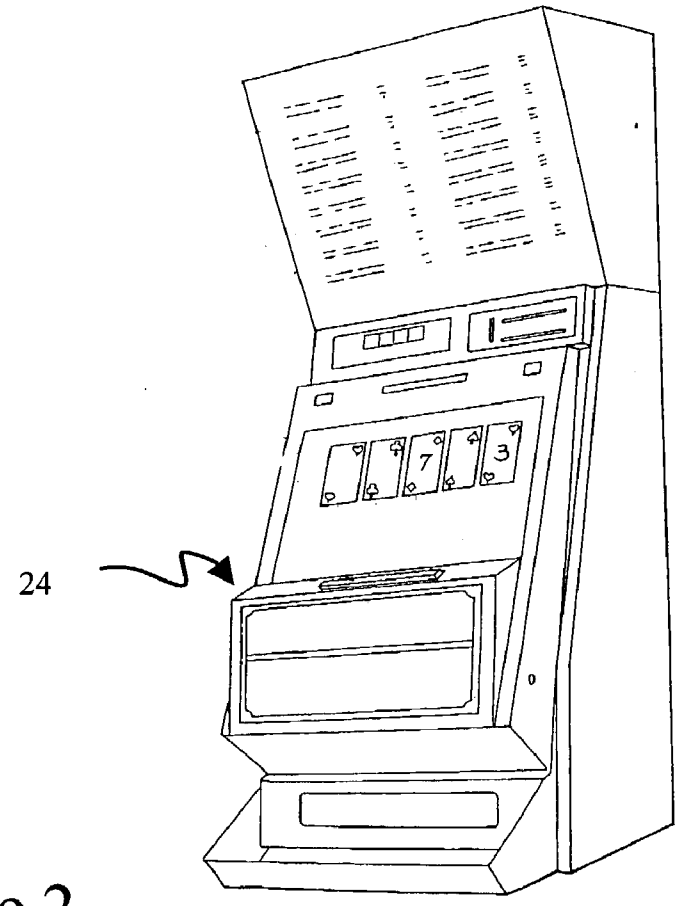


Figure 2

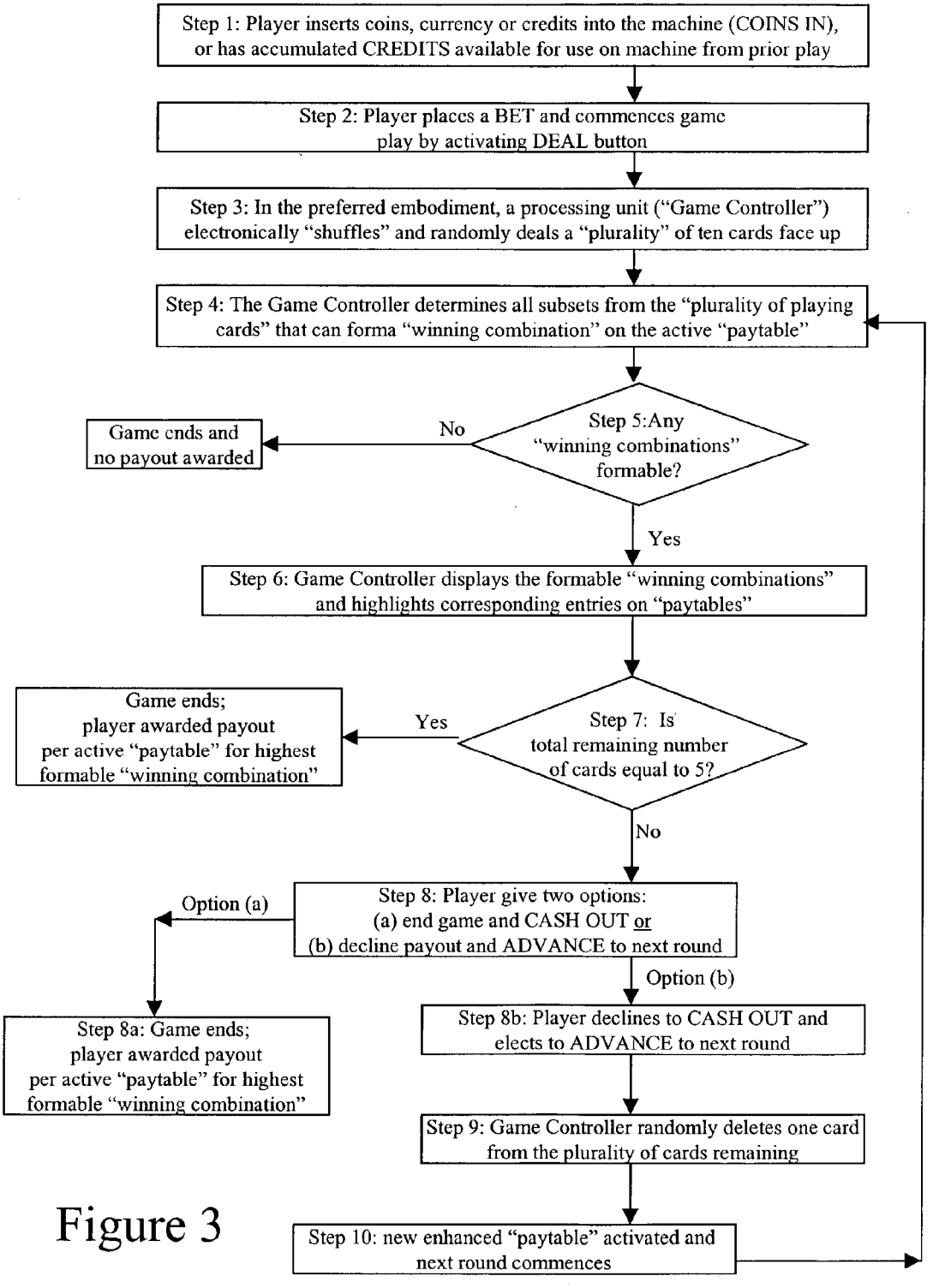

Step 1: Player inserts coins, currency or credits into the machine (COINS IN), or has accumulated CREDITS available for use on machine from prior play
Step 2: Player places a BET and commences game play by activating DEAL button
Step 3: In the preferred embodiment, a processing unit ("Game Controller") electronically "shuffles" and randomly deals a "plurality" of ten cards face up
Step 4: The Game Controller determines all subsets from the "plurality of playing cards" that can forma "winning combination" on the active "paytable"
Step 5:Any "winning combinations" formable?
No
Game ends and no payout awarded
Yes
Step 6: Game Controller displays the formable "winning combinations" and highlights corresponding entries on "paytables"
Step 7: Is total remaining number of cards equal to 5?
Yes
Game ends; player awarded payout per active "paytable" for highest formable "winning combination"
No
Step 8: Player give two options: (a) end game and CASH OUT or (b) decline payout and ADVANCE to next round
Option (a)
Step 8a: Game ends; player awarded payout per active "paytable" for highest formable "winning combination"
Option (b)
Step 8b: Player declines to CASH OUT and elects to ADVANCE to next round
Step 9: Game Controller randomly deletes one card from the plurality of cards remaining
Step 10: new enhanced "paytable" activated and next round commences

Figure 3

Figure 4

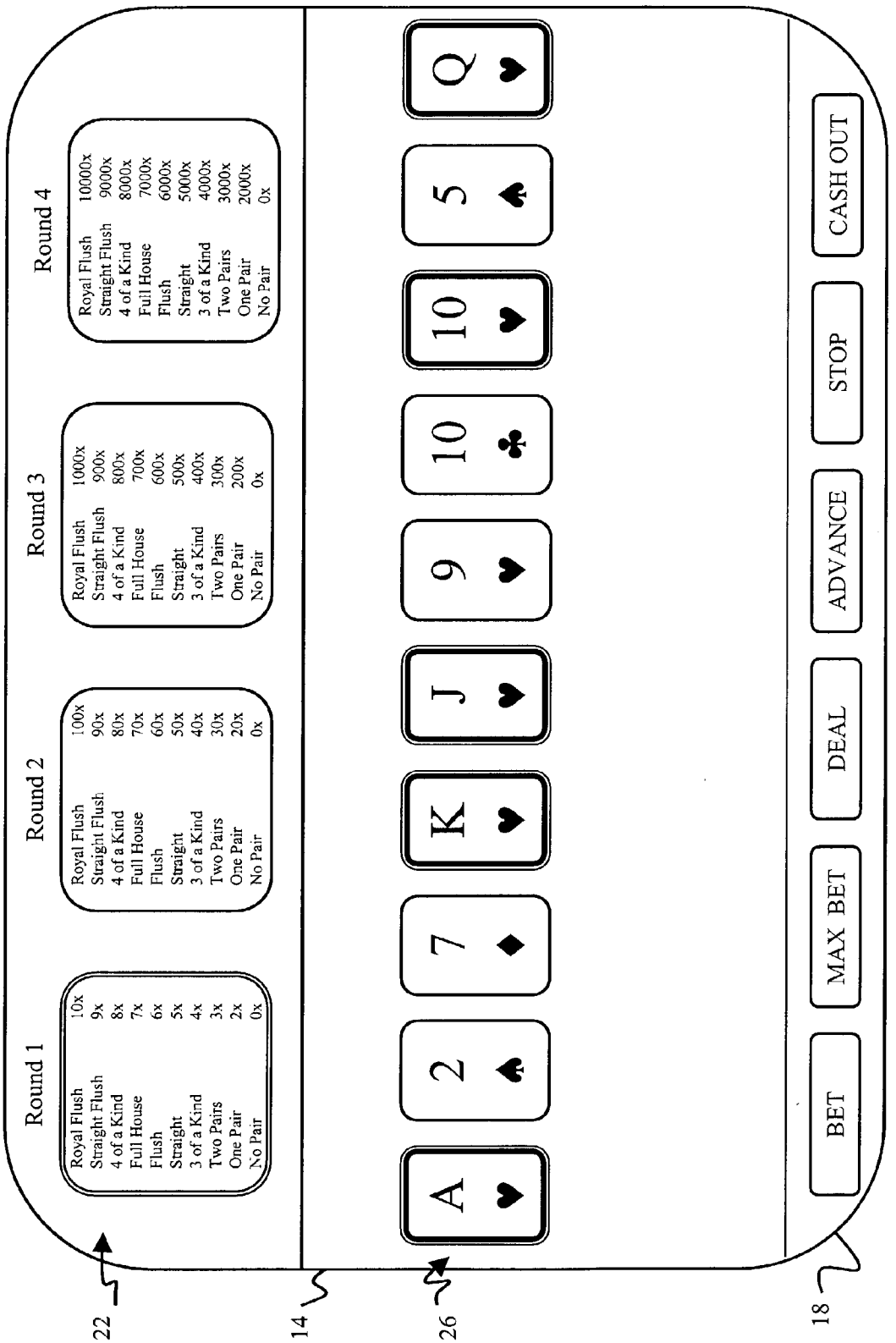

Round 1
Royal Flush 10x
Straight Flush 9x
4 of a Kind 8x
Full House 7x
Flush 6x
Straight 5x
3 of a Kind 4x
Two Pairs 3x
One Pair 2x
No Pair 0x
Round 2
Royal Flush 100x
Straight Flush 90x
4 of a Kind 80x
Full House 70x
Flush 60x
Straight 50x
3 of a Kind 40x
Two Pairs 30x
One Pair 20x
No Pair 0x
Round 3
Royal Flush 1000x
Straight Flush 900x
4 of a Kind 800x
Full House 700x
Flush 600x
Straight 500x
3 of a Kind 400x
Two Pairs 300x
One Pair 200x
No Pair 0x
Round 4
Royal Flush 10000x
Straight Flush 9000x
4 of a Kind 8000x
Full House 7000x
Flush 6000x
Straight 5000x
3 of a Kind 4000x
Two Pairs 3000x
One Pair 2000x
No Pair 0x
A ♥
2 ♠
7 ♦
K ♥
J ♥
9 ♥
10 ♣
10 ♥
5 ♠
Q ♥
BET
MAX BET
DEAL
ADVANCE
STOP
CASH OUT
22
14
26
18

Figure 5

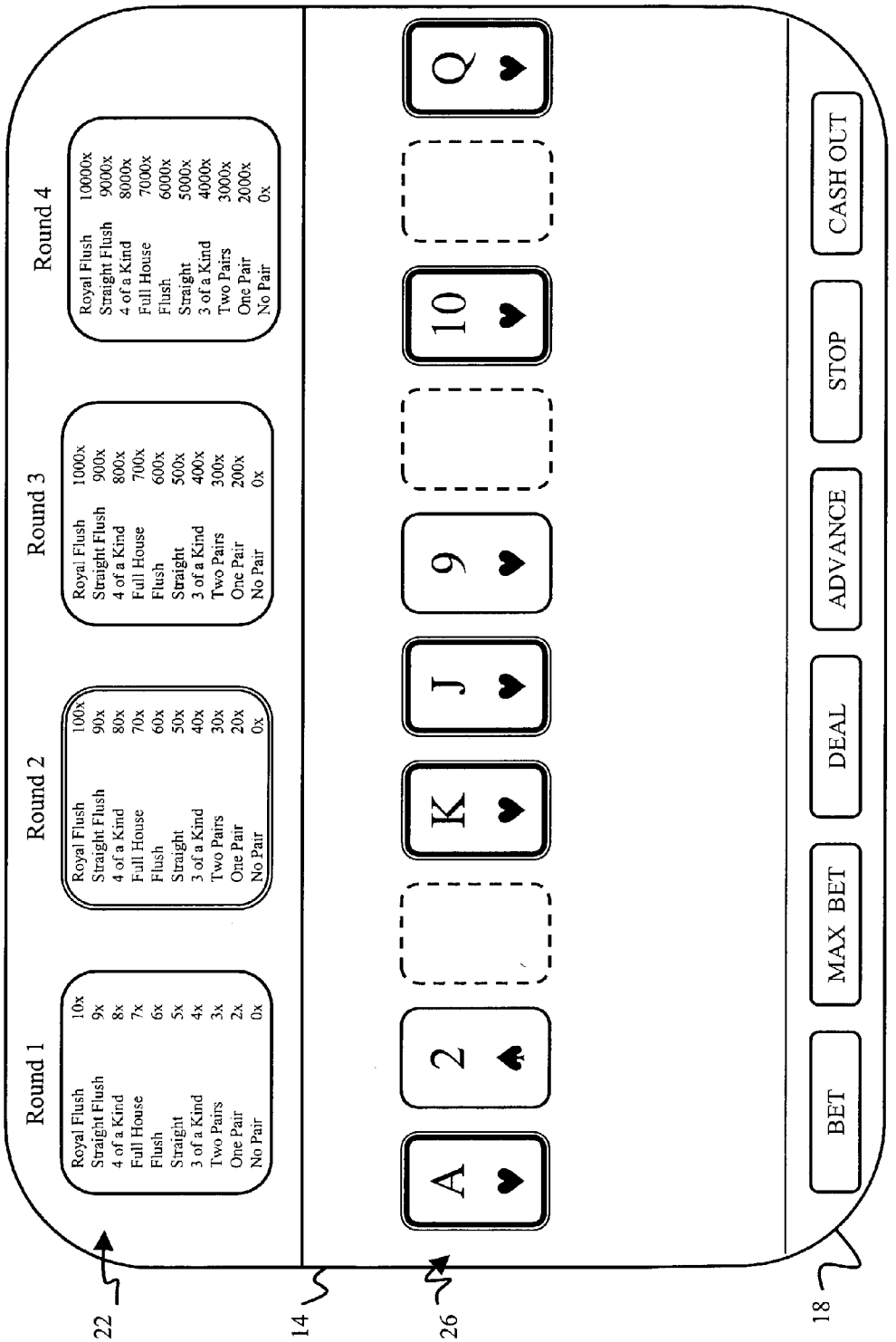
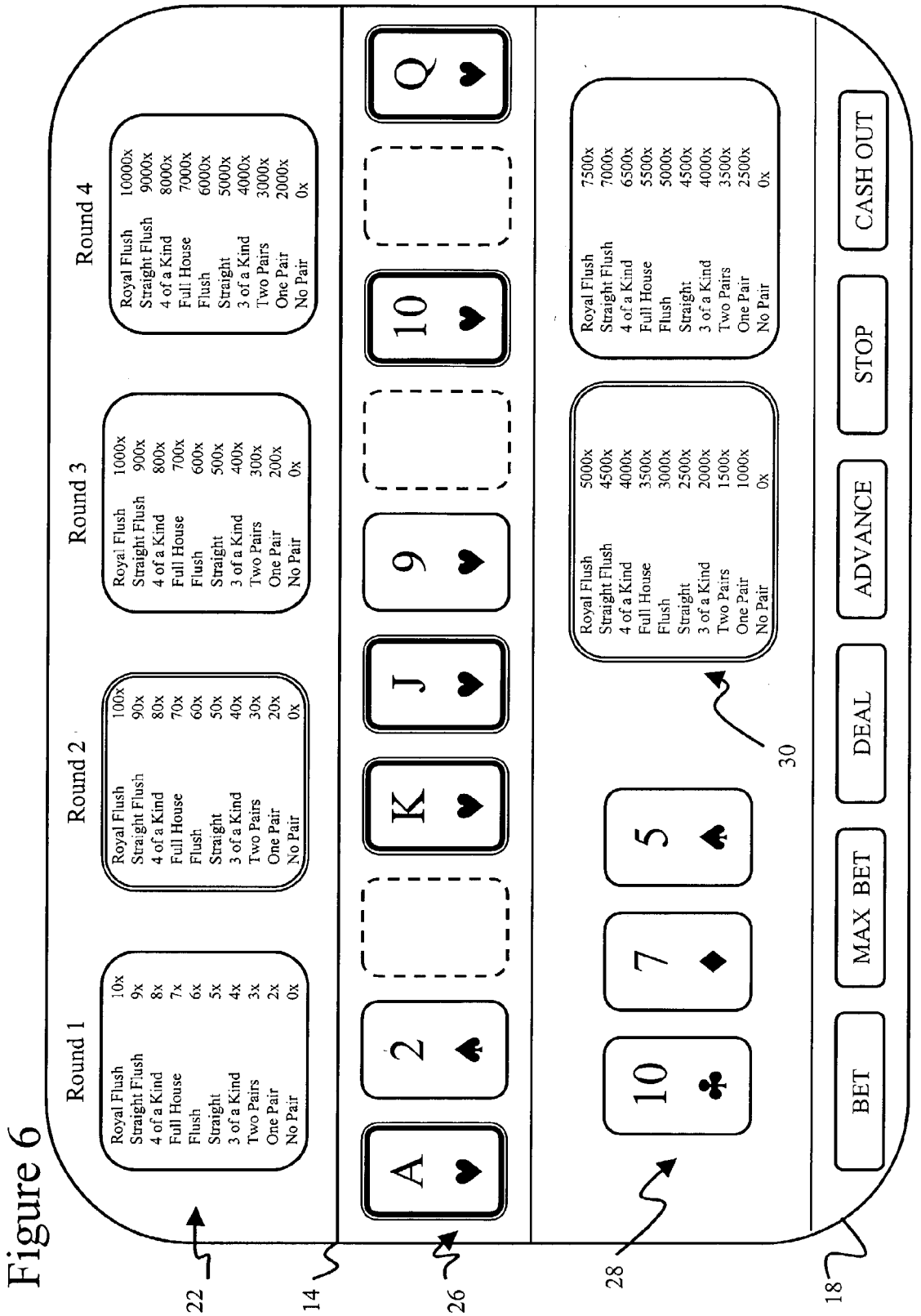

Round 1
Royal Flush 10x
Straight Flush 9x
4 of a Kind 8x
Full House 7x
Flush 6x
Straight 5x
3 of a Kind 4x
Two Pairs 3x
One Pair 2x
No Pair 0x
Round 2
Royal Flush 100x
Straight Flush 90x
4 of a Kind 80x
Full House 70x
Flush 60x
Straight 50x
3 of a Kind 40x
Two Pairs 30x
One Pair 20x
No Pair 0x
Round 3
Royal Flush 1000x
Straight Flush 900x
4 of a Kind 800x
Full House 700x
Flush 600x
Straight 500x
3 of a Kind 400x
Two Pairs 300x
One Pair 200x
No Pair 0x
Round 4
Royal Flush 10000x
Straight Flush 9000x
4 of a Kind 8000x
Full House 7000x
Flush 6000x
Straight 5000x
3 of a Kind 4000x
Two Pairs 3000x
One Pair 2000x
No Pair 0x
A
2
K
J
9
10
Q
BET
MAX BET
DEAL
ADVANCE
STOP
CASH OUT
22
14
26
18

Figure 6


Round 1
Round 2
Round 3
Round 4
Royal Flush 10x
Straight Flush 9x
4 of a Kind 8x
Full House 7x
Flush 6x
Straight 5x
3 of a Kind 4x
Two Pairs 3x
One Pair 2x
No Pair 0x
Royal Flush 100x
Straight Flush 90x
4 of a Kind 80x
Full House 70x
Flush 60x
Straight 50x
3 of a Kind 40x
Two Pairs 30x
One Pair 20x
No Pair 0x
Royal Flush 1000x
Straight Flush 900x
4 of a Kind 800x
Full House 700x
Flush 600x
Straight 500x
3 of a Kind 400x
Two Pairs 300x
One Pair 200x
No Pair 0x
Royal Flush 10000x
Straight Flush 9000x
4 of a Kind 8000x
Full House 7000x
Flush 6000x
Straight 5000x
3 of a Kind 4000x
Two Pairs 3000x
One Pair 2000x
No Pair 0x
A ♥
2 ♠
K ♥
J ♥
9 ♥
10 ♥
Q ♥
10 ♣
7 ♦
5 ♠
Royal Flush 5000x
Straight Flush 4500x
4 of a Kind 4000x
Full House 3500x
Flush 3000x
Straight 2500x
3 of a Kind 2000x
Two Pairs 1500x
One Pair 1000x
No Pair 0x
Royal Flush 7500x
Straight Flush 7000x
4 of a Kind 6500x
Full House 5500x
Flush 5000x
Straight 4500x
3 of a Kind 4000x
Two Pairs 3500x
One Pair 2500x
No Pair 0x
BET
MAX BET
DEAL
ADVANCE
STOP
CASH OUT
22
14
26
28
30
18

VIDEO POKER SYSTEM AND METHOD

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0001] The present invention relates generally to video poker, and more particularly to a system and method for playing video poker played with a user selectable diminishing number of cards.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Video poker games are frequently played in a casino on a video poker machine or over an online network of computers (e.g., the Internet). A significant advantage of the video poker machine is that there no need for a dealer, a table, cheques, cards and/or a plethora of other items that are used in playing traditional poker. Therefore, video poker utilizes little of the casino's infrastructure. Because little of the casino's infrastructure is used, video poker is often favored by the casino operators.

[0003] Video poker games are well known in the art. Traditionally, these video poker games appeal to hard-core poker players, but these video poker games become stale very quickly to advanced players. Additionally, the occasional poker player also finds these traditional video poker games unappealing.

[0004] Also, as players become more sophisticated regarding electronic video poker gaming machines, players prefer to play those poker machines that have pay tables with higher payouts for the types of poker hand rankings that are achievable. There is a need for new video poker gaming machines that are capable of encouraging a high volume of play while at the same time offering what the players consider to be good pay tables.

[0005] Many types of electronic video poker gaming machines have been developed in response to this phenomenon and are used in the casino gaming industry. Some of these video poker games are stud poker games and some are draw poker games. Each of these types of electronic video poker gaming machines is designed to replicate the play of a hand of poker. The player attempts to achieve the highest ranking poker hand possible from the cards dealt or displayed to the player.

[0006] The first electronic video poker gaming machines were standard draw poker games that dealt the player a hand of cards from a standard 52 card poker deck and displayed a single five card hand to the player. This was a conventional "player's hand only" game since the player did not play against a dealer's hand, but was only trying to achieve the highest poker hand ranking he could for his five card hand. In the conventional embodiment, the cards are electronically shuffled and an initial deal of five cards are displayed to the player. The player then selects which of the five cards he wants to hold. The non-selected cards are then removed and the replacement or drawn cards are displayed in place of the cards the player chose to discard. The player then wins or loses based on conventional poker hand rankings (as discussed infra) for the resulting five card hand.

[0007] The classic video draw poker machine has been modified over time to use Deuces (or other cards) as wild cards. Also, one or more Jokers may also be added to the standard fifty-two card deck and the Jokers are also used as wild cards. "Deuces Wild" and "Jokers Wild" draw poker still display to the player a single five card hand and allow the player to discard unwanted cards and receive replacement cards. The pay table is modified to recognize the differing odds for achieving various poker hands when wild cards are involved. When wild cards are used, other winning poker hand rankings can be used such as Five of a Kind or Wild Royal Flushes.

[0008] As video poker has evolved, the various gaming machines that have been disclosed in the related art generally continue to use an electronic video gaming machine that uses a video screen display to show the cards to the player. Computer controls carried on a printed circuit board mounted on the interior of the gaming machine electronically shuffles the deck of cards, activates the dealing sequence in response to input by a player, causes the initial five cards to be displayed on the video screen display, and deals replacement cards after the player has selected which cards to hold and discard and analyze the final five card hand to determine winning and losing hands. The computer controls also effect the payouts to the player based on the amount of the player's wager and the poker hand ranking of the final five card hand.

[0009] An invariant of most poker games is that a traditional poker hand is comprised of five cards. Most video poker machines use conventional poker hand rankings. The player with the highest ranking hand is usually the winner. The traditional rankings of poker hands, in descending order, are given as:

[0010] ROYAL FLUSH, (Ace, King, Queen, Jack and 10 of the same suit);

[0011] STRAIGHT FLUSH, (five cards in sequence in any suit, i.e. Jack, 10, 9, 8, 7, of the same suit);

[0012] FOUR OF A KIND, (four Aces is highest);

[0013] FULL HOUSE, (THREE OF A KIND plus a PAIR, i.e., 10, 10, 10, King King);

[0014] FLUSH (Five cards of the same suit);

[0015] STRAIGHT (five cards in sequence but of different suits, i.e., (Jack, 10, 9, 8, 7);

[0016] THREE OF A KIND (Three cards of the same rank, i.e., three Aces);

[0017] TWO PAIRS (i.e., two Kings and two 10's);

[0018] ONE PAIR (two 5's); and

[0019] NO PAIR

[0020] Since players have become bored with traditional video draw poker, and gaming casino operators are desirous of having different types of electronic video poker games to offer to the players, there is a need to provide new and interesting electronic video poker games that attract players and that can increase the volume of wagering in each gaming machine.

[0021] It is an object of the present invention to provide a new and interesting form of video poker which will attract players and increase the number of hands that can be played in a given time period while at the same time offering the player a good pay table.

[0022] Other objects, features and advantages of the present invention will become apparent from a consideration of the following detailed description.

[0023] The present invention is aimed at one or more of the problems set forth above.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0024] The subject invention provides a gaming machine and a method of playing the game. The gaming machine includes a processing unit (game controller) for controlling and processing the order of game play through one or more rounds as described below, input means for player wagering and player game play input/selections, and a display and a display processor for displaying representations of a plurality of playing cards, game information and options, and paytables to a player.

[0025] The subject invention provides a method of playing a video card-based game. The game, in its general form, includes the steps of:

[0026] (1) a player placing a wager

[0027] (2) displaying a randomly selected plurality of playing cards in number at least one greater than the standard hand (i.e., a hand being comprised of a predetermined number of cards) of the game being played,

[0028] (3) identifying (according to a list of predetermined combinations, as typically reflected in a "paytable") any "winning combinations" that can be formed using subset(s) of the plurality of cards,

[0029] (4) giving the player the opportunity to selectively:

[0030] (a) stop the game and receive a payout of winnings according to the currently active paytable and winning combination, or

[0031] (b) allow the game controller to randomly delete a number of the plurality of cards in exchange for providing the player enhanced payout odds if winning combinations can still be formed following the random reduction,

[0032] (4) repeating the sequence of steps **3** and **4** until the game is terminated by:

[0033] (a) the player electing to stop play and being paid any payout awarded at the current round,

[0034] (b) the deletion results in the non-existence of any winning combinations, or

[0035] (c) the plurality of cards is reduced to a predetermined lowest number.

[0036] Accordingly, the game of the subject invention overcomes the deficiencies of the related art games by providing a very fast-paced, easily understood game which encourages play by both experts and non-expert gamers alike, encouragement of repeated additional wagering and/or wagering of amounts previously won in exchange for the opportunity to win enhanced amounts.

[0037] It is a feature and an advantage to the present invention to provide an improved modified video card game that creates a higher perceived sense of winning than conventional video card games.

[0038] It is another feature and advantage to the present invention to provide an improved modified video card game that enables the player to exhibit some control over the risk versus reward balance by deciding how many rounds to advance in the game.

[0039] It is another feature and advantage of the present invention in providing an improved modified card game which may be implemented in a stand-alone environment.

[0040] It is another feature and advantage of the present invention in providing an improved modified video card game that is exciting and fast to play.

[0041] It is another feature and advantage of the present invention in providing a modified video card game which provides the player or players the opportunity to increase their winnings.

[0042] In addition, the present invention optionally and advantageously provides the player with the feature of increasing their winnings with additional risk of loss, including any winnings in prior rounds. Thus, in the present invention, an opportunity is provided to the player to increase his or her winnings, making the modified card game unexpectedly and substantially more exciting than other games.

[0043] In addition, the game is simple to learn, fast-paced, and may encourage players to wager additional amounts, thereby attracting a variety of players of differing skill levels and interests, while potentially increasing revenues for the game's owner.

[0044] The subject invention provides a gaming machine and a method of playing the game. The gaming machine includes a processing unit (game controller) for controlling and processing the order of game play.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0045] Other advantages of the present invention will be readily appreciated as the same becomes better understood by reference to the following detailed description when considered in connection with the accompanying drawings wherein:

[0046] **FIG. 1** is block diagram of a video poker system, according to an embodiment of the present invention;

[0047] **FIG. 2** is a diagrammatic illustration of a video poker gaming machine apparatus, according to an embodiment of the present invention;

[0048] **FIG. 3** is an exemplary screen shot of the video poker system of **FIG. 1**;

[0049] **FIG. 4** is a second exemplary screen shot of the video poker system of **FIG. 1**; and

[0050] **FIG. 6** is an exemplary screen shot of the video poker system of **FIG. 1**, according to an alternate embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0051] To achieve the features and advantages of the present invention, an improved video card game apparatus

and method of game play is provided. In the preferred embodiment, the game is based upon five card poker.

[0052] With reference to **FIGS. 1 and 2**, an electronic video poker gaming machine apparatus **10** is used to practice the method of the present invention. The electronic video poker gaming machine **10** has electronic computer controls ("game controller") **14**, a coin hopper, coin-in handling equipment, currency-in handling equipment, such as a bill or stored valued ticket acceptor, a video screen display **14** and other optional equipment such as player tracking apparatus, all as are conventional and well-known in the field. The game controller **14** is programmed to display and operate the method of the present invention. A representative electronic video poker gaming machine **12** upon which the method of the present invention can be practiced is shown in **FIG. 2**.

[0053] The screen display **14** includes at any desired location a card display area in which the cards to be played by the player are shown. In one embodiment, the screen display **14** is sized to display a first plurality of ten playing cards **26**. The screen display **14** may also show the player the number of COINS IN that the player has wagered on the current game as well the number of CREDITS that the player has accrued. In addition, multiple paytables **22** (as shown in **FIGS. 4-6**) may be displayed on the screen display **14**, as may be information regarding the current winning combinations formable by the cards in play at a particular time. The screen display **14** depicts said multiple paytables at any suitable location on the screen display **14**, with said paytables displaying to the player the amounts that the player can win in each round depending on the winning combinations formable utilizing the existing plurality of playing cards. The paytables **22** can have various payout amounts associated with winning combinations depending on what percentages (or house advantage) are desired by the game's owner or operator to be used with the game.

[0054] As is also conventional, a player interface **18** is provided. Specifically, buttons may be provided on a button panel **24** by which the player operates the gaming machine **12** to cause wagers to be placed (using a BET or MAX BET buttons), cards to be dealt (using a DEAL button), cash out accrued credits using any conventional cash out apparatus such as a coin hopper or ticket printer (using a CASH OUT button), and to selectively chose to end the game (using a STOP button) or advance (using an ADVANCE button) to a next round of the game when certain conditions are present as described below in more detail. Instead of, or in addition to, using physical buttons on the button panel to operate the player interface, conventional touch screen technology may be used for some or all such buttons (see **FIGS. 4-6**). The screen display **14** is thus provided with various touch screen locations that use conventional touch screen technology to allow the player to conduct some or all aspects of the method of play of the present invention. Most suitable electronic video poker gaming machines can be modified so that the method of the present invention can be practiced thereon.

[0055] The method of play of the preferred embodiment is illustrated in the flowchart in **FIG. 3**, and as described below:

[0056] Step **1**. The player introduces coins or gaming tokens into the coin-in handling equipment or suitable currency or stored value media into the currency-in handling equipment to activate the gaming machine. Alternatively, if the player has accrued credits from previous games, the player may use those credits to make further wagers.

[0057] Step **2**. The player wagers the desired number of credits (preferably a minimum of four in this embodiment) by pressing the desired physical or touchscreen BET or MAX BET buttons, then begins the game play by pressing a physical or touchscreen DEAL button to cause the initial deal of a plurality of cards **26** to be displayed on the video screen **14**.

[0058] Step **3**. The game controller electronically "shuffles," as is conventional, a standard deck of 52 virtual playing cards and then randomly selects a first plurality of playing cards **26** (P1) to be displayed on the screen display. PI should be at least one greater than the predetermined number of cards (N) which would otherwise constitute a standard hand for the card game being played. In the preferred embodiment, a standard poker hand consists of five cards (i.e., N=5). In the preferred embodiment, therefore, P1 >=six cards, and preferably P1=ten cards. Px represents the number of cards remaining in play in round number x (e.g., x=1, 2, 3 . . . 6 in the preferred embodiment).

[0059] Step **4**. The game controller **16** determines all subsets (if any) of the Px cards that will form a combination which matches one or more of a predetermined list of combinations ("winning combinations") for which the active paytable (Tx) provides a payout. The active pay table may be highlight, as shown in **FIGS. 4-6** or otherwise indicated. In the preferred embodiment, winning combinations consist of the following standard poker card combinations, in descending order of payout:

[0060] ROYAL FLUSH, (Ace, King, Queen, Jack and 10 of the same suit);

[0061] STRAIGHT FLUSH, (five cards in sequence in any suit, i.e. Jack, 10, 9, 8, 7, of the same suit);

[0062] FOUR OF A KIND, (four Aces is highest);

[0063] FULL HOUSE, (THREE OF A KIND plus a PAIR, i. e., 10, 10, 10, King King); FLUSH (Five cards of the same suit);

[0064] STRAIGHT (five cards in sequence but of different suits, i.e., (Jack, 10, 9, 8, 7);

[0065] THREE OF A KIND (Three cards of the same rank, i.e., three Aces);

[0066] TWO PAIRS (i.e., two Kings and two 6's);

[0067] ONE PAIR, JACKS OR BETTER (two Jacks, two Queens, two Kings, or two Aces).

[0068] As will be recognized, often multiple winning combination subsets of the Px cards may be formable. Tx represents the paytable active in round x, an example of which is depicted in **FIG. 4-6**.

[0069] Step **5**. If there are no winning combinations which are formable using the Px cards, the game ends and the player receives no award payout.

[0070] Step **6**. If there are one or more winning combinations which are formable using the Px cards, the game controller identifies the winning combinations which are thusly formable and identifies the winning payout available to the player corresponding to the highest formable winning

combination vis-a-vis paytable Tx, and preferably highlights the corresponding rows on the paytables for the current round (Tx) and for any and all subsequent rounds.

[0071] Step **7**. In the preferred embodiment, if Px=N (i.e., when there are only five total cards remaining in play), the game ends and the player is awarded a payout corresponding to the highest formable winning combination.

[0072] Step **8**. In the preferred embodiment, if Px>N, the player is given the option as to whether to

[0073] (**8***a*) accept the winning payout offered by the current paytable Tx and thereby end the game (using the STOP button), or

[0074] (**8***b*) decline the payout and proceed (using the ADVANCE button), preferably by requiring that an additional wager be placed, to the next round in accordance with Step **9** below.

[0075] Step **9**. If the player declines the payout (and places the required additional wager as required in the preferred embodiment), the game controller randomly selects one or more of the Px cards and deletes same, thereby creating a remaining plurality of playing cards.

[0076] Step **10**. x=x+1, a next enhanced paytable is activated, and the next round commences at Step **4** using the remaining plurality of playing cards. As will be apparent, the next round thus takes place with a reduced number of cards still in play (e.g., 9 rather than 10 in the preferred embodiment after the first round), and thus lower probabilities of being able to form winning combinations. Importantly, however, a new enhanced paytable **22** is activated, which must provide increased payouts vis-a-vis the paytable of the prior round so as to entice the player to accept the increased lower probabilities associated with the remaining/reduced number of plurality of playing cards from which to form any winning combinations.

[0077] In one embodiment, the initial number of plurality of playing cards **P1** equals ten and the predetermined number of cards equals five. In the preferred embodiment where play can continue only until Px=N, therefore, there are six potential rounds and, accordingly, five potential opportunities for the player to place an additional wager and advance to the next round. It is envisioned, however, that **P1** can be any number of cards greater than N, depending upon the desired number of potential rounds, cards to be deleted per round, and/or attendant paytable odds which the game's operator (or, alternatively, the player) selects.

[0078] In the preferred embodiment, the player is required to make an additional wager (e.g., one credit) to proceed to the next round, although it is envisioned that in some embodiments such an additional wager may not be required of the player in order to proceed to the next round.

[0079] In addition, in the preferred embodiment, one card is randomly deleted each round at Step **9**, although it is envisioned that that in some embodiments more than one card could be deleted per round, provided that the number of cards Px is never less than the N cards required to otherwise form a full normal hand.

[0080] In addition, in the preferred embodiment, one virtual standard 52-card deck is used, although it is envisioned that alternative decks, multiple decks or partial decks could alternatively be used in the game, including those with Joker(s) or other designated "wild cards."

[0081] In addition, in the preferred embodiment, the paytables **22** from prior rounds and cards deleted during prior rounds are dimmed or crossed out to signify they are no longer in play.

[0082] In addition, it is envisioned that many typical variations on the standard video poker game may easily be incorporated into the game as described herein. These include incorporation of one or more "Jokers" in the virtual deck, treating certain predetermined cards as "wild" cards, and/or providing the player with the option to selectively delete/"discard" and "draw" one or more replacement cards from those remaining in the deck between Steps **3** and **4** above, as well as other common variations which are well known to those skilled in the art.

[0083] In addition, the game method as described herein is adaptable to a variety of other games where final combinations of one or more elements are utilized to establish the existence of predetermined winning combinations.

[0084] In addition, it is envisioned that between Steps **3** and **4**, the player may be given the option to selectively choose to "lock" one or more of the cards, thereby preventing same from being randomly deleted by the game controller in Step **9** for one or more rounds. Alternatively, the one more or cards to be locked may be randomly selected.

[0085] In addition, it is envisioned that between Steps **8** and **9**, the player may be given the option (optimally for an additional wager) during one or more predetermined rounds to selectively "lock" one or more cards, thereby preventing same from being randomly deleted by the game controller in Step **9** during one or more subsequent rounds.

[0086] In addition, while in the preferred embodiment the game has the potential to continue until the minimum number of cards remain sufficient to form a normal hand (as reflected in Steps **7** and **8** above), it is envisioned that the game could continue until any predetermined number of cards remain in excess of that minimum (e.g., when six cards remain in a five-card hand game).

[0087] In addition, while in the preferred embodiment the game has the potential to only continue until the minimum number of cards remain sufficient to form a normal hand (as reflected in Steps **7** and **8** above), it is envisioned that the game could continue for additional rounds until a predetermined lesser number of cards remain (e.g., when just two cards remain in an otherwise five-card hand based game).

[0088] In addition, while in the preferred embodiment the game method is described for use in a physical casino environment, it is envisioned that games in accordance with the method of this invention could easily be adapted for use in an online casino gaming context and/or over a networked system of computers such as the Internet.

[0089] In addition, while in the preferred embodiment the minimum winning combination is a pair of jacks, it is envisioned that other lesser combinations (including no pairs) could constitute a winning combination(s) on one or more of the paytables.

[0090] In addition, in the preferred embodiment, the game controller selects and displays the initial plurality of cards.

It is envisioned, however, that the player may select the initial plurality from a display of the 52 randomly arranged face-down cards via the touchscreen.

[0091] In addition, while in the preferred embodiment the deleted cards are not used as an element of the game after they are deleted from the plurality of cards, it is envisioned that the deleted cards could be displayed as and form an alternative hand/plurality of playing cards **28** (see **FIG. 6**), with alternative paytables **30** providing for alternative payouts on alternative winning combinations.

[0092] Other aspects and features of the present invention can be obtained from a study of the drawings, the disclosure, and the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, the video poker game having a hand composed of a predetermined number of cards, including the steps of:

displaying on a video screen a number of plurality of playing cards, the number of plurality of cards being greater than the predetermined number of cards;

giving the player an opportunity to stop play and paying a payout as a function of a first pay table and any winning combination of cards in the plurality of playing cards; and,

if the player does not stop play, randomly deleting a first number of the plurality of playing cards and displaying a first remaining plurality of playing cards.

2. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 1, further comprising the step of paying a payout as a function of a second pay table and any winning combination of cards in the first remaining plurality of playing cards.

3. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 2, wherein the second pay table provides enhanced payouts of an increased payout over the first pay table.

4. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

giving the player an opportunity to stop play and paying a payout as a function of a second pay table and any winning combination of cards in the first remaining plurality of playing cards; and,

if the player does not stop play, randomly deleting a second number of the plurality of playing cards and displaying a second remaining plurality of playing cards.

5. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 1, wherein the predetermined number of cards is five.

6. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 1, wherein the predetermined number of cards is seven.

7. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 1, wherein the first number is predetermined.

8. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 1, wherein the first number may be selected by the player.

9. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 2, wherein the first number may be selected by the player and the second pay table is determined as a function of the first number.

10. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 9, wherein the player selects the first number from a plurality of choices and the second pay table has a higher payout based on a higher first number.

11. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 1, including the step of graphically identifying any winning combination of cards in the plurality of playing cards.

12. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 11, wherein the step of graphically identifying any winning combination of cards includes the step of cycling through each winning combination if there is more then one winning combination.

13. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 1, including the steps of:

displaying the first pay table; and,

graphically identifying any winning combination on the displayed pay table.

14. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 13, wherein the step of graphically identifying any winning combination of cards includes the step of cycling through each winning combination if there are more then one winning combination.

15. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 1, wherein the step of randomly deleting a first number of the plurality of playing cards includes the steps of:

sequentially identifying groups of at least one card and graphically identifying the groups to the player, each group having a number of cards equal to the first number; and,

allowing the player to choose a desirable group through manipulation of a player interface; and,

selecting one of the groups as a function of user manipulation of the player interface, where the selected group is deleted.

16. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 1, wherein the randomly selected plurality of playing cards are selected from at least one virtual deck, the virtual deck including at least 52 playing cards.

17. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 16, the virtual deck including at least one wild card.

18. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 1, including the step of allowing the player to lock at least one of the plurality of playing cards, wherein any locked card cannot be deleted.

19. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 18, wherein the player selects the at least one of the plurality of playing cards.

20. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 18, wherein the at least one of the plurality of playing cards is randomly selected.

21. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 1, including the step of the player placing a wager to start the game.

22. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 1, wherein the step of giving the player

an opportunity to stop play includes the step of requiring the player to place a wager to not stop play.

23. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 1, wherein the plurality of playing cards are randomly selected.

24. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 1, wherein cards deleted from the plurality of playing cards form an alternative hand of playing cards, the method including the step of paying an alternative payout as a function of an alternative pay table and any winning combination of cards in the alternative hand of playing cards.

25. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 1, including the steps of:

displaying a plurality of selectable playing cards face down; and

allowing the player to select the plurality of playing cards from the plurality of selectable playing cards.

26. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, the video poker game having a hand composed of a predetermined number of cards, including the steps of:

displaying on a video screen of plurality of playing cards, the plurality of cards being greater than the predetermined number of cards in the hand;

giving the player an opportunity to stop play and paying a payout as a function of a first pay table and any winning combination of cards in the plurality of playing cards;

if the player does not stop play, permitting the player to receive an additional number of cards, the plurality of playing cards and the additional number of cards forming a first set of playable cards;

giving the player an opportunity to stop play and paying a payout as a function of a second pay table and any winning combination of cards in the first set of playable cards;

if the player does not stop play, randomly deleting a first number of the plurality of playing cards and displaying a second set of playable cards; and.

paying a payout as a function of a second pay table and any winning combination of cards in the second set of playable cards.

27. A video poker game machine for playing a video poker game by a player, the video poker game having a hand composed of a predetermined number of cards, comprising:

a video display for displaying the video poker game to the player;

a player interface for receiving input from the player;

a game controller coupled to the video display and the player interface, the game controller for displaying on the video screen a number of plurality of playing cards, the number of cards being greater than the predetermined number of cards, for giving the player an opportunity to stop play and paying a payout as a function of a first pay table and any winning combination of cards in the plurality of playing cards, and, if the player does not stop play, randomly deleting a first number of the plurality of playing cards and displaying a first remaining plurality of playing cards.

28. A video poker game machine for playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 27, the game controller adapted to pay a payout as a function of a second pay table and any winning combination of cards in the first remaining plurality of playing cards.

29. A video poker game machine for playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 28, wherein the second pay table provides enhanced payouts for winning combinations over the first pay table.

30. A video poker game machine for playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 27, the game controller for giving the player an opportunity to stop play and paying a payout as a function of a second pay table and any winning combination of cards in the first remaining plurality of playing cards, and, if the player does not stop play, randomly deleting a second number of the plurality of playing cards and displaying a second remaining plurality of playing cards.

31. A video poker game machine for playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 27, wherein the predetermined number of cards is five.

32. A video poker game machine for playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 27, wherein the predetermined number of cards is seven.

33. A video poker game machine for playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 27, wherein the first number is predetermined.

34. A video poker game machine for playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 27, wherein the game controller is adapted to allow the player to select the first number.

35. A video poker game machine for playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 27, wherein the first number may be selected by the player and the second pay table is determined as a function of the first number.

36. A video poker game machine for playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 34, wherein the player selects the first number from a plurality of choices and the second pay table has a higher payout based on a higher first number.

37. A video poker game machine for playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 27, wherein the game controller displays on the video display any winning combination of cards in the plurality of playing cards.

38. A video poker game machine for playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 37, wherein the game controller cycles through each winning combination if there are more then one winning combination.

39. A video poker game machine for playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 27, wherein the game controller displays the first pay table on the video display and graphically identifies any winning combination of cards on the displayed pay table.

40. A video poker game machine for playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 39, wherein the game controller cycles through each winning combination if there are more then one winning combination.

41. A video poker game machine for playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 27, wherein the game controller sequentially identifies groups of at least one card and graphically identifies the groups to the player, each group having a number of cards equal to the first number, allows the player to attempt to choose a desirable group through manipulation of a player interface, and selects one

of the groups as a function of user manipulation of the player interface, where the selected group is deleted.

42. A video poker game machine for playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 27, wherein the randomly selected plurality of playing cards are selected from at least one virtual deck having at least 52 playing cards.

43. A video poker game machine for playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 42, wherein the virtual deck of playing cards includes at least one wild card.

44. A video poker game machine for playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 27, wherein the game controller allows the player to lock at least one of the plurality of playing cards, wherein any locked card cannot be deleted.

45. A video poker game machine for playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 44, wherein the player selects the at least one of the plurality of playing cards.

46. A video poker game machine for playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 44, wherein the at least one of the plurality of playing cards is randomly selected.

47. A video poker game machine for playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 27, wherein the player places a wager to start the game.

48. A video poker game machine for playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 27, wherein the player must place a wager to not stop play.

49. A video poker game machine for playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 27, wherein the plurality of playing cards are randomly selected by the game controller.

50. A video poker game machine for playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 27, wherein the game controller displays a plurality of selectable playing cards face down on the video display and allows the player to select the number of plurality of playing cards from the plurality of selectable playing cards.

51. A video poker game machine for playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 27, wherein cards deleted from the plurality of playing cards form an alternative plurality of playing cards, the game controller for paying an alternative payout as a function of an alternative pay table and any alternative winning combination of cards in the alternative plurality of playing cards.

52. A video poker game machine for playing a video poker game by a player, the video poker game having a hand composed of a predetermined number of cards, comprising:

a video display for displaying the video poker game to the player;

a player interface for receiving input from the player; and,

a game controller coupled to the video display and the player interface, the game controller for displaying on the video screen a plurality of playing cards, the plurality of cards being greater than the predetermined number of cards in the hand, for giving the player an opportunity to stop play and paying a payout as a function of a first pay table and any winning combination of cards in the plurality of playing cards, if the player does not stop play, for permitting the player to receive an additional number of cards, the plurality of playing cards and the additional number of cards forming a first set of playable cards, for giving the player an opportunity to stop play and paying a payout as a function of a second pay table and any winning combination of cards in the first set of playable cards.

53. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, the video poker game having a hand composed of a predetermined number of cards, including the steps of:

(a) the player making a wager;

(b) displaying on a video screen a plurality of playing cards, the number of plurality of playing cards being greater than the predetermined number of cards;

(c) determining all subsets of the plurality of playing cards that form a combination which matches one or more of a predetermined list of winning combinations;

(d) giving the player an opportunity to stop play and paying a payout as a function of an active pay table and at least one of the winning combinations; and,

(e) if the player does not stop play, randomly deleting a first number of the plurality of playing cards and displaying the remaining plurality of playing cards, activating a new active paytable, and repeating steps (c) through (e) using the new active paytable and the remaining plurality of playing cards.

54. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 53, wherein the step of giving the player an opportunity to stop play includes the step of requiring the player to place a wager to not stop play.

55. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 53, wherein the first number is predetermined.

56. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 53, wherein the first number is determined by the player and wherein the new active paytable is determined as a function of the first number.

57. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 53, including the step of graphically identifying the subsets of the plurality of playing cards that form a winning combination.

58. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 57, includes the step of cycling through each subset if there are more then one winning combination.

59. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 53, wherein the step of randomly deleting a first number of the plurality of playing cards includes the steps of:

sequentially identifying groups of at least one card and graphically identifying the groups to the player, each group having a number of cards equal to the first number; and,

allowing the player to choose a desirable group through manipulation of a player interface; and,

selecting one of the groups as a function of user manipulation of the player interface, where the selected group is deleted.

60. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 53, wherein the randomly selected plurality of playing cards are selected from at least one virtual deck, the virtual deck including at least 52 cards.

61. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 53, including the step of allowing the player to lock at least one of the plurality of playing cards, wherein any locked card cannot be deleted.

62. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 61, wherein the player selects the at least one of the plurality of playing cards.

63. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 61, wherein the at least one of the plurality of playing cards is randomly selected.

64. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, as set forth in claim 53, wherein cards deleted from the plurality of playing cards form an alternative hand of playing cards, the method including the step of paying an alternative payout as a function of an alternative pay table and any winning combination of cards in the alternative hand of playing cards.

65. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, including the steps of:

displaying on a video screen a plurality of playing cards;

giving the player an opportunity to stop play and paying a payout as a function of a first pay table and any winning combination of cards in the plurality of playing cards;

if the player does not stop play, randomly deleting a first number of the plurality of playing cards and displaying a remaining plurality of playing cards; and, paying a payout as a function of a second pay table and any winning combination of cards in the remaining plurality of playing cards.

66. A method of playing a video poker game by a player, including the steps as set forth in claim 1, wherein cards deleted from the plurality of playing cards form an alternative plurality of playing cards, and paying an alternative payout as a function of an alternative pay table and any alternative winning combination of cards in the alternative plurality of playing cards.

* * * * *