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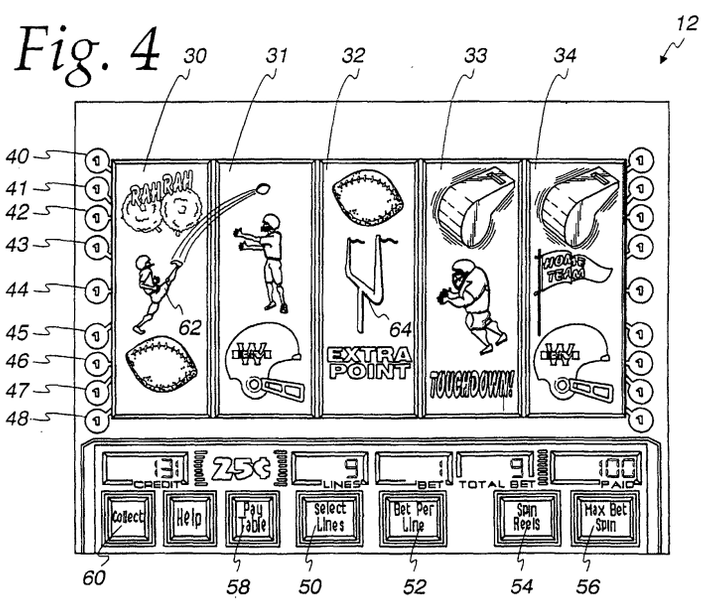
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(54) Gaming machine with interacting symbols on symbol array.

(57) A gaming machine comprises a visual display and a game of chance shown on the display. In connection with the game of chance, the visual display shows an array of symbols in visual association with at least one pay line. The array includes one or more special symbols. Each of the special symbols is associated with at least one of the other special symbols. The game of chance includes a plurality of game rounds. During each of the game rounds one or more of the special symbols appear in the array. In one embodiment, an interplay between two special symbols occurs if the symbols land in adjacent positions on a pay line. The interplay between the special symbols can occur as a part of a basic game round or may comprise a bonus round. The game of chance awards a payout during the round if the symbols along the pay line correspond to a winning game outcome. An interplay between special symbols may affect the location of one or more symbols in the array, thus affecting the game outcome and payout. Additionally, the interplay between special symbols may initiate a different payout schedule based on the results of the interaction.

Fig. 4



EP 1 205 894 A3

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DECLARATION

which under Rule 45 of the European Patent Convention shall be considered, for the purposes of subsequent proceedings, as the European search report

Application Number EP 01 40 2538

The Search Division considers that the present application, does not comply with the provisions of the EPC to such an extent that it is not possible to carry out a meaningful search into the state of the art on the basis of all claims

Reason:

The claims relate to subject matter excluded from patentability under Art. 52(2) and (3) EPC. Given that the claims are formulated in terms of such subject matter or merely specify commonplace features relating to its technological implementation, the search examiner could not establish any technical problem which might potentially have required an inventive step to overcome. Hence it was not possible to carry out a meaningful search into the state of the art (Rule 45 EPC). See also Guidelines Part B Chapter VIII, 1-6.

The applicant's attention is drawn to the fact that a search may be carried out during examination following a declaration of no search under Rule 45 EPC, should the problems which led to the declaration being issued be overcome (see EPC Guideline C-VI, 8.5).

CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.7)

G07F17/32

Place of search	Date	Examiner
MUNICH	12 September 2003	Laub, C

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