METHODS AND APPARATUS FOR OPERATING GAMES AND CONTESTS UTILIZING A NOVEL AND UNIQUE POINT SYSTEM TO REALISTICALLY EMULATE REAL MONEY GAMING AND CONTESTS

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ABSTRACT
Methods and apparatus for operating games and contests, utilizing a unique point system, whereby the excitement of participating in traditional games of chance, gambling style games and sport event outcome contests can be realistically emulated, without requiring participants to stake or risk anything of value, other than the personal efforts of the participants in playing the games or participating in the contests or in obtaining access to the Internet or in going to brick and mortar sites where participation in the games and contests is possible, inasmuch as the points that are used by participants are given to them by the sponsors of the games and contests free of charge and can be used for participation in the games or contests without risk of loss, i.e., all points that are given to participants are never, in reality, "lost" and are, at any and all times, redeemable for cash and/or prizes. More specifically, participants are afforded the opportunity to emulate the experience of real money gaming through the thrill of amassing point "winnings," or the agony of suffering point "losses," with absolutely no risk of experiencing the financial devastation of real money gaming or contests, inasmuch as participants cannot put any consideration, not even the points that they have been given, "at risk." The only "risk" to a participant is that the participant will become "hooked" by the entertainment experience and thus participate more often and longer and thereby be exposed to a greater number of messages from the sponsor—in the same manner that previous forms of entertainment such as radio and television have sought to present better and better programming to entice listeners and viewers to tune in more often and listen/watch longer and thereby be exposed to greater numbers of radio and tv commercials.
FIG. 1
Register User At Online Gaming Site

Store User Data

Establish User Prize And Play Accounts

User Plays Online Games In A Practice Mode And Is Exposed To Advertising

Add Points to User Prize Account

Use May Redeem Prize Account Points

User May Only Use Play Account Points To Play Games Online

Use May Opt To Convert Play Points Into Prize Points

Play Points "Lost" By Player Are Mandatorily Converted Into Prize Points

Play Points "Won" By Player Are Added To The Player's House Account

Use May Opt To Convert House Points To Prize Points

House Points "Lost" By Player Are Deducted From His House Account And Added To House Account Of "Winning" Player

Add Points To Accounts Of User For Participation Or A Part Of Promotion

FIG. 2
METHODS AND APPARATUS FOR OPERATING GAMES AND CONTESTS UTILIZING A NOVEL AND UNIQUE POINT SYSTEM TO REALISTICALLY EMULATE REAL MONEY GAMING AND CONTESTS

CROSS REFERENCES TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This is a non-provisional patent application claiming benefit of priority of U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/813,491, filed on Jun. 14, 2006 in the name of H. Anthony DeRosa-Grund and Charles W. Grimes for “Methods and apparatus for operating games and contests utilizing a novel and unique point system to realistically emulate real money gaming contests.”

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates generally to improved methods and apparatus for operating games and contests, utilizing a unique point system, whereby the excitement of participating in traditional games of chance, gambling style games and sport event outcome contests can be realistically emulated, without requiring participants to stake or risk anything of value or provide any consideration at any point in the process. More particularly, it relates to improved techniques for targeting advertising, for rewarding potential customers for viewing, listening to or otherwise being exposed to advertising, and for providing games and contests for utilizing reward points.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] Any U.S. resident who has participated in or that has thought about participating in real money online gaming, such as poker, blackjack, slots, bingo, or any of the other casino gambling style games, or sport event outcome contests offered over the Internet or in locales where such activities are not legal, is faced with the question of whether such participation is in violation of both Federal and State laws in the United States. Providers of such real money online gaming and contest systems and potential advertisers of these systems face similar questions.

[0004] The U.S. government is firmly entrenched in its stance of taking an enforcement, rather than a regulatory position towards online gaming. Since the U.S. government is not able to prosecute the operators of sites legally based on foreign soil, the Organized Crime and Racketeering section of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) has consistently taken aim at a simpler target, advertisers and ad-publishers. Through the use of “warning letters” the DOJ has for the last five years targeted the largest advertisers in a bid to send a message to smaller ones, in a concerted effort to dissuade them from taking any ads from offshore online casinos, sports books and poker sites.

[0005] The results of such enforcement by the DOJ can have far reaching consequences. For example, in October 2003, Paradise Poker paid the Discovery Channel $3.85 million to run ads for its offshore poker site. The Discovery Channel cancelled the contract after getting such a warning letter from the DOJ indicating the running of such ads could be construed as aiding and abetting an illegal activity under Title 18 U.S.C. §2. The contract was cancelled only after Discovery ran about $600,000 worth of the 30-second spots but did not refund the remaining $3.25 million. Paradise Poker filed a suit to recover the unearned portion of the contract, but by April 2004, U.S. marshals had seized it stating that the Discovery Channel was a party to an illegal activity when broadcasting online gambling ads. The U.S. marshals also seized about $2,000,000 under contracts relating to PartyPoker.com advertising from sister-station the Travel Channel. The message sent by the U.S. government at the time was very simple. Assets derived from online casino or gambling advertising could be seized and held as evidence pending trial.

[0006] Similar warning letters were sent to Google and Yahoo, upon receipt of which, these online search engines changed their corporate policy and now refuse to run ads for online casinos or gambling operations in the United States.

[0007] Most recently the website The Sporting News, owned by Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen, reached a $7.2 million settlement with the DOJ in order to avoid prosecution for running ads for the offshore online sports book Bodog.com in its magazine and on its syndicated radio show in 2002 and 2003. Allen’s site recently surrendered $4.2 million in gambling ad revenues and is running $3 million in anti-gambling advertisements over the next three years.

[0008] The current enforcement posture of the DOJ does not show any signs of weakening. The current Congress is of a mindset to give the DOJ more tools in its fight against offshore gaming, for example, targeting the financial transactions that fund Internet gambling, including the use of checks, electronic fund transfers, and credit card debt, as well as seeking to prohibit gambling businesses from accepting credit card and electronic transfer deposits and to require banks to deny customer payments to Internet gaming sites.

[0009] It is clear that the U.S. government will now attempt to both shut down the ability of offshore sites to market to customers in the United States as well as curtail any and all means of a U.S. citizen placing a bet or funding an account for any offshore online gaming site. It is the proverbial one-two punch.

[0010] Nevertheless, global revenues for real money online gaming and contests were predicted to exceed 100 billion dollars in 2006, and nearly 70% of those revenues were predicted to be generated from bettors residing in the United States. Industry giants such as Party Poker, Paradise Poker and Casino-on-Net have found these revenues too enticing to worry about their operations being “illegal” in the United States. Without exception, these offshore online casinos and sports books have taken the position that any and all betting transactions that they host do not take place where the bettor actually resides and makes the bet, but rather, where the transactions are deemed to occur, namely, only at their servers, and thus offshore. These offshore gaming and contest companies operate exclusively in jurisdictions that not only condone, but license, these online gaming and contest companies who feel they are beyond the reach of U.S. laws.

[0011] Rather than subsuming jurisdiction of their operations in the United States, these companies look to market to their largest customer base, United States gamblers, by exploiting potential loopholes and ambiguities in current Federal and State law so they may advertise in a manner that has not yet been addressed by the Department of Justice. The prevailing attitude of these companies is that since they are beyond the personal jurisdiction of the United States, they are willing to operate in a manner contrary to Department of Justice interpretations of law or to operate in a manner not
yet addressed by the Department of Justice. This cat and mouse game, played out between these illicit offshore sites and the Department of Justice, obviously relegates these companies to very narrow, non-mainstream marketing programs. For example, a typical poker site advertisement advertises its free play and emphasizes that it is not a gambling site although any user signing onto the site will immediately learn that the site is closely related to or part of a cash game site.

[0012] In spite of the aforementioned marketing challenges, these online entities are extraordinarily profitable. For example, PartyPoker.com, an industry leader, hosts approximately 32 hands of poker play per second, according to a British securities filing by its parent company, PartyGaming. In 2005, that amounted to about $1,454 wagered per second, overwhelmingly from players who bet on average less than $100.00 per week. This wagering equated to $45 billion for the year, and PartyPoker is just one among approximately 2,400 online poker sites with more sites coming online almost daily.

SUMMARY OF THE PRESENT INVENTION

[0013] Currently, a player looking for the excitement of playing online games of chance and gambling style games and participating in online sport event outcome contests stands to risk significant losses without any meaningful regulatory system to protect the player’s interests. Moreover, certain players desire to play such games and participate in such contests while socializing at brick and mortar locations in locales within the United States where such conduct is against the law. Finally, many players, whether online or at brick and mortar locations, wish to play and/or participate without any risk of loss. The present invention recognizes that it would be highly desirable and advantageous to construct methods of game play and contest participation that would permit players to play and participate under the foregoing conditions. More particularly, the present invention provides methods of game play, contest participation and associated methods of advertising that achieve the following:

[0014] 1) Allow for play of games of chance and of gambling style games and participation in sport event outcome contests, over the Internet and at any location within the United States, and within the scope and application of current Federal and State law;

[0015] 2) Contain a paradigm to permit players to experience the thrills of such game play and contest participation while being exposed to advertising that allows the player to emulate “winning” or “losing” without taking any money at all out of his or her own pocket or risking anything else of value—so that no consideration comes from the player;

[0016] 3) Inasmuch as such games and contests are legal within the scope of United States law, permit the associated advertising to avail itself of the vast array of mainstream marketing such as prime time network television, radio, newspaper and sports sponsorships that can only be afforded to a legal activity—i.e., opportunities that domestic advertising outlets cannot, and will not, offer to offshore entities; and

[0017] 4) In the process of achieving the foregoing, construct an advertising sales platform that only charges advertisers for ads actually viewed by the players and more effectively matches advertisers with their desired target demographics.

Methods and systems according to the present invention advantageously address such issues to provide a winning situation—for all the consumers playing, advertisers participating and a system proprietor of a legal online and nationwide gaming and contest system and method in accordance with the present invention.

[0018] A more complete understanding of the present invention, as well as other features and advantages of the invention, will be apparent from the following detailed description, the accompanying drawings, and the claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0019] FIG. 1 shows an exemplary overall system in accordance with the present invention; and

[0020] FIG. 2 shows an exemplary process in accordance with the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0021] As background for the discussion which follows, the topic of what constitutes illicit online gaming is briefly addressed. Generally, in the U.S., illicit gambling is defined as any activity in which a person places a bet or wager. Generally, a bet or wager occurs when a person stakes or risks something of value, in legal terms, “consideration,” upon the outcome of an uncertain event over which the better does not exercise control, i.e., where there is “chance”—such as a contest of others, a sporting event, or a game predominantly subject to chance, with the opportunity to win something of greater value than what was staked or risked, i.e., the opportunity to receive a prize. One must have all three of these elements, consideration, chance and prize, to meet most definitions of illicit gaming activity. The absence of any one of these three factors renders the activity legal.

[0022] Any and all current real money online gaming sites meet all three criteria. The consumer tenders real money—consideration. Playing any casino game—poker, bingo, blackjack, slots, etc.—fulfills the element of chance. The ability to win more money than originally tendered constitutes the fulfillment of the prize requirement. Hence, by their very nature all current online gaming sites are deemed illegal gambling under U.S. law.

[0023] All online sports event outcome contest sites have the added dubious distinction of also violating the Federal Wire Act. This statute makes it illegal for providers to offer or take bets, or information that assists in placing bets, from U.S. gamblers over any electronic communications means, unless otherwise authorized by a particular state.

[0024] A question is how can any approach to emulate online games of chance, gambling style games and/or sport event outcome contests be legal? The present invention removes the element of consideration from the process, one of the three required prongs. The modern view of consideration, and the view of most states and under applicable federal law, is that valuable consideration must be provided by the participants to meet the consideration element of gambling. As discussed further below, the present invention does not permit participants to contribute or risk any value for the opportunity to participate, let alone to win a prize,
thereby eliminating the element of consideration as it has been interpreted in most states and under relevant Federal law.

[0025] In a preferred embodiment, the present invention employs a novel and unique point system, involving:

- (1) registering a player;
- (2) creating play and prize accounts for the player;
- (3) placing points in the player’s play and prize accounts, both:
  - (a) initially upon registration; and
  - (b) thereafter on an ongoing basis;
- (4) crediting the player’s prize account as the player:
  - (a) at any time elects to convert play points to prize points; or
  - (b) uses and loses play points during play of games or participation in contests;
- (5) providing house points that are awarded to players who play and win another player’s play points; and
- (6) enabling the player to redeem his or her prize points at any time for cash or prizes.

[0036] First, a player’s online play and prize accounts are populated upon registration and, second, the player’s play and prize accounts increase based upon the player’s time engaged in the operator’s activities. For example, when a player views advertising, preferably on a per view basis, or “per-view-pay” (PVP) basis, the player’s play and prize point accounts are increased. The PVP compensation model is structured so that a player is accorded play and prize points in some proportion to the revenue generated for the site operator from the advertisements that the player views while playing online or otherwise, while taking into consideration the house points that the site operator has to be prepared to contribute in the event a player loses play points in the course of play to another player. The PVP model may be applied to any media content the consumer utilizes for which the site operator is paid for causing players to view, listen or otherwise be exposed to advertisements. In a presently preferred embodiment of the PVP compensation model, a percentage of the ad revenues generated will go to the system operator and a percentage to affiliate programs, as explained further below.

[0037] More specifically, in the context of advertising for simulations of online gaming or sports event outcome contests, the actual game interface, a virtual poker table, odds screen, or the like, is framed with a combination of banner, video and text ads that change on a predetermined timed basis. Every time the displayed ads change, the advertiser is charged on a charge per minute (CPM) basis. Ads displayed will also be “clickable.” These click-through ads will open in a separate pre-sized browser window to prevent player “slippage” from the online game or contest and any interruption in the ads being displayed in the main advertising frame.

[0038] It should be understood that other means of deriving advertising revenues in the context of the online gaming and contest experience described hereinabove and below are well known and can be incorporated and utilized without detracting from the benefits of applicant’s novel and unique point system.

[0039] The present invention may be suitably implemented as a computer-based system, in computer software which resides on computer readable media, such as solid state storage devices, such as RAM, ROM, or the like, magnetic storage devices such as a hard disk or floppy disk media, optical storage devices, such as CD-ROM or the like, or as methods implemented by such systems and software.

[0040] FIG. 1 shows an exemplary block diagram of a system 100 which may be suitably used to implement the present invention. System 100 is implemented as a plurality of player or user computers 12, . . . , 12, (collectively 12) such as a personal computer, workstation, or server. One likely scenario is that the system of the invention will be implemented as a personal computer or workstation which connects to a server or other computer running software to implement the processes of the present invention either through a network, Internet or other connection. As shown in FIG. 1 and described in further detail below, the system 100 includes software that is run by the central processing unit of each computer 12, as well as server 60. Each computer 12 may suitably include a number of standard input and output devices, including a keyboard 14, a mouse 16, CD-ROM drive 18, disk drive 20, monitor 22, and printer 24. In addition, each computer 12 may suitably include an Internet or network connection 26 for downloading software, data and updates, or for providing outputs to remote system users. It will be appreciated, in light of the present description of the invention, that the present invention may be practiced in any of a number of different computing environments without departing from the spirit of the invention. For example, the system 100 may be implemented in a network configuration with individual workstations connected to a server. Additionally, other input and output devices may be used, as desired. For example, a remote user could access the server with a desktop computer, a laptop utilizing the Internet or with a wireless handheld device such as a BlackBerry™, Treo™, or the like.

[0041] As illustrated in FIG. 1, and as described in greater detail below, additional inputs to server 60 may suitably include an advertising database 62, game software 64 and a player database 66.

[0042] In the exemplary embodiment of the invention, software is utilized to generate a number of computer display screens for receiving inputs from, and providing outputs to, a user of the system. For example, during player registration, a prospective player may be prompted to register using a plurality of display screens in which he or she can enter identifying information, such as, name, mailing address, age, sex, email address, areas of interest and the like. As a further example, during play of an online game, the user may see a display screen comprising a representation of a poker game plus one or more advertising displays.

[0043] It is anticipated that the models of the present disclosure will be implemented in software. The software may be stored in any appropriate computer readable medium, such as RAM. The software may be executed on any appropriate computer system, such as the system 12 as shown in FIG. 1.

[0044] FIG. 2 shows an exemplary process 200 in accordance with the present invention. When a player opens an account, as part of the account registration, the registering player provides certain personal information, such as name, age, occupation, address, email, areas of interest, or the like at an online gaming site in step 202. This user data is stored in step 204. As discussed further below, the present invention then uses this captured player data to match the ads
displayed on that particular player's screen to ads residing on advertising servers, from advertisers that have preset demographic parameters. This direct match of advertiser targets and customer demographics gives the invention a significant advantage over approaches such as Google's extrapolation matching model. Additionally, the inventive method will have an added significant advantage over national media in that its direct ad match model will possess the inherent capability of taking advertisements from regional and local advertisers. For example, the invention will allow ads which can be displayed only to players in a targeted specific geographic region. A 30 second spot for a local restaurant on a national site such as CBS Sportsline™ would be both too expensive and not get the desired results, as the scope of the CBS site is national. The invention will take ads for the local or regional advertiser. Those ads will only be displayed to potential customers in the advertisers' immediate geographic area and the charge can be appropriately matched to the number of ad viewers—which opens up new advertising approaches for a large number of advertisers.

[0045] As a next step 206, after a player completes the registration process, he or she will have at least two accounts tied to the same user identification (ID). First, he will have a prize account. This prize account is exactly what the name implies, it is the player's account that holds all of the players' "prize" points, which may be redeemed later for merchandise or money. Prize points are only accumulated in, or "cashed out", of this account. Prize points may never be transferred out of this account for any purpose other than redemption, hence it is a "no lose" account. Prize points, once "in" this account, are never subject to loss.

[0046] The second account established for the player is referred to herein as a "play" account. In this account the player will have points of no monetary value, merely play points. These play points may be used to participate in an online sporting event outcome contest through a simulation of a betting exchange or they may be used to participate in any number of games, such as casino style online games including but not limited to online poker, bingo, blackjack, slots and the like. These play points may be used only during contest participation and/or game play. At any point in time, the player may elect to transfer his play points to his prize account. This transfer is a one way transfer process. Until transferred to the prize account, play points have no value. Play points transferred to the prize account are redeemable but are now locked into the prize account for redemption, for merchandise or cash, and may never be used for play again. If a player uses his play points to participate in a contest or play in a game and "loses" any play points, the exact number of play points he has "lost" is automatically added to the player's prize account. The net effect to the player is that he has not "lost" anything. He simply cannot continue to participate in a contest or play in a game if he has "lost" all of his play points. He must first amass more play points, e.g., through "practice mode" play/participation or through watching others play/participate—during both of which activities he will be exposed to sponsors' ads and be given further play points (as well as prize points) by such sponsors. Once he is given such additional play points in this fashion, he can once again participate in contests and/or play in games.

[0047] It should be understood that play points that are "lost" by one player and seemingly "won" by another player are, in fact, not transferred between players. Rather, the play points that appear to have been "lost" are, in fact, as indicated previously, transferred to the prize account of the "losing" player. Instead of transferring play points from the losing player to the winning player, the operator credits "house" points to the "winning" player, which house points are supplied by the operator. Such house points are similar to play points in that they have no value and can be "used" by the winning player much the same as he uses play points, i.e., he can either convert the house points into prize points, or he can use them to play in games or participate in contests. The only difference between play points and house points is that, if a player with house points elects to play in games or participate in contests with the house points, and he "loses" such house points, he does not receive an equal amount of points in his prize account to the house points he lost. Instead, the house points he lost are thereby transferred to and available for "use" by the player who won them, i.e., either for redemption or further game play and/or contest participation.

[0048] The aggregate combination of the foregoing is that there is game play and contest participation without any consideration, anywhere in the process, rendered by the individual. Thus, the invention provides an emulation of real money gaming and sports event outcome contests—employing points having no value. This approach is the only approach in existence to do so within the scope and parameters of what is defined as legal under U.S. law.

[0049] In an alternative embodiment, i.e., if, for example, it were found to be legal under U.S. law for a player to "lose" their play points—inasmuch as play points are points for which the player provided no consideration and such points have no value, it is contemplated that such play points might, in fact, be "lost." By way of illustration, a "win double" game or contest could be structured where the "winning" player would get both the house points, as explained above that cover the play points "lost" by the "losing" player, as well as the play points of the "losing" player.

[0050] In step 208, the player plays online games in a practice mode and is exposed to advertising. In step 210, points are added to the user’s prize and play accounts.

[0051] So, how specifically does a player receive points in his prize and play accounts? As one example, while the player is online and viewing ads, play, and possibly prize, points are allocated to the player and increase as the operator's PVP gross revenue increases. Thus, for example, every point given to the player in his play account could also result in the player being given a point in his prize account. The user may redeem prize account points in step 212 or may use play account points to play games online in step 214.

[0052] For example, to play casino style games such as poker or blackjack, or to participate in sport event outcome contests, a player plays the game or participates in the contest with play points, which have no intrinsic monetary value. He then plays against other players for the same no value points. The aggregate of all points in play on the platform at any time is collateralized by the segregated ad revenues, held as aforementioned. Thus, at the point where a player seeks to redeem points for cash or merchandise, those funds have already been segregated and available.

[0053] At any point in time, the player can opt to convert play points into prize points in step 216. Such conversion is a "one way process," i.e., prize points, whether originally
given or the result of conversion of play points into prize points, cannot be changed into play points.

Play points which a player “loses,” either in a game or contest, are not actually “lost,” but rather, are mandatorily converted into prize points and added to the player’s prize account, in step 218.

Play points “won” by a player from another player in playing a game or participating in a contest are added as house points to the “winning” player’s house account, in step 220.

The player can opt to convert house points into prize points in step 222. Such conversion is a “one way process,” i.e., prize points which are the result of conversion of house points into prize points cannot be changed back into house points.

House points which a player “loses,” either in a game or contest, are deducted from his house account and added to the house account of the “winning” player, in step 224.

As a player continues to play and participate, or as part of promotions, e.g., to encourage play and participation, additional points can be added to the player’s accounts, e.g., his or her play, prize and/or house accounts, in step 226.

The result of this novel and unique point system is players experience the excitement of participating in traditional games of chance, gambling style games and sport event outcome contests, without staking or risking anything of value, other than the personal efforts of the participants in playing the games or participating in the contests or in obtaining access to the Internet or in going to brick and mortar sites where participation in the games and contests is possible, inasmuch as the points that are used by participants are given to them by the sponsors of the games and contests free of charge and can be used for participation in the games or contests without risk of loss, i.e., all points that are given to participants are never, in reality, “lost” and are, at any and all times, redeemable for cash and/or prizes. More specifically, participants are afforded the opportunity to emulate the experience of real money gaming through the thrill of amassing point “winning,” or the agony of suffering point “losses,” with absolutely no risk of experiencing the financial devastation of real money gaming or contests, inasmuch as participants cannot put any consideration, not even the points that they have been given, “at risk.”

A player who plays poorly will suffer “losses” in their play points account. While they will not have lost anything of value, they will have lost the opportunity to play until such time as they replenish their play account.

On the other hand, a player who plays well will enjoy the thrill of “winning” points from the house that he can convert to prize points or amass and use to continue to play in the games or participate in the contests.

The only “risk” to a participant is that he will become “hooked” by the entertainment experience and thus participate more often and longer and thereby be exposed to a greater number of messages from the sponsor—in the same manner that previous forms of entertainment such as radio and television have sought to present better and better programming to entice listeners and viewers to tune in more often and listen/watch longer and thereby be exposed to greater numbers of radio and tv commercials.

It is anticipated that not only will advertisements be accepted from advertisers, but advantageous redemption programs can also be structured for those advertisers’ goods and services. For example, one could readily see a company like Wal-Mart or Best Buy advertising on the inventive platform and accepting points for merchandise online, or in their stores like they would a gift card. In such an event, it is anticipated those deals will be structured to give the operator a small commission on any sale utilizing currency under the invention.

In an alternative embodiment, only two credit accounts are set up per player: namely, a play credit account, and a prize credit account. Players are given play credits for signing up for plays, for viewing advertisements while playing, and during game play. Players use play credits to play against other players. Players are given prize credits for signing up for play, for viewing advertisements while playing, and for converting excess play credits to prize credits. Play credits can be played and lost. Prize credits can never be lost through any play and are primarily accumulated through advertisement viewing. Prize credits cannot be converted to play credits. Prize credits can be redeemable for cash and other prizes. Prizes may be cash or valuable prizes and are funded through a percentage of the advertising revenue from the sites using the invention.

In a still further embodiment, the player who wins a game or contest not only wins the points being bet, in the form of house points, but also that player wins the points (both prize and play points) that would have been given to all of the participants in the game or contest in connection with advertising seen during the game or contest. This then is a “higher stakes” sort of play because more is being “won” or “lost.” Significantly, the added layer of points being “won” are of greater value than the normal house points because they include play and prize points with their usual attributes as heretofore explained.

In yet a still further embodiment, having created the concept of a third type of points, namely house points, allows for more excitement and enables the operator to “drive” play at given times and/or under given circumstances. Additional house points can be points “funded” by the advertisers at a particular time or under particular circumstances. These additional house points can be house points that become available because they have been allocated in the revenue structure but not “paid out” by the house, namely, if a player awarded prize and play points immediately converts their play points to prize points, such that house points associated with those play points never come into existence. These house points (whether advertiser contributed or the result of a player’s decision to immediately convert play points to prize points) can be used to encourage play at particular times of the day, or when particular ads are being displayed, analogous, for example, to how a red pin comes up during bowling and if the bowler bowls a strike the bowler wins a free game. As play goes forth, there could be announcements that the house has added “x” house points to all hands in play at a particular time, etc.

Irrespective of which embodiment is used, the invention is game independent and may be used for any number of games.

It is important to note that the PVP monetization model can be applied to compensate any viewer for watching, listening to, or reading any type media, even outside of the gaming platform. It is anticipated that PVP, in and of itself, will have value as a standalone application which may be licensed to other media companies.
There are a variety of potential per-view-pay applications that can be employed once an account card is issued to each player, i.e., like a credit card that can store the player’s accumulated account points on it.

In one application the card can act as a universal “gift card” and can be used to redeem prize points on it for merchandise at, for example, brick and mortar stores or online sites participating in Win Win.

In another application, the card can also function like an ATM/Debit card and be used to withdraw cash value from the player’s prize account.

In another application, the card can be used at movie theaters, namely, at each seat a swipe device is provided so that the theatergoer can swipe the card at the start of the commercials aired before the movie and get credit for viewing the commercials. The theater seat may incorporate a pressure type switch in the seat—like a seat failsafe on a lawn tractor—to verify that someone is actually in the seat, i.e., the circuit won’t “complete” so credit will not be given merely because a card has been swiped.

In another application, a thermal sensor is incorporated into a television set top cable box together with a card swipe device, so that a person watching tv can swipe the card and then get credits for viewing ads, with the thermal detector verifying that someone is, in fact, watching the tv while the commercials are being aired.

A similar application can be set up for cur radios, but instead of a seat trigger, the cur would have to actually be running in order to be credited for listening to ads. This system would work for over the air radio broadcasts as well as satellite radio broadcasts.

Alternatively, incenting tv viewers to actually watch content, including but not limited to advertising, paid programming, movies, shows, product placement within content that are broadcast over cable television and satellite delivery systems, can be achieved with a system whereby:

A. Software is placed in either the “head end” of a MSO/Cable System, or on “set top” boxes in the consumer’s location, which integrates with the satellite/satellite provider’s ad server and/or any program/system that provides “TIVO” type time shift viewing or VOD capabilities.

B. When a viewer actually watches a program, movie or any content delineated by the broadcaster and/or advertiser, or views a commercial contained with any content, they, the viewer, will be compensated/paid in either cash and/or credits that may be redeemed for goods and services. This methodology of incenting tv viewers to actually watch advertising is to be known as “Paid to View” or “P2V”.

Viewers may or may not be required to proactively validate that the aforementioned advertisement or content was actually viewed by pressing a key on their remote at either the start, or middle or conclusion of an advertisement to let the system know that they were actually viewing the ad/content that was displayed. In the case of TIVO type time shift viewing, the act of not “skipping” over the ad by fast forwarding may be utilized as an affirmation that the ad/content was actually viewed and qualify the viewer for compensation.

The Win Win game system, also known as the “Paid to Play” or “PD2P” may be delivered to consumers over Cable TV or Satellite Television distribution systems and played via integration into either the cable/satellite system’s “head end” system or within set top cable/television satellite boxes.

A similar system can be set up for point of sale, theaters, airlines, cruise ships, kiosks and mobile devices:

A. It is envisioned that both the aforementioned “P2V” and “PD2P” systems may be utilized/deployed in Point of Sale “POS” and “brick and mortar” environments beyond the scope of original Internet environment as originally envisioned. In general both the P2V and PD2P methodologies can be launched separately or in tandem in any environment. Specific applications include, but are not limited to:

1. Movie Theatres—A touch screen may be embedded in a back of a seat, in front of a patron. Instead of watching previews on the screen as is currently done. The patron may either watch previews and be accorded compensation for doing so under the previously delineated P2V model. Alternatively, all the patrons in the theatre could collectively view the same content on the theatre’s screen and then through either a cell phone text message or input device located at each of the theatre’s seats validate their watching said ad. A passive method of validation may be some type of bar code scanner that could read a code on the patrons ticket stub. Finally a pressure sensor located in the theatre seat could also provide a passive form of validation of ad/content viewing.

2. Cruise Ships and Airlines—Content provided either in-flight or on-ship/in-cabin via the same methodology as described in connection with movie theaters above.

3. Restaurants—Content provided either at a table or to a bar patron via the same methodology as described in connection with movie theaters above.

4. Kiosks—Content provided to stand alone kiosks via the same methodology as described in connection with movie theaters above.

5. Mobile Devices—Content provided to cell phones, PDA, wireless connected computers or other handheld/portal device able of displaying content via the same methodology as described in connection with movie theaters above. Content may be provided on a subscription basis for all of the foregoing modalities under the subscription model as described below.

It is envisioned that the P2V and/or PD2P models can be used to supplant a consumer paying for a subscription to any services out of their own pocket. For example, a person could receive, including but not limited to, their local cable service, phone service, VOD movie, magazine, newspaper, cell phone, club membership, online internet access, online game subscription, by playing games or watching content provided under the P2V and/or PD2P models.

To grow the player base, a multi-tiered marketing program (MTM) may suitably be included as part of the invention. For example, once a player signs up and is registered, he will be given a unique affiliate code number. He may then get others to sign up, or refer other individuals, using that affiliate code. Any players signing up using that player’s affiliate code will generate points in the original player’s play, prize and/or house accounts, depending upon the terms of the promotion. In turn, any players under a referred player that in turn sign up other players will generate points for all those players in the affiliate stream above them that they are “tied” to.
Consequently, the more people a player signs up to play, and the more people they in turn sign up, the more points the player makes. This MTM will significantly generate an accelerated growth curve, as well as provide a mechanism for bloggers and information sites to accord “free” advertising in exchange for an affiliate program thus rendering revenues to them for those who join through their media.

The present invention’s approach to and utilization of data capture creates two unique advantages. First, the ability to match ads to users allows for a higher CPM rate to be charged for ads displayed. Because users provide actual demographic data, the inventive approach has the inherent capability of more specifically, and scientifically, matching advertisers’ specific narrow target demographics with the users. As a result, the match method should support higher CPMs resulting in larger margins and profits.

A second major advantage will be in the area of click fraud. Click fraud can be an Achilles heel of online advertising. Click fraud is the practice of producing fake clicks in order to boost the amount that advertisers must pay for a search campaign. Search marketers have been increasingly worried about the click fraud issue, with a recent survey showing that seven out of nine search marketers were concerned that an unknown number of their paid clicks were bogus.

The present invention eliminates nearly any possibility of click fraud in two ways. First, a person has to actually provide personal data to participate. Without doing so, there can be no redemption on the part of the consumer. Hence, real verifiable data from a real person eliminates the possibility of some hacker from a country that allows for anonymous open proxy servers running a program to fraudulently click on a Google ad every few nanoseconds. Secondly, as in all current online casino software platforms, for the avoidance of collusion among players, the software will track every online transaction, thus the invention will provide a verifiable and certifiable record to advertisers that their ads were being viewed or clicked on by an actual individual that was playing online, with underlying verifiable person data.

The opportunity for utilization of the present invention in the online gaming sector is vast. The online gaming sector can be subdivided into different segments, with the largest individual segment being online sports event outcome contests, which in 2005 was estimated to have represented around 36% of total online gross gaming yield, followed by online casinos (25%) and poker (20%). A 10-year boom in offshore sports books has turned Las Vegas into a smaller player in the game, second in line to computers in Antigua, Costa Rica and other remote international outposts. The numbers are impossible to ignore. Offshore sports books combined for an estimated handle of $76.6 billion in 2004, compared to a handle of $2.08 billion in Nevada. At least five offshore books alone took in more money in sports wagers last year than the entire state.

The projected sports book handle for Bodog.com one of the leading online sports betting sites this year is $1.2 billion. That figure does not include the casino and poker rooms, which will help push the projected handle to $6 billion. The company’s marketing budget is $50 million, and Bodog has grown from having about 1,000 accounts the first two years to more than 30,000 accounts. Bodog is not even one of the sports books that caters to major players. It is known as a book that courts squares, or novice bettors, and expects at least a 5 percent hold. The company fact sheet states its average sports book wager is $68. Bodog is close to doubling in size every year.

Online sports books such as CRIS, Hollywood, Millennium, Olympic and Pinnacle, which offer higher limits and are estimated to double or triple Bodog’s sports handle, are bigger-volume businesses that expect a smaller win percentage of 1 to 2 percent.

Some other very relevant facts can be derived from a transcript of an ABC News nationwide broadcast of “Money Matters” on the afternoon of Feb. 8, 2006.

7 of 10 U.S. adults placed some sort of wager in the last year.

According to the NCAA, 35% of male college students bet on sports.

$600 billion changed hands last year worldwide as a result of online gaming.

The online gambling industry generated $12 billion in revenue in 2005.

Over 20 gambling companies are listed on non-U.S. stock exchanges. The biggest poker company has a market value of almost $9 billion. The biggest sports betting company has a market value of almost $3 billion.

The biggest sports book employs over 2,000 people during football.

The MGM-Mirage has publicly lobbied to allow U.S. companies to take part in online gambling.

Viewed from any perspective, the facts clearly support the position that a legal, online gaming and contest site where the individual has the chance to play for, and win, real money or prizes without having to take any money out of his pocket has tremendous upside potential.

Additionally, the invention is applicable in the brick and mortar world as well as the virtual one. Simply put, in certain states the opportunity exists to create a physical environment that would allow a real world application of the invention.

For example, in permissible jurisdictions, a person could go into a sports bar, present an account card similar to a player’s card, and be given the physical equivalent of the virtual play chips in the account. Then, the no monetary value play chips could be used to play casino style games such as poker, blackjack or the like against other live players, or they could be used to participate in sport event outcome contest which is part of the invention. At the end of play, the chips would then be surrendered at the equivalent of a casino cage, on premises, and re-credited to the online account. Because the chips have no value and cannot be exchanged for any prize on premises, the game play taking place does not constitute illicit gambling. The only preclusion to such brick and mortar applications may be certain states that have a blanket prohibition on any card game taking place in any establishment that is not a formal casino. Obviously, an opportunity exists to extend the brand through a chain of branded brick and mortar establishments similar to a Hooters, an ESPN Zone, or the like.

While the present invention has been disclosed in the context of various aspects of presently preferred embodiments, it will be recognized that the invention may be suitably applied to other environments consistent with the claims which follow.
We claim:
1. A method of affording a player the opportunity to experience the excitement of participating in traditional games of chance, gambling style games and sport event outcome contests, including the thrill of amassing point “winning,” or the agony of suffering point “losses,” with absolutely no risk of experiencing the financial devastation of real money gaming or contests, the method comprising: registering a player;
exposing the player to advertising;
establishing a point system that gives points to the player;
creating a point system that gives points to the player;
allowing the player to play with points given to him;
allowing the player to win additional points;
precluding the player from putting anything at risk;
including the points that he has been given;
causing the player’s loss of points he has been given to merely impact his ability to continue to play; and
allowing the player to redeem the points he has been given for cash or merchandise.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein during said step of registering the player, demographic data for the player is stored, the method further comprising targeting the advertising exposed to the players based upon the demographic data.
3. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of establishing a prize account for the player and a play account for the player, and transferring play points from the player’s play account to the player’s prize account when the player “loses” play points in the course of play.
4. The method of claim 3 further comprising the step of transferring, at the player’s request, play points from the player’s play account to the player’s prize account.
5. The method of claim 3 or claim 4 further comprising the step of causing such transfer of points from the player’s play account to the player’s prize account to be an irreversible, one-way transfer.
6. The method of claim 5 further comprising the step of redeeming points from the player’s prize account for a prize or for cash.
7. The method of claim 1 wherein said games comprise: poker, slots, blackjack, bingo, other casino games or online sports betting.
8. The method of claim 2 wherein said advertising is a local or regional advertisement targeted to the player based upon the stored demographics data.
9. The method of claim 1 wherein said step of exposing further comprises displaying an advertisement on a portion of a computer display screen in conjunction with simultaneous display of a game display.
10. A method for rewarding potential customers who are exposed to advertising and for emulating a real money online gaming site, the method comprising:
registering a player;
establishing a prize account for the player and a play account for the player;
exposing the player to advertising; and
assigning points having value to the player’s prize account and points having no value to the player’s play account, wherein any points in the player’s play account can be utilized by the player to play games on an emulated real money online gaming site.
11. The method of claim 10 wherein during said step of registering the player, demographic data for the player is stored, the method further comprising targeting the advertising exposed to the players based upon the demographic data.
12. The method of claim 10 further comprising the step of transferring, at the request of the player, points from the player’s play account to the player’s prize account.
13. The method of claim 10 further comprising the step of transferring play points from the player’s play account to the player’s prize account when the player “loses” play points in the course of play.
14. The method of claim 12 or claim 13 further comprising the step of causing such transfer of points from the player’s play account to the player’s prize account to be an irreversible, one-way transfer.
15. The method of claim 10 or claim 12 or claim 13 further comprising the step of redeeming points from the player’s prize account for a prize or for cash.
16. The method of claim 10 wherein said games comprise: poker, slots, bingo, blackjack, other casino games or online sports betting.
17. The method of claim 11 wherein said advertising is a local or regional advertisement targeted to the player based upon the stored demographics data.
18. The method of claim 10 wherein said step of exposing further comprises displaying an advertisement on a portion of a computer display screen in conjunction with simultaneous display of a game display.
19. A method for operating games and contests, whereby the excitement of participating in traditional games of chance, gambling style games and sport event outcome contests can be realistically emulated, without requiring participants to stake or risk anything of value, other than the personal efforts of the participants in playing the games or participating in the contests or in obtaining access to the Internet or in going to brick and mortar sites where participation in the games and contests is possible, the method comprising:
registering at least two players;
establishing a prize account, a play account and a house account for each player;
exposing both players to advertising;
assigning points having value to the prize account of each player and points having no value to the play account of each player;
allowing each player to redeem points in the player’s prize account for cash or prizes;
allowing each player to use any points in the player’s play account to play such games and participate in such contests;
transferring an amount of points from the play account of the losing player into his prize account equal in number to the points “lost” by such player; and
assigning to the house account of the winning player an amount of points equal to the number of points lost by the losing player.
20. The method of claim 19 further comprising the step of transferring, at the request of the player, points from the player’s house account to the player’s prize account.
21. The method of claim 19 further comprising the step of transferring house points from one player’s house account to another player’s house account when said one player “loses” house points in the course of play to said another player.
22. The method of claim 20 further comprising the step of causing such transfer of points from the player’s house account to the player’s prize account to be an irreversible, one-way transfer.

23. The method of claim 19 or claim 20 or claim 22 further comprising the step of redeeming points from the player’s prize account for a prize or for cash.

24. A computer based system for rewarding potential customers who are exposed to advertising and for emulating a real money online gaming site, the system comprising: means for registering a player; means for establishing a prize account for the player and a play account for the player; means for exposing the player to advertising; and means for assigning points having value to the player’s prize account and points having no value to the player’s play account, wherein any points in the player’s play account can be utilized by the player to play games on an emulated real money online gaming site.

25. The system of claim 24 further comprising storage for storing demographic data for the player gathering during registration of said player, the system further comprising: means for targeting the advertising exposed to the player based upon the demographic data.

26. The system of claim 24 further comprising means for transferring points from the player’s play account to the player’s prize account, said transfer being a one way transfer.

27. The system of claim 24 or claim 26 further comprising means for redeeming points from the player’s prize account for a prize or for cash.

28. The system of claim 24 wherein said games comprise: poker, slots, bingo, blackjack, other casino games or online sports betting.

29. The system of claim 25 wherein said advertising is a local or regional advertisement targeted to the player based upon the stored demographics data.

30. The system of claim 24 further comprising a video display screen for simultaneously displaying advertising content and a game screen.

31. A method for giving points to individuals for viewing advertising, comprising: registering an individual, including securing demographic data for the individual which is stored; exposing such individual to online advertising; independently verifying that such individual has been exposed to such advertising; reporting such exposure to advertisers; and giving the individual points based upon such exposure.

32. The method of claim 31 further comprising the steps of:
   - giving the individual play points of no value;
   - providing the individual games that can be played and contests that can be participated in using such play points.

33. The method of claim 32 further comprising the step of:
   - giving the individual a card, in the nature of a credit card, on which the individual’s play points can be registered.

34. The method of claim 32 further comprising the steps of:
   - giving the individual prize points as well as play points;
   - giving the individual a card, in the nature of a universal gift card, on which the individual’s prize points can be registered; and
   - enabling the individual to redeem the prize points for prizes at brick and mortar and/or online stores.

35. The method of claim 32 further comprising the steps of:
   - giving the individual prize points as well as play points;
   - giving the individual a card, in the nature of an ATM or debit card, on which the individual’s prize points can be registered; and
   - enabling the individual to redeem the prize points for cash at the locations where ATM and debit cards are accepted for such purpose.

36. The method of claim 33, further comprising the steps of:
   - giving the individual play points for viewing commercials at a movie theater before the movie is aired.

37. The method of claim 33, further comprising the steps of:
   - giving the individual play points for viewing commercials before, during and/or after the broadcast of media programming, such as television, radio and/or Internet programming.

38. Apparatus for giving points to individuals for viewing advertising, comprising:
   - means for registering an individual, including for securing and storing demographic data for the individual;
   - means for exposing such individual to online advertising;
   - means for independently verifying that such individual has been exposed to such advertising;
   - means for reporting such exposure to advertisers; and
   - means for giving the individual points based upon such exposure.

39. The apparatus of claim 38 further comprising:
   - means for giving the individual play points of no value;
   - means for providing the individual with games that can be played and contests that can be participated in using such play points.

40. The apparatus of claim 38 further comprising:
   - a card, in the nature of a credit card, on which the individual’s play points can be registered.

41. The apparatus of claim 38 further comprising:
   - means for giving the individual prize points as well as play points;
   - a card, in the nature of a universal gift card, on which the individual’s prize points can be registered; and
   - means for enabling the individual to redeem the prize points for prizes at brick and mortar and/or online stores.

42. The apparatus of claim 38 further comprising:
   - means for giving the individual prize points as well as play points;
   - a card, in the nature of an ATM or debit card, on which the individual’s prize points can be registered; and
   - means for enabling the individual to redeem the prize points for cash at the locations where ATM and debit cards are accepted for such purpose.

43. The apparatus of claim 39, further comprising:
   - means for giving the individual play points for viewing commercials at a movie theater before the movie is aired.

44. The apparatus of claim 39, further comprising:
   - means for giving the individual play points for viewing commercials before, during and/or after the broadcast of media programming, such as television, radio and/or Internet programming.
45. A method for emulating real money gaming and sport event outcome contests comprising: establishing a point system; registering at least two players; creating play point, prize point and house point accounts for each player; placing play points in each player's play point account, both: (a) initially upon registration; and (b) thereafter on an ongoing basis; crediting each player's prize point account with prize points as the player: (a) at any time elects to convert play points to prize points; or (b) uses and "loses" play points during play of games or participation in contests; providing house points to one of said players who plays and "wins" play points from said other of said players in an amount equal to the amount of play points "lost" by said one player; enabling said players to play in games and participate in contests with house points; crediting each player's prize point account as the player at any time elects to convert house points to prize points; and enabling each player to redeem prize points at any time for cash or prizes.

46. The method of claim 45 further comprising the step of placing prize points in each player's prize point account concomitantly with placement of play points in each player's play point account.

47. The method of claim 45 further comprising the step of precluding each player from converting prize points from the player's prize point account to either play points or house points.

48. The method of claim 45 further comprising the step of placing points in one or both player's play, prize and/or house account during game play or contest participation.

49. The method of claim 45 further comprising the step of placing points in one or both player's play, prize and/or house account as part of a promotion to promote play and/or participation.

50. A method for emulating real money gaming and sport event outcome contests comprising: establishing a point system; registering at least two players; creating play point, prize point and house point accounts for each player; placing play points in each player's play point account, both: (a) initially upon registration; and (b) thereafter on an ongoing basis; placing prize points in each player's prize point account concomitantly with placement of play points in each player's play point account; crediting each player's prize point account with prize points as the player: (a) at any time elects to convert play points to prize points; or (b) uses and "loses" play points during play of games or participation in contests; providing house points to one of said players who plays and "wins" play points from said other of said players in an amount equal to the amount of play points "lost" by said one player; enabling said players to play in games and participate in contests with house points; crediting each player's prize point account as the player at any time elects to convert house points to prize points; placing points in one or both player's play, prize and/or house account during game play or contest participation; placing points in one or both player's play, prize and/or house account as part of a promotion to promote play and/or participation; precluding each player from converting prize points from the player's prize point account to either play points or house points; and enabling each player to redeem prize points at any time for cash or prizes.

51. Apparatus for emulating real money gaming and sport event outcome contests comprising: means for establishing a point system; means for registering at least two players; means for creating play point, prize point and house point accounts for each player; means for placing play points in each player's play point account, both: (a) initially upon registration; and (b) thereafter on an ongoing basis; means for placing prize points in each player's prize point account concomitantly with placement of play points in each player's play point account; means for crediting each player's prize point account with prize points as the player: (a) at any time elects to convert play points to prize points; or (b) uses and "loses" play points during play of games or participation in contests; means for providing house points to one of said players who plays and "wins" play points from said other of said players in an amount equal to the amount of play points "lost" by said one player; means for enabling said players to play in games and participate in contests with house points; means for crediting each player's prize point account as the player at any time elects to convert house points to prize points; means for placing points in one or both player's play, prize and/or house account during game play or contest participation; means for placing points in one or both player's play, prize and/or house account as part of a promotion to promote play and/or participation; means for precluding each player from converting prize points from the player's prize point account to either play points or house points; and means for enabling each player to redeem prize points at any time for cash or prizes.

52. A method for operating games and contests, whereby the excitement of participating in traditional games of chance, gambling style games and sport event outcome contests can be realistically emulated, without requiring participants to stake or risk anything of value, other than the personal efforts of the participants in playing the games or
participating in the contests or in obtaining access to the Internet or in going to brick and mortar sites where participation in the games and contests is possible, the method comprising:

registering at least two players;
establishing a prize account, a play account and a house account for each of said two players;
assigning points having no value to the play account of each of said two players;
enabling each of said two players to use points in the player’s play account to play such games and participate in such contests;
exposing said at least two players to advertising during game play and contest participation;
transferring an amount of points from the play account of the losing player into his prize account equal in number to the points “lost” by such player;
assigning to the house account of the winning player an amount of points equal to the number of play points “lost” by the losing player;
assigning to the prize and play accounts of the winning player the prize and play points that would have been given to the losing player for the advertising seen during the game and/or contest; and
enabling each player to redeem points in the player’s prize account for cash or prizes.

53. A system for operating games and contests, whereby the excitement of participating in traditional games of chance, gambling style games and sport event outcome contests can be realistically emulated, without requiring participants to stake or risk anything of value, other than the personal efforts of the participants in playing the games or participating in the contests or in obtaining access to the Internet or in going to brick and mortar sites where participation in the games and contests is possible, the system comprising:

means for registering at least two players;
means for establishing a prize account, a play account and a house account for each of said two players;
means for assigning points having no value to the play account of each of said two players;

means for enabling each of said two players to use points in the player’s play account to play such games and participate in such contests;
means for exposing said at least two players to advertising during game play and contest participation;
means for transferring an amount of points from the play account of the losing player into his prize account equal in number to the points “lost” by such player;
means for assigning to the house account of the winning player an amount of points equal to the number of play points “lost” by the losing player;
means for assigning to the prize and play accounts of the winning player the prize and play points that would have been given to the losing player for the advertising seen during the game and/or contest; and
means for enabling each player to redeem points in the player’s prize account for cash or prizes.

54. A method of affording a player the opportunity to experience the excitement of participating in traditional games of chance, gambling style games and sport event outcome contests, including the thrill of amassing point “winnings,” or the agony of suffering point “losses,” with absolutely no risk of experiencing the financial devastation of real money gaming or contests, the method comprising:

registering a player;
exposing the player to advertising;
establishing a point system that gives points to the player;

enabling the player to play with points given to him;
enabling the player to win additional points;
enabling the player to lose the points he has been given and he has won;
precluding the player from putting anything of his own of value “at risk;”
enabling the player to redeem the points he has been given and has won for cash or merchandise; and
causing the player’s loss of all of his points to impact his ability to continue to play.

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