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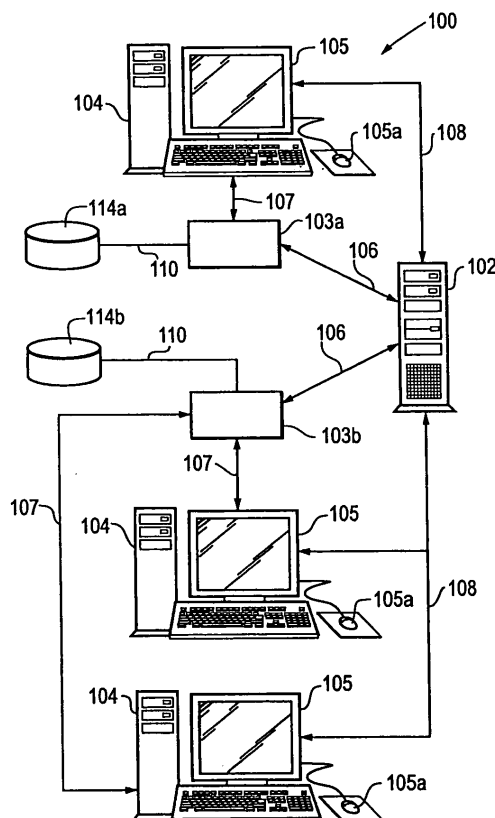
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(54) **Game playing devices and video slots without paylines**

(57) Game playing devices are described which are configured with software instructions for rendering a video slots type game comprising an array of symbols, typically but not necessarily displayed in rows and columns of symbols. The games of this disclosure do not use the concept of pay lines. Rather, winning results are determined by a minimum number of the one or more of the symbols of the game appearing in the array of symbols. Such symbols may appear either in a scattered, random arrangement and the player wins. If they are in an adjacent arrangement, e.g., all on the same row, the player wins a higher prize.

Fig. 11



Description**BACKGROUND**

[0001] This invention relates generally to the field of devices and systems for playing wager games.

[0002] Video slot games are known in the art which are playable on an electronic game playing device. The game playing device can take a variety of forms, including an electronic slot machine found in a casino, a personal computer, a portable computing device, a cellular telephone, and other similar electronic devices. Such games are typically embodied as machine-executable software instructions which are executable by a processing unit in the game playing device. These games, played in an electronic format, have become increasingly popular because they enable game designers to easily add additional game features and complexity to the games in order to stimulate player interest.

[0003] One such additional game feature is a so-called "bonus game". A bonus game is generally distinct from an underlying "base" video slot game and is usually designed to provide a player with entertainment in addition to increased opportunity to win game prizes. The bonus game is typically triggered when some combination of symbols appear after a turn of the game. See, for example, U.S. patent application serial no. 11/978,876 filed October 29, 2007, "Display of Bonus Game Progression in Reel-Type Games", assigned to the assignee of this invention.

[0004] Some video slots games use a virtual set of three slot machine reels and display the results from a spin of the virtual slot machine reels. If the symbols resting on the pay line are a winning result, the player wins an amount depending on the amount wagered.

[0005] Other types of video slots games include more symbols than just three. For example, a video slots game may display symbols in an array of 5 columns and 3 rows for a 5 X 3 array of symbols. As another example, the symbols may be arranged as a 5 X 5 array of symbol positions, with 5 columns and 5 rows. The symbols appearing in each of the 15 (or 25) symbol positions are randomly generated. To determine whether a winning result has been achieved, certain symbols must fall on a predetermined arrangement of the symbol positions. These predetermined arrangements of symbol positions are known in the art as "pay lines". See U.S. patent application serial no. 11/373,748 filed March 9, 2006 for an example of pay lines for a 5 X 3 array of symbols in a video slots type game. For example, in a 5 X 3 symbol format, pay lines may comprise the five symbols found in each of the three rows, as well as five symbols found in various zig-zag arrangements across the three rows and five columns.

[0006] The base games are made more attractive by incorporating more pay lines, each pay line affording a player a separate opportunity to wager and thereby to win a game prize. It is not uncommon for base games to have up to 50, or even 100, pay lines, provided the array of game symbols is sufficiently large. The player selects one or more pay lines for the upcoming turn of the game. A player wins a game prize when a predetermined combination of randomly-selected symbols is displayed on a pay line on which the player has wagered.

[0007] The complexity of video slot base games has progressed to such a point that an increasing number of players find them confusing and become reluctant to play the games. It is often difficult for a player to know precisely which pay lines the player has wagered on and, for this reason, such players may prefer to play simpler and less cluttered, but nonetheless potentially rewarding, video slot games instead.

[0008] A particular type of video slot game is disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 6,093,102. This patent discloses a video slot game which has an array of symbol positions having, for example, 3 rows and 5 columns. A player of the game is first required to "construct" a number of active pay lines by selecting one or more active symbol positions in each column of the array. The number of active pay lines is the product of the number of active symbol positions in each column of the array. Once the player has constructed the number of active pay lines in this manner, symbols are randomly generated and displayed in each active symbol position and the player wins a prize when any one of a number of predetermined combinations of winning symbols appears in any active pay line. In the limit, when every symbol position in this example of a 3 x 5 array is active, the game will have 3⁵ or 243 active pay lines. The player is required to select a number of active symbol positions in each column of the array, which makes this game unnecessarily complex and tedious.

[0009] There is a need in the art to provide a game playing device incorporating software instructions which, when executed, presents a video slot game of reduced complexity relative to known prior art.

SUMMARY

[0010] Game playing devices are described herein configured to provide for video slot games that do not award prizes for arrangements of symbols that appear on predefined pay lines in a symbol array. In video slot games explained in this disclosure, players are not required to concern themselves with the geometry of one or more pay lines, as prizes are awarded when a predetermined minimum number of any of the symbols appear anywhere in the symbol array ("scattered" in the following description). The payout is increased if the symbols in the prize-winning arrangement are adjacent to each other in any manner. Such video slot games are much simpler to play and less confusing than pay line-based prior art equivalents.

[0011] In one embodiment, an electronic game playing device is disclosed comprising a processing unit, a memory storing software instructions and a display. The software instructions comprise instructions for displaying on the display a video slots-type game comprising an array of randomly generated symbols. The game includes a pay table associated with individual symbols appearing in array, wherein in accordance with the pay table prizes are awarded when a minimum number of the one or more of the symbols appear anywhere in the array of symbols and wherein the symbols do not have to be present at predetermined or preselected positions in order to win.

[0012] In another embodiment, a gaming server is disclosed which is operatively coupled to a plurality of game playing workstations over a computer network. The gaming server comprises a computing platform and a memory storing instructions for execution by the computing platform. The gaming server is configured to generate data representing an array of randomly generated symbols and send such data to one of said workstations. The game server further awards prizes (e.g.; additional credit which is redeemable for cash or additional turns of the game) to an account associated with the workstation in accordance with a pay table associated with the individual symbols appearing in array. In accordance with the pay table, prizes are awarded by the game server to the account when a minimum number of the one or more of the symbols appear anywhere in the array of symbols and wherein the symbols do not have to be present at predetermined or preselected positions in order for the player to achieve a winning result.

[0013] Certain preferred embodiments of the invention will now be described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which the Figures can be described as follows.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0014]

Figure 1 is a screen shot from a display of a game playing device showing a video slots game and wager controls.

Figure 2 is a screen shot of the game of Figure 1 showing a pay table associated with a "10" symbol. The pay table appears when the cursor is held over the symbol. The pay table includes two separate pay tables, namely a "scatter" pay table that is invoked when 3, 4 or 5 of the "10" symbols appears in a scattered (non-adjacent) arrangement in the 5 X 3 array. Here, the minimum number of times the symbol must be found in the array to win is 3. The pay table also includes an "Adjacent" pay table that is invoked when 3, 4 or 5 of the "10" symbols appear in an adjacent relationship. In this example, "adjacent" means that the symbols appear on the same row.

Figure 3 is a screen shot of the game of Figure 1 showing a pay table associated with a "Q" (queen) symbol. The pay table also has scatter and adjacent components, as was the case for the pay table of Figure 2.

Figure 4 is a screen shot of the game of Figure 1 showing a pay table associated with a "Emerald" symbol. The pay table also has scatter and adjacent components, as was the case for the pay table of Figure 2.

Figure 5 is a screen shot of the game of Figure 1 showing a pay table associated with a "Crest" symbol. The pay table also has scatter and adjacent components, as was the case for the pay table of Figure 2.

Figure 6 is a screen shot of the game of Figure 1 showing a pay table associated with a "Jewel Box" symbol. The pay table also has scatter and adjacent components, as was the case for the pay table of Figure 2.

Figure 7 is a screen shot showing the display of symbols after a turn of the game. There are three "Goblets" in a scattered arrangement, which results in a win of 200 coins according to the pay table for the "Goblet" symbol.

Figure 8 is a screen shot showing the display of symbols after another turn of the game, with two winning results, namely 5 adjacent Emeralds and 3 scattered "10" symbols.

Figure 9 is a screen shot showing the display of symbols after another turn of the game, with three winning results, namely 3 adjacent Emeralds and 3 scattered "10" symbols, and 3 adjacent "A" (Ace) symbols.

Figure 10 is a screen shot showing the display of symbols after another turn of the game, with three winning results, namely 4 adjacent Emeralds, and 5 scattered Emeralds, and 3 scattered "10" symbols.

Figure 11 is a block diagram showing a computer-networked implementation of the game of Figures 1-10 wherein results of a spin are generated by a central gaming server and transmitted to remotely located gaming workstations over a computer network, e.g., the Internet or a local area network.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0015] Game playing devices are described which are configured with software instructions for rendering a video slots type game comprising an array of symbols, typically but not necessarily displayed in rows and columns of symbols. The games of this disclosure do not use the concept of pay lines. Rather, a winning result occurs if a minimum number of one or more of the symbols of the game appears in the array of symbols. Such symbols may appear either in a scattered or in an adjacent arrangement, in which event a higher payout occurs. The games of this disclosure use a simple pay table construction associated with the individual symbols. The games are best illustrated by way of example, with reference to a sequence of screen shots shown in the appended Figures 1-10.

[0016] The games will be described in conjunction with the screen shots appearing on the display of a game playing device such as a general purpose computer or casino game playing terminal or workstation. It will be understood by persons skilled in the art that the essential functionality of the software instructions will be able to be discerned from the displayed screen shots and the following description. Furthermore, persons skilled in the art will understand that the game described herein can be rendered on any suitable electronic game playing device.

[0017] Figure 1 is a representation of a five reel video slot game which is played on an electronic game playing device and presented on a display (10) of the device. The video slot game has fifteen symbol positions arranged as an array of 3 rows and 5 columns, the array of symbols indicated at (11). The video slot game includes the following set of symbols: 10, Jack ("J"), Queen ("Q"), King ("K"), Ace ("A"), Goblet, Emerald, Crest, Crown and Jewel Box. The symbols which are displayed in the array after a turn of the game are randomly determined. The random generator for the game can reside either locally on the game playing device or can reside in a remote gaming server, as will be described in conjunction with Figure 11.

Wager Controls

[0018] The game includes wager controls. A representative, but non-limiting example of wager controls is described below. The particular design of the wager controls is not considered important and can vary widely from those described in this section.

[0019] The wager controls for the game of Figure 1 includes a coins icon (12), a bet max icon (14) and a spin icon (16). The coins icon (12) allows the user to vary the number of coins that are wagered on a spin of the game. The coins box (22) shows the number of coins currently being bet on a spin of the game. By toggling the coins icon (12), the number shown in the coins box (22) increases by one coin, up to a maximum of 20 coins, after which the number appearing in the box (22) goes to 1 coin. The coin size (value per coin) is adjusted by the use of icons (18) to either increase or decrease the coin size (currently set as \$ 0.10 per coin). The bet max icon (14) automatically results in a wager of the maximum number of coins (here, twenty in this example). The spin icon (16) initiates a turn of the game by causing the symbols to spin (simulated) and come to rest in some new, randomly generated arrangement.

[0020] The wager box (20) is a multiplier which is used by the game designer to allow the player to experience more frequent winning outcomes while still maintaining the overall profitability of the game, i.e. many winning outcomes may, in fact pay out less than the player's bet, but the player will still have the experience of a payout.

[0021] The bet box (24) shows the product of number in the wager box (20) (twenty) multiplied by the number of coins shown in the coins box (22) (ten), i.e., $20 \times 10 = 200$ coins. The player needs to have a winning result from a spin of the game of at least 200 coins in order to break even.

[0022] The win box (26) shows the amount won for a spin of the game. The win that is shown in the win box (26) is the product of the number of coins bet (value in coins box (22)) multiplied by the pay table associated with the winning symbols which appear in the display area, as will be explained below.

[0023] The wager controls just described are offered by way of example and not limitation. They may vary widely from the disclosed embodiments without departure from the invention.

[0024] Each position in the array of symbol positions is an active position and there are no predefined, or pre-selected, pay lines as such.

Pay Table

[0025] The games of this disclosure features pay tables that are associated with individual symbols and which do not require the symbols to appear in any predetermined symbol positions (pay lines) in order for a winning result to be achieved.

[0026] Figure 2 is a screen shot showing the display (10) of the game playing device when the player holds their mouse or cursor over one of the symbols, in this example the "10" symbol.

When this occurs, a pay table (30) associated with the symbol is presented. The pay table is in two parts.

[0027] Firstly, the pay table (30) includes a pay table (32) that is invoked if the given symbol is displayed 3 times, 4

times or 5 times anywhere in the 5 X 3 array in a turn of the game. These payouts are shown in the left hand side of the icon (30) under the legend "scatter". The term "scatter" means that the symbol does not have to appear in any particular position or arrangement relative to other positions; rather the symbol can occur anywhere and in any relationship to other symbols in order to count towards the minimum of 3 symbols. Thus, for the "10" symbol, if three of the symbol are present anywhere in the display, the payout is 7 times the number of coins wagered. If four of them are present anywhere, the payout is 20 times the number of coins wagered. If five of them are present anywhere, the payout is 100 times the number of coins wagered.

[0028] Secondly, the pay table (30) includes a pay table (34) if three of such symbols are adjacent to each other, four of such symbols are adjacent to each other, or five of such symbols are adjacent to each other. The term "adjacent" means that two symbols are next to each other in the same row. In the example of the symbol "10", if three of them are adjacent, the payout is 70 times the amount wagered, if four of them are adjacent, the payout is 200 times the amount wagered, and if five of them are adjacent, the payout is 1000 times the amount wagered. Optionally, "adjacent" symbols could be defined by the game designer to also include symbols which are next to each other in the same column or diagonally, in any direction:

[0029] As a representative and non-limiting example, the video slot game has the pay table (in units) set forth in Table 1 below for all of the symbols which can appear. This table will be described in more detail in the discussion that follows. For example, for a wager of one coin (e.g., 1 dollar) if the player has three tens displayed scattered anywhere in the 5 X 3 array of symbols, the player wins 7 dollars. If the player wagered 10 of such coins, the player would win 70 dollars.

TABLE 1

Symbol	Scatter			Adjacent		
	x3	x4	x5	x3	x4	x5
10	7	20	100	70	200	1000
Jack	7	20	100	70	200	1000
Queen	12	25	125	120	250	1250
King	12	25	125	120	250	1250
Ace	15	30	150	150	300	1500
Goblet	20	50	500	200	500	5000
Emerald	25	75	750	250	750	7500
Crest	30	100	1000	300	1000	10000
Crown	40	150	1500	400	1500	15000
Jewel Box	50	200	2000	500	2000	20000

[0030] If a player allows a pointing device such as a mouse to hover over any displayed symbol, the portion of the pay table that relates to that particular symbol is displayed. See Figure 3 for the pay table in relation to the Q (Queen) symbol, see Figure 4 for the pay table in relation to the Emerald symbol, Figure 5 for the pay table in relation to the Crest symbol, and Figure 6 for the pay table in relation to the Jewel Box symbol.

Game Play

[0031] When the player has finished using the wager controls to set the desired wager, the player activates the SPIN icon (16), whereupon a new set of symbols is randomly generated and displayed in each position in the array (11), as shown in Figure 7. If the array contains the minimum number of like symbols that appears in the pay table, the player wins a corresponding prize (e.g., money is deposited into their credit account or additional turns are awarded). In Figure 7, for example, three Goblet symbols (40) appear in the array. These three Goblet symbols are scattered (i.e. not ordered), and are not adjacent to each other. According to the pay table, three Goblet symbols appearing anywhere in the array in a non-ordered pattern will yield a payout of 20 units. In Figure 7, the player wagered 10 coins so the player receives a payout of 20 x 10 coins = 200 coins as indicated on the win box (26).

[0032] Note in particular that the win is not conditional on the set of symbols appearing on a predefined pay line. Rather, they can appear anywhere in the array. This makes the game much simpler to understand and does not require any understanding of the concept of "pay line", as used in prior art games based on 5 X 3 and like arrays of symbols.

[0033] Figure 8 shows an outcome where five Emerald symbols (50) appear in the array (11). Furthermore, the Emerald symbols are adjacent. According to the pay table, five adjacent Emerald symbols appearing in the array yield a payout

of 7,500 units. In Figure 8, the player wagered 10 coins so the player receives a payout of $7,500 \times 10$ coins = 75,000 coins. As above, the win is not conditional on the set of ordered symbols appearing on a predefined or preselected pay line.

[0034] The outcome of Figure 8 also contains a scattered arrangement of three 10s, providing the player with an additional payout of 7×10 coins = 70 coins.

[0035] Thus, unlike the known prior art, the present game and pay table differentiates between ordered and non-ordered winning patterns of the same symbols.

[0036] Figure 9 shows an outcome where three adjacent Emerald symbols appear in the array, as indicated at (60). According to the pay table, three adjacent Emerald symbols appearing in the array yield a payout of 250 units. (Note that in Figure 9, the player wagered 10 coins so the player receives a payout for this win of 250×10 coins = 2,500 coins).

[0037] The outcome of Figure 9 also contains three adjacent Ace symbols indicated at (70) providing the player with an additional payout of 150×10 coins wagered = 1,500 coins according to the pay table.

[0038] The outcome of Figure 9 also contains three scattered 10s, providing the player with an additional payout of 7×10 coins wagered = 70 coins.

[0039] The total win for the turn of the game shown in Figure 9 is the sum of the three wins, namely $2500 + 1500 + 70 = 4,070$ coins.

[0040] Figure 10 shows an outcome from another turn of the game. The turn resulted in four adjacent Emerald symbols appear in the array (11). According to the pay table, four adjacent Emerald symbols appearing in the array yields a payout of 750 units. In Figure 10, the player wagered 10 coins so the player receives a payout of 750×10 coins = 7,500 coins.

[0041] The outcome of Figure 10 also contains a fifth non-adjacent Emerald symbol, which means the player also wins a further 750×10 coins = 7,500 coins arising out of the appearance in the array of five non-adjacent Emerald symbols.

[0042] The outcome of Figure 10 also includes three scattered 10s, providing the player with an additional payout of 7×10 coins = 70 coins.

[0043] The total win in the iteration of Figure 10 is $7,500 + 7,500 + 70$ or 15,070 coins.

Other Embodiments

[0044] The embodiment described with respect to Figures 1 to 10 only pays out for adjacent like symbols that appear on the same row of the symbol array. Where all the symbols that appear in each position in the symbol array are independent, the pay table may also provide for payouts when like symbols appear adjacent in the same column of the symbol array. Furthermore, where the symbol array is square, for example 5 rows and 5 columns, and the symbols that appear in each position are independent, the pay table may also provide for payouts when like symbols appear adjacent along a diagonal of the symbol array.

[0045] Thus, from the above description, it will be appreciated that a new genre of video slot games are envisioned that do not award prizes for arrangements of symbols that appear on predefined pay lines in a symbol array. In video slot games taught in this invention, players are not required to concern themselves with the geometry of one or more pay lines, as prizes are awarded when predetermined arrangements of symbols appear anywhere in the symbol array. The payout is increased if the symbols in the prize-winning arrangement are adjacent. Such video slot games are much simpler to play and less confusing than pay line-based prior art equivalents.

Game Playing Devices

[0046] It is envisioned that the games of this disclosure are embodied as software instructions which are resident in memory either on or accessible to an electronic game playing device. For example, an electronic slot machine, e.g., installed in a casino, is contemplated which includes a display unit, wager controls, and a central processing unit and a memory storing machine readable instructions, as is conventional. The instructions include instructions for presenting on the display a game of the type shown in Figures 1-10. The player uses the wager controls to set the amount of wager. The game machine further includes a button (which can be a physical button, or an icon on a touch-sensitive screen) which initiates a spin or similar action in which the player invokes a turn of the game. The symbols in the array are randomly determined, e.g., with a random number generator. The software in the machine presents the results of the turn on the display of the machine, along with the total amount wagered, the amount of the win (if any) and further highlights the winning icons (either scattered or adjacent).

[0047] The gaming machine for playing the games described herein can also take the form of a general purpose computer. The computer includes a connection to the Internet and obtains software instructions for playing the game from a web site, such as a virtual casino game site. The software instructions allow the user to play wager games on-line and communicate over the Internet with a gaming server. This embodiment will be described in further detail below.

[0048] The gaming machine can also take other forms, such as portable computing device or cellular telephone having a screen display, a processing unit, a memory storing software instructions, and user interface features allowing the

user to make wager selections, activate a "spin" icon or the like. Of course, the games can be played for entertainment only with no real money wagered. Alternatively, the game machines can be incorporated into a system in which the player plays with money or credit redeemable for cash, e.g., in a casino, virtual casino, or on-line gaming situation.

5 Networked Gaming Device Embodiment

[0049] Referring to Figure 11, a system suitable for permitting gaming devices in the form of computing devices to play games over a computer network is indicated generally by reference numeral (100). The system (100) includes a central gaming server (102), and a portal (103) in the form of web server on the World Wide Web of the Internet which
10 hosts a game playing web site. The portal (103) is managed by the game proprietor. For convenience, embodiments of the invention will be described with particular reference to one such portal (103). Other portals operated by other lottery operators or online casinos may be present.

[0050] The portal or web server (103a, b) is accessible by a player (not shown) through a player gaming terminal (104) in the form of an Internet-enabled computer having a display monitor (105) and an associated pointing device (105a) such as a mouse or, alternatively, a touchpad. In this embodiment, web server (103b) is shown as having two computer gaming terminals (104) logically connected thereto. It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the web server (103) can be logically connected to any desired number of such computer gaming terminals (104) simultaneously, which number is physically limited only by considerations of processing power and Internet access bandwidth.

[0051] The gaming server (102) functions to receive datagrams containing amounts wagered and gaming action, such as activation of a "spin" icon, from the gaming terminals (104). The server (102) also functions to generate random outcomes for turns of play of the electronic wager games played by the terminals (104). It also functions to generate datagrams containing such outcomes and transmits the datagrams to the terminals (104).
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[0052] The web server (103) and the terminals (104) are capable of communicating with each other by means of an open communication network (107) that is, in this embodiment, the Internet. The Internet is represented in Figure 1 as separate logical communication networks (106, 107, 108). The particular networking topology used and presence of intermediate networks or switching equipment is not important, and may make use of intervening communications networks such as the public switched telephone network, cable networks, cellular wireless networks; WiFi, WiMax, etc.

[0053] The gaming server (2) is associated with a database (114). The database (114) maintains a credit account balance for each player who participates in a game offered by the web server (103). In the illustrated embodiment, therefore, if players are participating in the game from each one of the gaming terminals or workstations (104), the database (114) has one player credit account associated with each of the player gaming terminals or workstations (104). The credit account maintained in the database (114) maintains a balance of credits redeemable for cash, and cash amounts, if any, due the player from winning results of play.
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[0054] Players at the gaming terminals (104) use a web browser to access the web site hosted by the web server (103) and view the available games for play, such as slots, poker, Black Jack, Roulette and other games. Each of the available games has a corresponding web application that includes display tools for displaying on the user interface display (105) gaming symbols (e.g., slot machine reels, cards, Roulette wheels, etc.), displaying gaming controls by which the player can place wagers, spin the reels, etc., and displaying the results of play. The application also includes gaming logic for facilitating the execution of a turn of a game, and communications facilities for communicating player actions using the user interface to the central gaming server (102), and receiving datagrams from the gaming server containing results of play. The data representing results of play are translated to graphical symbols which are presented on the user interface display (105). Further details are known in the art and described in the patent literature, see e.g., U.S. application serial no. 10/540,744 filed September 23, 2005.
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[0055] Each gaming terminal (104) may take the form of a conventional personal computer operating under a Windows XP, Vista, ME, 2000 or other operating system, which is well known and commercially available from Microsoft Corporation of Redmond, Washington, or other operating system such as provided by Apple Computer or a Linux operating system. The gaming terminal (104) may also take the form of an Internet-enabled portable computing device such as a personal digital assistant, iPhone or the like, or cellular telephone.
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[0056] The gaming server (102) operates, for example, under the Windows NT operating system, and includes a central processing unit (conventional) and associated computer memory (conventional, not shown) for storing software instructions for execution by the central processing unit.
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[0057] The game application (described above in conjunction with the description of Figure 1-10) executing in a client gaming terminal (104) and the corresponding stored server program executing in the gaming server (102) will be referred to, for convenience, as a client process and a server process, respectively. The server process generates one or more random events that determine the outcome of turns of the game, such as determining the outcomes of spins of the symbols in the 5 x 3 array of the participating players. The client process of any particular gaming terminal (104) obtains the generated random events from the gaming server (102) along the communication network (108) and displays them on the display monitor (105) of the terminal in an intelligible manner as a simulated game outcome, such as, for example,
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by causing the player's set of symbols to spin and to come to rest at a position corresponding to the random event generated by the gaming server (102).

[0058] In use, a player wishing to participate in a wager game uses a terminal (104) to access the web server (103). When the player navigates using their web browser to the web site hosted by web server (103), the player logs into the web server (details of which are not important) and a web page is served to the terminal (104) containing a menu of available games to play. Obviously, other security precautions may be present to prevent unauthorized access to the wager games. When the player selects the wager games without pay lines for the first time, a dialog box pops up in which they are prompted to download the client process (software instructions) for playing the games of this disclosure. Once the software is downloaded, a screen similar to Figure 1 is displayed and the player begins to play the game in the manner described above.

[0059] The website hosted by the web server (103) may be provisioned as a virtual slots room where video slots is the only game available to players. Alternatively, and more preferably, the website may provide a plurality of different types of games in order to satisfy the preferences of a variety of players.

[0060] In accordance with the games of this disclosure, the gaming server (102) is operatively coupled to a plurality of game playing workstations (104) over a computer network, which could be the Internet as shown in Figure 11. or a local area network. The gaming server (102) includes a computing platform and a memory storing instructions for execution by the computing platform, wherein the gaming server (102) is configured to generate data representing an array (11, Figures 1-10) of randomly generated symbols and sends such data to at least one of the workstations (104).

[0061] The gaming server (102) awards prizes to an account (maintained in database 114) associated with the workstation (104) in accordance with a pay table (30, Figures 3-6, Table 1) for the individual symbols appearing in array (11). As described above, in accordance with the pay tables (30, Figures 3-6), prizes are awarded by the gaming server (102) to the accounts when a minimum number of the one or more of the symbols appear anywhere in the array of symbols and wherein the symbols do not have to be present at predetermined or preselected positions in order for the player to achieve a winning result. A further prize is awarded if a minimum number of symbols appear in the array of symbols in an adjacent relationship.

Symbol arrays (11)

[0062] The array of symbols (11) shown in Figures 1-10 is considered exemplary and not limiting. The particular layout of the symbol array is not important. As an example, the array of symbols includes three rows of symbols and at least three columns of symbols, such as five columns of symbols, as shown in Figures 1-10. In one possible embodiment, the array of symbols includes 15 symbol positions (e.g., in a 5 X 3 or 3 X 5 array) and wherein the minimum number of symbols to appear in either a scattered or adjacent relationship to trigger a winning result comprises three of such symbols.

[0063] The following clauses are considered further descriptive of the disclosed inventions.

1. An electronic game playing device comprising a processing unit, a memory storing software instructions and a display, wherein the software instructions comprise instructions for displaying on the display a video slots-type game comprising an array of randomly generated symbols, and wherein the game includes a pay table associated with individual symbols appearing in array, wherein in accordance with the pay table prizes are awarded when a minimum number of one or more of the symbols appear anywhere in the array of symbols and wherein the symbols do not have to be present at predetermined or preselected positions in order to win.

2. The game playing device of clause 1, wherein the array of symbols includes three rows of symbols and at least three columns of symbols.

3. The game playing device of clause 1 or clause 2, wherein the array of symbols includes five columns of symbols.

4. The game playing device of any of clauses 1-3, wherein a higher prize than the prize awarded for a scattered arrangement is awarded if a minimum number of symbols appear in the array of symbols in an adjacent relationship.

5. The game playing device of any of clauses 1-4, wherein the game playing device comprises a gaming workstations installed in a casino.

6. The game playing device of any of clauses 1-4, wherein the game playing device comprises a general purpose computer and wherein the instructions are obtained by the computer over a computer network.

7. The game playing device of clause 1, wherein the array of symbols includes 15 symbol positions and wherein the minimum number comprises 3.

8. A gaming server operatively coupled to a plurality of game playing workstations over a computer network, the gaming server comprising a computing platform and a memory storing instructions for execution by the computing platform,

wherein the gaming server is configured to generate data representing an array of randomly generated symbols and send such data to one of said workstations, and

wherein the game server awards prizes to an account associated with said workstation in accordance with a pay table associated with the individual symbols appearing in array, wherein in accordance with the pay table prizes are awarded by the game server to the account when a minimum number of one or more of the symbols appear anywhere in the array of symbols and

wherein the symbols do not have to be present at predetermined or preselected positions in order for the player to achieve a winning result.

9. The gaming server of clause 8, wherein the array of symbols includes three rows of symbols and at least three columns of symbols.

10. The gaming server of clause 8 or clause 9, wherein the array of symbols includes five columns of symbols.

11. The gaming server of any of clauses 8-10, wherein a higher prize than the prize awarded for a scattered arrangement is awarded if a minimum number of symbols appear in the array of symbols in an adjacent relationship.

12. The gaming server of any of clauses 8-11, wherein the gaming workstations and the gaming server are installed in a casino.

13. The gaming server of any of clauses 8-11, wherein the gaming workstation comprises a general purpose computer and wherein the computer network comprises the Internet.

14. The gaming server of any of clause 8 or clause 11-13, wherein the array of symbols includes 15 symbol positions and wherein the minimum number comprises 3.

15. The game playing device of clause 1-7, wherein the game playing device further comprises a pointing device displayable on the display, and when the instructions are configured such that when the pointing device is hovered over one of the symbols appearing in the array the pay table associated with that symbol is displayed.

16. The game playing device of clause 15, wherein the pay table comprises a scattered arrangement pay table and an adjacent arrangement pay table.

[0064] Variation from the specifics of this disclosure are of course possible without departure from the scope of the invention. All questions concerning scope are to be answered by reference to the appended claims.

Claims

1. An electronic game playing device comprising a processing unit, a memory storing software instructions and a display, wherein the software instructions comprise instructions for displaying on the display a video slots-type game comprising an array of randomly generated symbols, and wherein the game includes a pay table associated with individual symbols appearing in array, wherein in accordance with the pay table prizes are awarded when a minimum number of one or more of the symbols appear anywhere in the array of symbols and wherein the symbols do not have to be present at predetermined or preselected positions in order to win.

2. The game playing device of claim 1, wherein the array of symbols includes three rows of symbols and at least three columns of symbols.

3. The game playing device of claim 2, wherein the array of symbols includes five columns of symbols.

4. The game playing device of claim 1, 2 or 3, wherein a higher prize than the prize awarded for a scattered arrangement is awarded if a minimum number of symbols appear in the array of symbols in an adjacent relationship.

5. The game playing device of any preceding claim, wherein the game playing device comprises a gaming workstation

installed in a casino.

6. The game playing device of any preceding claim, wherein the game playing device comprises a general purpose computer and wherein the instructions are obtained for the computer over a computer network.
7. The game playing device of any preceding claim, wherein the array of symbols includes 15 symbol positions and wherein the minimum number comprises 3.
8. A gaming server operatively coupled to a plurality of game playing workstations over a computer network, the gaming server comprising a computing platform and a memory storing instructions for execution by the computing platform, wherein the gaming server is configured to generate data representing an array of randomly generated symbols and send such data to one of said workstations, and wherein the game server awards prizes to an account associated with said workstation in accordance with a pay table associated with the individual symbols appearing in array, wherein in accordance with the pay table prizes are awarded by the game server to the account when a minimum number of one or more of the symbols appear anywhere in the array of symbols and wherein the symbols do not have to be present at predetermined or preselected positions in order for the player to achieve a winning result.
9. The gaming server of claim 8, wherein the array of symbols includes three rows of symbols and at least three columns of symbols.
10. The gaming server of claim 9, wherein the array of symbols includes five columns of symbols.
11. The gaming server of claim 8, 9 or 10, wherein a higher prize than the prize awarded for a scattered arrangement is awarded if a minimum number of symbols appear in the array of symbols in an adjacent relationship.
12. The gaming server of any of claims 8-11, wherein the gaming workstations and the gaming server are installed in a casino.
13. The gaming server of any of claims 8-12, wherein the gaming workstation comprises a general purpose computer and wherein the computer network comprises the Internet.
14. The gaming server of any of claims 8-13, wherein the array of symbols includes 15 symbol positions and wherein the minimum number comprises 3.
15. The game playing device of any of claims 1-7, wherein the game playing device further comprises a pointing device displayable on the display, and when the instructions are configured such that when the pointing device is hovered over one of the symbols appearing in the array the pay table associated with that symbol is displayed.
16. The game playing device of claim 15, wherein the pay table comprises a scattered arrangement pay table and an adjacent arrangement pay table.

Fig. 1

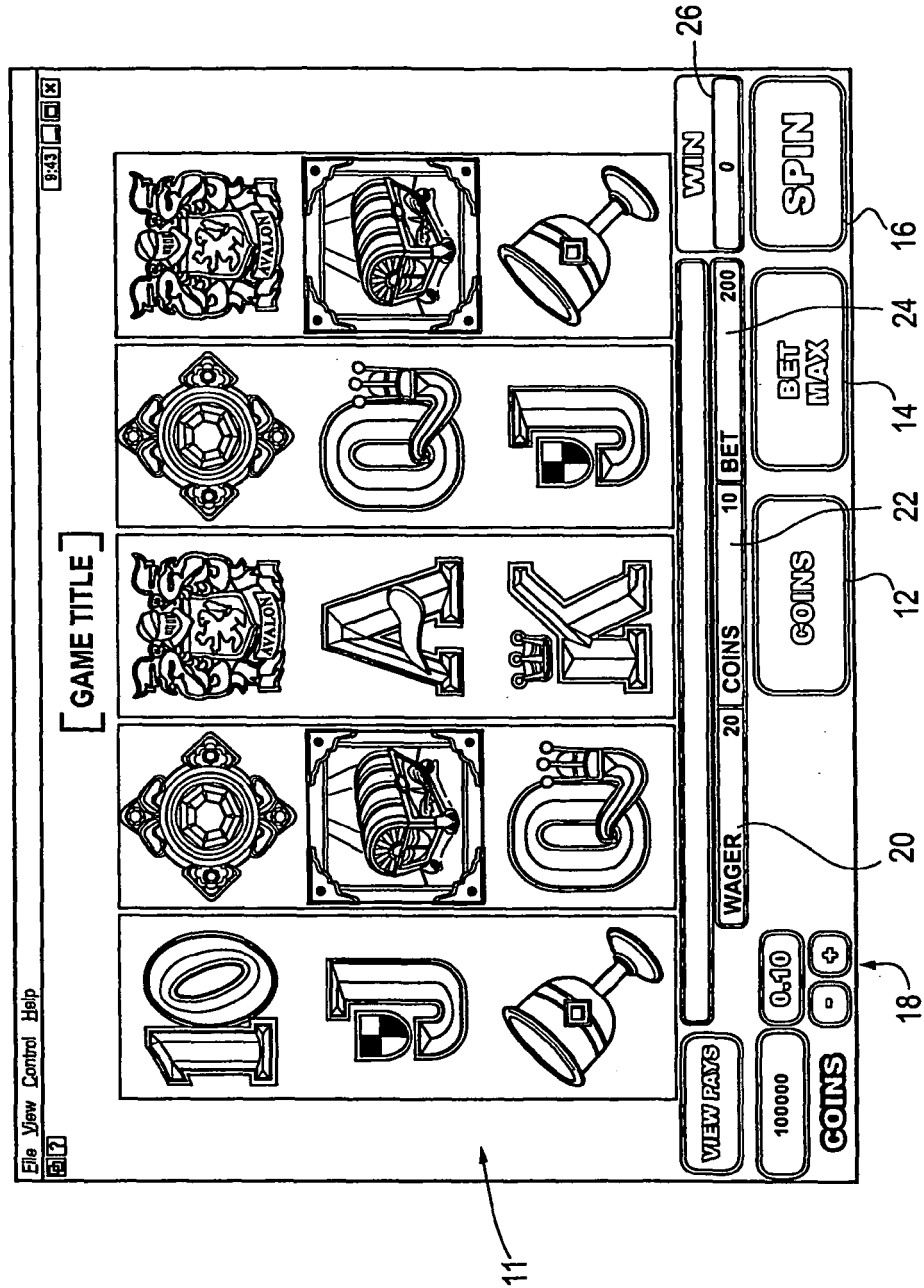


Fig. 2

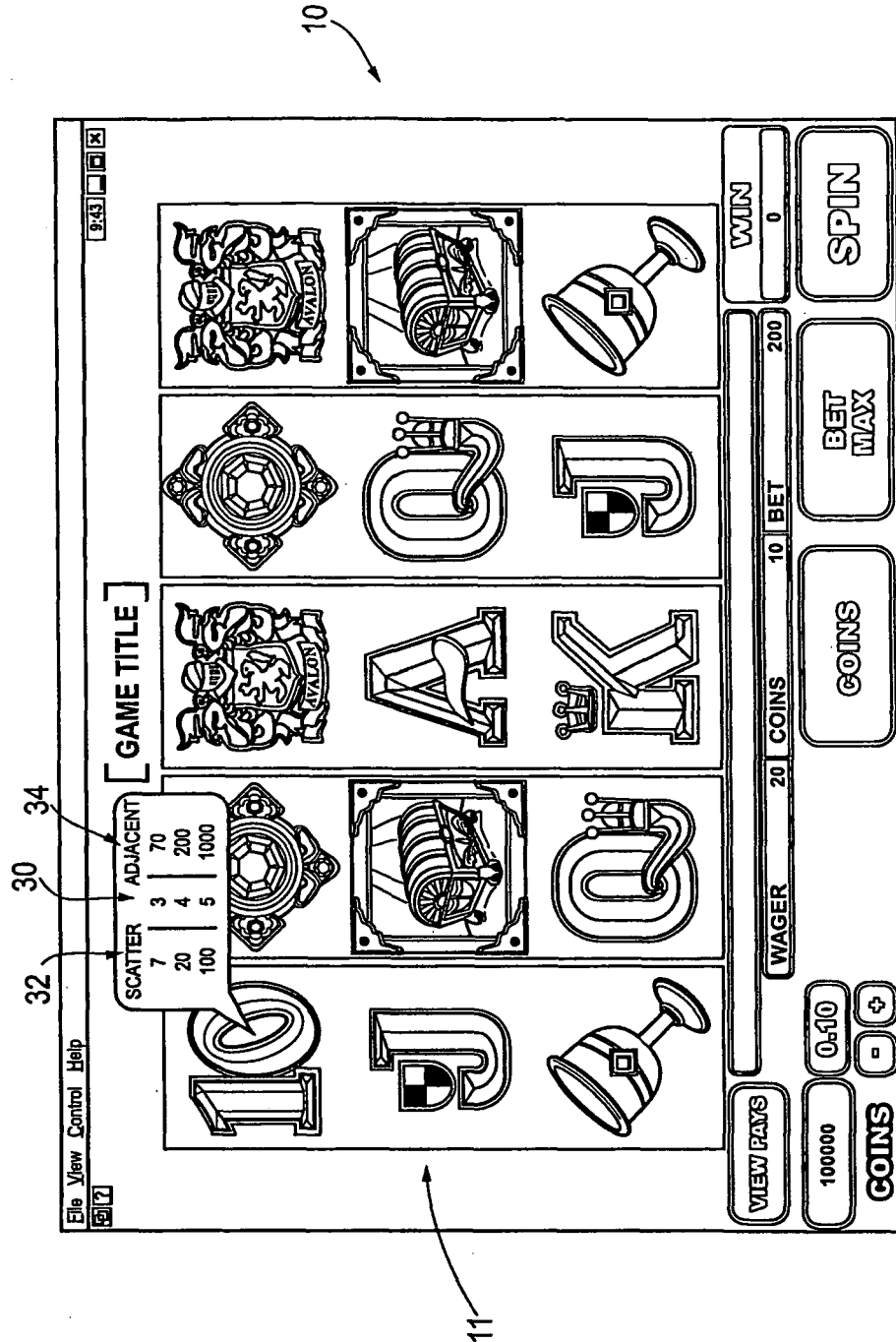


Fig. 3

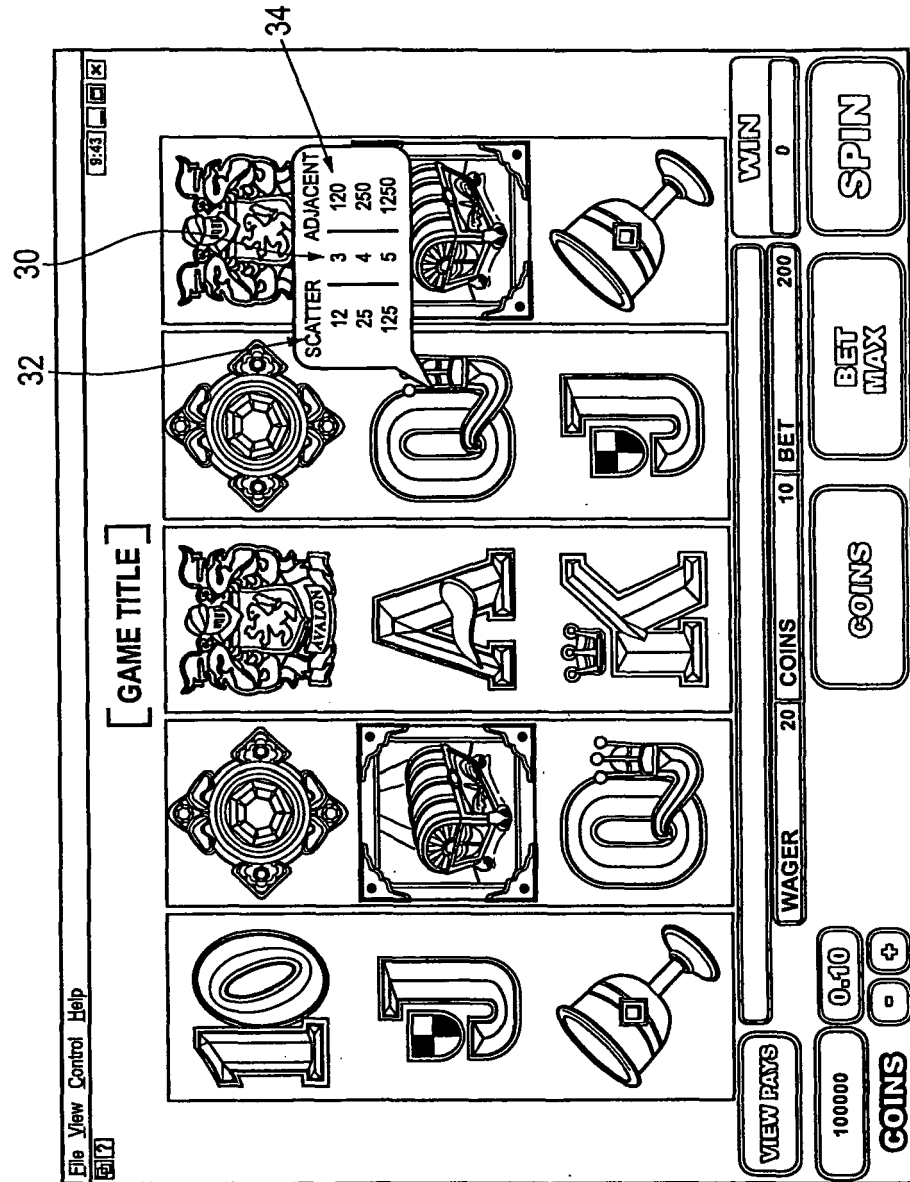


Fig. 4

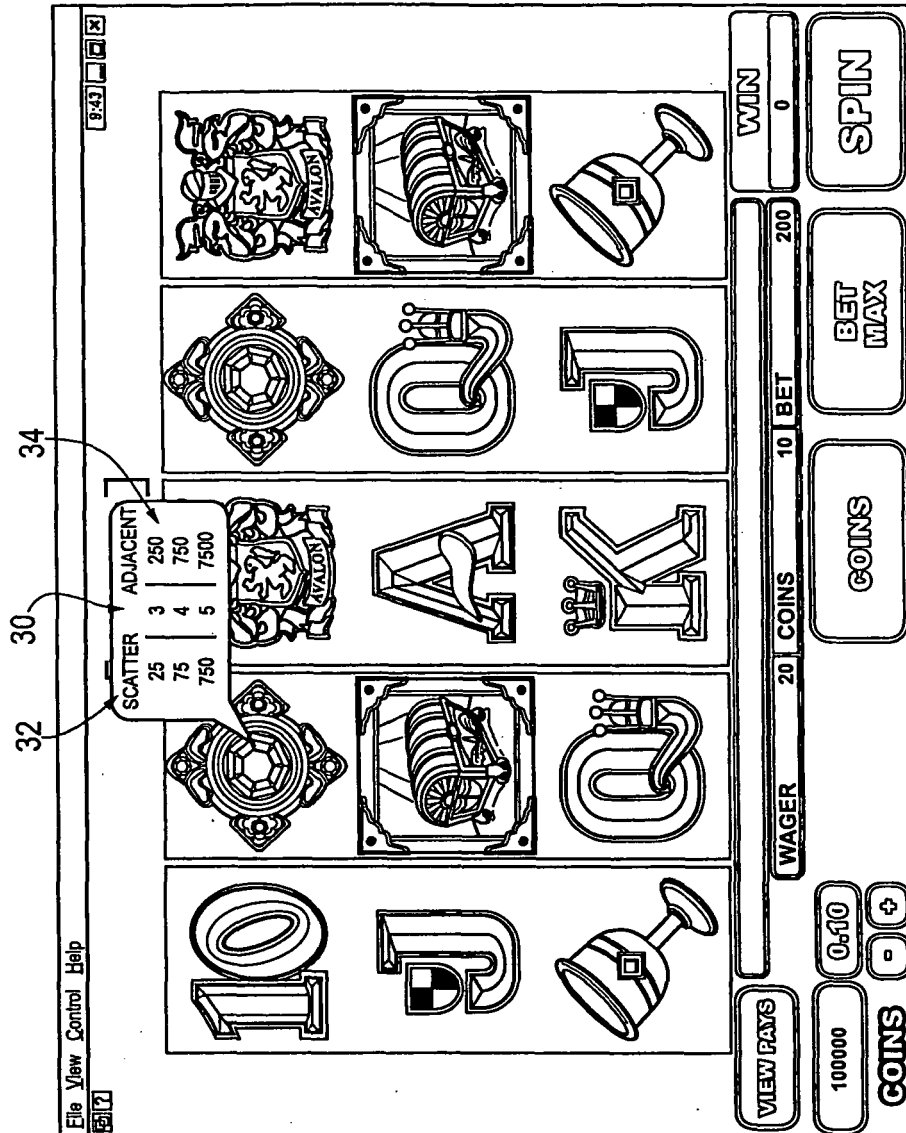


Fig. 5

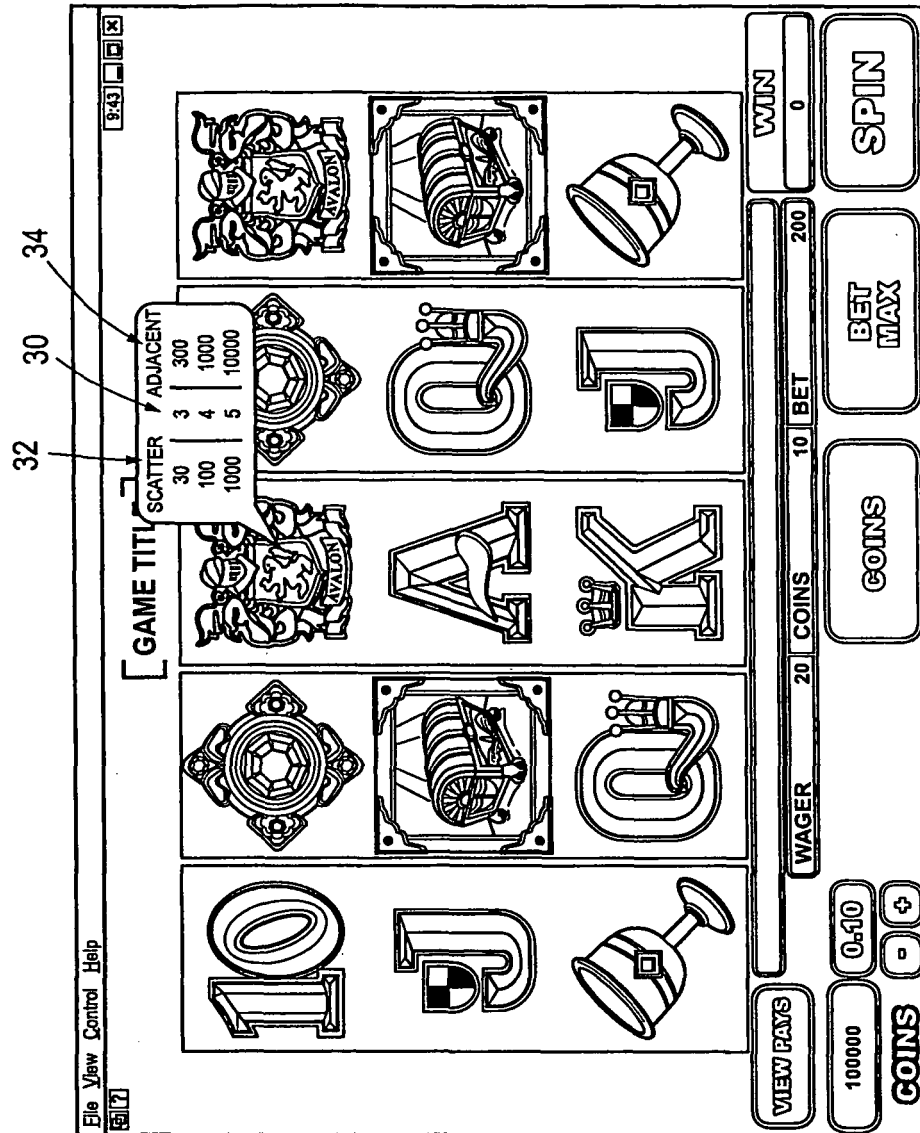


Fig. 6

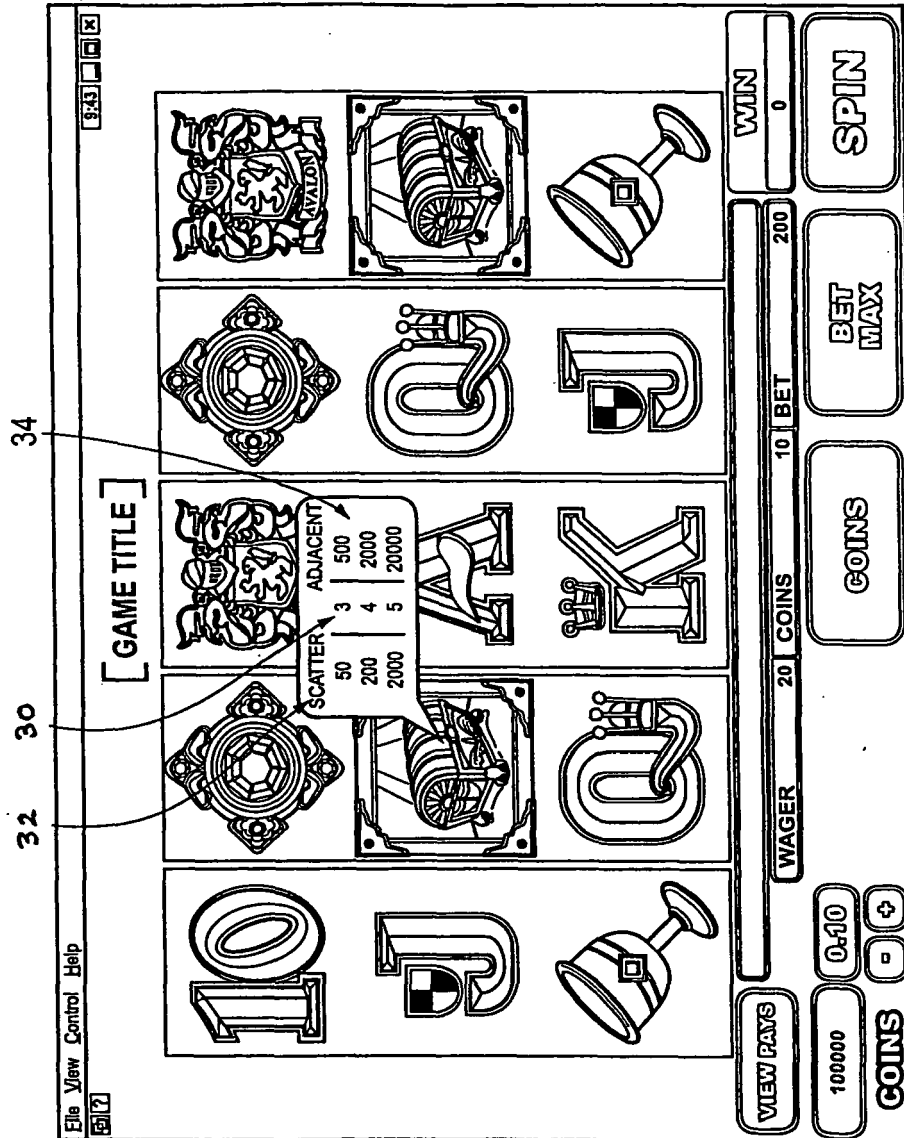


Fig. 7

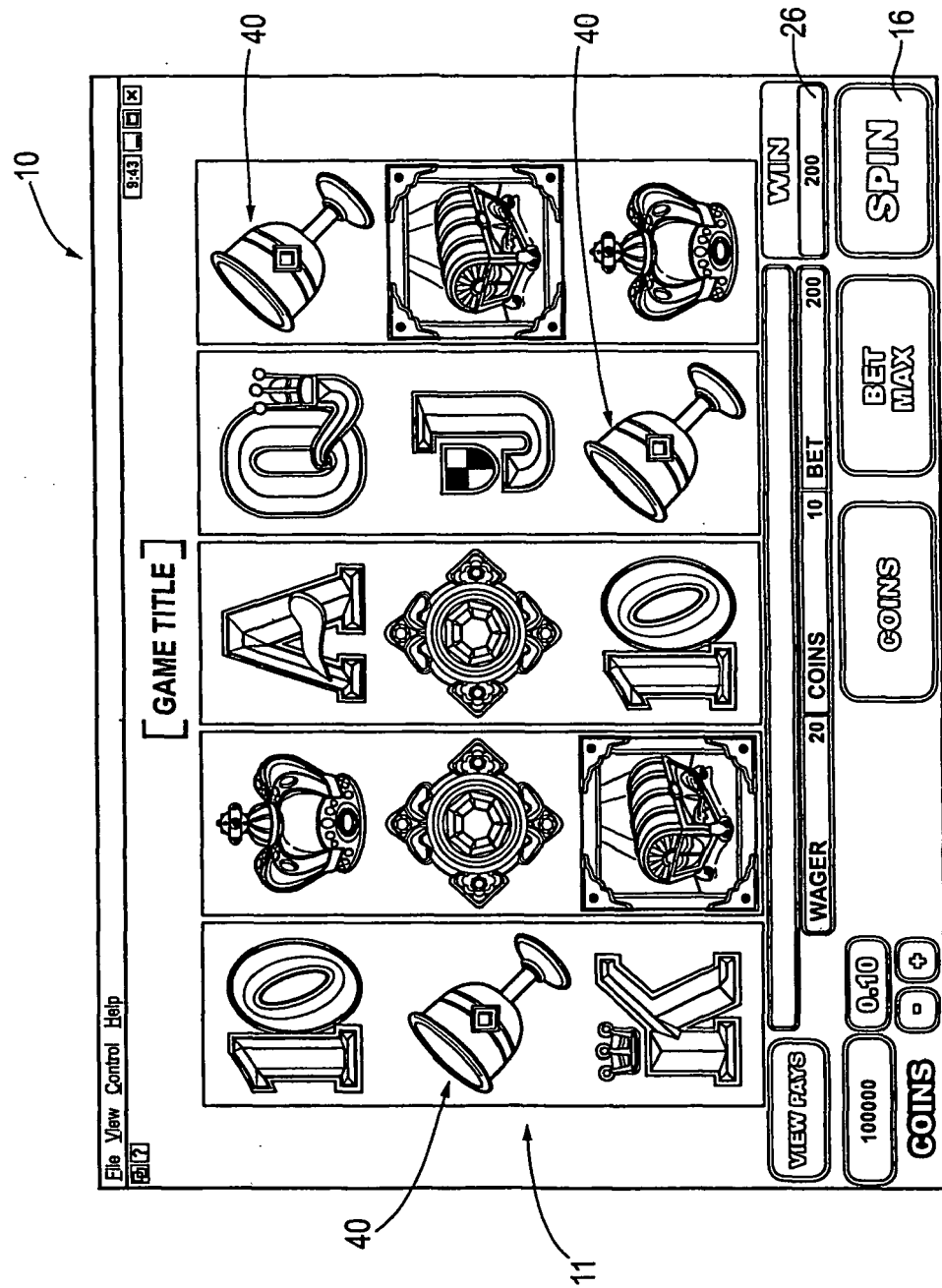


Fig. 8

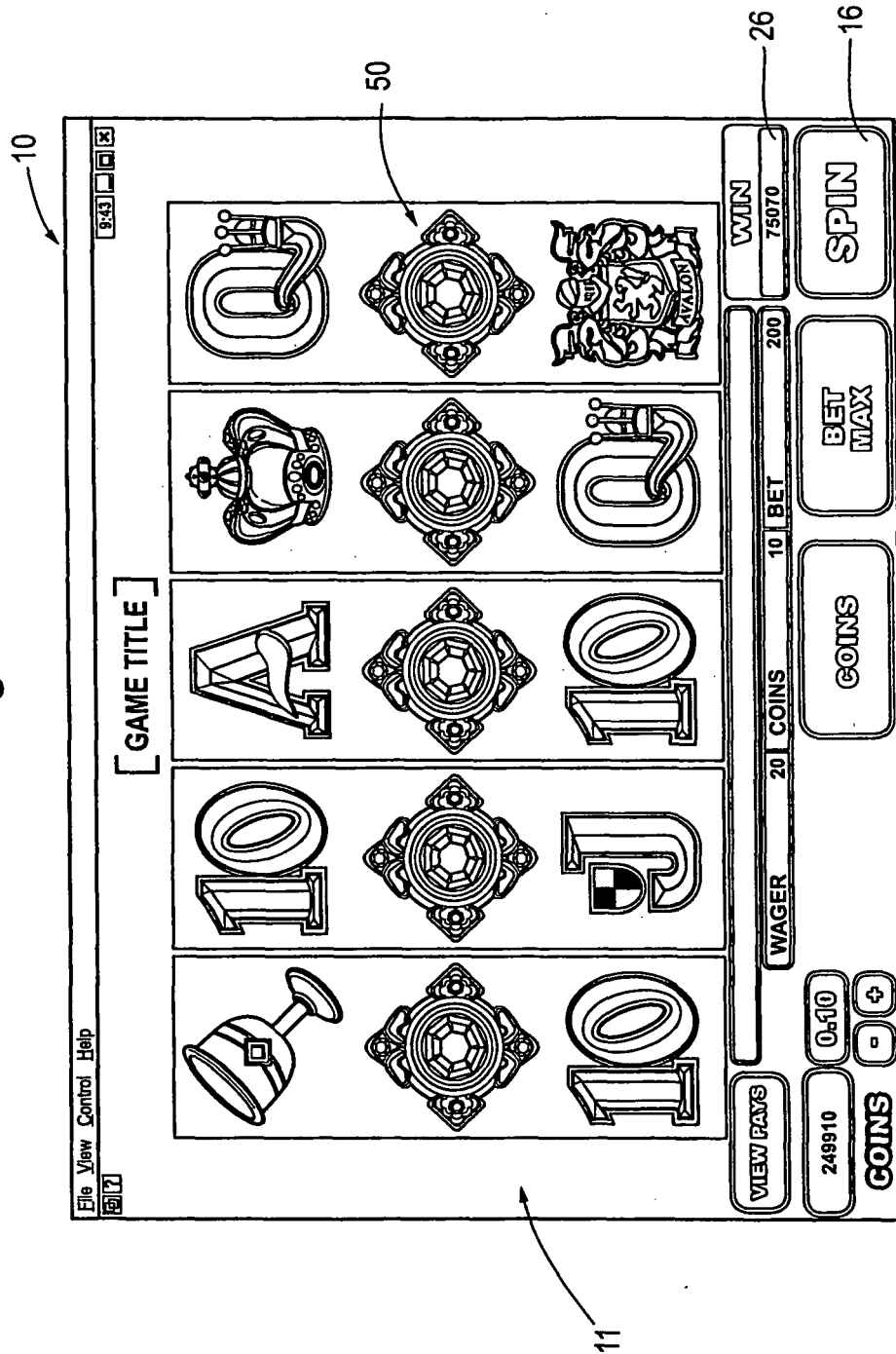


Fig. 9

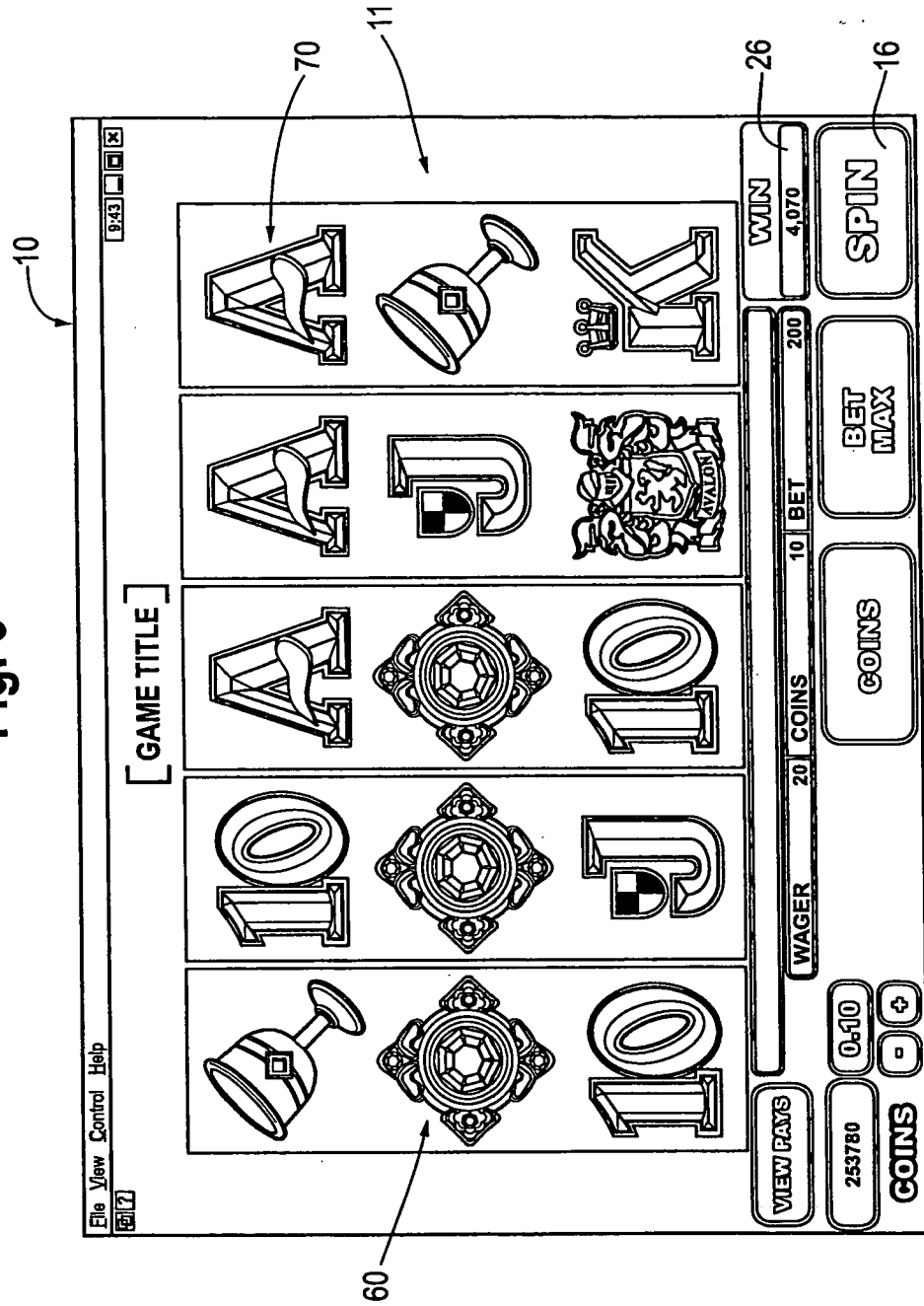


Fig. 10

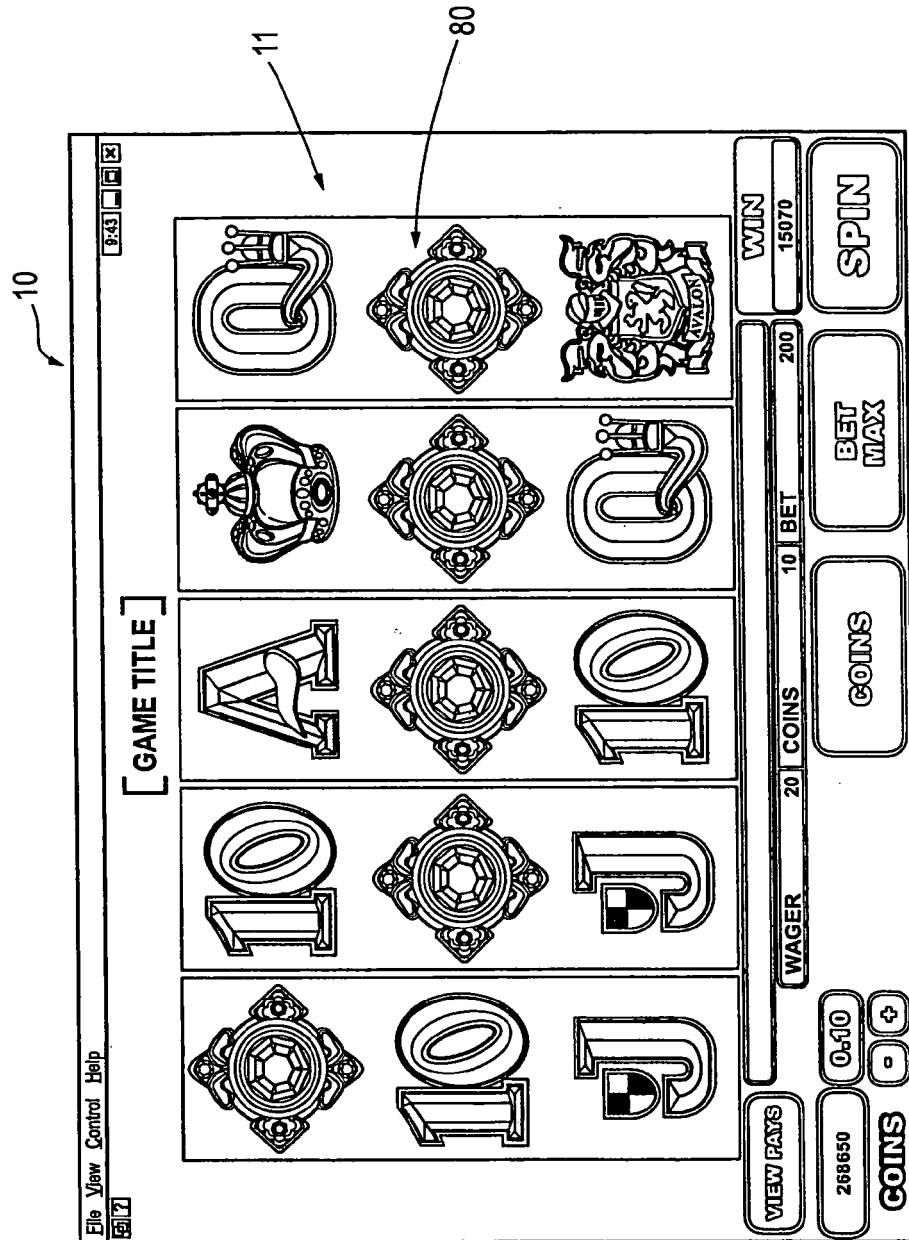
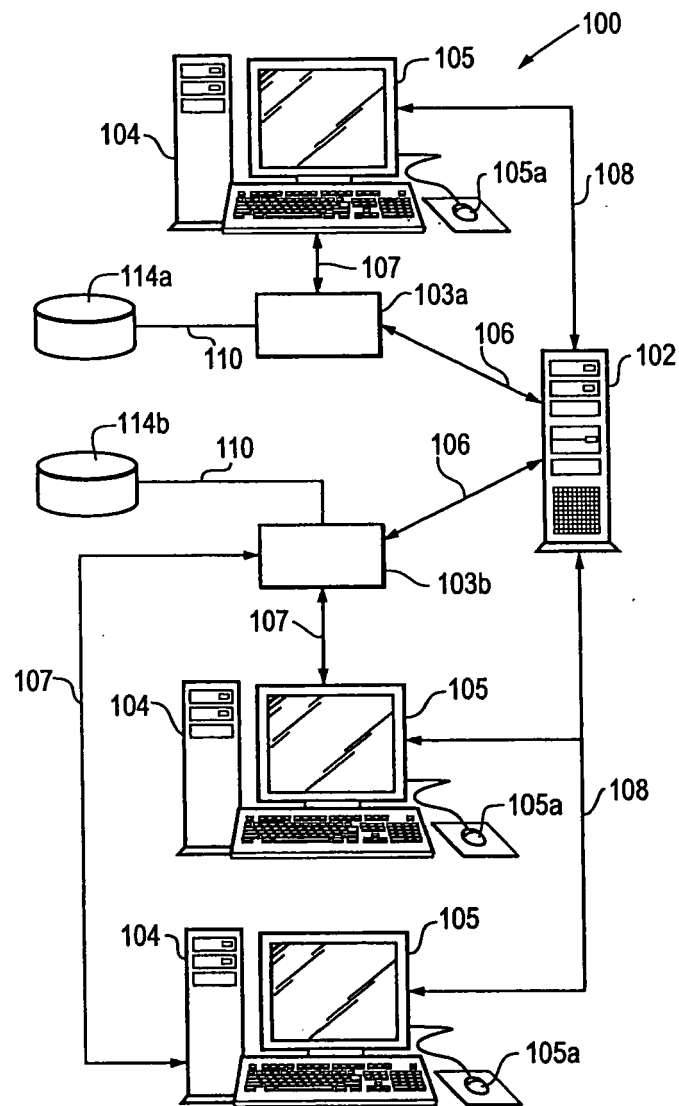


Fig. 11





EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 09 25 2801

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The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search The Hague		Date of completion of the search 8 April 2010	Examiner Diepstraten, Marc
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