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(54) **A METHOD FOR EXHIBITING A CARD GAME**

VERFAHREN ZUM DARSTELLEN EINES KARTENSPIELS

PROCEDE DE PRESENTATION D'UN JEU DE CARTES

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(56) References cited:
US-A- 5 451 054

- '31st annual world series of poker' 24 April 2000 - 18 May 2000, XP002997309

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Description

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention.

[0001] The present invention relates to a video format for exhibition of a card game and more particularly to a method for exhibiting video images of a card game, such as poker game, in which a plurality of video frames of video images of the game in progress are presented with textual/graphic data regarding the status of the game including each player's cards and each player's bet in a manner which does not detract from a viewer's interest in viewing a recording of the game.

2. Description of the Prior Art.

[0002] Various methods are known for exhibiting card games, such as poker games. One method is disclosed in US Patent No. 5,451,054. The method described in the '054 patent requires a custom poker table configured with a plurality of card viewing windows adjacent each player's station, built into the playing surface of the poker table, and a chip receptacle for each player. The card viewing windows enable each of the players to place their cards face down on the window so that the player's cards can be displayed to the viewing audience without revealing the cards to the other players. The chip receptacle is used for electronically keeping track of each player's total number of chips. Other data pertinent to the poker game, such as player names, each player's cards and bet is added as text boxes to the video recording during editing. Although the text boxes provide important data relating to the current status of the poker game, such as each player's cards and bets, the exhibition method disclosed in the '054 patent utilizes a format in which the text boxes are displayed in lieu of the game itself. Unfortunately, poker games are rather short and quick. Interruption of the game to display the text information, thus distracts the viewer's attention to the game.

[0003] The custom poker table disclosed in the '054 patent was used during a poker tournament called the "Poker Million Tournament," broadcast from the Ladbroke Casino on the Isle of Man by Fox Sports Net. FIG. 7 is a video shot from underneath the viewing window on the poker table. As shown, the viewing window is used to display a player's cards to the viewing audience without revealing the player's cards to other players. While the cards are being viewed by the viewing audience, for example, as illustrated in Figure 7, the poker game is continuing in the background out of view of the viewing audience. Even though each player's hands is displayed by way of the viewing window, the viewing audience will miss a substantial portion of the poker game while the player's cards are being displayed.

[0004] FIG. 8 illustrates a video format used in the video presentation of the World Heads Up Poker Champi-

onship, played on June 2 through June 5, 2001. As shown, the video format includes an exemplary video frame, generally identified with the reference numeral 20. The exemplary video frame 20 is sectioned into a pair of player viewing windows 22 and 24, disposed in the upper left and right hand corners of the video frame 20, which represent video images of two of the players. The video presentation of the poker tournament is presented in an upside-down T-shaped viewing window 26. The T-shaped viewing window 26 represents a camera shot viewing down on the table which shows, for example, three of the dealer's cards, collectively identified with the reference numeral 28. The player's cards are superimposed on the presentation window 26 and disposed underneath the player viewing windows 22 and 24, respectively. For example, as shown, the cards identified with the reference numerals 30 and 32 are associated with the player in the player viewing window 22. Similarly, the cards identified with the reference numerals 34 and 36 are disposed beneath the player exhibited in the viewing window 24. A bottom viewing window 38 is selectively used as a rectangular presentation area, for example, to illustrate the dealer's cards. Alternatively, the bottom viewing window 38 is used to form part of the viewing window 26.

[0005] The configuration of the player viewing windows 22 and 24 and the T-shaped video image presentation area 26 illustrated in FIG. 8 is not conducive to presenting video images of the players seated around the table playing the game. As such, the video format illustrated in FIG. 8 detracts from the viewing audience's view of the poker tournament itself.

[0006] Fig. 9 illustrates yet another video format for exhibiting a poker game. This format was presented in a television production entitled "Inside the World Series of Poker," presented on the Discovery Channel. As shown, the exemplary video frame of video images illustrated in FIG. 9 is from a perspective from behind the dealer. As shown, four (4) community cards, collectively identified with the reference numeral 40, are shown face-up on the table while the fifth community card 42 is being placed face up on the table by the dealer. The video format used in this exhibition does not allow the audience to learn the identity of any of the player's cards, normally face down, until revealed by the players. Moreover, betting information can only be derived from the video image, if possible.

[0007] The format utilized in FIG. 9 is an undesirable format for exhibiting a poker game for several reasons. First, the audience is unable to get a feel for the game as it is being displayed since the audience is not made aware of each individual player's hand until the player turns his normally face down cards face up. In addition, betting information can only be derived from the video image which means the audience must count the number of chips played by each of the players in an attempt to keep track of these bets. Also, when players bet a stack of chips, the audience is unable to determine the exact amount of the bet. Finally, such a format does not easily allow the audience to keep track of each player's bets.

[0008] Fig. 10 illustrates another known video format which integrates both video images of the poker game along with graphic/textual information regarding the status of the game. As shown, an exemplary video frame, generally identified with the reference numeral 44, is divided into a generally rectangular video image viewing window 46 and a generally L-shaped graphics/text presentation area 48. The graphics/text presentation area 48 is used to exhibit various types of information including the player's names, identified in the text boxes 50 and 52; graphic images of the cards associated with each of the players, generally identified with the referenced numerals 54 and 56; and the odds associated with each player, by way of text boxes, generally identified with the reference numeral 58 and 60, 62 and 64. Near the bottom of the graphics/text presentation area 48, graphical images of each of the community cards, collectively identified with the reference numeral 66, are identified.

[0009] As shown, the player Smith is favored to win with a pair of aces while the odds are zero that player Jones with a 2 of spades and an 8 of diamonds will win. The odds also show that there is a zero percent chance of a game ending in a tie.

[0010] The format presented in Fig. 10 was used at the 31st Annual World Series of Poker at the Binion's Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada, produced by Ross Television Productions for the Discovery Channel. This format requires a reduced size video image presentation window which detracts from viewer's interest in the game. Moreover, betting information is not included. Thus, there is a need for a video format for exhibition of a card game, such as a poker game, which does not detract from the viewer's interest in viewing the game while at the same time provides the viewing audience with at least information as to each player's cards and each player's bet.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0011] The present invention relates to a method for exhibiting a card game as defined in claim 1, such as a poker game, in which graphic and text data is selectively superimposed on video frames which include the video image of the card game in a relatively unobstructive manner in order to inform the viewing audience of each player's cards and each player's bets. In this manner, viewers can get the feel of the game from each player's perspective during the game and at the same time view the card game in a relatively unobstructed matter. The graphical and text data may be superimposed on the video image in the form of pop-up boxes which can be selectively displayed on top of the video image and removed.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0012] These and other advantages of the present invention will be readily understood with reference to the following specification and attached drawing wherein:

[0013] FIG 1 is an exemplary video format of an ex-

emplary frame of a card game, such as a poker game, illustrating superimposed graphic and text matter on the video frame in accordance with the present invention.

[0014] FIG 2 is a sectional elevational view of a portion of a game table for use with the present invention which includes a vertically oriented camera disposed, for example, in a side bumper of the poker table for enabling the viewing audience to view the player's cards, shown with a player in phantom placing the cards before the camera.

[0015] FIG 3 is a perspective view illustrating a player showing his cards to the camera illustrated in FIG 2.

[0016] FIG 4 is an exemplary view of an exemplary optional text box illustrating each player's current chip count in accordance with an aspect of the present invention.

[0017] FIG 5 is an exemplary view of an optional video frame of a card player and superimposed data regarding the player's current status in the game in accordance with an aspect of the present invention.

[0018] FIG 6 is an exemplary view of another optional frame for displaying various information regarding an individual player in accordance with another aspect of the invention.

[0019] FIG 7 is a representation of a video frame from a previously exhibited poker tournament, identified as the Poker Million, broadcast from the Ladbroke Casino located in the Isle of Man by Fox Sports Net, illustrating a camera shot from underneath the table through a window on the table.

[0020] FIG 8 is a representation of a video format of a previously exhibited poker tournament, entitled the World's Heads-Up Poker Championship, played on June 2 - June 5, 2001.

[0021] FIG 9 is a representation of a video format of a previously exhibited video production entitled "Inside the World Series of Poker" produced by Ross Television Productions for the Discovery Channel.

[0022] FIG 10 is a representation of a video format of a previously exhibited video production, entitled the "31st Annual World Series of Poker," produced by Ross Television Productions for the Discovery Channel.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0023] The present invention relates to a method for exhibiting a card game, such as a poker game. In accordance with an important aspect of the invention, the video format of the card game is exhibited such that the viewing area on the television screen or monitor is optimized for display of the video images of the card game while including pop-up text and graphics information boxes which provide the viewing audience with information regarding the status of the game such as each player's cards, their bets and optionally additional information. The video format produced by the method in accordance with the present invention enables continuous presentation of the card game illustrating the players and the poker table at a minimum, while at the same time providing the

video audience with the status of the game obstructing as little as possible of the game in order to give the viewing audience the feel of the game to thereby increase interest in viewing the game.

[0024] As illustrated and described herein, the method and resulting video format is presented for a poker game, for example a poker tournament. The exemplary game exhibited is a seven (7) card poker game in which five (5) dealer cards are dealt face up and placed on a poker table. Each of the players are dealt two (2) cards face down. Each player's hand thus consists of face down two (2) cards plus the five (5) community cards. The player with the best poker hand wins the game.

[0025] The poker game described above is typically played at poker tournaments, such as a "Poker Million", the "World Series of Poker" and the "World Poker Tour". However, the method and resulting video format is clearly applicable to other games, such as other card games in which there is very little movement or action on the part of the players and/or games which last a relatively short period of time. The method and resulting video format in accordance with the present invention compensates for the little amount of player action during the games by optimizing the video image display of the game by allowing virtually continuous presentation of the card game and utilizing pop-up text and graphic boxes, superimposed on the video image, in a relatively unobstructive manner to inform the viewing audience of the various information regarding the status of the game including each player's cards and bet. These pop-up data boxes may be selectively displayed in different areas of the video image viewing window to avoid overlaying important features of the video image of the game. By optimizing the video images of the game and providing pop-up text and graphic boxes which include the player's cards and current bet, the resulting video format in accordance with the present invention enables a viewing audience to follow the game from each player's perspective during the game thus increasing the viewer's interest in the game. As will be discussed in more detail below, additional information may also be optionally provided to further enhance the audience interest in viewing the game.

[0026] In accordance with one aspect of the invention, a small video camera 100 (FIG 2) may be vertically mounted with respect to the playing surface of a poker table 104, for example, in a bumper portion 102 of the table 104. As shown best in FIG 2, the bumper portion 102 is raised from the playing surface of the poker table 104, forming a wall around the poker table 104. The video camera 100 is thus vertically mounted with respect to the playing surface of the poker table 104 to provide a more natural presentation of the player's cards. As a player lifts his cards as shown in FIGS 2 and 3 to view the cards himself, the cards are also exposed to the video camera 100. As shown best in FIG 1, a video camera 100 is provided for each player, adjacent each player's station around the poker table 104.

[0027] This video information can be used to present

each player's cards to the viewing audience during the game in one of several ways. In particular, a signal from a video camera 100 may be coupled to a microprocessor (not shown) by way of an analog digital converter and compared with stored video images to automatically identify the player's cards, for example as disclosed in US Patent Number 5,451,054, so that the player's cards can be identified in the form of a graphic/text box to the viewing audience in real time. Alternatively, the video shots of the player's cards as illustrated in FIG 3 can be used strictly during video editing of the card game. In this situation, the player's card information along with the player's name may be input into a pop-up text/graphic box. By utilizing a vertically oriented video camera, for example, disposed in the bumper portion 102 of a poker table 104, the player's actions are more natural than the system disclosed in US Patent Number 5,451,054 in which the players are required to slide their cards over a viewing window on the surface of the table.

[0028] The video format in accordance with the present invention is illustrated in FIG 1. Unlike the known video format illustrated in FIG 9, the video format in accordance with the present invention optimizes the frames of video image of the poker game in progress by utilizing most if not all of the video frame 106 for the video images of the game in progress rather than dividing the display area 106 into viewing different video windows as in the known methods as discussed above. By optimizing the video image of the poker game in progress within the video frame 106, a more natural exhibition of the poker game from the standpoint of the viewing audience can be presented.

[0029] As used herein, a video image is defined to mean an image recorded by one of more video cameras. These video images may represent a static frame or multiple frames in accordance with, for example, a standard format, such as NTSC or PAL formats or other standard or non-standard formats. Stop action video refers to a freeze frame of the video image.

[0030] A pop-up data box refers to a text/graphics box which can be overlaid over the video image in a video frame using conventional off the shelf special effects video editors, such as Adobe After Effects and the like. These special effects video editors allow the pop-up data boxes to be programmed to be visible for any desired amount of time and can be selectively placed anywhere in the video frame 106. Use of such special effects video editors is well known within the art.

[0031] Referring to FIG 1, the video format in accordance with the present invention is illustrated. An exemplary video format is presented for example, for a video poker tournament. As shown, a video image of a poker table 104 is illustrated along with three players, identified with the reference numerals 108, 110 and 112 and a dealer 114. As mentioned previously, video cameras 100 are disposed, for example, in the bumper portion 102 of the poker table 104. In addition, a main video camera (not shown) is used to record successive frames of the main

video image, identified with the reference numeral 116, for example, a poker game in progress which includes a video display of the action of the players 108, 110 and 112 around the poker table 104 and optionally a dealer 114. As the game is being played, various pop-up data boxes are displayed and overlaid over a selected portion of the video frame 106 in an unobstructive manner. As shown in FIG. 1, most if not the entire video frame 106 is used for the video image. The pop boxes are selectively positioned so as to obstruct a minimal portion of the main video image 116 of the game in progress, if any at all. As discussed previously, these pop-up data boxes include various data regarding the status of the game to increase the audience interest in the game. For example, individual pop-up data boxes 118 and 120 may be provided for each player. Each pop-up data box may be provided with a portion 120 for the player's name as well as portions 122 and 124 for each player's cards and a portion 126 for the player's current bet. A turn arrow 128 may also optionally be provided to indicate which player has the current turn.

[0032] The video format in accordance with the present invention provides the video viewing audience with a distinct advantage over the live viewing audience and viewers of other video formats, namely, the video viewing audience of the video format in accordance with the present invention will be provided with information regarding each player's cards and current bet while the game is in progress. Thus, the video viewing audience will be able to get a better feel for the game while it is in progress to further stimulate viewer interest in watching video replays of a poker game. In addition to the data boxes 118, 120 which identify the player's cards and bets, additional data boxes may be provided to increase viewer interest. For example, a data box 128 may optionally be provided which illustrates the community cards, collectively identified with the reference numeral 130.

[0033] As mentioned above, for the particular game being illustrated, five (5) cards are dealt by the dealer 114 face up. These five (5) cards, identified herein as the community cards 130, may be displayed in a pop-up data box 128. These cards 130 may be displayed as shown with alphanumeric characters and symbols or images of the cards themselves may be shown. Similarly, the data boxes 118 may also illustrate alphanumeric images and symbols of the playing cards or alternatively display images of the cards themselves.

[0034] As shown in FIG 1, the pop-up data box 128 illustrating the community cards 130 allows the video viewing audience to easily view each player's entire hand. As mentioned above for the particular game illustrated, each player's hand consists of the five (5) community cards 130 plus the two (2) individual cards dealt face down to the player 108, 110, 112. As shown, the player Jones has a pair of aces and a pair of eights. The player Smith has three (3) eights and a pair of nines. The indicator arrow 128 indicates that it is currently Smith's turn. The audience at this point is aware that Smith's

hand can win. As indicated, Smith "calls". At this point, the viewing audience knows that Smith will win the hand before Smith himself.

[0035] Other pop-up boxes may be deployed and overlaid over portions of the video frame 106. For example, a pop-up box 130 may be used to present the odds to the audience. In addition, other pop-up boxes 132 and 134 may be used to identify the pot size for the current hand. A pop-up box 136 may be used for additional information regarding lingo used in the game, hand update or a prior play. All of the pop-up boxes 118, 120, 128, 130, 132,134 and 136 may be overlaid over the video image being displayed in the frame 106 for example, adjacent to the main video image 116 of the poker game. In this way the main video image 116 is optimized while at the same time providing the viewing audience with at least minimal information regarding the status of the game including the identity of each player's face down cards as well as each player's bet.

[0036] In addition to the video format illustrated in FIG 1, additional information regarding the game may be provided as illustrated in FIGS 4, 5, and 6. For example, FIG 4 illustrates one or more text boxes 140 and 142 which provide data regarding each player's chip count. The pop-up box 140 may be configured as a banner with the words "Chip Count" and the title of the competition, for example "World Poker Tour." A data box 142 may be used to identify each of the players by name and the value of their current chip count. These pop-up boxes 140 and 142 may be overlaid over a video frame 106 for example, between games.

[0037] FIGS 5 and 6 illustrate additional formats for informational video frames, for example, to be used between games. In particular FIG 5 illustrates a freeze frame video image of a poker player with a data box 144 at the bottom of the viewing window 106 illustrating the player's current status. FIG 6 illustrates yet another format for providing additional information regarding a player. The format illustrated in FIG 6 is configured such that the video frame 106 is used for the text box and includes a video window 146 which has a freeze frame or video frames of a player. As shown, various textual information may be provided within the video window 146. For example, the player's first and last name, age, town and past achievements. These video formats may be used between poker games to further enhance a viewer's interest in viewing the poker games.

[0038] Obviously, many modifications and variations of the present invention are possible in light of the above teachings. Thus, it is to be understood that, within the scope of the appended claims, the invention may be practiced otherwise than as specifically described above.

[0039] What is claimed and desired to be covered by a Letters Patent is as follows:

Claims

1. A method for exhibiting a card game to a viewing audience, comprising the steps of:

- (a) continuously exhibiting video images of a card game in progress as a series of video frames; and
 (b) concurrently displaying each player's cards essentially in real time with the game in progress, and not in lieu of displaying the game, to enable the viewing audience to concurrently view the players' cards and the game in progress,

characterized in that

step (b) includes providing a game table having a bumper therearound with a video camera disposed at each player's station in said bumper and aimed horizontally across the table to enable the player's cards to be viewed remotely without revealing the cards to other players at the game table and that step (b) includes the step of displaying additional information concurrently with the game in progress, wherein the step of displaying additional information comprises displaying information relating to hand updates.

2. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein step (b) further comprises: displaying data representative of each player's current bet.
3. The method as recited in claim 1 or 2, wherein video images from said video cameras at said player stations are used to identify each player's cards.
4. The method as recited in any preceding claim, wherein data regarding the game is directly overlaid on said video frames of said game in progress.
5. The method as recited in any preceding claim, further including the step of displaying each player's current odds.
6. The method as recited in any preceding claim, further including the step of displaying the current pot size.
7. The method as recited in any preceding claim, wherein the step of displaying additional information comprises displaying lingo information.
8. The method as recited in any preceding claim, wherein the step of displaying additional information comprises displaying information relating to a prior hand.
9. The method as recited in any preceding claim, wherein the video frames fill substantially all of a vid-

eo frame.

Patentansprüche

1. Verfahren zum Darstellen eines Kartenspiels für Zuschauer, mit den folgenden Schritten:

- (a) Videobilder eines laufenden Kartenspiels werden kontinuierlich als Folge von Videobildern dargestellt; und
 (b) die Karten jedes Spielers werden gleichzeitig im Wesentlichen in Echtzeit mit dem laufenden Spiel und nicht anstelle einer Darstellung des Spiels dargestellt, damit die Zuschauer gleichzeitig die Karten der Spieler und das laufende Spiel betrachten können,

dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass

in Schritt (b) ein Spieltisch, der eine Umrandung aufweist, mit einer Videokamera versehen wird, die an der Station jedes Spielers in der Umrandung angeordnet ist und horizontal über den Tisch gerichtet ist, damit die Karten des Spielers von fern betrachtet werden können, ohne die Karten anderen Spielern an dem Spieltisch zu zeigen, und dass in Schritt (b) weitere Informationen parallel zu dem laufenden Spiel angezeigt werden, wobei der Schritt des Anzeigens weiterer Informationen die Anzeige von Informationen bezüglich neuer Karten umfasst.

2. Verfahren nach Anspruch 1, wobei Schritt (b) ferner Folgendes umfasst: Anzeige von Daten über den aktuellen Einsatz jedes Spielers.
3. Verfahren nach Anspruch 1 oder 2, wobei Videobilder von den Videokameras an den Stationen der Spieler verwendet werden, um die Karten jedes Spielers zu identifizieren.
4. Verfahren nach einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, wobei Daten über das Spiel direkt in die Videobilder des laufenden Spiels eingeblendet werden.
5. Verfahren nach einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, bei dem ferner die aktuellen Gewinnchancen jedes Spielers angezeigt werden.
6. Verfahren nach einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, bei dem ferner die aktuelle Potgröße angezeigt wird.
7. Verfahren nach einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, wobei der Schritt des Anzeigens weiterer Informationen die Anzeige von fachsprachlichen Informationen umfasst.
8. Verfahren nach einem der vorhergehenden Ansprü-

che, wobei der Schritt des Anzeigens weiterer Informationen die Anzeige von Informationen über ein früheres Spiel umfasst.

9. Verfahren nach einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, wobei die Videobilder im Wesentlichen einen gesamten Videorahmen ausfüllen.

Revendications

1. Procédé permettant de présenter un jeu de carte à un public, comportant les étapes consistant à :

(a) présenter en continu des images vidéo d'un jeu de carte en cours en tant qu'une série de trames vidéo ; et

(b) afficher simultanément les cartes de chaque joueur essentiellement en temps réel avec le jeu en cours, et non pas au lieu de montrer le jeu, afin de permettre au public de voir concurrentement les cartes des joueurs et le jeu en cours,

caractérisé en ce que

l'étape (b) inclut l'étape consistant à prévoir une table de jeu ayant un rebord sur le pourtour avec une caméra vidéo agencée au poste de chaque joueur sur ledit rebord et orientée horizontalement à travers la table en vue de permettre aux cartes du joueur d'être visualisées à distance sans révéler les cartes à d'autres joueurs présents à la table de jeu et **en ce que**

l'étape (b) inclut l'étape consistant à afficher des informations supplémentaires simultanément avec le jeu en cours, dans lequel l'étape en vue d'afficher des informations supplémentaires comporte l'étape consistant à afficher des informations relativement à des mises à jour de main.

2. Procédé selon la revendication 1, dans lequel l'étape (b) comporte en outre l'étape consistant à : afficher des données relativement à l'annonce de chaque joueur.
3. Procédé selon la revendication 1 ou 2, dans lequel des images vidéo desdites caméras vidéo au niveau desdits postes de joueur sont utilisées en vue d'identifier les cartes de chaque joueur.
4. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel des données relatives au jeu sont directement superposées sur lesdites trames vidéo dudit jeu en cours.
5. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, comportant en outre l'étape consistant à afficher les chances de chaque joueur.

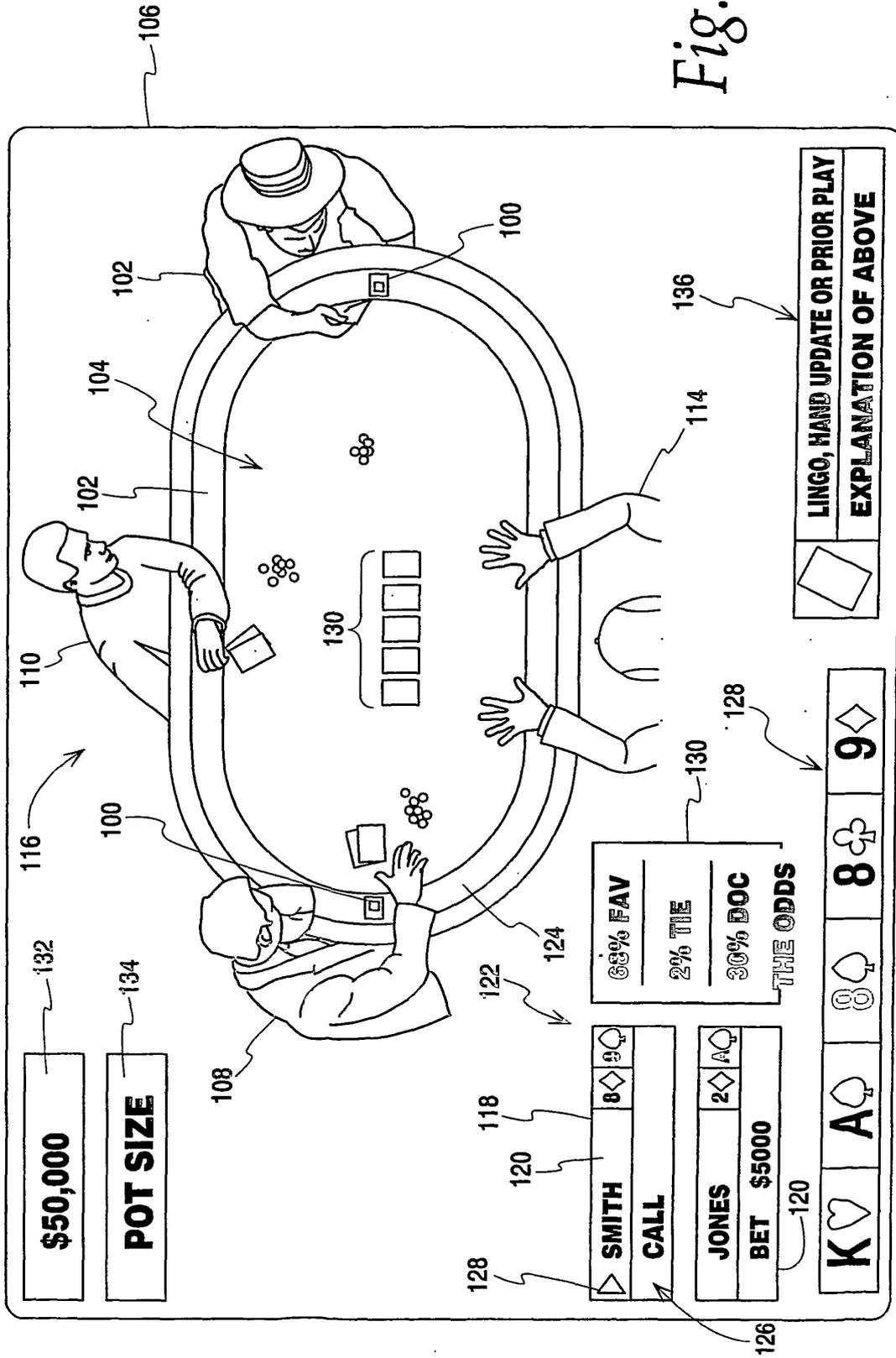
6. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, comportant en outre l'étape consistant à afficher la valeur de la cagnotte en cours.

7. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel l'étape consistant à afficher des informations supplémentaires comporte l'étape consistant à afficher des informations relatives au jargon employé.

8. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel l'étape consistant à afficher des informations supplémentaires comporte l'étape consistant à afficher des informations relatives à une main précédente.

9. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel les trames vidéo occupent considérablement toute la trame vidéo.

Fig. 1



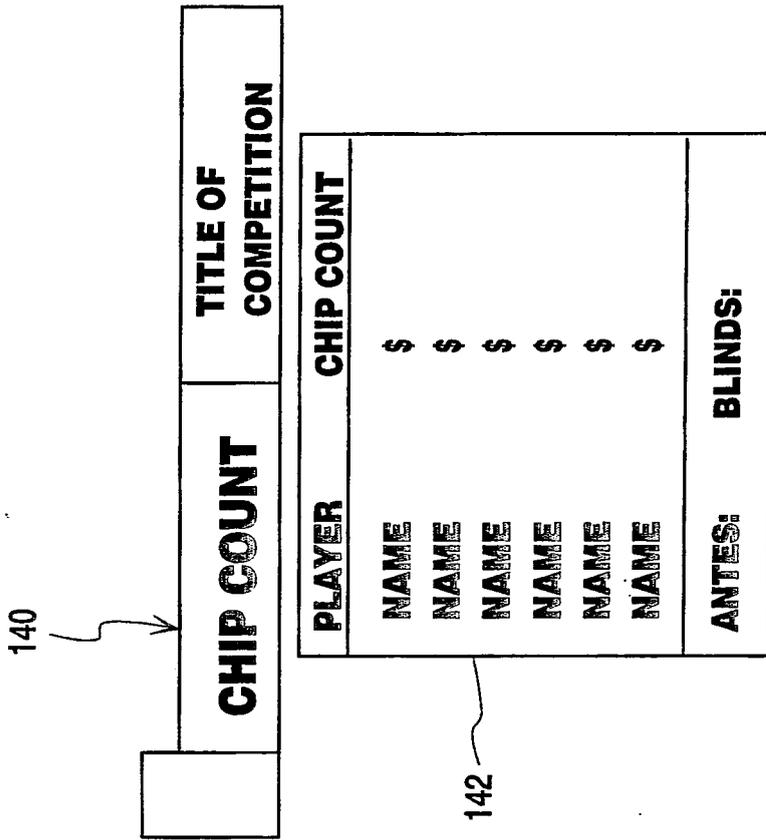
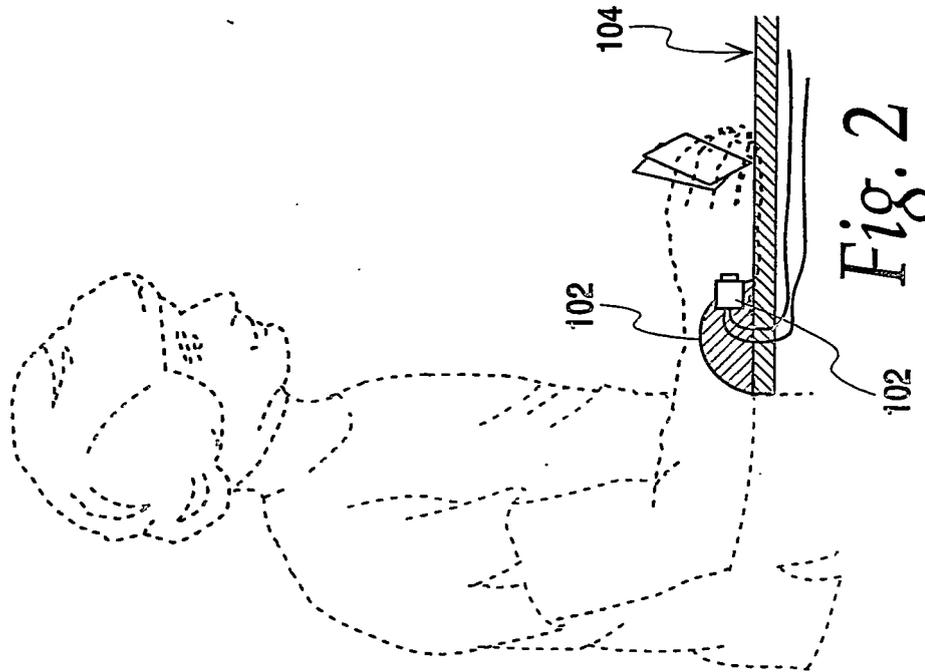


Fig. 4



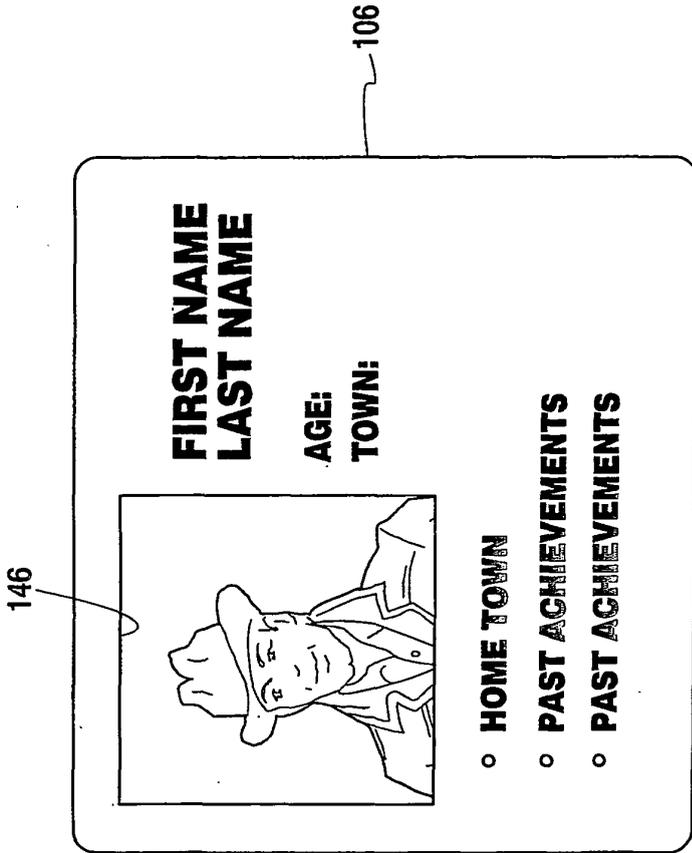


Fig. 6

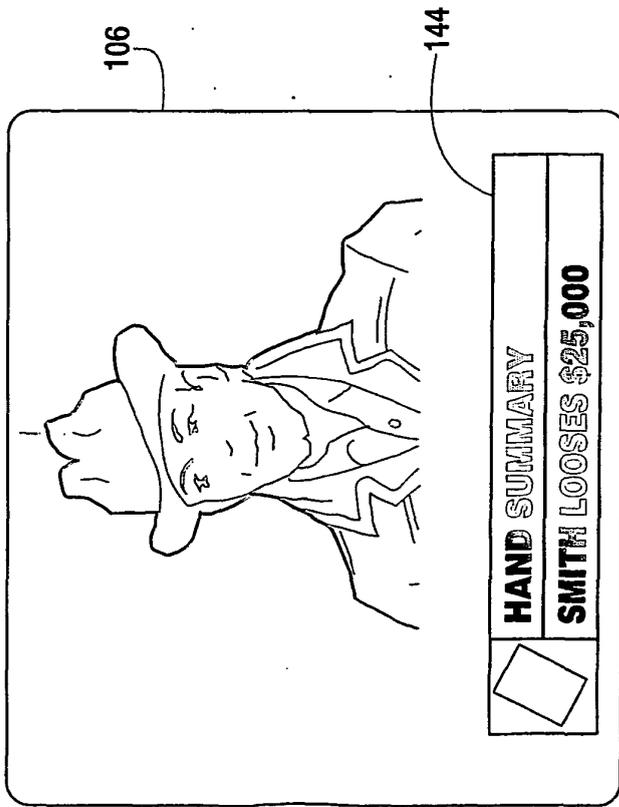


Fig. 5

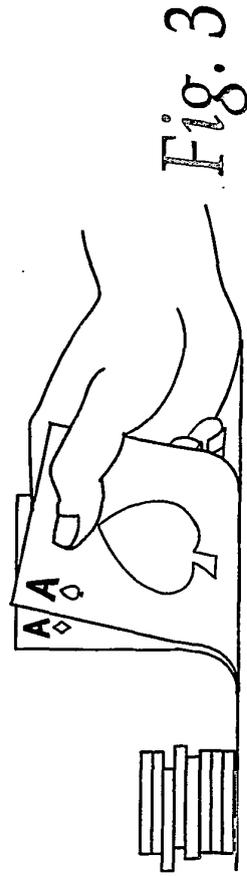
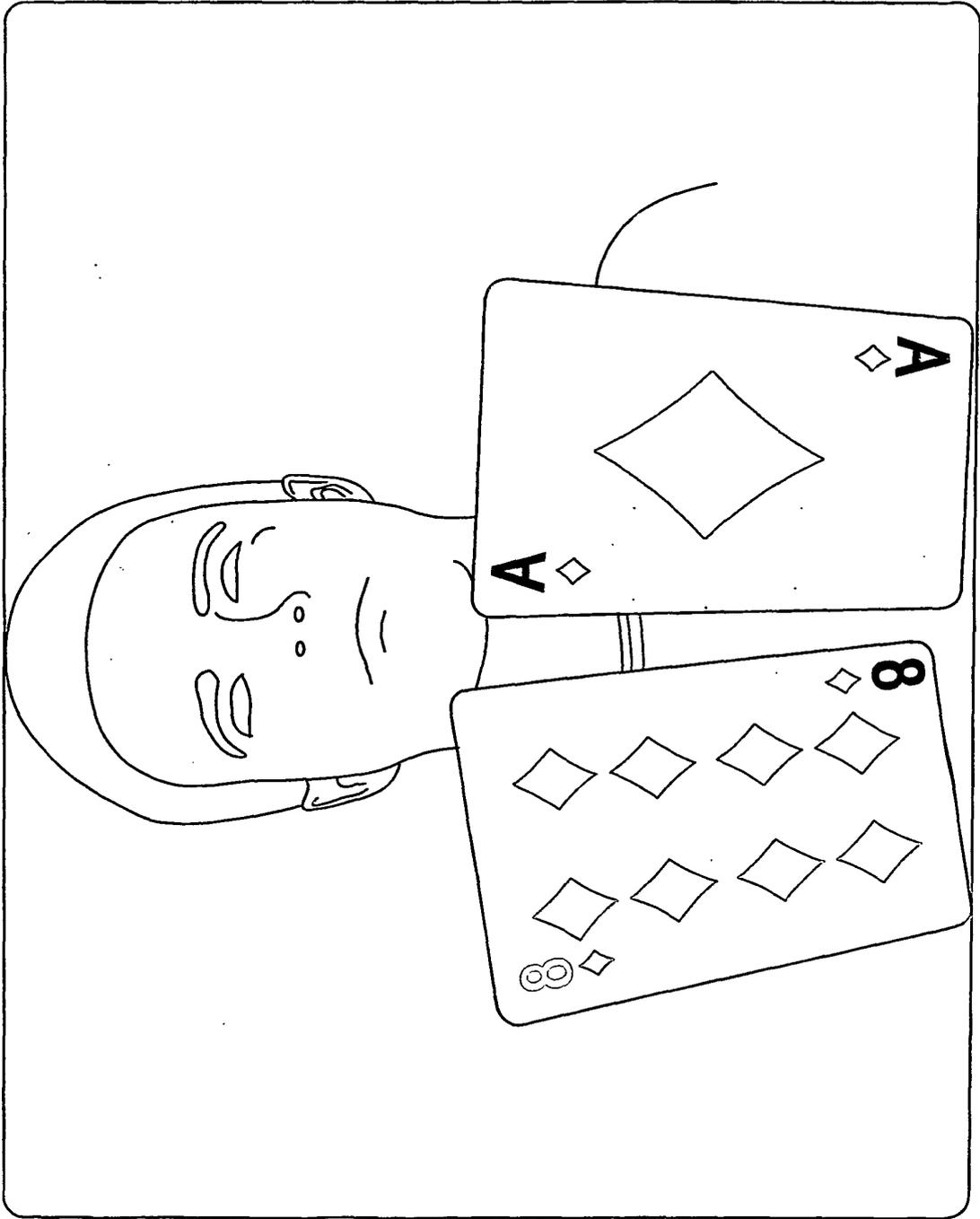


Fig. 7
Prior Art



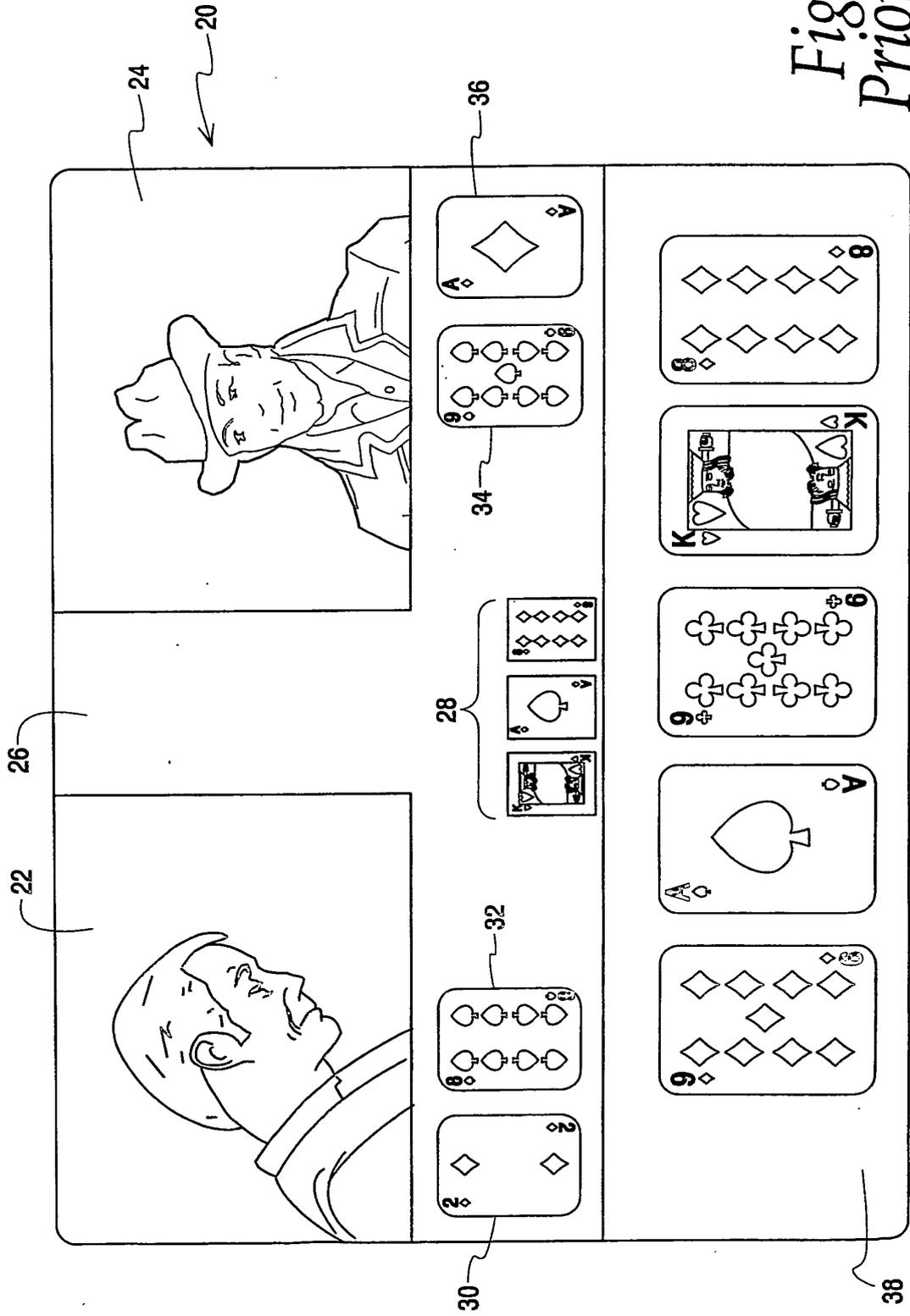
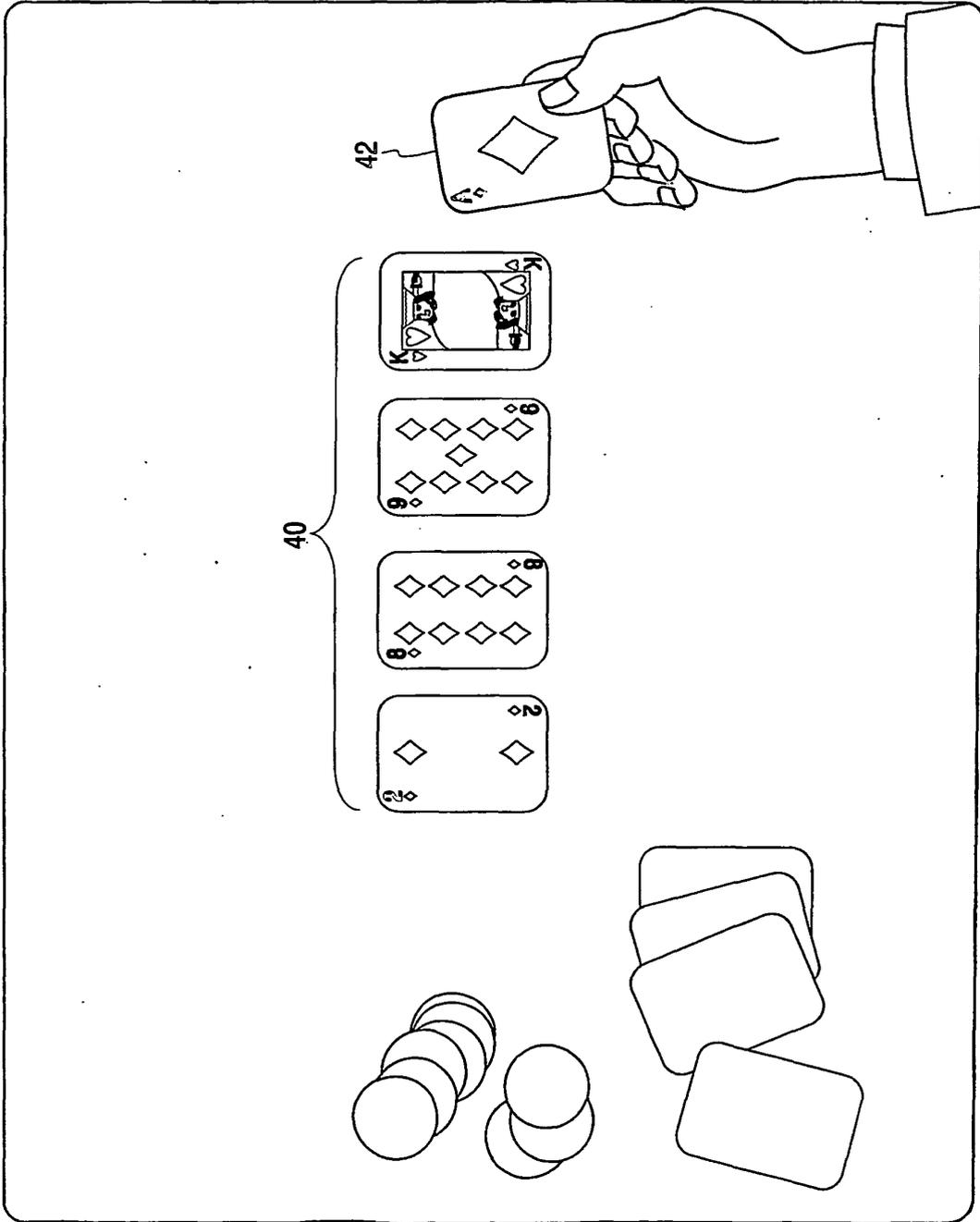


Fig. 8
Prior Art

Fig. 9
Prior Art



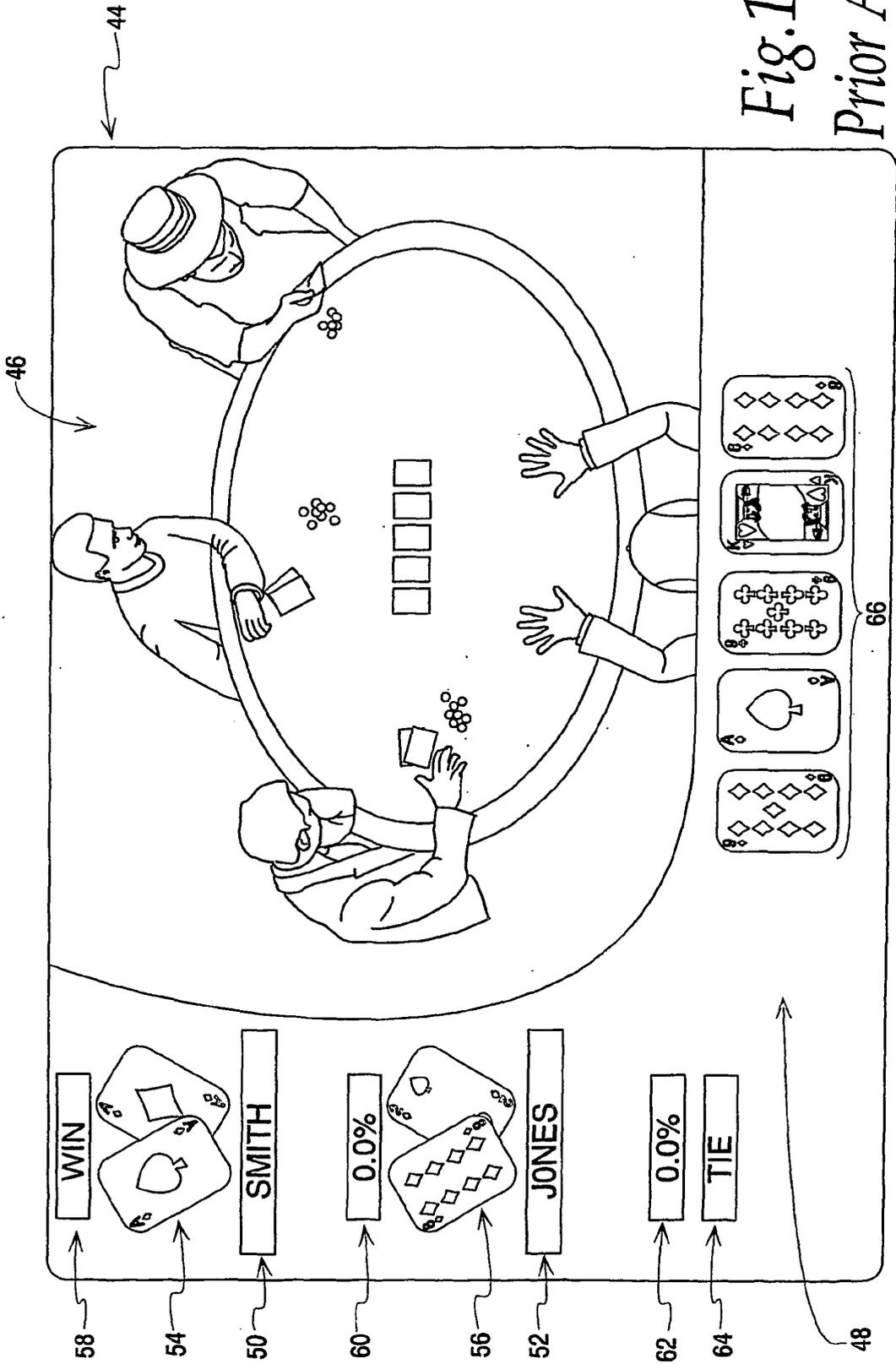


Fig.10
Prior Art

REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

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Patent documents cited in the description

- US 5451054 A [0002] [0027] [0027]