



(12) **EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION**

(43) Date of publication:
16.04.2008 Bulletin 2008/16

(51) Int Cl.:
G07F 17/32 (2006.01)

(21) Application number: **07254039.6**

(22) Date of filing: **11.10.2007**

(84) Designated Contracting States:
AT BE BG CH CY CZ DE DK EE ES FI FR GB GR HU IE IS IT LI LT LU LV MC MT NL PL PT RO SE SI SK TR
Designated Extension States:
AL BA HR MK RS

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(30) Priority: **12.10.2006 US 548850**

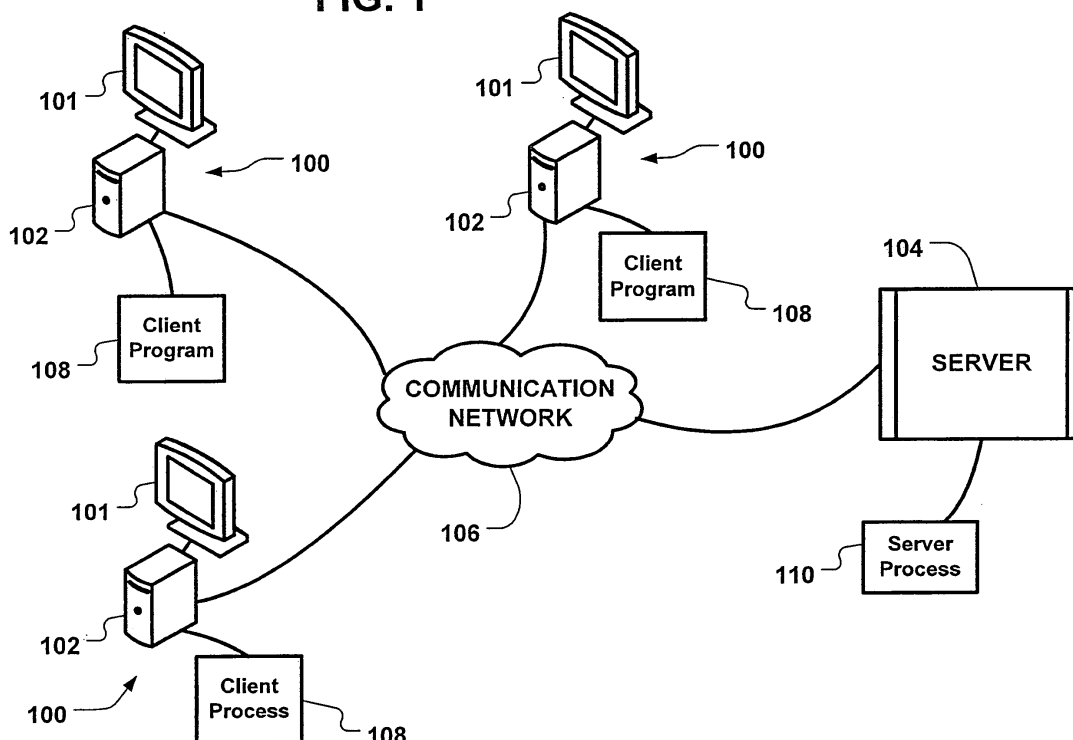
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(54) **Method and system for providing deal-making in multiplayer tournaments**

(57) A system and method for deal-making in a multiplayer game-of-chance tournament are described. The system and method are applicable to poker, blackjack, mah-jongg, video slots, and other betting games of chance at online and live casinos. The system includes a graphical interface which depicts the game-of-chance

and a deal-making interface. The deal-making interface allows players to negotiate the distribution of a divisible prize (a prize pool split). The graphical interface may also include a chat window, displayed along with the deal-making interface, for allowing communication among players.

FIG. 1



Description

[0001] The present invention relates generally to electronic multiplayer tournaments involving games-of-chance such as poker, blackjack, mah-jongg, video slots and the like; and more particularly, to deal-making proposals in such games.

[0002] An electronic multiplayer tournament for a game-of-chance generally comprises a number of rounds, each round involving one or more instances of a virtual game-of-chance (hereinafter, game) in which players participate. Depending on the type of game, each instance may involve one or more hands, turns, spins, or other wagering events during the virtual game.

[0003] For example, in an electronic multiplayer poker tournament, the game instance might be a virtual poker table, at which typically six to eight players may play poker against each other. For a small multiplayer tournament there might be only a few virtual poker tables, or even only one virtual poker table. For a large multiplayer tournament, there might be hundreds or even thousands of virtual poker tables. At each game instance, the players play multiple hands of poker at the virtual table until the game ends.

[0004] Electronic multiplayer video slot tournaments present a different organizational scheme. In an electronic multiplayer video slot tournament, each game instance typically may be a single virtual slot machine. Typically, a single player will play by wagering and spinning that single virtual slot machine. The single player competes along with other similarly situated players, who each play by wagering and spinning their associated virtual slot machine. Generally, each round consists of one or more spins, with a typical round involving a fixed time limit, spin total, or total winnings target.

[0005] In order to participate in an electronic multiplayer tournament, a player is typically required to pay a buy-in amount and an entrance fee. For example, if the buy-in amount is \$40 and the entrance fee is \$4, each player participating in the tournament pays \$44 to the tournament organizers in order to play. The buy-in amount from all the participating players in the tournament may be pooled to form the tournament prize money. The entrance fee normally accrues to the tournament organizers.

[0006] Each player is typically awarded an identical quantity of tournament chips at the beginning of the tournament. These tournament chips may typically be used as counters to determine the ultimate winner(s) of the tournament. The tournament prize money may be distributed among the top-placed finishers in the tournament.

[0007] If there is more than one round in a tournament, the number of players in each successive tournament round is typically smaller than the number of players in each preceding round. In poker, for example, a player is eliminated from the game instance when the player has lost all the player's tournament chips. Typically, when a

predetermined number of surviving players in each game instance remains, the round ends and those surviving players proceed to the next round. In another example, blackjack rounds may each consist of a predetermined number of hands. Once that number of hands has been played, a predetermined number of top chip holders from each game instance proceed to the next round.

[0008] Ultimately, the number of surviving players is whittled down, round by round, until a sufficiently small number of players remain so that they are all "in-the-money," i.e., entitled to a share of the prize money.

[0009] Once the surviving players in a tournament are all in-the-money, they can play out the tournament to the end. Generally, each player will collect a share of the prize money corresponding to that player's eventual finishing position. Alternatively, the remaining players can agree to terminate the tournament early and to share, according to some agreed upon distribution scheme, the combined prize money they could have collectively won. This is known in the art as "deal-making" and is well known in land-based poker tournaments. This type of deal-making requires that all the players agree upon a payout distribution scheme and successful deal-making may depend on the honor of the players to distribute the money according to the deal.

[0010] In electronic multiplayer tournaments, deal-making is not as well known. Currently, electronic deal-making is offered only for select poker tournaments on the Internet. In the electronic poker tournaments offering deal-making, when a player proposes a deal, the tournament game is suspended and all the players' workstations are re-directed to a separate deal-making application and a new display. The new display does not show the current poker game in progress. Further, the electronic poker tournaments that provide deal-making do not make use of the same input tools present in the normal poker display, such as the standard chat window which players use to communicate during game play.

[0011] Within the new display, the players can negotiate and attempt to arrive at an agreeable payout distribution scheme. If an agreement is reached, the tournament is terminated and the collective prize money is distributed as per the deal. If no settlement is reached, the players' workstations and displays are redirected back to the electronic tournament game display and play resumes.

[0012] If no formal deal-making is available through an electronic tournament space, players can also propose and agree to deals through chat or other communication systems. However, the distribution of winnings depends on the honor of the players to distribute the winnings to other deal participants as per the deal.

[0013] A system and method for deal-making in electronic multiplayer games-of-chance tournaments is described. A gaming interface is described that includes a deal-making interface. The deal-making interface allows for prize pool-splitting deals to be proposed and for players to accept, reject, or modify those deal proposals. The

interface can allow the game to remain in full view while a deal is being made. Further, the interface gives players a quick and upfront option to make a deal.

[0014] The present disclosure is applicable to poker, blackjack, mah-jongg, video slots and other betting games of chance. The disclosure is also applicable to land-based electronic gaming machines at a typical live casino, such as video poker machines connected through a network by a central gaming server, and to online gaming at an online casino.

[0015] In one example, a graphical interface for deal-making in a multiplayer game-of-chance is presented. The graphical interface comprises a game play environment depicting the game-of-chance and a deal-making interface. The deal-making interface may allow players to negotiate the distribution of a divisible prize (a prize pool split) associated with the game-of-chance. Further, the deal-making interface may be depicted along with the game-of-chance such that both are in view. The graphical interface may also include a chat window, displayed along with the deal-making interface, for allowing communication among players.

[0016] The deal-making interface may include a distribution display which shows a measure, such as chip count, of each player's standing in the game-of-chance relative to other players' standing in the game-of-chance. Within the deal-making interface, a deal defining a proposed prize pool split may be automatically displayed or manually displayed at a player's request. The proposed prize pool split may be calculated based on each player's standing relative to other players' standing or the proposed prize pool split may be defined by a player.

[0017] In another example, a method for providing deal-making in a multiplayer game-of-chance is presented. The method comprises providing a game play environment depicting the game-of-chance and providing a deal-making interface. The deal-making interface may allow players to negotiate the distribution of a divisible prize (a prize pool split) associated with the game-of-chance. Further, the deal-making interface may be depicted along with the game-of-chance such that both are in view.

[0018] In another example, a gaming station is presented. The gaming station comprises a monitor, a processor, and a memory. The monitor is for presenting to a user a display depicting game play corresponding to a game-of-chance. The display further depicts a deal-making interface for allowing players of the game-of-chance to negotiate the distribution of a divisible prize (a prize pool split) associated with the game-of-chance. The memory contains processing instructions executable by the processor for displaying on the monitor the deal-making interface along with the game play such that both are in view.

[0019] In another example, a gaming system is presented. The gaming system comprises a gaming station and a server. The gaming station further comprises a workstation and a monitor. The monitor is for presenting

to a user a display depicting game play corresponding to a game-of-chance. The display further depicts a deal-making interface for allowing players of the game-of-chance to negotiate the distribution of a divisible prize (a prize pool split) associated with the game-of-chance. The server further comprises a processor and a memory. The memory contains processing instructions executable by the processor for displaying on the gaming station monitor the deal-making interface along with the game play such that both are in view.

[0020] These as well as other aspects and advantages will become apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art by reading the following detailed description, with reference where appropriate to the accompanying drawings. Further, it is understood that this summary is merely an example and is not intended to limit the scope of the invention as claimed.

[0021] Presently preferred embodiments are described below in conjunction with the appended drawing figures by way of example only, wherein like reference numerals refer to like elements in the various figures, and wherein:

Figure 1 is a block diagram illustrating a gaming station coupled to a server through a communication network, according to an example;

Figure 2 is a block diagram of a gaming station, as depicted in Figure 1, according to an example;

Figure 3 is a graphical display of a game play environment that includes a deal-making interface, according to an example;

Figure 4 is a graphical display of a deal-making interface, as depicted in Figure 3, according to an example;

Figure 5 is a flow chart depicting a method of automatically triggering a deal proposal, according to an example;

Figure 6 is a flow chart depicting a method of manually triggering a deal proposal, according to an example; and

Figure 7 is a flow chart depicting a method of deal-making, according to an example.

[0022] Fig. 1 is a block diagram illustrating a gaming station 100 coupled to a server 104 through a communication network 106, according to an example. The gaming station 100 includes a display 101 and a workstation 102. The communication network 106 may be, but is not limited to, the Internet, a local area network (LAN), a wide area network (WAN), a wireless network, a mobile telephone network, or any combination of networks. The gaming station 100 may receive user input and transmit the user input through the communication network 106 to the server 104 via a wireline or wireless interface. The gaming station 100 may receive input from the server 104 and display information to a user through the monitor 101 and/or communicate information to the user by other means, such as audio. For example, the gaming station

100 may be an electronic poker game at a live casino, or a personal computer or mobile phone which allows a user to participate in online poker gaming.

[0023] In one gaming example, the gaming station 100 may be a client workstation and the server 106 may be a gaming server remote from the gaming station 100. The gaming server may be linked to workstation 102 of the gaming station 100 by a communication network 106 such as the Internet. One or more betting games, including, but not limited to poker, blackjack, mah-jongg, video slots, and variations of each, are then executable by a user of the gaming station 100. Each game offered by a gaming provider may include a server process 110, which is executable in the gaming server 104, and a client process 108, which is executable in the workstation 102 of the gaming station 100.

[0024] The server process 110 may generate one or more random events upon which an outcome of the game depends. Such random events can correspond, for example, to the deal of a playing card in a poker game. The client process 108 and/or the server process 110 may present to the user a simulation of the game being played. The client process 108 and/or the server process 110 may also enable the player to place wagers on, and to control the progress of, the game. Further, the client process 108 and/or the server process 110 may display to the player the outcome of the game as a function of the random events generated by the server process 110.

[0025] In order to communicate with the server 104, the gaming station 100 may operate under control of the client process 108. For purposes of this disclosure, any directions, control, functions, instructions, or programming attributed to the client process 108 may alternatively or additionally be attributed to the server process 110 on the server 104.

[0026] The client process 108 (or server process 110) may cause the monitor 101 to display to the user a variety of game selection options. The user is then able to select any one of the games that user wishes to play.

[0027] Figure 2 is a block diagram of a workstation 102. The workstation 102 may include a processor 200 and a memory 202. When the user selects a particular game, the workstation 102 may execute instructions through processor 200 to download game software from the gaming server 104 and store the game software in the memory 202 as client process 108. Alternatively or additionally, the game software may already be resident in the memory 202 of the workstation 102 as client process 108. The processor 202 may execute the instructions contained within the client process 108 as well as other instructions stored in the memory 202. The game software may also be executed directly from the server 104 as server process 110 without requiring storage in the memory 202 and/or without requiring execution of instructions by the processor 200.

[0028] The game software, regardless of whether it is executed as client process 108 or server process 110, may include instructions that direct the processor 200 to

display a game play environment on the monitor 101.

[0029] Figure 3 is a graphical display 300 of a game play environment. The game play environment may include a graphical representation 302 of a betting game, shown here as a poker game. In the poker game example shown, the graphical display 300 may display cards that are in play and/or in a user's hand, betting amounts, pot amounts, or other relevant game data. The graphical representation 302 is not limited to poker games. The graphical display 300 may alternatively display the relevant characteristics of any betting game. Further, the graphical representation 302 of the betting game may be omitted in favor of other methods of communicating game characteristics to players including, but not limited to, text displays or audio cues.

[0030] The client process 108 or server process 110 may also include instructions that cause the monitor 101 to display various input tools or their sub-components. The server process 110 may or may not utilize the processor 200 to accomplish the display. Such input tools may include a chat window 304 and a deal-making interface 306.

[0031] The chat window 304 may allow a user to interact or "chat" with others involved in the game including, but not limited to other players, a dealer, and/or game or site administrators. The user may interact with others involved in the game by using a mouse, a keyboard, voice, or any other user input devices or methods.

[0032] The deal-making interface 306 may allow players to strike deals to share the prize pool, or a portion thereof, according to some agreed upon payout distribution, thus ending the game prior to the determination of an ultimate winner. The graphical representation 302 of the betting game and/or the chat window 304 may be at least partially in view while the deal-making interface 306 is displayed, thus the players are able to view the graphical representation 302 of the betting game, or use or view the chat window during deal-making.

[0033] Figure 4 is a more detailed graphical display of the deal-making interface 306 depicted in Figure 3. The deal-making interface 306 and/or the individual sub-components of the deal-making interface 306 may appear to an individual player or to multiple players. The deal-making interface 306 may also be turned off if deal-making is not allowed.

[0034] The deal-making interface 306 in this poker example may include some or all of the following sub-components: a message area display 402, a player list display 404, a distribution display 406, a payout distribution display 408, a status area display 410, a prize pool display 412, and a timer display 414.

[0035] Those skilled in the art will realize that other display subcomponents are possible. For example, the distribution display 406 in this poker game example preferably shows chip distribution. However, the distribution display 406 may show a different measure of player standing such as point totals or games won that would be relevant to a betting game other than poker.

[0036] The message area display 402 may display messages relevant to the deal-making to a single player, to multiple players, or to users viewing the game but not participating. The player list display 404 typically may list current players in the game. The player list display 404 does not need to be a text based representation of each player as shown in Figure 4, but may alternatively or additionally be a graphical representation of the player. For example, many online players use a picture to represent themselves in an online game. The picture is generally referred to as the player's avatar and the avatar may be used with, or instead of, the text based representation of the player.

[0037] The distribution display 406 shows the basis for a method of calculating a default payout distribution scheme. In the poker game example shown in, the distribution display 406 shows the percentage of total tournament chips possessed by each player. The percentage may be used as the basis for calculating the default payout distribution. The payout distribution may also known as the prize pool split. The payout distribution display 408 shows the proposed prize pool split. In the example shown, the payout distribution display 408 shows a default prize pool split that matches the percentages in the distribution display 406. Other default payout distribution schemes and the methods for calculating them are possible and are discussed below with regard to Figure 7.

[0038] A custom payout distribution may also be proposed by a user and the resulting proposal may alternatively or additionally be displayed in the payout distribution display 408. For example, the payout distribution display 408 may contain a first column of numbers indicating the default payout distribution, as shown, and a second column of numbers indicating the proposed custom payout distribution. In another example, the payout distribution display 408 could also display a column of percentages derived from the relative proportion of each player's proposed distribution share. In yet another example, the column of numbers indicating the default payout distribution as shown in the payout distribution display 408 may be replaced with a column of numbers indicating the proposed custom payout distribution.

[0039] Those skilled in the art will understand that the column displays need not be in any particular order. Further, the display need not be arranged in columns, but may be arranged in rows or any other format which indicates the necessary relationships between the players and their individual data.

[0040] The status area display 410 preferably indicates which players have chosen to participate in the deal and may also indicate their role in the deal. In the example shown in Figure 4, Player 1 has "Proposed" a deal to split the prize pool, Players 3 and 4 have "Accepted" the deal, and Player 2 is "Waiting," indicating that Player 2 has not yet decided to accept or reject the deal. Other indications are possible beyond "Proposed," "Accepting," and "Waiting" and those indications are not meant to be limitations. For example, the status area display

may indicate "Yes," "No," "Not Accepted," "Declined," or other indicators corresponding to a player's participation or role in the deal. Alternatively, the status area display 410 may be configured not to display participation and/or role information, which may provide some anonymity to the deal making process.

[0041] In the example shown in Figure 4, the deal-making interface 306 preferably includes a "SPLIT NOW" button 416 on which a player may click to propose a deal based on the default payout distribution or to accept a previously proposed deal. The "SPLIT NOW" button 416 gives the player a quick and upfront option to make a deal at any time allowed within the tournament.

[0042] Alternatively, the player may instead have the option to click on a "CUSTOM SPLIT" button 418. Clicking on the "CUSTOM SPLIT" button 418 gives or may give the player the ability to propose a custom payout distribution for consideration by the other players.

[0043] A "NO SPLIT NOW" button 420 may also be included. Clicking on the "NO SPLIT NOW" button 420 may allow a player to reject any current deal proposal or any later occurring deal proposal within the same hand, turn, spin, or other wagering event - depending on the type of game. Alternatively, the "NO SPLIT NOW" button 420 could be configured to reject all deal proposals until such configuration is changed by the player.

[0044] Those skilled in the art will understand that the button labels need not be "SPLIT NOW," "CUSTOM SPLIT," and "NO SPLIT NOW." Any other labels which indicate the relevant function of each button will suffice.

[0045] The deal-making interface 306 or the sub-components of the deal-making interface 306 may be displayed or not displayed according to rules set by the game administrators. For example, the deal-making interface 306 could be configured to automatically display upon the game reaching some predetermined condition or conditions, such as a specific number of players remaining or a certain amount of time remaining in the round. The deal-making interface 306 could also be displayed manually in response to a player or administrator action or request.

[0046] Figure 5 is a flow chart depicting a method 500 of automatically triggering a deal proposal. Triggering a deal proposal includes displaying or updating the deal-making interface 306 and optionally calculating and displaying a default proposed prize pool split so that players may accept or reject the deal. Triggering a deal proposal is discussed in more detail with reference to Figure 7.

[0047] At block 502, game administrators may set conditions for when a deal proposal is automatically triggered. For example, the deal proposal may be triggered when there are less than six players remaining in a multiplayer poker tournament. In other examples, the deal proposal may be triggered when there are less than 10 minutes remaining in a multiplayer slot tournament, less than 10 hands remaining in a blackjack tournament, or less than 10 tiles remaining in a mah-jongg tournament.

[0048] At block 504, the conditions set in block 502 are

monitored. The monitoring could occur continuously, repeatedly, or periodically throughout the game.

[0049] At block 506, if the conditions are not met, the monitoring continues. If the conditions are met, the deal-making interface 306 is shown at block 508, if not already shown, and the deal proposal is triggered at block 510.

[0050] Figure 6 is a flow chart depicting a method 600 of manually triggering a deal proposal.

[0051] At block 602, game administrators may set conditions for when the deal-making interface 306 is shown to the users, so that the users may manually trigger a deal proposal. For example, the deal-making interface 306 could be shown during each hand when there are less than five players remaining in the final round of a poker tournament.

[0052] At block 604, the conditions set in block 602 for displaying the deal-making interface 306 are monitored. The monitoring may occur continuously, repeatedly, or periodically throughout the game.

[0053] At block 606, if the conditions are not met, the display state of the deal-making interface 306 may be updated at block 610 and monitoring may continue. The display state of the deal-making interface 306 may be changed if condition status changes. For example, the deal-making interface may be shown continuously during the final round of a tournament. However, for example, if there are only two players remaining and the chip distribution is greater than 80% in favor of one player, the deal-making interface 306 may be turned off so that the players are forced to complete the game through normal play.

[0054] At block 608, if the conditions are met for showing the deal-making interface 306, then the deal-making interface 306 is either shown or updated as appropriate. For example, during an update, various subcomponents of the deal-making interface 306 may be changed, or turned on or off. In one example, the player list 404 may be updated to reflect only those players remaining in the game. In another example, the "CUSTOM SPLIT" button 418 may be turned off or on. Practically, any part of the deal-making interface 306 may be turned on, turned off, or changed as desired by the game administrators.

[0055] At block 612, a player may either propose a deal or not. If no player proposes a deal, condition monitoring continues at block 604.

[0056] At block 614, if any player proposes a deal, then the deal proposal is triggered.

[0057] Figure 7 is a flow chart depicting a method 700 of deal-making.

[0058] At block 702, a deal proposal may be automatically or manually triggered. The deal proposal may be automatically triggered as described with respect to Figure 5 (or any other method) or the deal proposal may be manually triggered as described with respect to Figure 6 (or any other method).

[0059] At block 704, a countdown timer is started. The length of the timer is preferably fixed. For example, the timer length may be fixed by the game administrators.

Alternatively, the length of the timer may be automatically set according to a game condition. For example, the timer length may vary depending on the game type, the round, whether the deal proposal was automatically or manually triggered, or any other game condition.

[0060] At block 706, the default payout distribution (default split) is calculated. Preferably, in the poker example shown, the default payout distribution is directly proportional to the amount of chips each player has at the time of the deal proposal. Other default payout distributions are also possible for poker and other games. Examples include, but are not limited to: (i) disproportionate distributions where large chip holders receive either disproportionately more or less of the prize pool than small chip holders; (ii) probabilities-based distributions where, for example, distributions schemes are based on the cards held and/or shown in a poker game; or (iii) the number of rounds remaining in the tournament in combination with the chip distribution.

[0061] At block 708, the deal-making interface 306 is updated. Examples of updates include, but are not limited to, showing the timer and changing or showing the default payout distribution.

[0062] At block 710, individual players elect whether to accept the default payout distribution, to reject the default payout distribution, or to do nothing. As an example, with reference to the deal-making interface 306 shown in Figure 4, a player may click on the "SPLIT NOW" button 416 to accept the default payout distribution or click on the "NO SPLIT NOW" button 420 to reject the proposal.

[0063] At block 712, if all players accept the default payout distribution (e.g., all players click on the "SPLIT NOW" button 416), then the prize pool is automatically distributed to each player's account according to the default split and the game ends.

[0064] At block 714, if at least one player rejects the deal proposal, then the deal proposal may be ended.

[0065] At block 716, the deal proposal may be ended and the overall game display 300 and the deal-making interface 306 may return to their prior display states, as if no deal proposal had been triggered. For example, if the deal-making interface 306 was not displayed prior to the deal proposal being triggered, then the display of the deal-making interface 306 display may be turned off following a player rejection of the deal at block 714. In another example, if only certain subcomponents of the deal-making interface 306 were visible prior to the deal proposal, then the other subcomponents may be turned off following a player rejection at block 714.

[0066] In an alternative embodiment, if one or more players reject the proposal, the deal proposal may not end, but rather the deal proposal functionality may continue to be viable until a player proposes a custom split as in block 718 or the timer runs out as in block 720.

[0067] At block 718, a player may propose a custom payout distribution (custom split). In reference to the example deal-making interface 306 shown in Figure 4, the player may click the "CUSTOM SPLIT" button 418 and

modify the totals shown in the payout distribution display 408. Preferably, the player manually enters new payout values corresponding to each player in the payout distribution display 408. Alternatively, the player may select from pre-calculated payout schemes which include those schemes described above for alternatively calculating the default payout distribution (e.g., disproportionate distributions, etc.). In the example payout distribution display 408 shown in Figure 4, there is only column displayed; however, multiple columns may be used to show the default payout distribution and to display and/or update other proposed payout distribution(s).

[0068] At block 720, if not all players accept the default payout distribution and no player rejects the default payout distribution or proposes a custom split, then the timer started in block 704 may eventually expire. When the timer expires, the deal proposal may end and the overall game display 300 and the deal-making interface 306 may return to their prior display states, as if no display proposal had been triggered, as shown in block 716. Examples of the overall game display 300 and the deal-making interface 306 returning to their prior display states is discussed above with reference to block 716.

[0069] At block 722, the timer may optionally reset if a player proposes a custom split. This allows the players more time to negotiate or decide whether to accept the new payout distribution. As with the original timer value, the new countdown timer may be fixed by the game administrators or based on game conditions.

[0070] At block 724, if all players accept a proposed custom payout distribution, then the prize pool is automatically distributed to each player's account according to the accepted payout distribution and the game ends, as shown in block 712.

[0071] At block 726, if at least one player rejects the deal proposal, then the deal proposal may end and the overall game display 300 and the deal-making interface 306 may return to their prior display states, as shown in block 716. Examples of the overall game display 300 and the deal-making interface 306 returning to their prior display states is discussed above with reference to block 716.

[0072] In an alternative embodiment, if one or more players reject the proposal, the deal proposal may not end, but rather the deal proposal functionality may continue to be viable until a player proposes a custom split as in block 718 or the timer runs out as in block 728.

[0073] At block 728, if not all players accept the custom payout distribution, and no player rejects the custom payout distribution or proposes a new custom split, then the timer started in block 704 and/or updated in block 722 may eventually expire. When the timer expires, the deal proposal ends and the overall game display 300 and the deal-making interface 306 may return to their prior display states, as if no display proposal had been triggered, as shown in block 716.

[0074] Since many modifications, variations, and changes in detail can be made to the described embod-

iments, it is intended that all matters in the foregoing description and shown in the accompanying drawings be interpreted as illustrative and not in a limiting sense. For example, additional subcomponents for the deal-making interface 306 beyond those described with reference to Figure 4 may be possible. For example, the deal-making interface may include an area which displays the sum total of a proposed prize pool split. Further, it is possible that the sum total of the proposed prize pool split may be less than total prize pool. Thus, players could elect to split a portion of the prize pool and continue playing for the remainder of the prize pool.

[0075] It is intended to be understood that the following clauses further describe aspects of the present application.

(1) A graphical interface for deal-making in a multiplayer game-of-chance, comprising in combination:

a game play environment depicting the game-of-chance; and
a deal-making interface for allowing players of the game-of-chance to negotiate a distribution of a divisible prize associated with the game-of-chance, wherein the deal-making interface is depicted with the game-of-chance in the graphical interface.

(2) The graphical interface of clause (1), further comprising a chat window for allowing communication among the players of the game-of-chance.

(3) The graphical interface of clause (1) or (2), wherein the deal-making interface includes a distribution display showing a measure of each player's standing in the game-of-chance relative to other players' standing in the game-of-chance.

(4) The graphical interface of clause (3), wherein the measure is chip count.

(5) A method for providing deal-making in a multiplayer game-of-chance, the method comprising:

providing a game play environment depicting the game-of-chance; and
providing a deal-making interface for allowing players of the game-of-chance to negotiate a distribution of a divisible prize associated with the game-of-chance, wherein the deal-making interface is depicted with the game-of-chance in a single view.

(6) The method of clause (5), further comprising providing a chat window for allowing communication among players of the game-of-chance.

(7) The method of clause (5) or (6), wherein providing the deal-making interface includes providing a distribution display showing a measure of each player's standing in the game-of-chance relative to other players' standing in the game-of-chance.

(8) The method of clause (7), wherein the measure is chip count.

(9) The method of clause (5), (6), (7) or (8), further comprising automatically displaying a deal defining a proposed prize pool split.

(10) The method of clause (5), (6), (7), (8), or (9), further comprising calculating the proposed prize pool split based on a measure of each player's standing in the game-of-chance relative to other players' standing in the game-of-chance.

(11) The method of clause (5), (6), (7), (8), (9), or (10), further comprising receiving a proposal from a player of the game-of-chance to split a prize pool.

(12) A gaming station, comprising in combination:

a monitor for presenting to a user a display depicting game play corresponding to a game-of-chance, wherein the display further depicts a deal-making interface for allowing players of the game-of-chance to negotiate a distribution of a divisible prize associated with the game-of-chance;

a processor; and

a memory containing processing instructions executable by the processor for displaying the deal-making interface with the game play on the monitor.

(13) The gaming station of clause (12), wherein the memory further contains processing instructions executable by the processor for displaying on the monitor a chat window for allowing communication among the players.

(14) The gaming station of clause (13), wherein the chat window is displayed on the monitor with the deal-making interface and the game play.

(15) The gaming station of clause (12), (13), or (14), wherein the deal-making interface includes a distribution display showing a measure of each player's standing in the game-of-chance relative to other players' standing in the game of chance.

(16) The gaming station of clause (15), wherein the measure is chip count.

(17) A gaming system, comprising in combination:

a gaming station having a workstation and a monitor for presenting to a user a display depicting game play corresponding to a game-of-chance, wherein the display further depicts a deal-making interface for allowing players of the game-of-chance to negotiate a distribution of a divisible prize associated with the game-of-chance; and

a server having a processor and memory containing processing instructions executable by the processor for displaying the deal-making interface and the game play in a same view on the monitor.

(18) The gaming system of clause (17), wherein the memory further contains processing instructions executable by the processor for displaying on the monitor a chat window for allowing communication among players.

(19) The gaming system of clause (17) or (18), wherein the deal-making interface includes a distribution display showing a measure of each player's standing in the game-of-chance relative to other players' standing in the game of chance.

(20) The gaming system of clause (19), wherein the measure is chip count.

[0076] It should be understood that the illustrated embodiments are examples only and should not be taken as limiting the scope of the present invention. The claims should not be read as limited to the described order or elements unless stated to that effect. Therefore, all embodiments that come within the scope of the following claims and equivalents thereto are claimed as the invention.

Claims

1. A data processing means including a monitor presenting a graphical interface to a player in a multi-player game-of-chance:

the graphical interface displaying a game play environment depicting the game-of-chance, and also displaying in a single view with the depicted game of chance a deal-making interface for allowing players of the game-of-chance to negotiate a distribution of a divisible prize associated with the game-of-chance.

2. A data processing means as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a chat window for allowing communication among the players of the game-of-chance.

3. A data processing means as claimed in claim 1, wherein the deal-making interface includes a distribution display showing a measure of each player's standing in the game-of-chance relative to other players' standing in the game-of-chance.

4. A data processing means as claimed in claim 3, wherein the measure is chip count.

5. A data processing means as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the deal making interface displays automatically a deal defining a proposed prize pool split.

6. A data processing means as claimed in claim 5, wherein the proposed prize pool split is based on a measure of each player's standing in the game-of-

chance relative to other players' standing in the game-of-chance.

7. A data processing means as claimed in claim 6, wherein the proposed prize pool split is based on chip count. 5
8. A data processing means as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the data processing means is configured to allow the players of the game of chance to propose a deal to split a prize pool using the deal making interface. 10
9. A data processing means as claimed in any preceding claim, in communication with a server which provides instructions to the data processing means to present the graphical interface on the monitor. 15
10. A method of presenting a graphical interface to a player using data processing means including a monitor to play in a multiplayer game-of-chance, the method comprising providing a game play environment depicting the game-of-chance, and providing a single view depicting the game of chance and a deal-making interface for allowing players of the game-of-chance to negotiate a distribution of a divisible prize associated with the game-of-chance. 20 25
11. A server configured to provide instructions to data processing means including a monitor for use by a player in a multiplayer game of chance, wherein the instructions are adapted to cause the data processing means to present a graphical interface on the monitor, the graphical interface displaying a game play environment depicting the game of chance, and also displaying in a single view with the depicted game of chance a deal-making interface for allowing players of the game of chance to negotiate a distribution of a divisible prize associated with the game of chance. 30 35 40
12. A computer readable medium having computer executable instructions adapted to cause data processing means including a monitor to present a graphical interface on the monitor for use by a player in a multiplayer game of chance, the graphical interface displaying a game play environment depicting the game of chance, and also displaying in a single view with the depicted game of chance a deal-making interface for allowing players of the game of chance to negotiate a distribution of a divisible prize associated with the game of chance. 45 50
13. A graphical interface for deal-making in a multiplayer game-of-chance, comprising in combination: 55

a game play environment depicting the game-of-chance; and

a deal-making interface for allowing players of the game-of-chance to negotiate a distribution of a divisible prize associated with the game-of-chance, wherein the deal-making interface is depicted with the game-of-chance in the graphical interface.

14. A method for providing deal-making in a multiplayer game-of-chance, the method comprising:

providing a game play environment depicting the game-of-chance; and
providing a deal-making interface for allowing players of the game-of-chance to negotiate a distribution of a divisible prize associated with the game-of-chance, wherein the deal-making interface is depicted with the game-of-chance in a single view.

15. A gaming station, comprising in combination:

a monitor for presenting to a user a display depicting game play corresponding to a game-of-chance, wherein the display further depicts a deal-making interface for allowing players of the game-of-chance to negotiate a distribution of a divisible prize associated with the game-of-chance;
a processor; and
a memory containing processing instructions executable by the processor for displaying the deal-making interface with the game play on the monitor.

16. A gaming system, comprising in combination:

a gaming station having a workstation and a monitor for presenting to a user a display depicting game play corresponding to a game-of-chance, wherein the display further depicts a deal-making interface for allowing players of the game-of-chance to negotiate a distribution of a divisible prize associated with the game-of-chance; and
a server having a processor and memory containing processing instructions executable by the processor for displaying the deal-making interface and the game play in a same view on the monitor.

FIG. 1

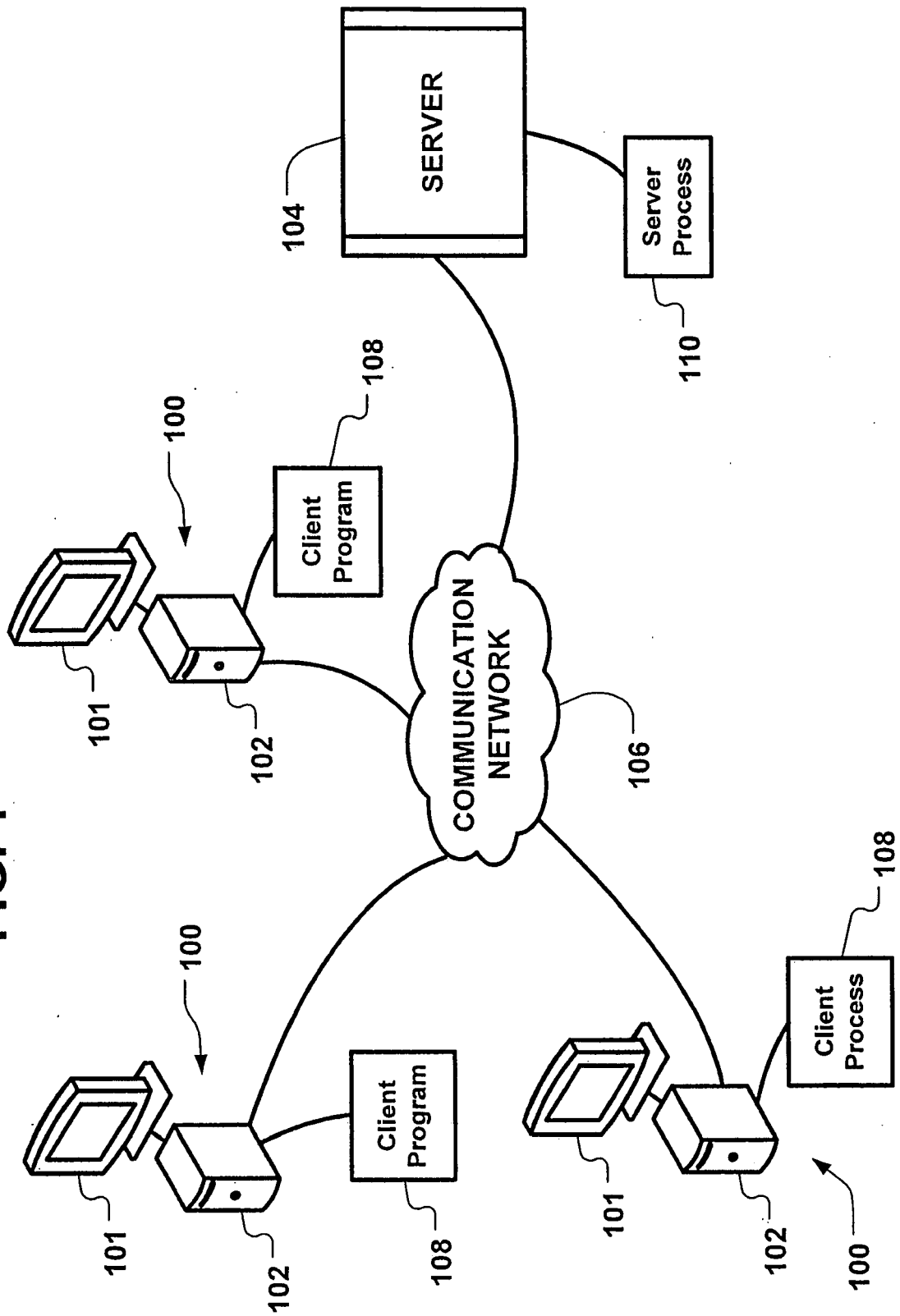


FIG. 2

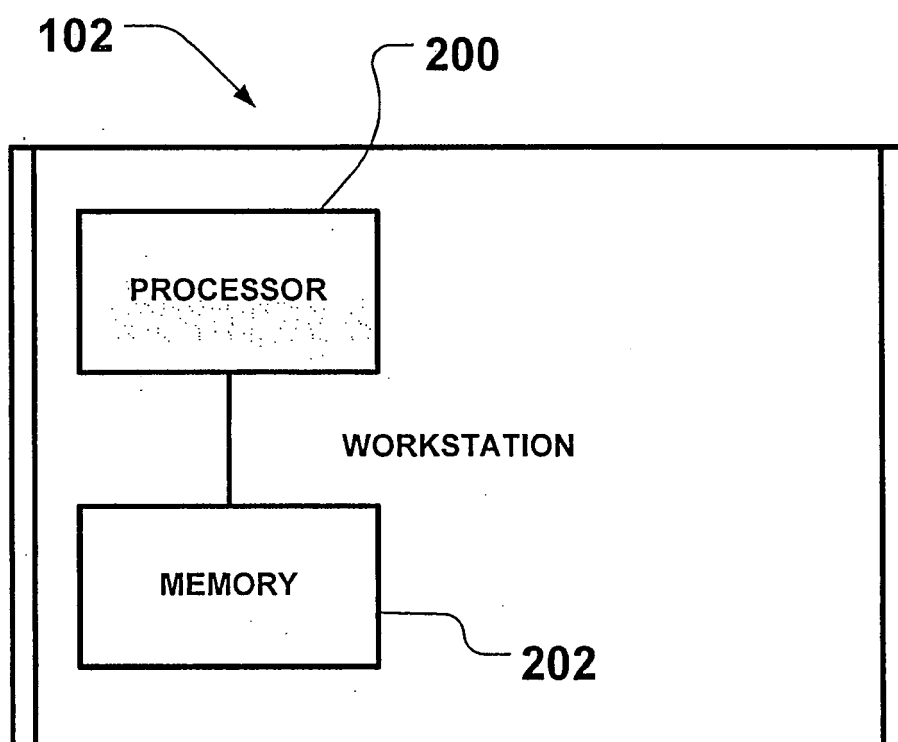


FIG. 3

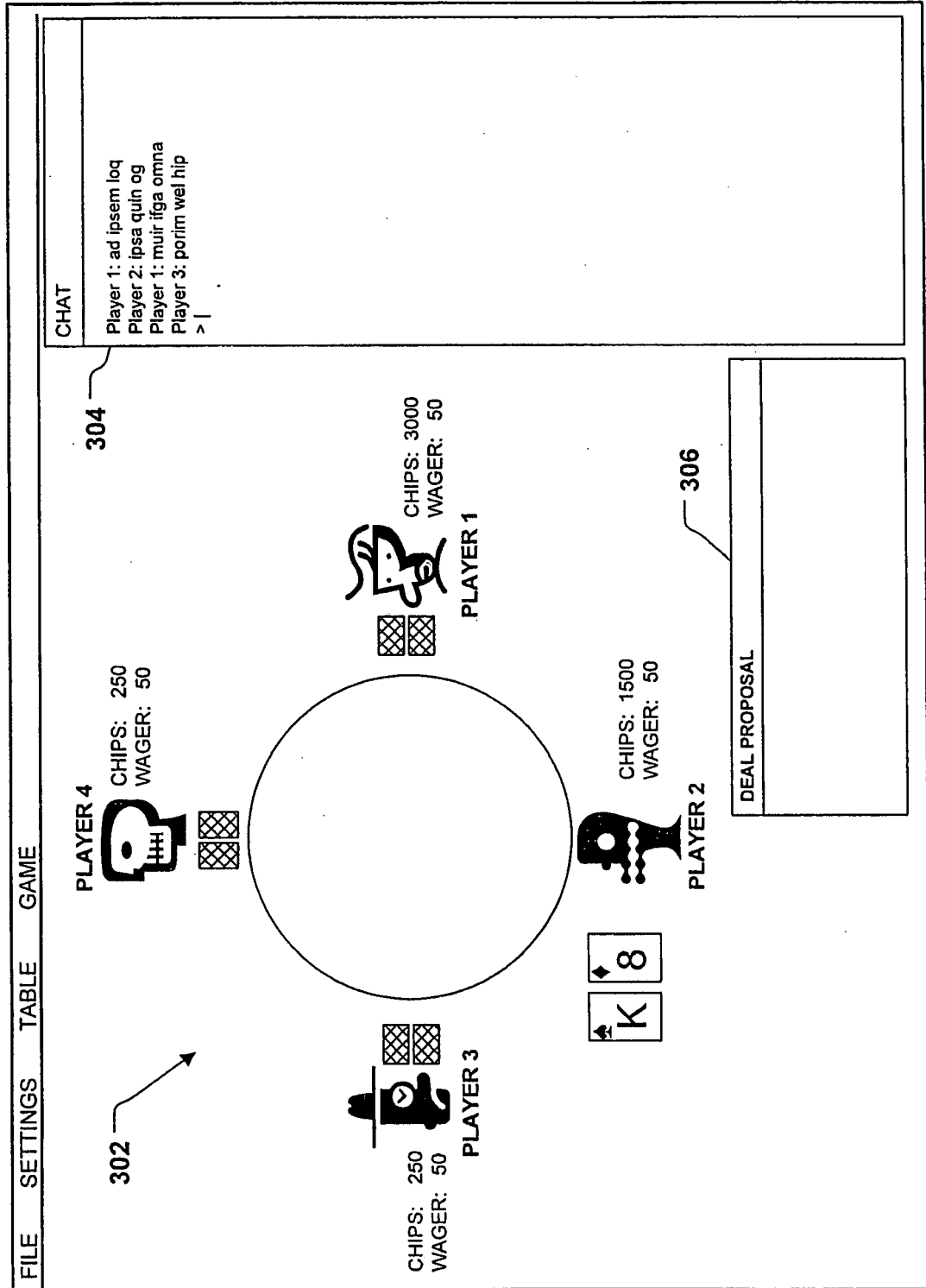


FIG. 4

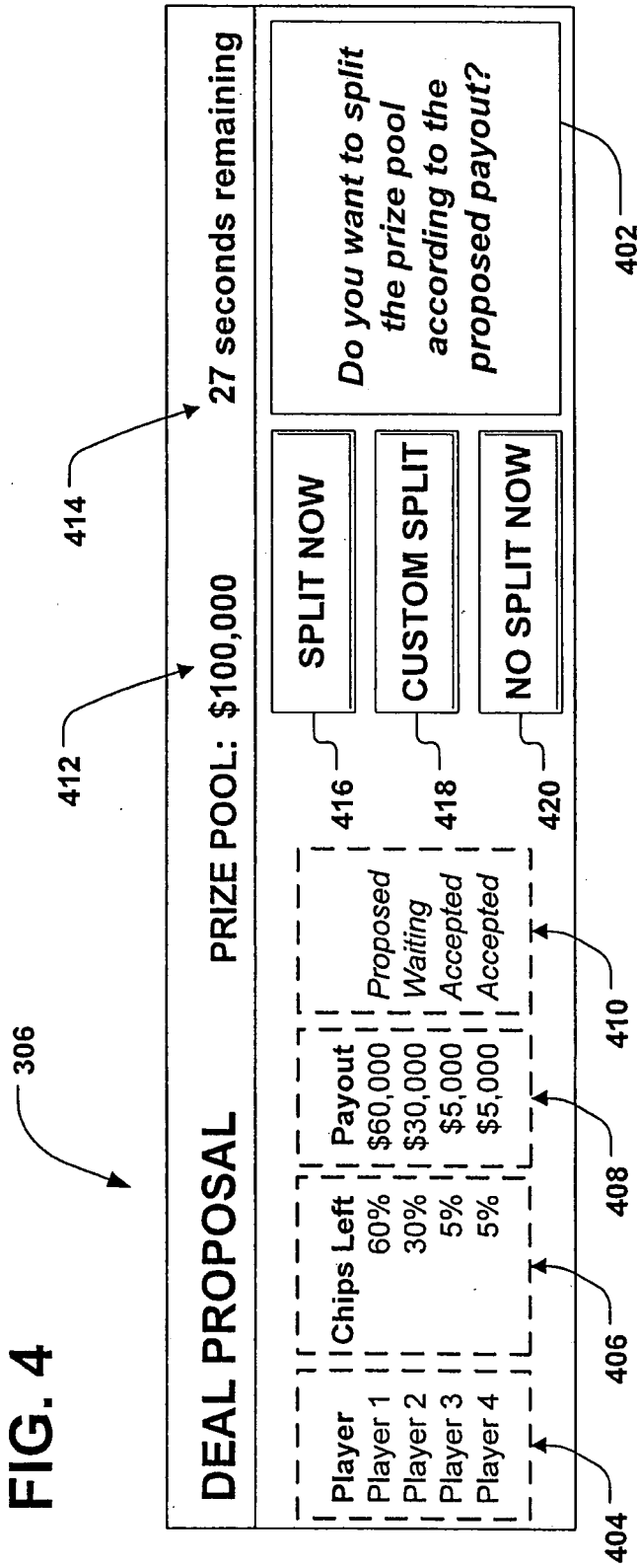


FIG. 5

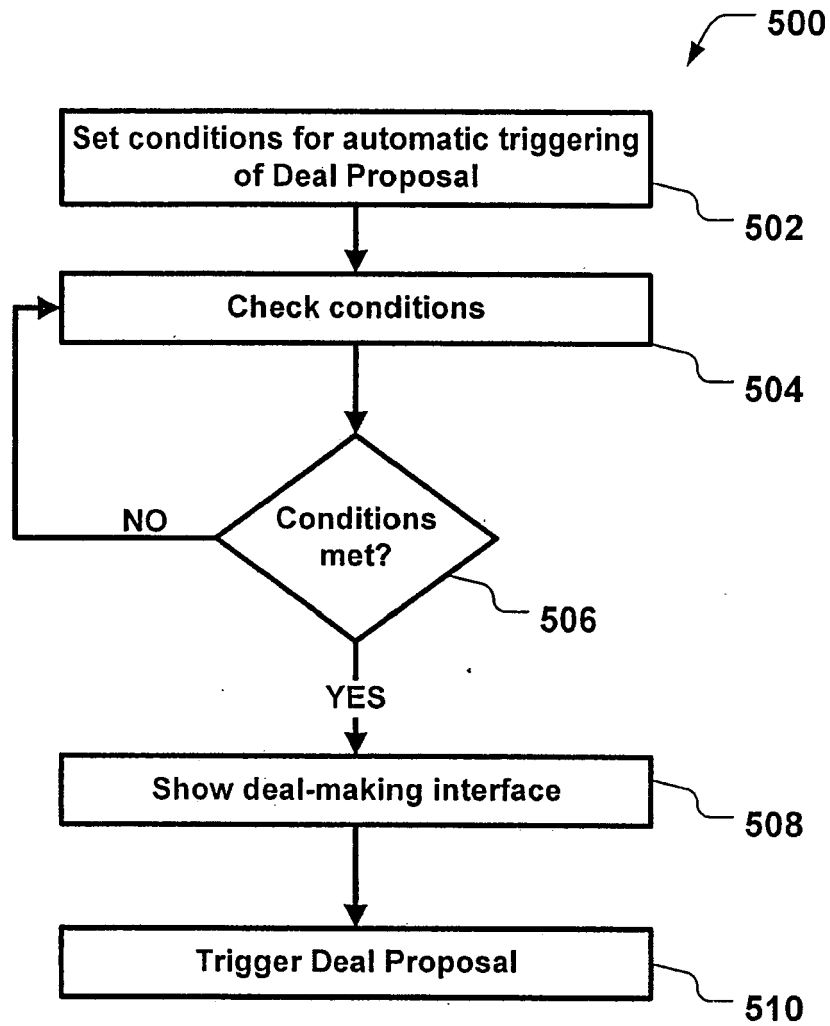


FIG. 6

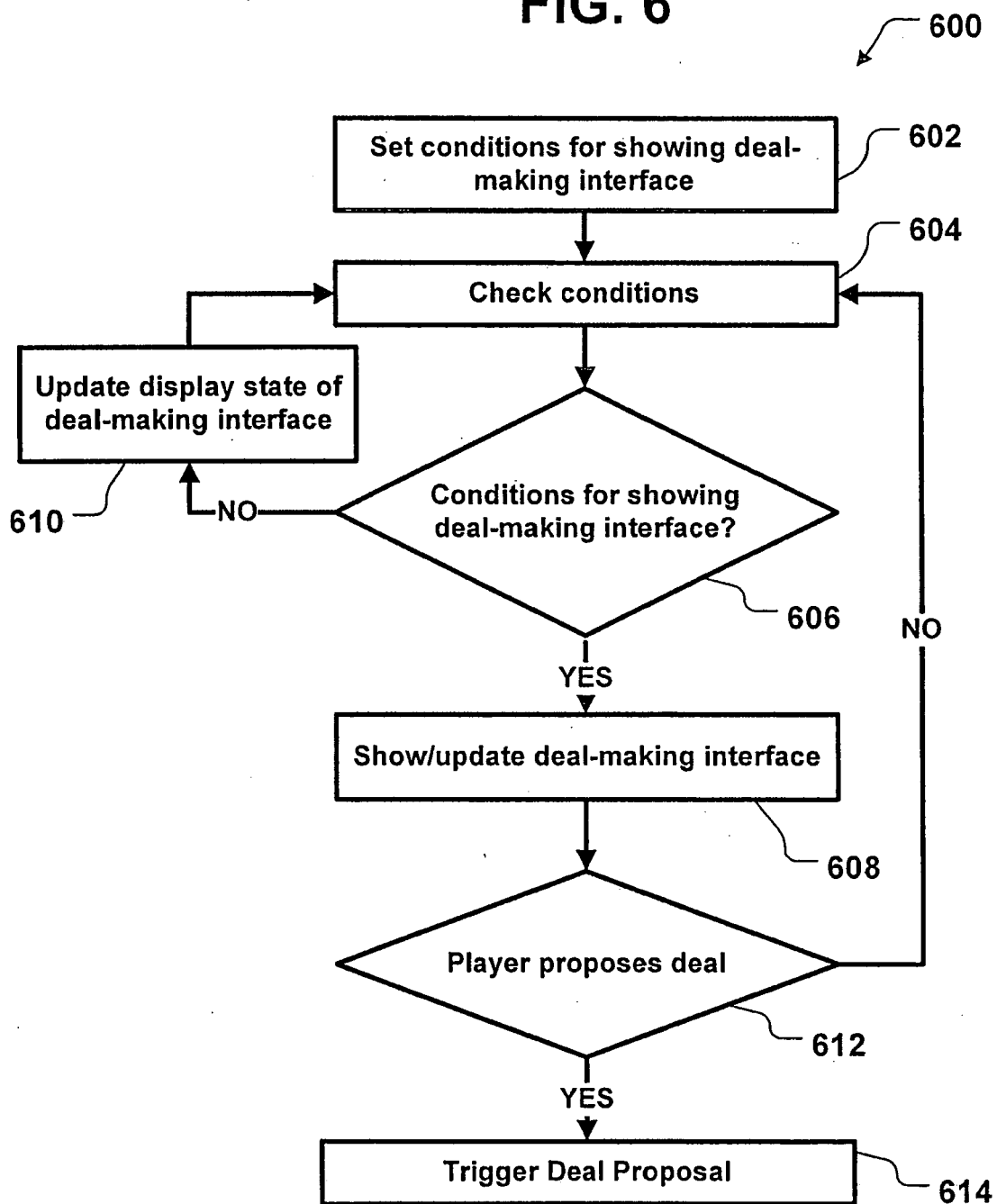
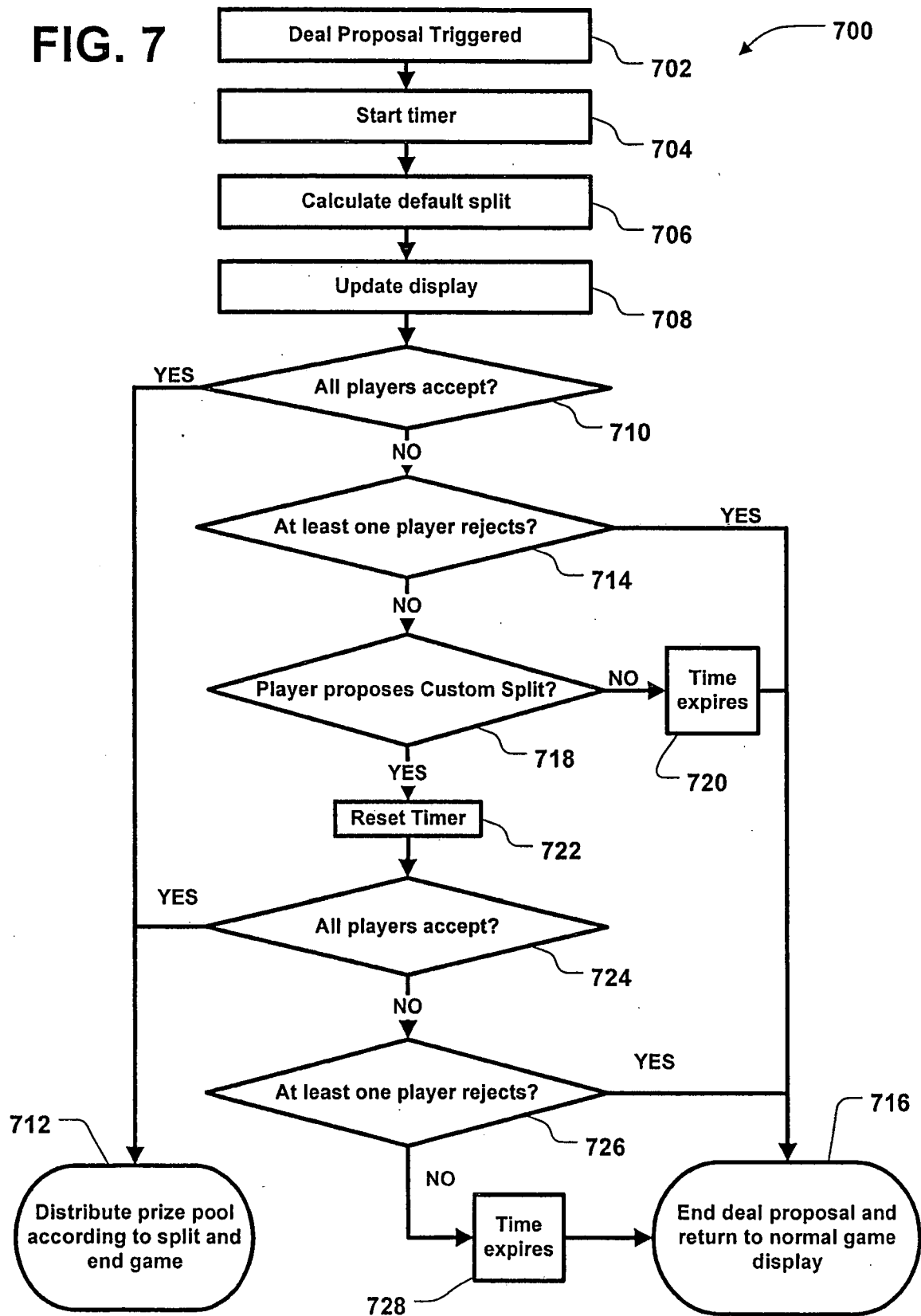


FIG. 7





European Patent
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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 07 25 4039

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (IPC)
X	US 2003/027638 A1 (SCHNEIDER RICHARD J [US] ET AL) 6 February 2003 (2003-02-06) * the whole document * -----	1-16	INV. G07F17/32
			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (IPC)
			G07F
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search Munich		Date of completion of the search 30 January 2008	Examiner Mennerun, Steeve
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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EP 07 25 4039

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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30-01-2008

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
US 2003027638 A1	06-02-2003	US 2006247034 A1	02-11-2006

EPO FORM P0459

For more details about this annex : see Official Journal of the European Patent Office, No. 12/82