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(54) **Electronic wagering including a bonus game**

(57) A communal gaming method and system in which a bonus game is provided. When a trigger event occurs in a primary communal game, a separate bonus

game feature is made available to players. The bonus game is preferably only available to participants in the primary game. This allows for more player interest to be generated.

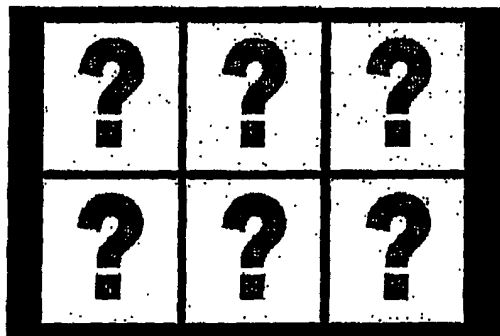


Figure 1

Description

[0001] The present invention relates to a modified electronic gambling game, which can be implemented in conjunction with electronic wagering.

[0002] The game of roulette is a popular form of gaming, both as a table game in casinos, and in automated and electronic forms. The simplicity of the game and the lack of room for player strategy makes it difficult to successfully add features to the game.

[0003] Recently, games have been developed which use electronic means to place bets with the result being derived from a live dealer determined wheel, or from a simulated wheel. Such a system is disclosed in US patent No. 6659866, the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference.

[0004] Other games have also been proposed in which the players are betting against a common outcome, such as communal simulated table games and communal slot games, but in which electronic betting terminals are provided for each player.

[0005] Within a casino game, it is always the operator's objective to maximise the enjoyment of the game by players, and to increase the amounts wagered.

[0006] It is an object of the present invention to provide a feature for enhancing the enjoyment of a game based on a communal outcome.

[0007] In broad terms, the present invention provides a bonus feature for communal games using electronic betting, whether with a live game or a simulated game. Upon the occurrence of a predetermined event - for example, a particular number in roulette - a bonus game feature is triggered on each active player terminal. This game may take a variety of forms.

[0008] Throughout the specification and claims, the term communal game means a game in which the result is shared by a variety of players, whether the game is a traditional dealer operated table game, or an electronic game such as a communal slot game or a simulated table game. The players may, depending upon the game, wager on different results occurring in the game.

[0009] According to a first aspect, the present invention provides a method of operating a gambling game, the game being a communal game and including a plurality of player terminals which permit wagers to be placed on a game outcome, the method including the steps of:

receiving player wagers at one or more terminals;
determining the outcome of a primary game;
crediting any player winnings;
determining whether a trigger event occurs;
if a trigger event occurs, providing an option to play a different, bonus game to all players who placed wagers on the primary game;
receiving player wagers on said bonus game; and
crediting any player winnings from said bonus game.

[0010] The trigger event may be a predetermined, known event in the primary game, or may be generated at a randomly determined time, or on any other suitable basis. The trigger may be a particular symbol combination or specific game result. It may be based on a desired average turnover between trigger occurrences. The invention is not limited in scope to any particular trigger event.

[0011] It is preferred that the bonus game is made available after the normal wagers are paid, but the reverse order could be used. It is preferred that the bonus game only be available to those players who wagered on the primary game.

[0012] The player terminals may be located at an actual gaming table, or remote from it. The game may be an actual table game, for example roulette, or a simulated game, for example a simulated roulette wheel. It may be a communal slot game. Preferably, the bonus game has a higher rate of return to players than the primary game.

[0013] According to another aspect, the present invention provides a gaming system, including a plurality of electronic player terminals, and a game outcome determining device, said terminals allowing a respective player to place wagers on the outcome of said game outcome determining device, said game having at least a first mode, in which a primary game is played using said game outcome determining device, and a second mode, in which an electronic bonus game is played, said second mode being temporarily operative only after a trigger event.

[0014] The primary game may be a manually determined outcome, such as an actual dealer operating a roulette wheel, dice or cards; a shared result in a automated game, such as an automatic roulette wheel; a simulated table game; a communal slot game; or any other type of communal game using electronic betting.

[0015] As an electronic terminal is used by players to place wagers, the present invention allows the operator to provide interesting features and variations which are not practical in a fully manual system, or in a system of independent gaming machines. A particular outcome in, for example, a roulette game may trigger a game of an entirely different type. This allows the operator to maintain interest and excitement for players, breaks up the regular pattern of play, and creates an anticipation of a different event during play. The present invention also contemplates that different outcomes could give rise to different bonus games, or that different possible bonus games are used either at random or on a cyclical basis.

[0016] An embodiment of the present invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying figures, in which:

Figures 1 to 3 show representations of screens during a bonus play game.

[0017] The present invention lends itself to many dif-

ferent implementations, as will be apparent to those skilled in the art. The following example is intended purely to illustrate one possible implementation. The implementation of the present invention may involve a relatively straightforward software modification to the various existing games in question.

[0018] The primary game, as described above, may be any suitable game which has a common outcome on which wagers are placed by the players. All player may be wagering on a common outcome, or may make wagers on different possible outcomes, depending upon the nature of the game. However, the present invention is particularly advantageous when implemented in association with a dealer determined table game. The bonus feature, as will be further described below, adds an extra level of excitement to a table game, which is not achievable using conventional methods.

[0019] According to this example, a bonus game is added once a trigger event has taken place. This may be the occurrence of a particular, predetermined outcome, such as a particular result in roulette. It could equally be triggered at random times, within certain time periods, or by events occurring over more than one game of the primary game.

[0020] Other determinants may be any number on the roulette wheel, a timed device that periodically selects a designated game or a results driven determinant. Regardless of the trigger mechanism, the bonus feature is set to be awarded upon the conclusion of a game, and is made available to the players who participated in that game. The bonus feature is also designed to sit within the total return to player of the game and has no connections to any of the individual bets placed by a player other than the player's total wager amount.

[0021] For simplicity in describing this feature, the occurrence of the number 1 on a roulette wheel will be used to signal the awarding of the bonus feature. Once this has occurred, all players who participated in the previous game, regardless of their wager level, will be included in the feature.

[0022] Upon the designated result or event occurring, the player will be presented a new screen on their player terminal that will offer them a number of symbols between 2 and n from which to choose. Behind these symbols is a prize equal to the predetermined prize allocation from the base game (taking into account the chance of a player making a successful choice) multiplied by the players total bet from the previous game. If the player makes a successful choice, they are awarded the designated prize. The prize awarded is related to their chance of making a successful choice and the frequency of the bonus feature.

[0023] One method of implementing the present invention is outlined below:

1. Players place bets for current game
2. Betting time is closed, wheel is spun or result determined

3. Winning number is 1 (red, odd)

4. All winning bets are paid related to the winning combinations as detailed in the rules of roulette

5. The bonus screen of figure 1 is offered to all players involved in the previous game regardless of the bet.

6. The player makes a selection from the screen. Figure 2 illustrates a losing choice, and figure 3 illustrates a winning result.

7. In the event a player makes a correct choice, they are awarded the designated prize multiplied by their total bet from the previous game.

[0024] In figure 1, behind one of the '?' symbols is a bonus prize. The selection may either be conveniently made by a touch screen apparatus or by means of buttons that would be provided as part of the machine. Other embodiments may include

- More than one prize behind the available selections
- Player may have more than one choice
- The more choices it takes the player to select the prize, the smaller it gets
- Other prizes as determined by the venue (car, holiday etc.)

[0025] The use of a pre-determined number, while not the only method, is the simplest for players to understand and is preferred. It also makes the calculation of the prize contribution much easier to evaluate.

[0026] It is preferred that the bonus game, implemented as described, on each terminal is not identical. Clearly, if all screens showed the same bonus selections and the prize was always behind the same selection for all screens, this would facilitate other players copying a successful player. One option is to have different winning selections for each terminal, generated by the central game processor. Another alternative is to have the winning selection controlled locally by the player terminal. Alternatively, if the timing of determination of whether a selection wins is delayed until a common time, then the terminals could have the same winning selection.

[0027] It will be appreciated that the bonus game as described is only an example, and any suitable bonus game could be used. For example, the bonus game may be one in which a simulated reels type game is played on each terminal, or in which a separate feature game is made available. The bonus game could be a game in which each terminal receives the same result, but this is not preferred. The bonus game can provide a larger, jackpot style outcome more readily if each player has only a chance of obtaining a larger prize, as described in the example.

[0028] The present Invention can be implemented in systems which are configured in various ways. The terminals may be largely autonomous, replying only on a central device to communicate the winning outcomes, but paying successful wagers and debiting credits for

bets made locally. The terminals may be essentially slaves to a central control system, with all wagers accepted and managed centrally, with the local terminal providing a way to communicate with and provide inputs to the central system. One of the terminals may operate as the central controller or determine the game outcomes. If the game is played manually, the outcome can be entered manually using a keyboard or touchscreen or the like by the dealer, or detected automatically by automatic means - for example, a photoelectric device to detect where a roulette ball has settled. The present invention can be applied in any of these configurations, provided a communal game is played.

[0029] In the event that a dealer determined game is played, it is preferred that some means is provided to indicate to the dealer that a bonus game is in progress. This may be via an audible sound, visual indicia, display on the dealer display or the like.

[0030] It will be further understood that the player is not compelled to participate in the bonus game, and may simply wait it out and not make a selection.

[0031] It is preferred in any implementation that there is an overall control on the time taken for the bonus game, so that the overall game speed is not reduced by the operation of the bonus game. Preferably, the default delay position is that the player does not participate. It will be understood that the present invention may be implemented in variety of ways with a frequency of trigger, prize level and chance of winning as desired by the game designer. Additional features as appropriate to the primary game may be implemented with the present invention.

Claims

1. A method of operating a gambling game, the game being a communal game and including a plurality of player terminals which permit wagers to be placed on a game outcome, the method including the steps of:

receiving player wagers at one or more terminals;
determining the outcome of a primary game;
and
crediting any player winnings from the primary game;
determining whether a trigger event occurs;
if a trigger event occurs, providing an option to play a different, bonus game to all players who placed wagers on the primary game;
receiving player wagers on said bonus game;
and
crediting any player winnings from said bonus game.

2. A method according to claim 1, wherein the trigger

event is a predetermined event in the primary game.

3. A method according to claim 1, wherein the trigger event occurs at a randomly selected time.
4. A method according to any preceding claim, wherein the player wagers on said bonus game are limited to the total player wagers on the primary game.
5. A method according to any preceding claim, wherein the return on said bonus game is proportional to the total player wagers on the primary game.
6. A method according to any preceding claim, wherein the primary game is a live, dealer determined game.
7. A gaming system, including a plurality of electronic player terminals and a game outcome determining device, said terminals allowing a respective player to place wagers on the outcome of said game outcome determining device, said game having at least a first mode, in which a primary game is played using said game outcome determining device, and a second mode, in which an electronic bonus game is played, said second mode being temporarily operative after a trigger event.
8. A system according to claim 7, wherein the primary game is determined by a dealer manually operating said device.
9. A system according to claim 7, wherein the primary game is electronically determined.
10. A system according to any one of claims 7 to 9, wherein the trigger event is a predetermined event in the primary game.
11. A system according to any one of claims 7 to 9, wherein the trigger event occurs at a randomly selected time.
12. A system according to any one of claims 7 to 11, wherein the player wagers on said bonus game are limited to the total player wagers on the primary game.
13. A system according to any one of claims 7 to 12, wherein the return on said bonus game is proportional to the total player wagers on the primary game.
14. A software product operatively adapted to implement the method according to claim 1.

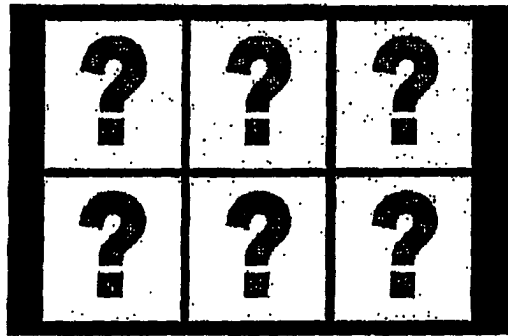


Figure 1

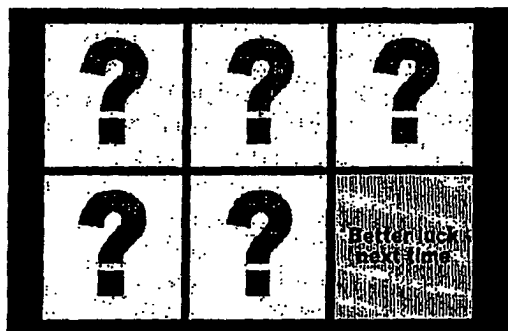


Figure 2



Figure 3



European Patent
Office

EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 05 25 4481

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Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.7)
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			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl.7)
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The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search The Hague		Date of completion of the search 12 September 2005	Examiner Van Dop, E
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document			

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**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
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This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report.
The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on
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