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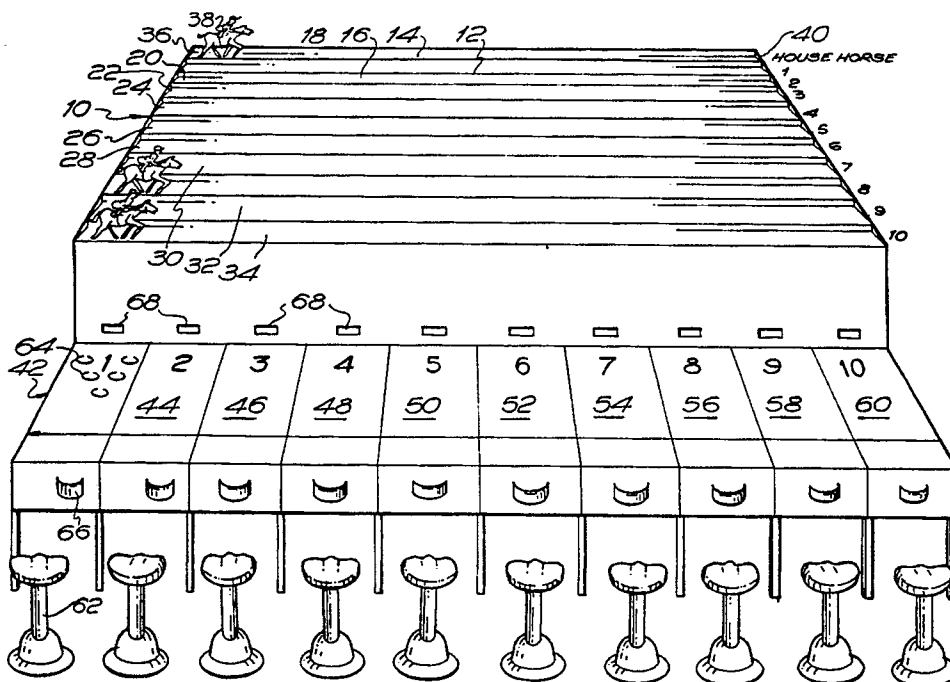
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54 **Improvements relating to machines for gaming, amusement, education and the like.**

57 The invention provides a coin operated gaming machine comprising a plurality of horizontal tracks extending between a starting line and a finishing line. Each track has a movable model horse or the like. One of the horses is the "house horse" and moves at a fixed predetermined speed when the game is started. The other horses are moved by the respec-

tive players of the machine at speeds dependent upon the skill of the players in propelling balls into holes in bagatelle tables. Any player whose horse reaches the finishing line before the house horse wins a prize which may be automatically dispensed coins or tokens.



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Improvements Relating to Machines for Gaming, Amusement, Education and the Like

This invention relates to a machine for use in gaming, amusement, education, competition and the like being of the type operated by a player and the object of which is to ascertain if the player can reach a particular goal in the play of the machine. The achievement of that goal may for example result in the winning of a competition, the collection of a prize, the assessment of a person's ability or any other achievement which may be selected.

As the main utilisation of the machines to which the invention relates, as far as the inventor is concerned, comprises the provision of a prize on the reaching of a goal, the description which follows herein will be limited to describing the machine as a gaming machine, but it is to be borne in mind, as will be clearly understood from the description, that the invention need not apply only to gaming machines.

In a known gaming machine, play of the machine involves the participation of a number, say 15 to 20 players, each of which sits in front of his or her own table. The table is arranged as a form of bagatelle and the player rolls a ball across the table with the object of having the ball drop into holes provided in the table. Depending upon which hole the ball drops into, so the player achieves a point rating being 1, 2 or 3 points. For each point achieved by a player, a corresponding play component moves along a track by one step, and quite simply the object of the game is to have the players compete against each other and the winner being established when his movable component has moved from a common starting line and is first to a common finishing line a number of steps, for example 25 to 50, away from the starting line.

Such games are commonly known as "Derbys" insofar as the movable components are usually model horses or the like and are arranged in alignment at the starting line at the start of each game, and each moves along its own track as the points are accumulated by the respective players. These games are extremely popular at fairgrounds and pleasure parks, and create considerable excitement amongst the participants, as during the course of play all of the respective horses advance in steps depending upon the performance of the players arranging for their playballs to drop through the appropriate holes in the play table.

This type of machine has in fact been well known for a large number of years, and strangely enough there has been virtually no variations in same since its first inception.

The present invention is a machine of the type described above, with the exception that one of the model horses or the like (house horse) at the start

of play advances at a predetermined rate and each play can be used as a race against the house horse. In the typical arrangement at commencement of a game, the house horse starts either automatically at a pre-set time or as soon as one player rolls a ball into a hole in the table and the house horse steps forward, the player's horse stepping forward from the starting line by one step for each point scored.

Thus, one or more players can play against the house horse and each player who beats the house horse can be "paid out" by an amount proportional to the extent by which he beats the house horse. Such amount will preferably be in tokens automatically dispensed to the player.

It can be seen that this concept is fundamentally different from the machine described above, because a table and associated standard setting device can be used by one individual without requiring any other players. It was a disadvantage of the known machine that it required a plurality of players in order to commence operation.

The machine of the present invention does not preclude the simultaneous utilisation of a plurality of the tables and linking same together so that a plurality of players can take part and compete against each other and the house horse, or in another arrangement, against each other only, in which case it would be a simple matter to isolate so as to render inoperative the house horse in which case the respective players would be competing against each other only as with the conventional game when the various tables are interlinked so that as soon as one person's house horse has reached the finishing line all other horses stop and a bell or other signal sounds in order to indicate that the game had been won. The machine is capable of being re-set so that each horse is re-set to the starting line following each game.

Therefore, at the commencement of the day's operations, the operator of the machine could if he wished set the machine for individual table play so that individual players could play against the house horse independently of other players, and if there were sufficient players then the operator could switch the play to the multiple participant arrangement described above in which the respective participants are competing against each other.

The skill part of the machine preferably will comprise the rolling of balls into holes or pockets, but it could take any other form or could involve the throwing of darts, the striking of balls, the utilisation of cues for propelling balls as long as there is some manual control over components such as balls which have free movement after

being propelled as a result of direct manual effort or by manual effort through the use of a striking or propelling device.

An embodiment of the present invention will now be described, by way of example, with reference to the accompanying diagrammatic drawing, of which the single figure is a perspective view of a machine according to the invention.

Referring to the drawing, the basic components of a machine are shown, and these will be seen to comprise a play table 10 having a plurality of rails or partitions 12 defining horizontal parallel tracks 14 - 34 at one end (the starting end) 36, in which tracks are arranged movable model horses 38 or the like which are associated with drive mechanisms enabling the horses to be moved stepwise fashion along the tracks from the starting end 36 to a finishing end 40.

The tracks 14 to 34 are arranged at progressively different heights, track 14 being the highest, and track 34 being the lowest so that the horses 38 and their movement along the tracks can be observed by players playing the machine in a manner to be hereinafter described.

The horse in the first track 14 is the house horse, and this horse proceeds during play of the game at a predetermined speed between the starting line 36 and the finishing line 40, and the speed at which the remaining horses move is under the control and skill of the players and these horses in fact compete against the house horse. Each horse which reaches the finishing line 40 before the house horse is a "winner" and the player will receive an appropriate award which is in fact proportional to the extent by which his horse beats the house horse.

The play lanes 16 to 34 for the players which are numbered respectively 1 to 10 are shown adjacent the finishing line 40, and there are ten play tables 42 to 60 arranged side by side. In front of each play table is a seat 62 so that a player may sit at the play table during the play of the game. In order to play the game in fact each player has to propel a ball up the play surface of the table 42 to 60 with the objective of causing the ball to fall through collecting holes 64 and, depending upon which hole the ball falls through, so the corresponding horse is propelled along the appropriate lane towards the finishing line by an appropriate amount. When the ball falls through a hole 64 it is returned to the front of the play table to a collection pocket 66 from whence the player can retrieve same and once more propel the ball over the table play surface. Obviously the speed, judgement and dexterity of the player is important in achieving a win against the house horse.

The arrangement described has a number of advantages compared to the conventional machine

the first and most important of which is that a single player can play against the house horse even if the other tables of the machine are not in use. The owner of the machine therefore does not have to wait until all seats are full before commencing a game. Additionally, several players can play against the house horse at the same time, although in such circumstances it may be necessary to provide a means to ensure that the players are ready to commence play at the same time. This could be achieved by providing an automatic signalling means such as a bell within a predetermined time after each player has placed his coin in the coin slot of the table to cause the machine to become operative, because it is envisaged that the tables will be coin operated and clearly it will be desirable for there to be a time lag between the insertion of the first coin to start a game and the commencement of the game to give an opportunity to other players to insert their coins and join the game.

This arrangement in fact provides another advantage because in the conventional machine the tables are not coin operated and an operator has to collect payment from the individual players. In this connection there is normally a catwalk between the tables 42 to 60 and the lane assembly 10 to enable the operator to collect the money and also to hand a prize to the winner.

In the machine described, winnings may be in the form of tokens dispensed automatically from dispense slots 68 so that the tokens will roll down the tables to the players. When payment is made upon a player achieving a win, the tokens will be automatically dispensed and will be in proportion to the extent by which the player has beaten the house horse, and overall play of the game will be stopped when the house horse 38 reaches the finishing line. As regards those players whose horses have not reached the finishing line at this instant, they are losers and receive no reward or payment. After a pre-determined time, when all winners have been paid out all horses will be returned to the starting line. When a player's horse wins against the house horse, there will preferably be an indication (such as the illumination of a lamp) of that win to avoid disputes.

The tokens which are paid out to the winners can be similar to tokens paid out in other adjacent machines where, for example the machine illustrated is included in an arcade which has other pay-out machines therein.

The machine can be run without an operator, although it will be preferable to have a mechanic or engineer on hand to deal with any malfunctioning of the machine or customer disputes. Because there is no catwalk between the tables and the track assembly, the machine can be made smaller

in construction, and can be supported entirely on the floor.

The electrical and electromechanical controls for the effective operation of the machine may be of any convenient conventional or custom made design.

Claims

1. A gaming machine comprising a plurality of play stations for individual players, play means at each station enabling the player to exercise his skill in the play of the machine, and standard setting means against which each of the players competes, characterised in that the standard setting means comprises a standard element which moves along a track at a predetermined speed on starting of the machine from a start line to a finishing line, and each play station is associated with a track which extends from said starting line to the finishing line and a play element moves to race the standard element to the finishing line as a rate determined by the players performance.

2. A gaming machine according to Claim 1, characterised in that the standard element and player elements are model race horses and jockeys.

3. A gaming machine according to Claim 1 or 2, characterised by adjustment means for adjusting the speed of the standard element.

4. A gaming machine according to any of Claims 1 - 3, characterised in that the play stations are coin operated.

5. A gaming machine according to any preceding claim, characterised by coin or token pay out means at each play station for the paying out to any player who wins against the standard element.

6. A gaming machine according to Claim 5, characterised in that the pay out means pays out an amount dependent upon the extent to which the player wins against the standard element.

7. A gaming machine according to any preceding claim, characterised in that each said play station comprises a play table having holes therein, and a ball which the player rolls on the table with the view of having the ball fall through a hole, and the standard element starts to move the first time a player causes the ball to fall through one of the holes.

8. A gaming machine according to any one of the preceding claims, characterised in that there are ten play stations each with a seat for the player to enable ten players to sit side by side facing ten players tracks and a standard element extending horizontally between the starting line and finishing line.

9. A gaming machine according to any one of

the preceding claims, characterised in that the standard play element can be selectively immobilized and the machine can be set in a mode in which the players compete against each other.

