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(54) Gaming system and a method of gaming

(57) The present invention relates to a gaming system and method for playing a game which is able to achieve a jackpot outcome when a jackpot trigger condition is satisfied. The jackpot trigger condition may be changed on instructions from a jackpot controller. In one embodiment, the jackpot trigger condition of an electronic gaming machine is re-set from time to time by a jackpot controller.

The system may be used to play games like Keno or Bingo on EGMs, the jackpot controller downloading jackpot trigger conditions for the Keno or Bingo game (e.g. Keno or Bingo numbers).

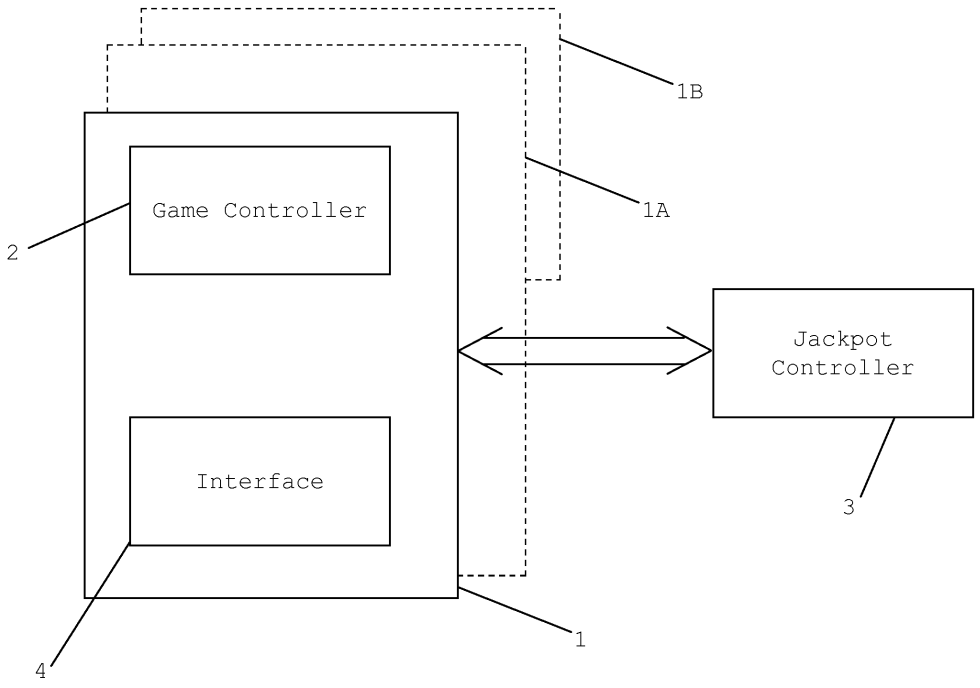

Figure 1

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Description

Field of the Invention

[0001] The present invention relates to a gaming system and to a method of gaming, and, particularly, but not exclusively, to a gaming system and a method of gaming in which a game is played which may achieve a jackpot outcome.

Background of the Invention

[0002] It is know to provide a gaming system which comprises a game controller arranged to randomly display several symbols from a predetermined set of symbols and to determine a game outcome such as a game win based on the displayed symbols. Such gaming systems may commonly be implemented as a stepping machine provided with reels with each reel carrying several symbols of the set, or a video machine wherein selected symbols are displayed on virtual reels on a graphical display device. Win outcomes can occur based on symbols appearing in one or more horizontal lines, diagonal lines, or any other predetermined way.

[0003] Gaming systems are known which implement jackpot outcomes. A jackpot outcome may depend on a particular combination of symbols being selected in a base game. Alternatively, a jackpot outcome may depend on a random factor, such as a predetermined amount of turnover. Such a jackpot is termed a "mystery" jackpot (because the event which triggers the jackpot - in this case the amount of turnover of the system - is not known to the player). Both mystery and conventional jackpot games may be progressive-type jackpots (the jackpot increasing as the gaming system is played - in one example in proportion to the amount of turnover of the system). Gaming systems may be linked so that more than one gaming system (for example more than one electronic gaming machine, (EGM) may contribute to a progressive jackpot, enabling a large jackpot prize to be offered. Such jackpots are known as linked progressive jackpots.

[0004] Jackpots are generally triggered by a particular event occurring in the game played by the gaming system (e.g. a particular symbol combination) or a particular event being generated by the gaming system (the gaming system "clicking over" a turnover amount). In either case, as far as the gaming system is concerned the jackpot trigger is invariable. It is either triggered by a predetermined and unchangeable symbol combination, or by an event which the gaming machine has no control over (generation of turnover causing the jackpot controller to determine that a jackpot has occurred), or other predetermined outcome.

[0005] While such gaming systems provide users with enjoyment, a need exists for alternative gaming systems in order to maintain or increase player enjoyment.

Summary of the Invention

[0006] In accordance with a first aspect, the present invention provides a gaming system, comprising a game controller arranged to control play of a game and to determine a game outcome, the game controller being arranged to determine that a jackpot outcome is achieved when a jackpot trigger condition is satisfied by the game outcome, the game controller being arranged to receive jackpot trigger condition instructions from a jackpot controller, setting the jackpot trigger condition.

[0007] An advantage of at least an embodiment of the invention is that the jackpot trigger condition is selectable. A new jackpot trigger condition can be set for the gaming system, for example, usually by the jackpot controller. For example, in a reel game which implements a version of poker, a jackpot trigger condition may be that five Aces be displayed on a line on five reels. Conventionally, this jackpot trigger condition would be invariable for a gaming system. In this embodiment of the invention, however, the jackpot trigger condition can be varied by providing new jackpot trigger condition instructions to the gaming system. For example, a decision may be made to change the five Aces jackpot trigger conditions to one requiring five Kings as a jackpot trigger condition. Any other jackpot trigger condition may be implemented. This advantageously increases game variety and player interest. In an embodiment, the jackpot trigger condition may only be changed when a jackpot outcome has been achieved by the gaming system.

[0008] In an embodiment, the jackpot controller may be remote from the gaming system and may communicate the jackpot trigger condition instructions to the gaming system over a communications network. In an embodiment, a plurality of gaming systems may be linked to the jackpot controller and each may be arranged to receive trigger condition instructions from the jackpot controller. In an embodiment, a linked progressive jackpot with selectable jackpot trigger conditions may be implemented.

[0009] In an embodiment, the jackpot trigger condition instructions may set a plurality of jackpot trigger conditions. In an embodiment, the plurality of jackpot trigger conditions may enable multiple jackpots of varying values to be triggered. In an embodiment, the plurality of jackpot trigger conditions may enable a single jackpot to be triggered by a plurality of game outcomes.

[0010] In an embodiment, the gaming system may include a display displaying the jackpot trigger condition information for view by players, such as, for example, the combination of symbols or other game outcome that will achieve a jackpot outcome. In an embodiment, where a linked jackpot is implemented, the display may be a display common to a number of associated gaming systems, such as associated EGMs.

[0011] Keno is a game where a player chooses a subset of numbers, typically six to twenty numbers, in a given range (typically 1 to 80), then a gaming system chooses

twenty numbers in the same range. A player may win a prize according to how many numbers are matched between the two selections, and also on the size of the player selection (which governs the odds and therefore can govern the magnitude of the prize awarded).

[0012] Bingo is a game of chance where randomly-selected numbers are drawn and players must match those numbers to numbers appearing in rows and columns on a "card". Cards may be electronically or physically represented.

[0013] An advantage of an embodiment of the present invention is that Keno or Bingo-type games may be implemented utilising the selectable jackpot trigger facility. In an embodiment, the jackpot trigger condition instructions may set a jackpot trigger condition which includes a plurality of symbols (number or letters). The gaming system may play a game which may generate numbers or letters. Matching the generated numbers or letters with those set by the jackpot trigger condition may result in a jackpot. This may be applied in a similar fashion to a Keno or Bingo-type game. The gaming system may generate the numbers or letters for this type of game either as a base game or as part of a feature game which may be associated with or triggered by the base game.

[0014] In an embodiment, a display may be provided and the gaming system may be arranged to display jackpot trigger condition information which gives information on the progress of achieving a trigger condition outcome. Where a game is implemented which matches numbers or other symbols generated by the gaming system with a set of numbers provided as a trigger condition by the jackpot controller (such as a Keno or Bingo-type game), the display may display the numbers achieved so far which match the numbers provided by the trigger condition instructions.

[0015] In accordance with a second aspect of the gaming system, the present invention provides a gaming arrangement, comprising a plurality of gaming systems in accordance with the first aspect of the invention, each being arranged to receive jackpot trigger condition instructions from a common jackpot controller.

[0016] In accordance with a third aspect, the present invention provides a jackpot controller apparatus, comprising a jackpot controller arranged to provide jackpot trigger condition instructions to a gaming system arranged to play a game and determine a jackpot outcome on the basis that a jackpot trigger condition is satisfied by a game outcome, the jackpot trigger condition instructions setting the jackpot trigger condition.

[0017] The gaming system may be a gaming system in accordance with the first aspect of the invention. The jackpot controller apparatus may provide instructions for a plurality of gaming systems in accordance with the first aspect of the invention.

[0018] In accordance with a fourth aspect, the present invention provides, in a gaming system arranged to play a game, a method of gaming, comprising the steps of playing a game having a game outcome, determining whether the game outcome satisfies a jackpot trigger condition to achieve a jackpot outcome, and providing jackpot trigger condition instructions to the gaming system from a jackpot controller, the jackpot trigger condition instructions determining the jackpot trigger condition.

[0019] In accordance with a fifth aspect, the present invention provides a computer programme comprising instructions for controlling a computer to implement a gaming system in accordance with the first aspect of the invention.

[0020] In accordance with sixth aspect, the present invention provides a computer readable medium providing a computer programme in accordance with the fifth aspect of the invention.

[0021] In accordance with a seventh aspect, the present invention provides a computer programme comprising instructions for controlling a computer to implement a gaming arrangement in accordance with the second aspect of the present invention.

[0022] In accordance with an eighth aspect, the present invention provides computer readable medium providing a computer programme in accordance with the seventh aspect.

[0023] In accordance with a ninth aspect, the present invention provides a computer programme comprising instructions for controlling a computer to implement a jackpot controller apparatus in accordance with the third aspect of the invention.

[0024] In accordance with a tenth aspect, the present invention provides a computer readable medium providing a computer programme in accordance with the ninth aspect of the invention.

Brief Description of the Drawings

[0025] Features and advantages of the present invention will become apparent from the following description of embodiments thereof, by way of example only, with reference for the accompanying drawings, in which;

Figure 1 is a schematic diagram of a gaming system in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 2 is a schematic block diagram of core components of a gaming system in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 3 is a diagrammatic representation of a gaming system in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention with the gaming system implemented in the form of a stand alone gaming machine;

Figure 4 is a schematic block diagram of operative components of the gaming machine shown in Figure 3;

Figure 5 is a schematic block diagram of components of a memory of the gaming machine shown in Figure 3;

Figure 6 is a schematic diagram of a gaming system in accordance with an alternative embodiment of the

present invention with the gaming system implemented over a network;

Figure 7 is a schematic diagram of functional components of a gaming system in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention; and

Figure 8 is a flow diagram illustrating implementation of game play in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention.

Detailed Description of Embodiments

[0026] Referring to Figure 1, there is shown a schematic diagram illustrating a gaming system 1 in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. The gaming system 1 includes a game controller 2 which, in this embodiment, is arranged to control play of a game and to determine a game outcome. The game controller 2 is also arranged to determine a jackpot outcome is achieved when a jackpot trigger condition is satisfied. The game controller 2 is arranged to receive jackpot trigger condition instructions from a jackpot controller 3, which in this example is remote from the gaming system 1. The jackpot trigger condition instructions set the jackpot trigger condition. The jackpot trigger condition is therefore selectable and may be changed, in this embodiment from the jackpot controller 3.

[0027] In this example, the game system 1 includes a player interface 4 via which a player may interact with the gaming system 1. The interface may include an arrangement via which a player may place a bet (e.g. a coin insert or card swipe), a display via which the player may follow progress of the game and a player manipulatable interface (e.g. buttons) via which the player may interact with the game system 1.

[0028] In this embodiment, the jackpot game is a progressive jackpot. The jackpot controller 3 may be linked to other gaming systems 1A, 1B (and there may be more gaming systems than shown) and the jackpot may be a linked progressive jackpot. The jackpot controller 3 may provide jackpot trigger condition instructions to all the gaming systems that are linked to it.

[0029] In the above embodiment the jackpot controller 3 is separate and linked via network communications to the gaming systems 1, which in an embodiment may be implemented as stand alone Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs).

[0030] In an alternative embodiment, the gaming system may be a stand alone machine incorporating the jackpot controller as part of the gaming system.

[0031] The system is not limited to the above architectures and other architectures may be implemented.

[0032] The gaming system may take a number of forms.

[0033] In a first form, a stand alone gaming machine is provided wherein all or most components required for implementing the game are present in a player operable gaming machine. The jackpot controller may be implemented in the stand alone gaming machine or may be remote from it.

[0034] In a second form, a distributed architecture is provided wherein some of the components required for implementing the game are present in a player operable gaming machine and some of the components required for implementing the game are located remotely relative to the gaming machine. For example, a "thick client" architecture may be used wherein part of the game is executed on a player operable gaming machine and part of the game is executed remotely, such as by a gaming server; or a "thin client" architecture may be used wherein most of the game is executed remotely such as by a gaming server and a player operable gaming machine is used only to display audible and/or visible gaming information to the player and receive gaming inputs from the player.

[0035] However, it will be understood that other arrangements are envisaged. For example, an architecture may be provided wherein a gaming machine is networked to a gaming server and the respective functions of the gaming machine and the gaming server are selectively modifiable. For example, the gaming system may operate in stand alone gaming machine mode, "thick client" mode or "thin client" mode depending on the game being played, operating conditions, and so on. Other variations will be apparent to persons skilled in the art.

[0036] Irrespective of the form, the gaming system comprises several core components. At the broadest level, the core components are a player interface 50 (equivalent to 4 of Figure 1) and a game controller 60 (equivalent to 2 of Figure 1) as illustrated in Figure 2. The player interface is arranged to enable manual interaction between a player and the gaming system and for this purpose includes the input/output components required for the player to enter instructions and play the game.

[0037] Components of the player interface may vary from embodiment to embodiment but will typically include a credit mechanism 52 to enable a player to input credits and receive payouts, one or more displays 54 and a game play mechanism 56 that enables a player to input game play instructions.

[0038] The game controller 60 is in data communication with the player interface and typically includes a processor 62 that processes the game play instructions in accordance with game play rules and outputs game play outcomes to the display. Typically, the game play instructions are stored as program code in a memory 64 but can also be hardwired. Herein the term "processor" is used to refer generically to any device that can process game play instructions in accordance with game play rules and may include: a microprocessor, microcontroller, programmable logic device or other computational device, a general purpose computer (e.g. a PC) or a server.

[0039] A gaming system in the form of a stand alone gaming machine 10 is illustrated in Figure 3. The gaming machine 10 includes a console 12 having a display 14 on which is displayed representations of a game 16 that

can be played by a player. A mid-trim 20 of the gaming machine 10 houses a bank of buttons 22 for enabling a player to interact with the gaming machine, in particular during game play. The mid-trim 20 also houses a credit input mechanism 24 which in this example includes a coin input chute 24A and a bill collector 24B. Other credit input mechanisms may also be employed, for example, a card reader for reading a smart card, debit card or credit card. A reading device may also be provided for the purpose of reading a player tracking device, for example as part of a loyalty program. The player tracking device may be in the form of a card, flash drive or any other portable storage medium capable of being read by the reading device.

[0040] A top box 26 may carry artwork 28, including for example pay tables and details of bonus awards and other information or images relating to the game. Further artwork and/or information may be provided on a front panel 29 of the console 12. A coin tray 30 is mounted beneath the front panel 29 for dispensing cash payouts from the gaming machine 10.

[0041] The display 14 shown in Figure 2 is in the form of a video display unit, particularly a cathode ray tube screen device. Alternatively, the display 14 may be a liquid crystal display, plasma screen, any other suitable video display unit, or the visible portion of an electromechanical device. The top box 26 may also include a display, for example a video display unit, which may be of the same type as the display 14, or of a different type.

[0042] Figure 4 shows a block diagram of operative components of a typical gaming machine which may be the same as or different to the gaming machine of Figure 3.

[0043] The gaming machine 100 includes a game controller 101 having a processor 102. Instructions and data to control operation of the processor 102 are stored in a memory 103, which is in data communication with the processor 102. Typically, the gaming machine 100 will include both volatile and non-volatile memory and more than one of each type of memory, with such memories being collectively represented by the memory 103.

[0044] The gaming machine has hardware meters 104 for purposes including ensuring regulatory compliance and monitoring player credit, an input/output (I/O) interface 105 for communicating with peripheral devices of the gaming machine 100. The input/output interface 105 and/or the peripheral devices may be intelligent devices with their own memory for storing associated instructions and data for use with the input/output interface or the peripheral devices. A random number generator module 113 generates random numbers for use by the processor 102. Persons skilled in the art will appreciate that the reference to random numbers includes pseudo-random numbers.

[0045] In the example shown in Figure 3, a player interface 120 includes peripheral devices that communicate with the game controller 101, comprising one or more displays 106, a touch screen 107, a card and/or ticket reader 108, a printer 109, a bill acceptor and/or coin input mechanism 110 and a coin output mechanism 111. Additional hardware may be included as part of the gaming machine 100, or hardware may be omitted as required for the specific implementation.

[0046] In addition, the gaming machine 100 may include a communications interface, for example a network card 112. The network card may, for example, send status information, accounting information or other information to a central controller, server or database and receive data or commands from the central controller, server or database.

[0047] Figure 5 shows a block diagram of the main components of an exemplary memory 103. The memory 103 includes RAM 103A, EPROM 103B and a mass storage device 103C. The RAM 103A typically temporarily holds program files for execution by the processor 102 and related data. The EPROM 103B may be a boot ROM device and/or may contain some system or game related code. The mass storage device 103C is typically used to store game programs, the integrity of which may be verified and/or authenticated by the processor 102 using protected code from the EPROM 103B or elsewhere.

[0048] It is also possible for the operative components of the gaming machine 100 to be distributed, for example input/output devices 106,107,108,109,110,111 to be provided remotely from the game controller 101.

[0049] Figure 6 shows a gaming system 200 in accordance with an alternative embodiment. The gaming system 200 includes a network 201, which for example may be an Ethernet network. Gaming machines 202, shown arranged in three banks 203 of two gaming machines 202 in Figure 5, are connected to the network 201. The gaming machines 202 provide a player operable interface and may be the same as the gaming machines 10,100 shown in Figures 2 and 3, or may have simplified functionality depending on the requirements for implementing game play. While banks 203 of two gaming machines are illustrated in Figure 5, banks of one, three or more gaming machines are also envisaged.

[0050] One or more displays 204 may also be connected to the network 201. The displays 204 may, for example, be associated with one or more banks 203 of gaming machines. The displays 204 may be used to display representations associated with game play on the gaming machines 202, and/or used to display other representations, for example promotional or informational material.

[0051] In a thick client embodiment, game server 205 implements part of the game played by a player using a gaming machine 202 and the gaming machine 202 implements part of the game. With this embodiment, as both the game server and the gaming device implement part of the game, they collectively provide a game controller. A database management server 206 may manage storage of game programs and associated data for downloading or access by the gaming devices 202 in a database 206A. In this embodiment, the jackpot server 207 implements jackpot controller and enables players to par-

ticipate in a jackpot game.

[0052] In a thin client embodiment, game server 205 implements most or all of the game played by a player using a gaming machine 202 and the gaming machine 202 essentially provides only the player interface. With this embodiment, the game server 205 provides the game controller. The gaming machine will receive player instructions, pass these to the game server which will process them and return game play outcomes to the gaming machine for display. In a thin client embodiment, the gaming machines could be computer terminals, e.g. PCs running software that provides a player interface operable using standard computer input and output components.

[0053] Servers are also typically provided to assist in the administration of the gaming network 200, including for example a gaming floor management server 208, and a licensing server 209 to monitor the use of licenses relating to particular games. An administrator terminal 210 is provided to allow an administrator to run the network 201 and the devices connected to the network.

[0054] The gaming network 200 may communicate with other gaming systems, other local networks, for example a corporate network, and/or a wide area network such as the Internet, for example through a firewall 211.

[0055] Persons skilled in the art will appreciate that in accordance with known techniques, functionality at the server side of the network may be distributed over a plurality of different computers. For example, elements may be run as a single "engine" on one server or a separate server may be provided. For example, the game server 205 could run a random generator engine. Alternatively, a separate random number generator server could be provided. Further, persons skilled in the art will appreciate that a plurality of games servers could be provided to run different games or a single game server may run a plurality of different games as required by the terminals.

[0056] Referring to Figure 6, functionality of embodiments of the present invention may be implemented by a game controller 2 having the functional components illustrated. In these embodiments, the functional components are implemented utilising a processor and memory (such as processor 102 and memory 103 in Figure 4, or processor 62 and memory 64 in Figure 2 or the game server 205 of Figure 6) and associated programming. Other implementations are envisaged. For example, the functional blocks of Figure 6 may be implemented in hardware of separate units, or a combination of hardware and software as separate units. Any practical implementation of these functional units may be employed.

[0057] Referring to Figure 6, the game controller 2 includes a symbol selector 301 which is arranged to select a plurality of symbols from a set of symbols in order to play a game. In the normal course of a game, these symbols are displayed on the display (54 of Figure 2, 16 of Figure 3, 106 of Figure 4, 204 of Figure 6). The selected symbols in this embodiment are displayed as a plurality of virtual reels on the video display. Alternatively, the display may comprise a stepper motor and physical reels.

[0058] The game controller 2 also includes an outcome generator 302 which is arranged to determine the outcome of a game. In this embodiment, the outcome of the game depends on the selected symbols and may include a win outcome, jackpot game outcome and a feature outcome. Outcomes may be determined on the basis of symbols appearing in one or more horizontal lines, diagonal lines, or any other predetermined combination.

[0059] In this embodiment, the game controller 2 is arranged to receive jackpot trigger condition instructions from a jackpot controller 303. As discussed previously, the jackpot controller 303 may be internal to a standalone EGM or may be remote from the game controller 2. The jackpot trigger condition instructions set the jackpot trigger condition. In this embodiment, the jackpot trigger condition may be a predetermined combination of symbols to be selected by the symbol selector 301. If those symbols are selected, the outcome generator generates a jackpot game outcome and a jackpot trigger is generated by the game controller 2 and provided to the jackpot controller 303. The player wins a jackpot.

[0060] After a jackpot is won, the jackpot controller 303 may provide further jackpot instructions to the game controller 2 which may vary the symbols that may result in a jackpot game outcome. For example, a preceding jackpot game outcome may have required five Aces on a five reel row, and a succeeding jackpot game outcome may be triggered by a jackpot condition requiring five Kings in a row.

[0061] Note that the symbol selector and the outcome generator may be implemented by a process which involves picking stopping positions of the reels (symbol selection) and subsequently spinning the reels to stop at particular stopping positions and then subsequently searching a pay table to determine a outcome (outcome generator).

[0062] In any event, the game outcome is determined by the outcome generator based on a combination of symbols selected and appearing in the display. The symbols may be any symbols. As will be appreciated, many different types of symbols are used in gaming systems. A set of symbols may include standard symbols and function symbols. For example, standard symbols may resemble fruit such as apples, pears and bananas with a win outcome being determined when a predetermined number of the same fruit appear on a display in the same line, scattered, and so on.

[0063] In the above example, the base game may trigger a jackpot. In an alternative embodiment, the jackpot may be triggered by a feature game. The feature game my comprise numbers or other symbols generated by the base game which are matched against other numbers. The other numbers are downloaded by the jackpot controller as the jackpot trigger condition. One implementation is a variation of keno.

[0064] In this game, the jackpot controller 303 first selects twenty unique numbers in the range 1 to 80. It sends

them to a display associated with the gaming system and to each connected gaming machine (where the game system is implemented as a plurality of connected EGMs attached to the jackpot controller) for display. These twenty selected numbers comprise the jackpot trigger condition. It will be appreciated that the numbers may be different symbols and there may be different ranges and amounts of numbers (not limited to 1-80).

[0065] During the course of a base game, players are awarded numbers in the range of 1 to 80. These numbers are displayed to the player of the gaming system. When all the selected numbers e.g. say ten numbers match ten of the twenty of the jackpot trigger condition, the gaming machine determines that a win has occurred and triggers the jackpot.

[0066] As discussed above the jackpot controller 303 may have multiple levels of jackpot, in which case matching ten of the numbers will trigger a win of jackpot level 1, matching nine of twenty will trigger a win of level 2, etc for as many levels of jackpot as required. Again, the amount of numbers selected by the base game and the amount to match up games is a matter of choice of the game designer.

[0067] Multiple sets of trigger conditions may be used, one for each jackpot level. The jackpot controller may select a first set of twenty numbers from 80 and the second set of twenty numbers from 60 and a third set of twenty from 40. Each selection has different odds of triggering a jackpot win.

[0068] Keno numbers may be selected by the game controller in many different ways.

1. A feature game may select all numbers during the course of a single feature.
2. A series of free games may each select one Keno number, such that at the end of ten free games ten numbers have been selected. If the free game sequence retriggers more than ten Keno numbers are selected this subset of the numbers is used for a single Keno jackpot attempt, or all the Keno numbers are used for multiple jackpot entries.
3. The Keno numbers are selected over the course of a number of separate games. If a specific trigger occurs in the game one or more Keno numbers are generated.

[0069] The gaming machine Keno numbers may be unique (such that they do not repeat any of the previous nine numbers selected) or not.

[0070] Figure 8 is a flow diagram showing play of a game which may implement a Keno-type game played as a feature of a base game.

[0071] At step 400, the player plays a base game on a gaming system in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. The base game may result in a base game outcome 401 which may be a win, lose or other outcome, including a feature outcome. If a feature outcome, the game feature generates one or more numbers (step 402). If enough numbers have been generated (it may be one or more) the numbers are compared with a jackpot trigger condition (step 403). The jackpot trigger condition in this example includes numbers which have been selected by a jackpot controller for matching against the numbers generated by the feature game. At step 404 it is determined whether or not a jackpot outcome is achieved. If not the game returns to step 402 for generation of a further number (if the feature game allows this) or back to the base game. If a jackpot outcome is achieved, a jackpot trigger is provided to the jackpot controller (step 405). The player wins a jackpot and the jackpot generates a further trigger condition for the gaming system (step 406).

[0072] Among other games that may be played utilising the selectable jackpot trigger condition implemented by this invention includes a variation of the game of Bingo. In this case a jackpot controller selects a predetermined number of numbers (e.g. 25) to form a Bingo card, and these are distributed to connected EGMs as jackpot trigger conditions. Different Bingo cards (e.g. different numbers) may be provided to each EGM, or each EGM may be provided with the same Bingo card. A game is played and results in the selection of numbers generated by the gaming system (randomly) which can be matched against the Bingo card. When a winning pattern occurs the gaming machine triggers a jackpot win to the jackpot controller.

[0073] As discussed above, the jackpot may be a linked progressive jackpot, and in one embodiment the gaming system includes a plurality of EGMs that are connected to a jackpot controller.

[0074] Many other types of games may be played with selectable jackpot trigger conditions, using any symbols (e.g. Poker, fruits, letters etc).

[0075] The jackpot controller and remote gaming machine (where this is the implementation of the invention) in this embodiment should use the same trigger condition. There are various ways of ensuring this, including periodic broadcast of the trigger condition instruction, the gaming machine not taking part in the jackpot until it has successfully communicated with jackpot controller, each message between the jackpot controller and gaming machine containing the code distinguishing one set of jackpot trigger condition instructions from another.

[0076] The trigger condition instructions may be implemented in many ways. As discussed above it may be symbols or numbers to be matched, or a programme that is executed to determine if the trigger occurs. Using Microsoft.NET™ for example.

[0077] There may be more than one game representation for each trigger condition, so that apparently different games can be connected to the same jackpot link.

[0078] In an embodiment, the gaming system may communicate its current status to a display controller controlling a display that shows progress towards a jackpot. In a Keno-type game or Bingo-type game, for example, the display could show the numbers generated by the

game so far, matched up with the numbers providing the jackpot trigger condition selected by the jackpot controller, to show the players progress in achieving the jackpot.

[0079] The invention may be further defined by one or more of the following clauses: A gaming system as described above, wherein the jackpot is a progressive jackpot. A gaming system in which a plurality of jackpot outcomes are achievable by the plurality of game outcomes. A gaming system wherein the game is Keno. A gaming system wherein the game is Bingo.

[0080] In the claims which follow and in the preceding description of the invention, except where the context requires otherwise due to express language or necessary implication, the word "comprise" or variations such as "comprises" or "comprising" is used in an inclusive sense, i.e. to specify the presence of the stated features but not to preclude the presence or addition of further features in various embodiments of the invention.

[0081] It will be appreciated by persons skilled in the art that numerous variations and/or modifications may be made to the invention as shown in the specific embodiments without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention as broadly described. The present embodiments are, therefore, to be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive.

Claims

1. A gaming system, comprising a game controller arranged to control play of a game and to determine a game outcome, the game controller being arranged to determine that a jackpot outcome is achieved when a jackpot trigger condition is satisfied by the game outcome, the game controller being arranged to receive jackpot trigger condition instructions from a jackpot controller, setting the jackpot trigger condition.

2. A gaming system in accordance with claim 1, the gaming system being arranged such that different jackpot trigger conditions may be set, in accordance with the jackpot condition instructions received, whereby different game outcomes may achieve a jackpot outcome.

3. A gaming system in accordance with claim 2, wherein the system is arranged, following a jackpot trigger condition being satisfied, to receive further jackpot trigger condition instructions from the jackpot controller, resetting the jackpot trigger condition.

4. A system in accordance with claim 2 or claim 3, wherein the game controller may receive jackpot trigger condition instructions to set a plurality of jackpot trigger conditions, whereby a jackpot outcome may be achieved by a plurality of game outcomes.

5. A system in accordance with any one of the preceding claims, further comprising a display arranged to display jackpot trigger condition information for viewing by a player.

6. A system in accordance with claim 5, wherein the jackpot trigger condition information provides details on the game outcome that will achieve a jackpot outcome.

7. A system in accordance with any one of the preceding claims, wherein the game controller comprises a symbol selector arranged to select a plurality of symbols from a set of symbols, and an outcome generator arranged to determine the game outcome based on the selected symbols.

8. A system in accordance with claim 7, wherein the game controller is arranged to control play of a game where the symbols are numbers or letters and wherein a jackpot trigger condition is satisfied by a game outcome where one or more of the numbers or letters match a set of numbers of letters provided by the jackpot trigger condition instructions.

9. A gaming arrangement, comprising a plurality of gaming systems in accordance with any one of the preceding claims each being arranged to receive jackpot trigger condition instructions from a common jackpot controller.

10. A gaming arrangement in accordance with claim 10, wherein one or more of the plurality of gaming systems comprises a game controller arranged to play a game different from one or more of the other of the plurality of gaming systems, the game being played for a common jackpot.

11. A gaming arrangement in accordance with claim 9 or claim 10, each of the plurality of gaming systems being arranged to play a game for a common jackpot outcome.

12. A networked gaming arrangement in accordance with claim 9, 10, or 11, further comprising a common display arranged to display jackpot trigger condition information viewable by players of the plurality of gaming systems.

13. A networked gaming arranged in accordance with claim 12, wherein the jackpot trigger condition information provides details on a game outcome that will achieve a jackpot outcome.

14. A jackpot controller apparatus, comprising a jackpot controller arranged to provide jackpot trigger condition instructions to a gaming system being arranged to play a game and determine a jackpot outcome on

the basis that a jackpot trigger condition is satisfied by a game outcome, the jackpot trigger condition instructions setting the jackpot trigger condition.

15. A jackpot controller apparatus in accordance with claim 14, wherein the gaming system comprises a gaming system in accordance with any one of claims 1 to 8 and the jackpot controller is arranged to provide jackpot trigger condition instructions to the plurality of gaming systems.

16. A networked gaming system, comprising a jackpot controller apparatus in accordance with claim 15 and a gaming arrangement in accordance with any one of claims 9 to 13.

17. A networked gaming system in accordance with claim 16, wherein each of the gaming systems comprise stand alone electronic gaming machines e.g. EGMs.

18. In a gaming system arranged to play a game, a method of gaming, comprising the steps of playing a game outcome having a game outcome, determining whether the game outcome satisfies a jackpot trigger condition to achieve a jackpot outcome, and providing jackpot trigger condition instructions to the gaming system from a jackpot controller, the jackpot trigger condition instructions determining the jackpot trigger condition.

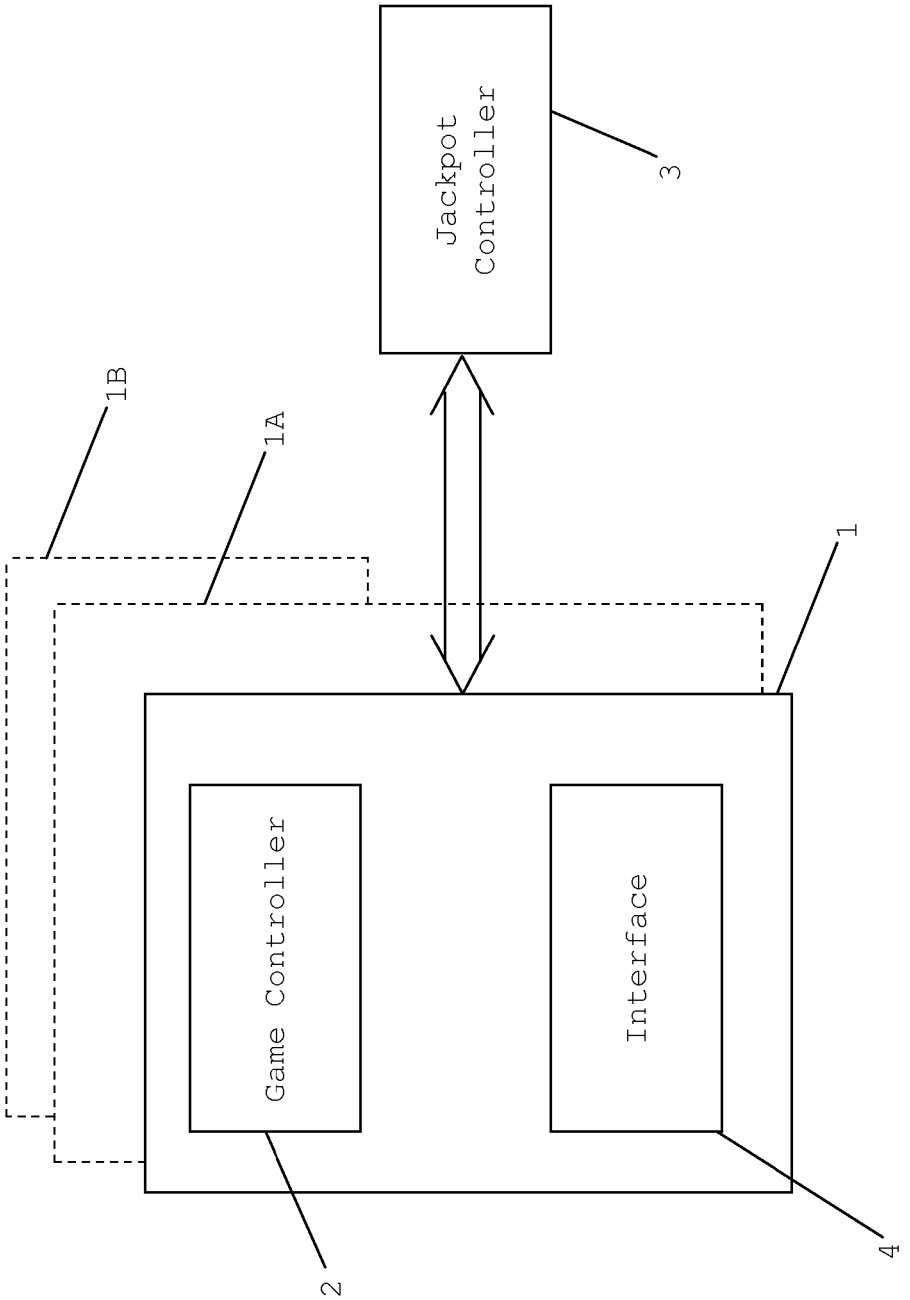

Figure 1

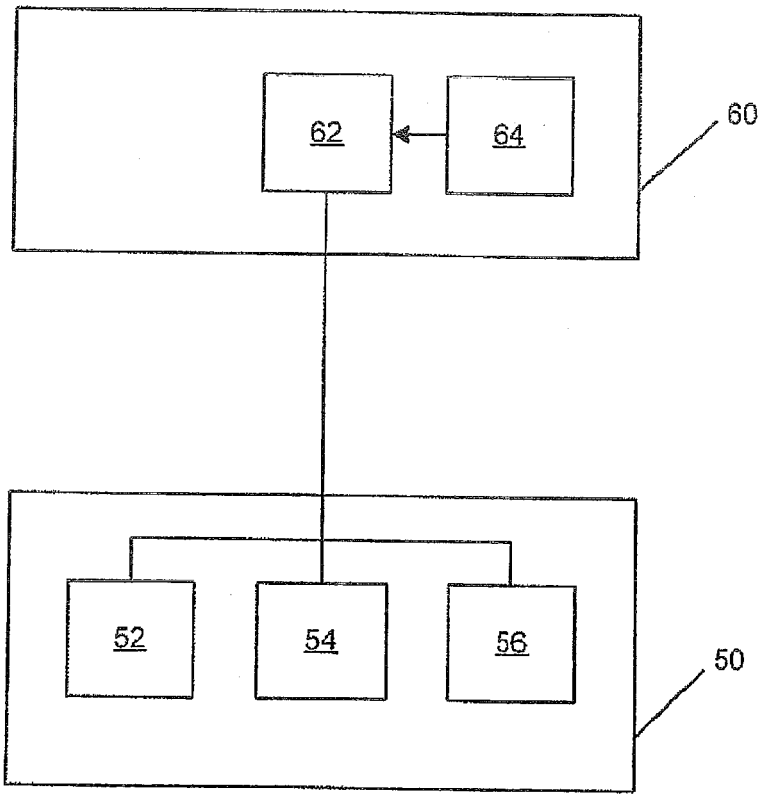

Figure 2

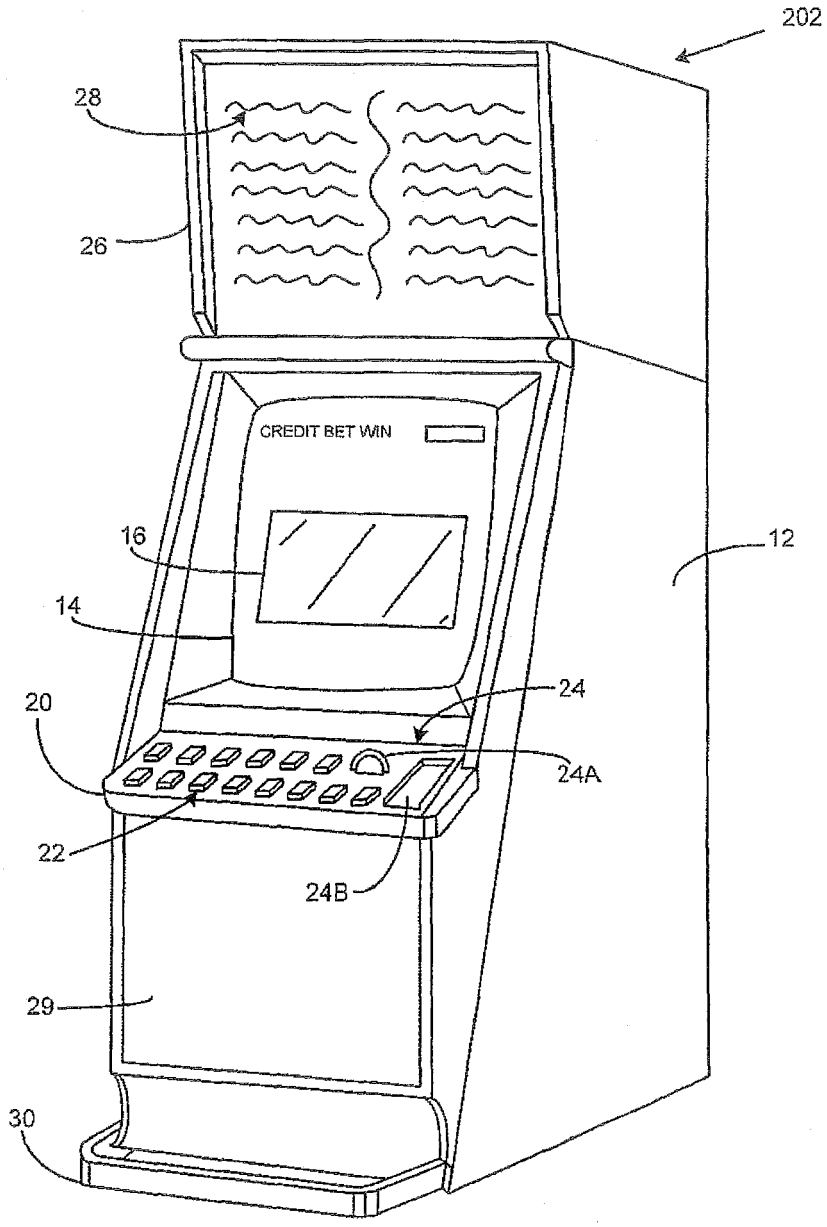

Figure 3

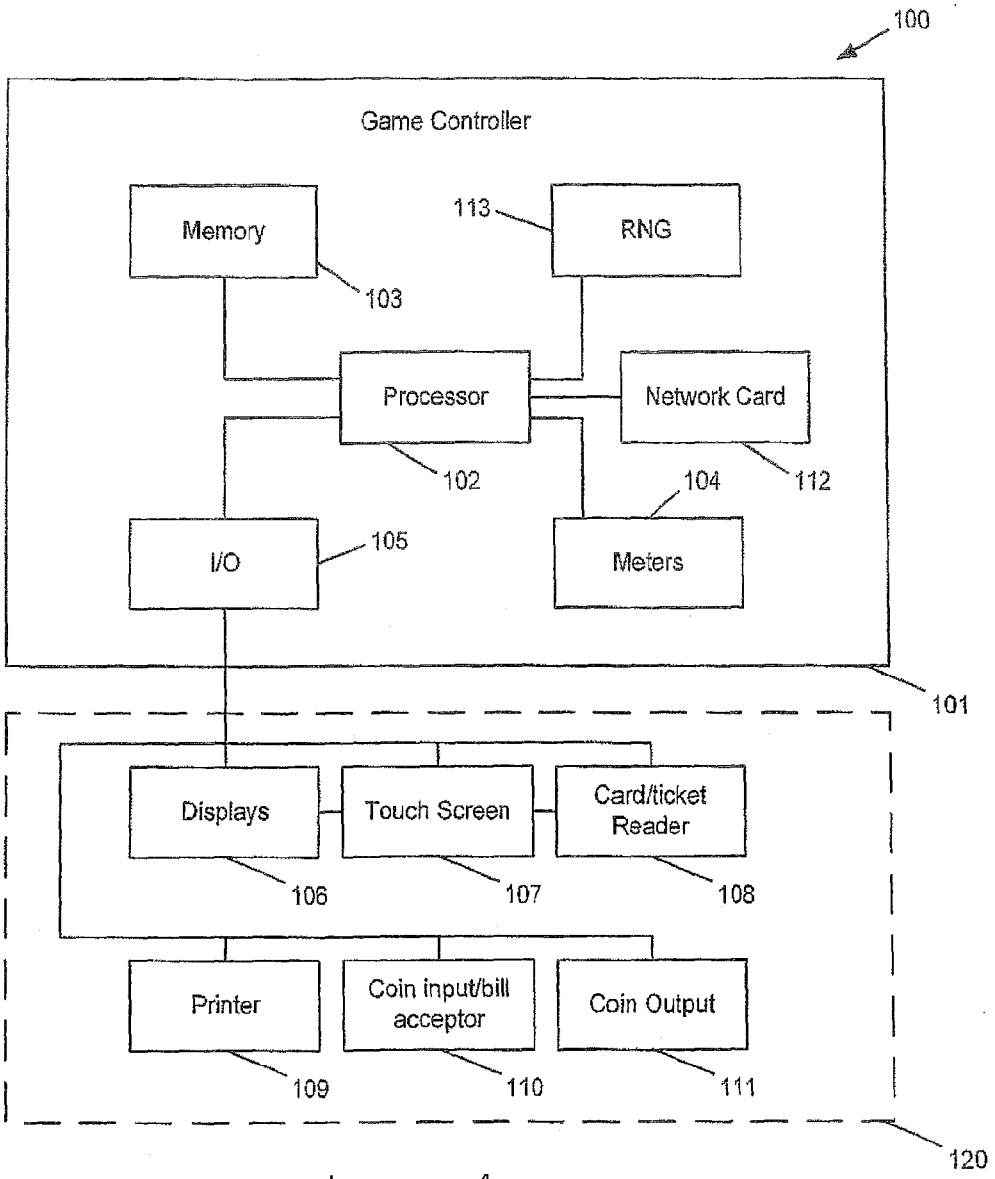

Figure 4

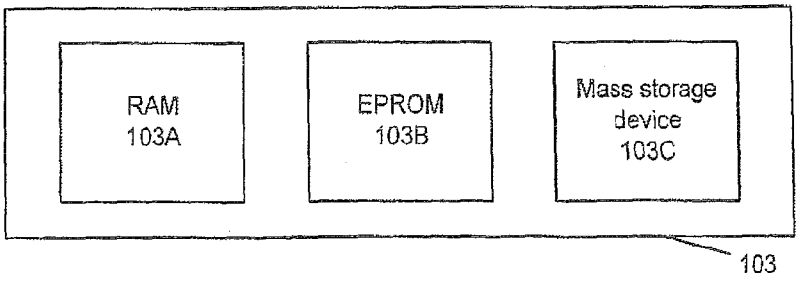

Figure 5

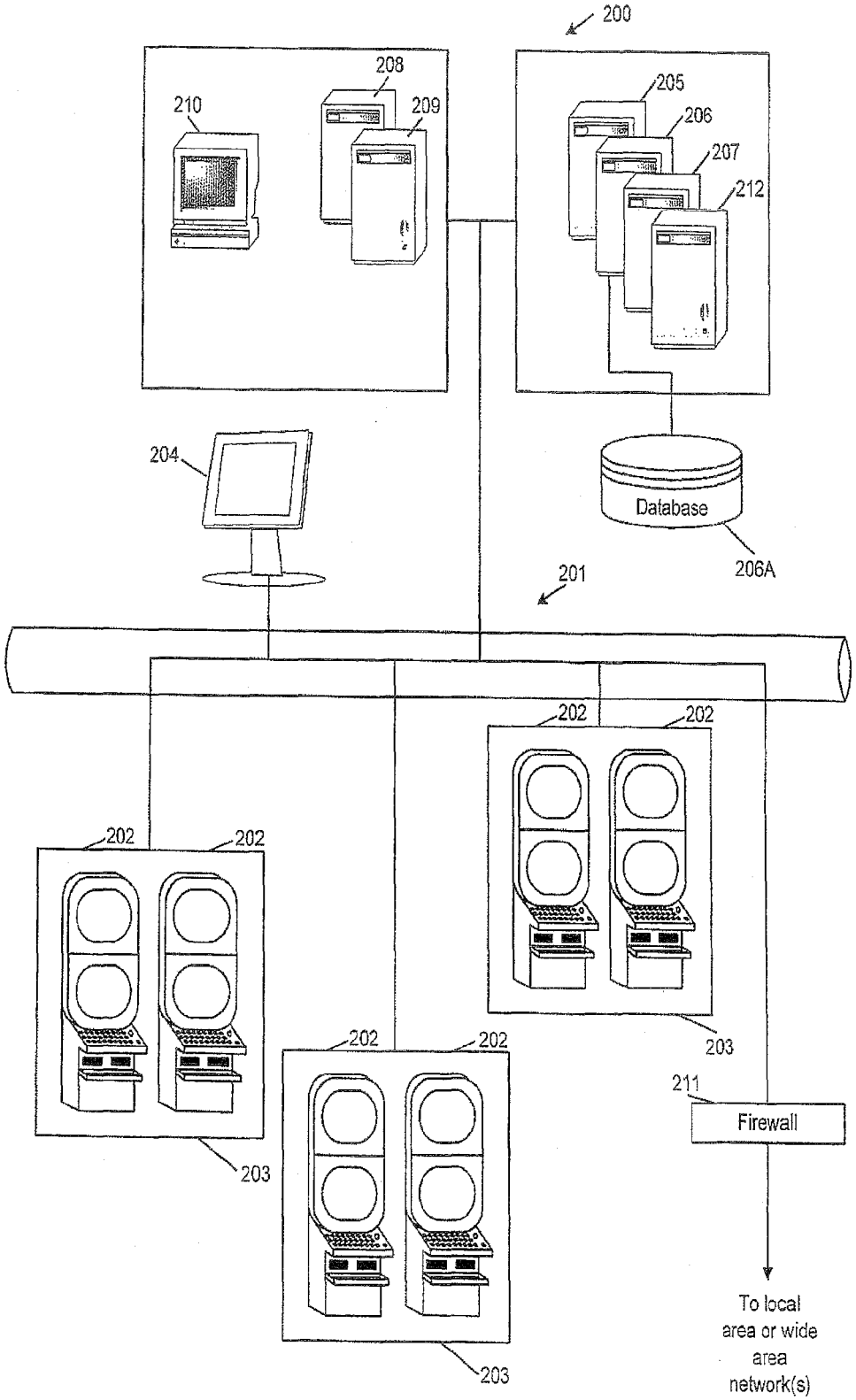
200
208
210
209
205
206
207
212
204
Database
206A
201
202
202
202
202
202
202
203
203
211
Firewall
To local area or wide area network(s)

Figure 6

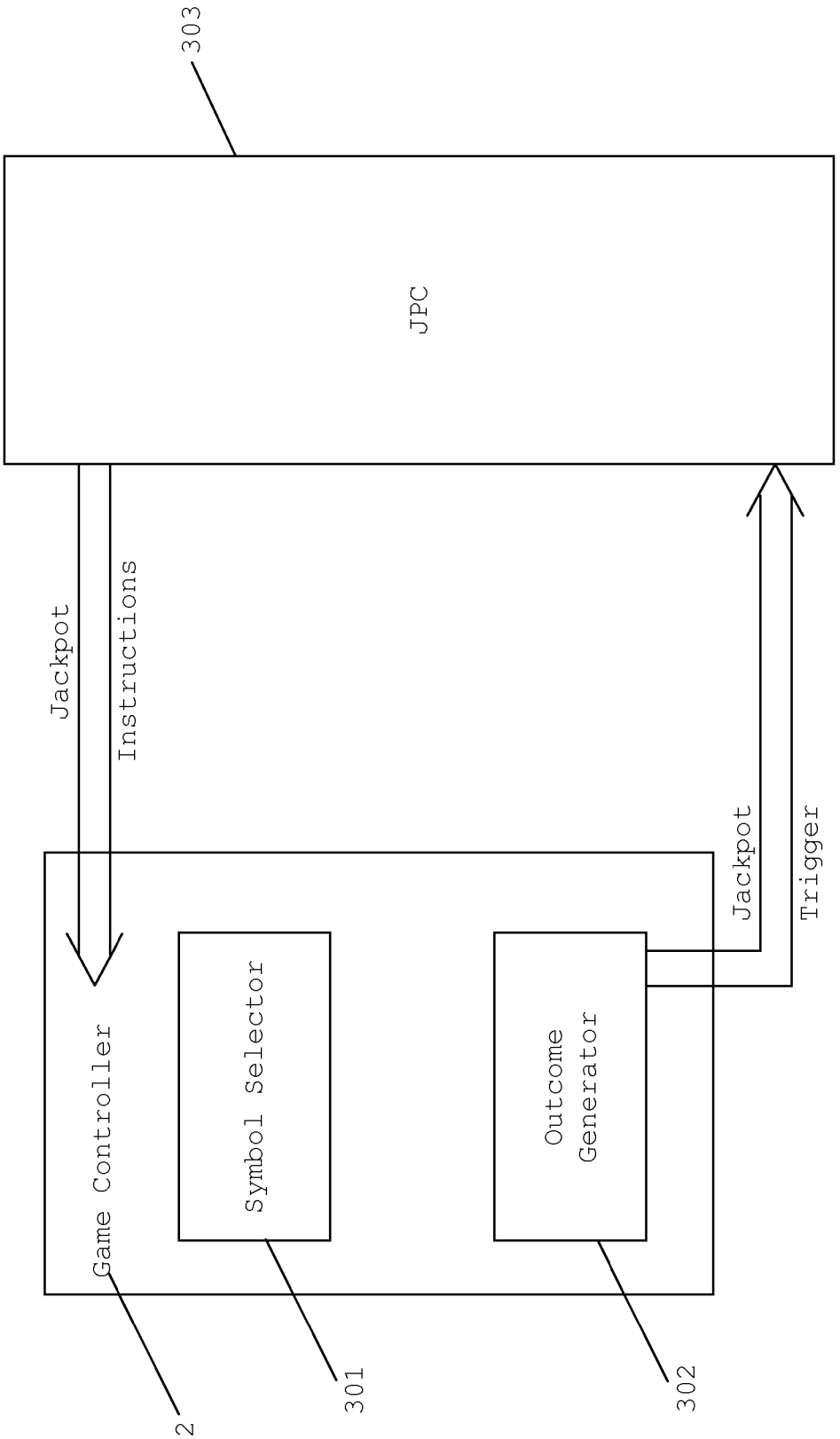
303
JPC
Jackpot
Instructions
Jackpot
Trigger
Game Controller
Symbol Selector
Outcome Generator
2
301
302

Figure 7

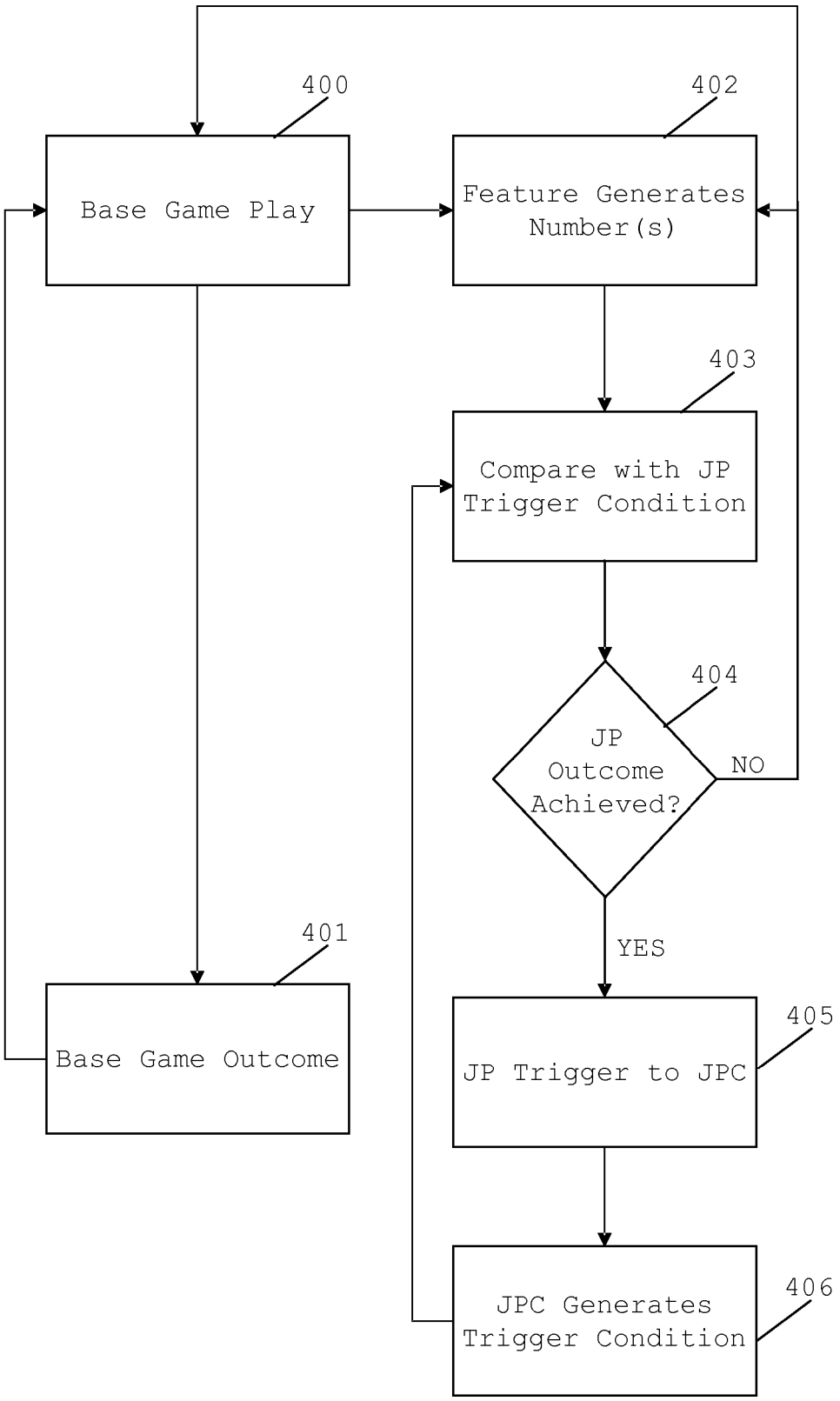
400
Base Game Play
402
Feature Generates Number(s)
403
Compare with JP Trigger Condition
404
JP Outcome Achieved?
NO
YES
401
Base Game Outcome
405
JP Trigger to JPC
406
JPC Generates Trigger Condition

Figure 8

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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 08 16 1710

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X	WO 2007/033430 A (ARISTOCRAT TECHNOLOGIES AU [AU]; BYNG STEPHEN [AU]) 29 March 2007 (2007-03-29) * abstract * * page 1, line 22 - page 2, line 9 * * page 11, line 1 - page 16, line 25 * * figures * -----	1-18	
A	US 5 876 284 A (ACRES JOHN F [US] ET AL) 2 March 1999 (1999-03-02) * abstract * * column 5, line 55 - column 6, line 63 * * column 36, line 64 - column 38, line 27 * * figures * -----	1-18	TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (IPC) G07F
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The present search report has been drawn up for all claims

Place of search	Date of completion of the search	Examiner
The Hague	28 October 2008	Breugelmans, Jan

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3

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