



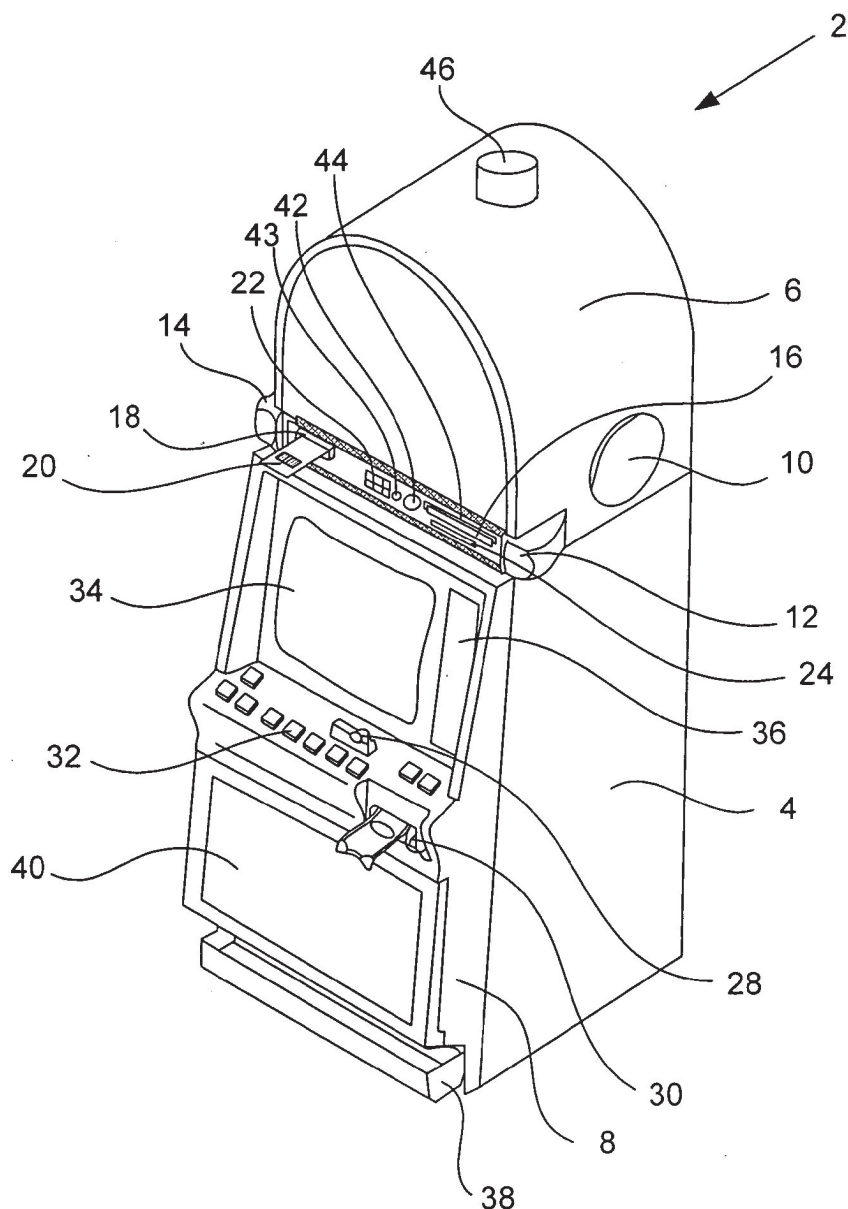
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(19) **United States**(12) **Patent Application Publication** (10) **Pub. No.: US 2005/0153768 A1**
Paulsen (43) **Pub. Date: Jul. 14, 2005**(54) **GAMING MACHINE BONUSING METHOD
UTILIZING A PLAYER TRACKING CARD****Publication Classification**(75) **Inventor: Craig Paulsen, Reno, NV (US)**(51) **Int. Cl.⁷ A63F 9/24**(52) **U.S. Cl. 463/16**

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BEYER WEAVER & THOMAS LLP**P.O. BOX 70250****OAKLAND, CA 94612-0250 (US)**(57) **ABSTRACT**

Methods and apparatus for providing a bonus on a gaming machine are disclosed. Specifically, a first bonus can be provided to a player on a gaming machine. During or for an outcome of the first bonus, an opportunity for a second bonus can be provided. Whether the opportunity has been met can be determined using player tracking information from a player tracking card inserted into the gaming machine. If the opportunity has been met, then a second bonus can be provided.

(73) **Assignee: IGT**(21) **Appl. No.: 10/754,395**(22) **Filed: Jan. 8, 2004**

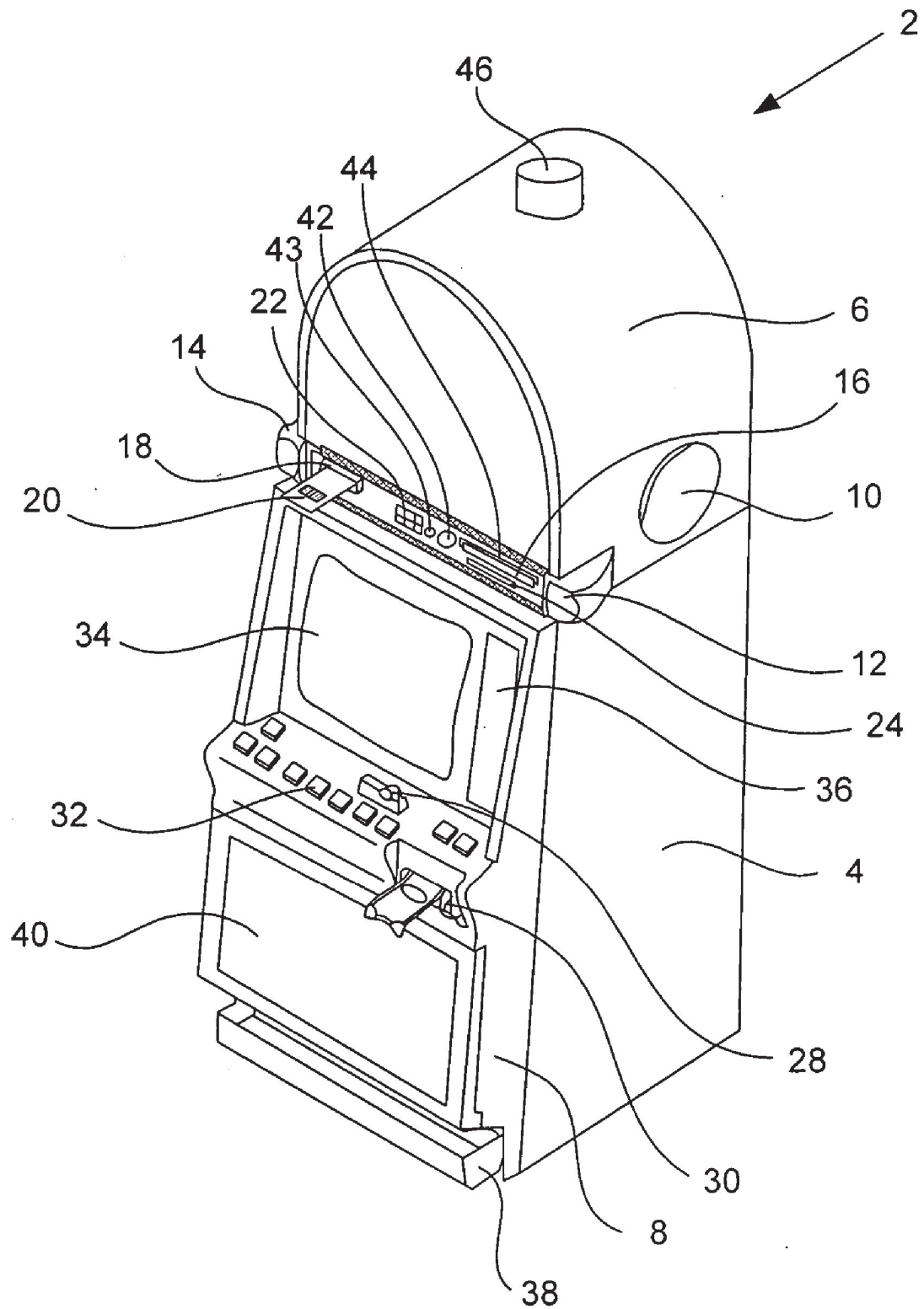


Figure 1A

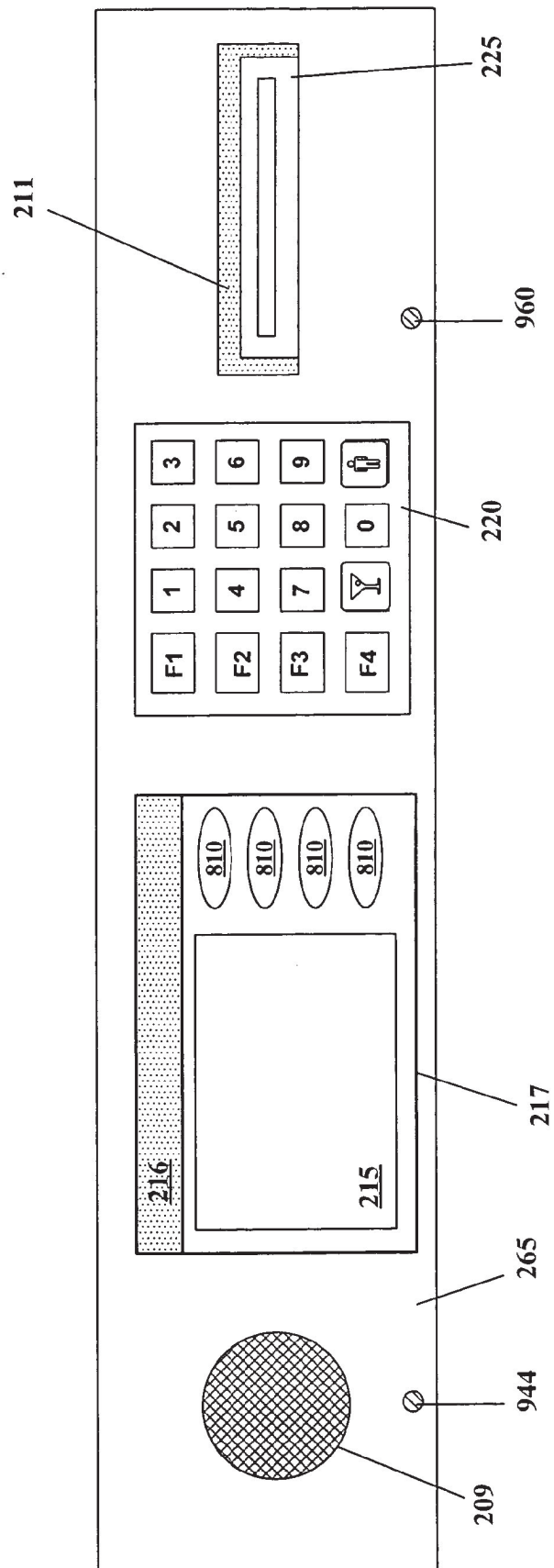
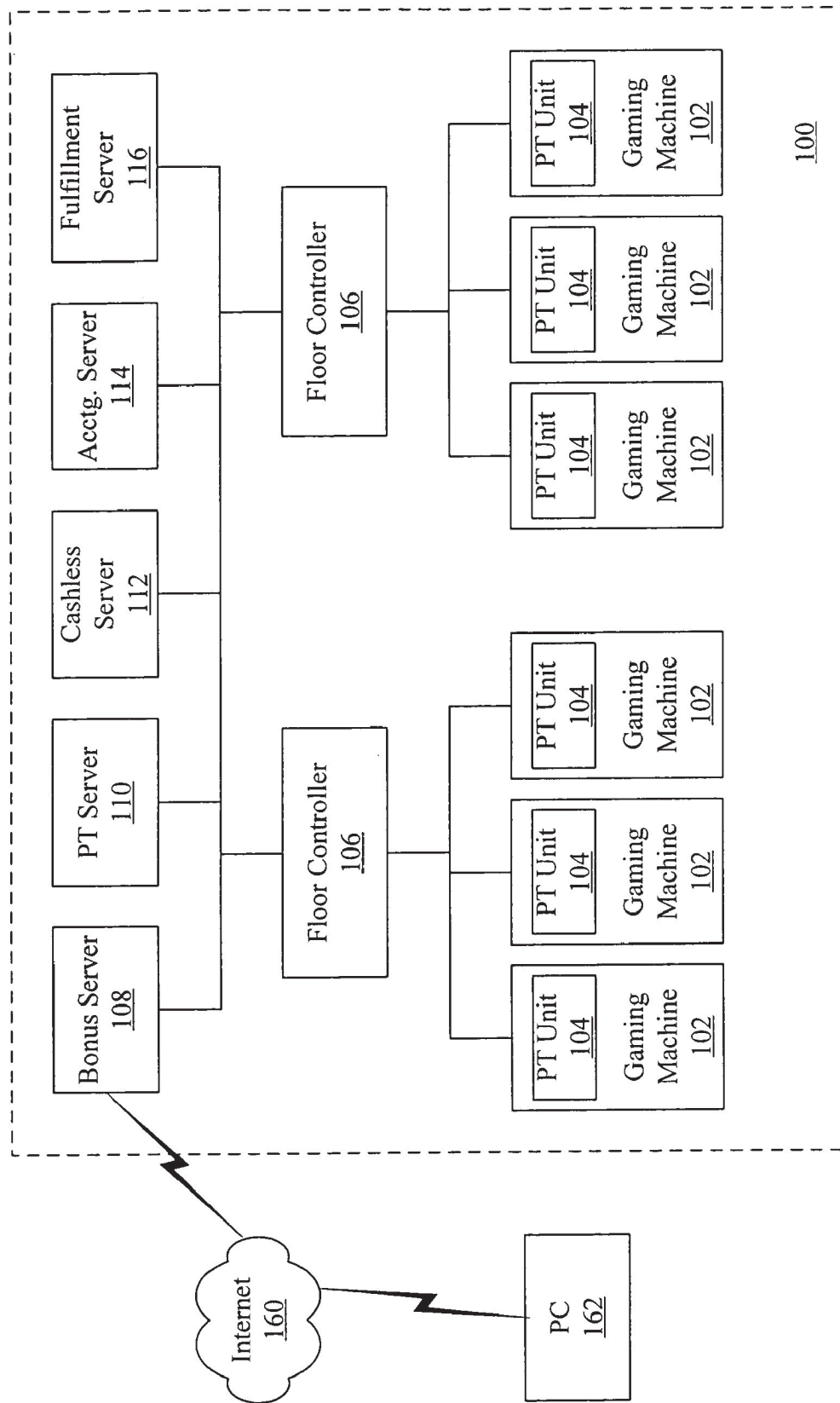


Figure 1B

Figure 2



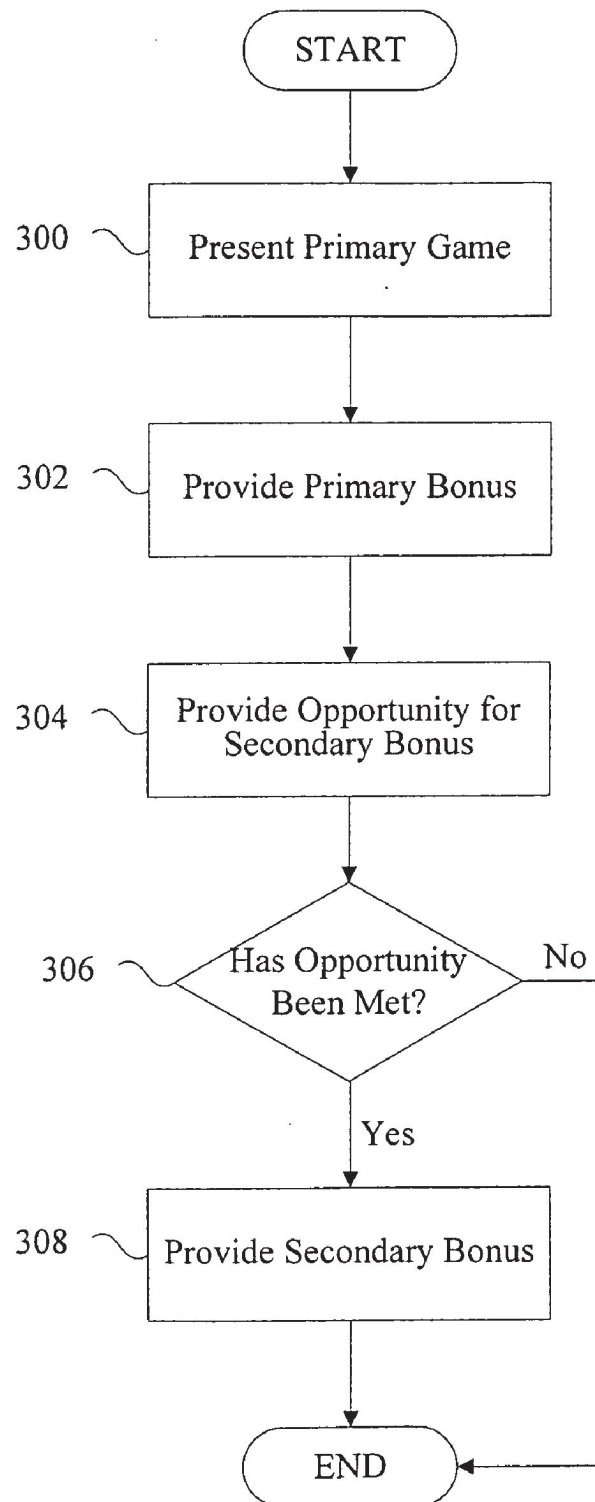


Figure 3A

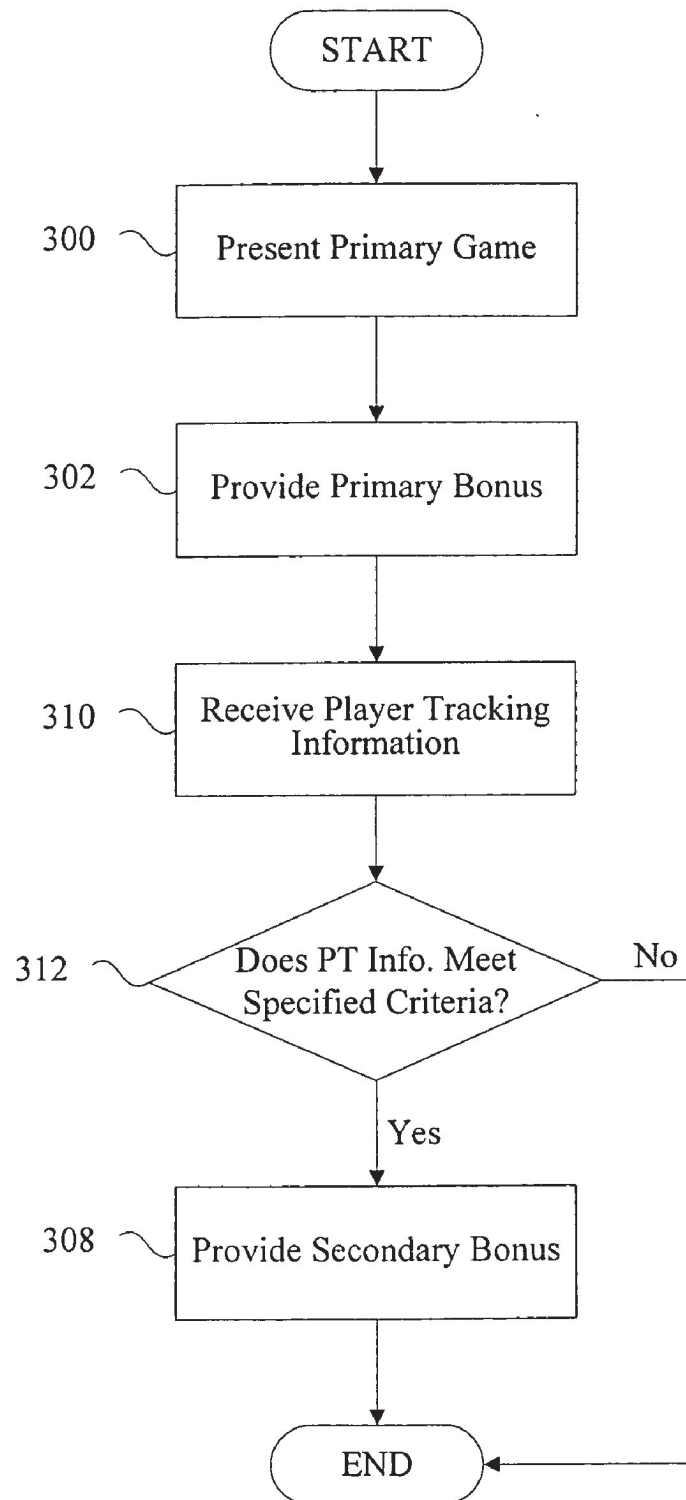


Figure 3B

GAMING MACHINE BONUSING METHOD UTILIZING A PLAYER TRACKING CARD

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is related to U.S. patent application Ser. No. _____ [Attorney Docket IGT P094/P-810], entitled "MATCHING BONUSING METHOD USING A PLAYER TRACKING CARD," filed on the same day as the instant application, by Nguyen et al., which is incorporated by reference herein in its entirety for all purposes.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] I. Field of the invention

[0003] The present invention relates to gaming machines. More particularly, the present invention relates to methods and apparatus for providing bonuses based on the use of a player-tracking account.

[0004] II. Background

[0005] There are a wide variety of associated devices that can be connected to a gaming machine such as a slot machine or video poker machine. Some examples of these devices are player tracking units, lights, ticket printers, card readers, speakers, bill validators, ticket readers, coin acceptors, display panels, key pads, coin hoppers and button pads. Many of these devices are built into the gaming machine or components associated with the gaming machine such as a top box which usually sits on top of the gaming machine. In addition, many of these devices can be integrated into a player tracking unit.

[0006] Typically, utilizing a master gaming controller, the gaming machine controls various combinations of devices that allow a player to play a game on the gaming machine and also encourage game play on the gaming machine. For example, a game played on a gaming machine usually requires a player to input money or indicia of credit into the gaming machine, indicate a wager amount, and initiate a game play. These steps require the gaming machine to control input devices, including bill validators and coin acceptors, to accept money into the gaming machine and recognize user inputs from devices, including touch screens and button pads, to determine the wager amount and initiate game play.

[0007] After game play has been initiated, the gaming machine determines a game outcome, presents the game outcome to the player and may dispense an award of some type depending on the outcome of the game. A game outcome presentation may utilize many different visual and audio components such as flashing lights, music, sounds and graphics. The visual and audio components of the game outcome presentation may be used to draw a player's attention to various game features and to heighten the player's interest in additional game play. Maintaining a game player's interest in game play, such as on a gaming machine or during other gaming activities, is an important consideration for an operator of a gaming establishment.

[0008] One related method of maintaining a game player's interest in game play includes offering player tracking programs through various casinos. Player tracking programs typically provide rewards, or "comps," to players in propor-

tion to the player's level of patronage (e.g., to the player's playing frequency and/or total amount of game plays at a given casino). Player tracking rewards may be free meals, free lodging and/or free entertainment. These rewards may help to sustain a game player's interest in additional game play during a visit to a gaming establishment and may entice a player to visit a gaming establishment to partake in various gaming activities.

[0009] Player tracking cards and player tracking programs have become a de facto marketing method at casinos. A casino can obtain valuable marketing information from player tracking programs and provide loyalty incentives to players. These loyalty incentives provide a way to maintain a player's interest in playing games at a particular casino once a player has initiated game play with a player tracking card.

[0010] Accordingly, it is desirable to encourage players to use their player tracking cards during game play. By encouraging such use, the traditional player tracking programs can be used even more effectively to maintain player interest in the games, and to provide gaming establishments with valuable information that allows them to better serve their players.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0011] The techniques of the present invention address the above need by providing methods, code and apparatus that provide bonusing to players who use player tracking cards. In particular, the invention accomplishes this by providing an opportunity for a secondary bonus during or for a primary bonus to players who use their player tracking cards, or the like, during game play.

[0012] One aspect of this invention pertains to a method of providing a bonus on a gaming machine. This method may be characterized by the following sequence of operations: providing a first bonus to a player on a gaming machine; providing an opportunity for a second bonus during the first bonus; determining if the opportunity has been met using player tracking information; and providing the second bonus if the opportunity has been met.

[0013] Another aspect of this invention pertains to a method for providing a bonus award on a gaming machine, which may be characterized by the following sequence of operations: providing a first bonus to a player on a gaming machine; receiving player tracking information associated with the player, wherein the player tracking information includes player status information; and providing a second bonus during or for an outcome of the first bonus if the player tracking information meets a specified criteria.

[0014] Still another aspect of the invention pertains to a gaming system for providing a bonus award on a gaming machine. Such gaming system may be characterized by the following features: logic for providing a primary game, wherein the primary game is a game of chance; logic for providing a first bonus, wherein the first bonus is provided based on player tracking information, a random event, or a combination thereof; and logic for providing a second bonus, wherein the second bonus is provided during or for the first bonus, and wherein the second bonus is based on player tracking information.

[0015] Yet another aspect of the invention pertains to computer program products including machine-readable

media on which are stored program instructions for implementing a portion of or an entire method as described above. Any of the methods of this invention may be represented, in whole or in part, as program instructions that can be provided on such computer readable media. In addition, the invention pertains to various combinations of data generated and/or used as described herein.

[0016] These and other features and advantages of the present invention will be described in more detail below with reference to the associated figures.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0017] **FIG. 1A** is a perspective drawing of a gaming machine having a top box and other devices.

[0018] **FIG. 1B** is a diagrammatic representation of a player tracking user interface.

[0019] **FIG. 2** is block diagram of a gaming system configured to present bonuses when a player tracking account is used.

[0020] **FIG. 3A** is a flow diagram depicting a process for providing a secondary bonus to a player using a player-tracking account.

[0021] **FIG. 3B** is a flow diagram depicting another process for providing a secondary bonus to a player using a player-tracking account.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF INVENTION

[0022] Various embodiments of the present invention pertain to technology for issuing secondary bonuses for or during primary bonuses on a gaming machine. The bonuses can be issued via cashless instruments (sometimes referred to as “cashless indicators” or “cashless indicia” herein), monetary prizes, and the like. Cashless instruments may be redeemed for various bonus awards such as services, merchandise, comps, additional game plays, etc.

[0023] Bonuses can include bonus games, credits, prizes (e.g. monetary, in-kind, or the like), multiples of base game winnings (e.g. two times primary game winnings for a primary bonus, or two times a primary game or primary bonus game winnings for a secondary bonus), and the like. In addition, multiples can be applied to any type of winning, such as credits, monetary prizes, in-kind prizes, and the like. Examples of in-kind prizes include passes to a show, dinner vouchers, and the like.

[0024] The concept of a bonus game is rather expansive. It sometimes involves an elaborate auxiliary game presented on a gaming machine. Other times it involves a simple random or semi-random issuance of bonus awards not directly connected to a primary game on the machine. In most instances, it supplements a “primary game” played on a gaming machine. The primary game is typically a slot game, video poker, keno, checkers, pachinko, or other game provided on the gaming machine.

[0025] The primary game has its own awards for winning outcomes. The bonuses supplement the “primary awards” issued for normal play of the primary game. Appropriate game logic determines when a primary bonus should be issued. Typically, this is triggered when a predetermined or random event (a “bonus event”) occurs. At that point, the

game logic instructs the machine to issue a cashless or other indicator of the primary bonus. The bonus event may be tied directly to some event in the primary game (e.g., a coin in or coin out event). It may also be tied to the quantity of play on the primary game. For example, after a certain length of playing time or a certain number of primary game awards, the probability of the primary bonus increases—or the primary bonus becomes certain.

[0026] As described in more detail below, a secondary bonus can be provided during or for a primary bonus. More specifically, the secondary bonus can be based on player tracking information. For instance, if the player tracking information indicates that the player is a preferred player, a member of a specified group, a recipient of a single win, or the like, a secondary bonus can be provided, such as a multiple of any awards provided for or during a primary bonus or a primary game. A single win can be obtained during previous game play, and can be in the form of a redeemable game, credits, or the like. In addition, players awarded multiples may win amounts that exceed the posted winnings on the gaming machine. By providing multiples of this type, preferred players, such as high rollers or members of exclusive gaming establishment clubs, can be afforded special treatment. Such special treatment can enhance the players’ gaming experience and can encourage further game play at the gaming establishment.

[0027] In some embodiments, a secondary bonus can be redeemable at a later time. For example, a cashless instrument can be issued as a secondary bonus, which can entitle a player to a secondary bonus game, credits, or the like, when the cashless instrument is inserted into a gaming machine during a subsequent gaming session. During the subsequent gaming session, this secondary bonus can be redeemed alone or in conjunction with a primary game or primary bonus. In other embodiments, the cashless instrument issued as a secondary bonus can be redeemable during a subsequent gaming session when the gaming machine of the subsequent gaming session provides a specific event such as an audio and/or visual prompt to insert such a cashless instrument to trigger a secondary bonus. It should be noted that in some embodiments, the value of a cashless instrument issued as a secondary bonus may not be apparent at face value. Instead, the secondary bonus may provide a mystery amount that is revealed when it is redeemed, a secondary bonus game that has an outcome that is not yet determined, or the like.

[0028] A primary game is typically “executed” on the gaming machine during normal play. The execution may be triggered mechanically (e.g., the pulling of a lever actuates mechanically driven slot reels), electrically, or by a combination of the two. Typically, game execution is divided into at least two stages or components: game outcome determination (lose, win \$A, win \$B, . . .) and game presentation. In modern gaming machines, game outcome determination typically employs an algorithm acting on or with a random number generator and a payable. It occurs transparently. In other words, the player does not see it happening. Presentation involves displaying a video sequence or a mechanical sequence or both. At the end of the game presentation, the game outcome is depicted to the player. During a slot game play sequence, for example, game logic first determines whether the player will lose or win and, if she wins, how much she wins. This is the game outcome determination.

Next the gaming machine displays spinning reels during the game presentation phase. Finally, the game logic directs the reels to settle at positions corresponding to the game outcome originally calculated. If a winning event resulted, the machine will issue a primary award as either cash, a cashless indicator of the primary award, or the like.

[0029] The issuance of a cashless instrument or other indicia of credit representing a bonus award may occur at any time during play of the primary game. In one embodiment described herein, the cashless instrument issues concurrently with the primary award, sometimes as part of the same ticket or other cashless indicator. In certain other embodiments, the cashless instrument is issued entirely separate from the primary award. The separation may be in time, place, and format. Hence the primary award might be a cash award dropped from a coin hopper, while the bonus award might occur via a cashless ticket issued from a separate dispenser on the machine (or even on a separate machine) before or during game presentation. Other permutations are possible.

[0030] Note that the concept of a gaming machine extends to home computers connected over a network (often the Internet) to game servers that provide the necessary game logic to control interaction with a remote game player. The remote game player uses his/her client computer to receive network data from the game server. The game server determines the game outcome and directs the game presentation displayed on the client computer. As part of the network game, a cashless indicia of bonus awards are generated at the client computer. These may be printed from a local computer onto 8½×11 inch paper or another printable medium.

[0031] As explained in more detail below, the cashless indicia of the bonus award may take many different forms. General examples include tokens, printed tickets, or coupons dispensed by machines, information written to a smart card, player tracking card, or other instrument controlled by the player (at least temporarily), and information written to a database or other repository of data pertaining to player.

[0032] In the case of redeemable instruments issued by gaming machines (or other apparatus associated with the game machine), the instrument may serve functions in addition to merely providing indicia of the bonus award. It may also include indicia of the primary game award, advertising, or other information. Both the indicia of the primary award and the indicia of the bonus award may be preprinted on blank instruments in the machine or one or both may be printed at issuance. In one embodiment, the indicia of the bonus award is preprinted on a portion of only certain instruments held in the machine prior to issuance. When a winning event occurs during the primary game, a new cashless instrument is printed to show the primary game award. If the instrument printed has, by chance, a bonus award preprinted thereon, the player wins both a primary game award and a bonus award, as indicated on the dispensed instrument. In one specific case, the bonus game award is indicated on one side of the instrument and the primary game award (or other information) is printed on the other side. A secondary bonus award can also be indicated on the cashless instrument.

[0033] In another embodiment, the printed instruments are issued as duplicates, one showing one or more bonus awards and the other showing other information such as a primary

game award. Alternatively, a single instrument is issued, but that instrument has two portions that can be separated. One portion may be affixed to the other by perforations, adhesion, etc. In a specific embodiment, the two portions can be peeled apart from one another.

[0034] In still other embodiments, the primary bonus can be used to play a "secondary bonus game" such as a bingo game, a scratch away lottery type game, etc. Or the cashless indicators of the primary bonus game may have different formats (e.g., colors) and multiple of these formats must be collected by a player in order to "win" the secondary bonus game. Collecting such cashless indicators, which are also referred to as primary or secondary bonus game outcomes, can be displayed as bonus award progress, as described in more detail below.

[0035] According to various embodiments of the present invention, gaming machines may include many different combinations of award dispensers, play interfaces, bill validators, cashless indicia validators, etc. A gaming machine may have a single dispenser for awards from both the primary game and bonus games. Alternatively, the machine may include two or more award dispensers. In some embodiments, each of these dispensers can dispense cashless indicia. One of them can be dedicated to issuing bonus awards and the other to issuing primary game awards. In other embodiments, one dispenser can be a cash dispenser and the other a cashless dispenser. In some examples, the bonus awards can be issued by the cashless dispenser. The machine may also have a receptacle for accepting non-cash indicia such as the cashless instruments issued in accordance with this invention. Such receptacles allow the machine to credit players based on previously issued bonus awards or previously issued primary game awards.

[0036] The gaming machine may be a stand-alone machine or it may be connected to a server or other computational machine. It may also be connected to other gaming machines via a network. The network may allow communication by any of a number of suitable protocols, standard, proprietary, etc. If the machine is connected to a server, that server may (or may not) communicate information associated with the bonus awards. Such information includes directions to award bonuses, directions to return player information to update databases of bonus awards in the server, etc. In some embodiments, the gaming machine itself does not control the game outcome and/or the game presentation. The gaming machine, in such cases, is merely a terminal, a client computer, etc. And another machine contains the game logic for providing the outcome and/or presentation.

[0037] Generally, a master gaming controller (described below) and associated software or other logic instructions provide "primary game logic" and "bonus game logic." The primary game logic is responsible for determining a game outcome and instructing the gaming machine to give a game presentation consistent with that outcome. The bonus game logic is responsible for determining a bonus game outcome in response to one or more user inputs during a primary or secondary bonus game. In simple embodiments, this involves nothing more than a determination that a bonus award should be given randomly and then instructing the printer or other mechanism to issue the cashless or other indicia of the bonus award. In other embodiments, the bonus

game logic instructs the gaming machine to give a sophisticated bonus game presentation. In some embodiments, the bonus game logic is coupled to the primary game logic in a manner allowing the bonus game logic to detect events in the primary game that trigger issuance of the cashless indicia of bonus awards.

[0038] A sample gaming machine suitable for use with this invention is depicted in **FIG. 1**. As shown, a video gaming machine **2** includes a main cabinet **4**, which generally surrounds the machine interior (not shown) and is viewable by users. The main cabinet includes a main door **8** on the front of the machine, which opens to provide access to the interior of the machine. Attached to the main door are player-input switches or buttons **32**, a coin acceptor **28**, and a bill validator **30**, a coin tray **38**, and a belly glass **40**. Viewable through the main door is a video display monitor **34** and an information panel **36**. The display monitor **34** will typically be a cathode ray tube, high resolution flat-panel LCD, or other conventional electronically controlled video monitor. The information panel **36** may be a back-lit, silk screened glass panel with lettering to indicate general game information including, for example, the maximum coin value. The bill validator **30**, player-input switches **32**, video display monitor **34**, and information panel are devices used to play a game on the game machine **2**. The devices are controlled by circuitry (not shown) housed inside the main cabinet **4** of the machine **2**. Many possible games, including traditional slot games, video slot games, video poker, video lottery, video blackjack, video pachinko, video keno, general video card games and video games of chance may be provided with gaming machines of this invention.

[0039] The gaming machine **2** includes a top box **6**, which sits on top of the main cabinet **4**. The top box **6** houses a number of devices, which may be used to add features to a game being played on the gaming machine **2**, including speakers **10**, **12**, **14**, a ticket printer **18**, such as a thermal printer, which may print bar-coded tickets **20**, a key pad **22** for entering player tracking information, a vacuum fluorescent display **16** for displaying player tracking information, a card reader **24** for entering a magnetic striped card containing player tracking information. Further, the top box **6** may house different or additional devices than those shown in **FIG. 1**. For example, the top box may contain a bonus wheel or a back-lit silk screened panel which may be used to add bonus features to the game being played on the gaming machine. During a game, these devices are controlled and powered, in part, by circuitry (not shown) housed within the main cabinet **4** of the machine **2**. In some embodiments, a player tracking unit can be located at the base of top box **6**, as described in more detail below with regard to **FIG. 1B**.

[0040] Understand that gaming machine **2** is but one example from a wide range of gaming machine designs on which the present invention may be implemented. For example, not all suitable gaming machines have top boxes. Further, some gaming machines have two or more game displays—mechanical and/or video. And, some gaming machines are designed for bar counters and have displays that face upwards. Such machines may not include such features as bill validators, coin acceptors and coin trays. Instead, they may have only ticket readers, card readers and ticket dispensers. Those of skill in the art will understand

that the present invention, as described below, can be deployed on most any gaming machine now available or hereafter developed.

[0041] Further, a game may be generated in a host computer and displayed on a remote terminal or a remote gaming device. The remote gaming device may be connected to the host computer via a network of some type such as a local area network, a wide area network, an intranet or the Internet. The remote gaming device may be a portable gaming device such as a cell phone, a personal digital assistant, and a wireless game player. Those of skill in the art will understand that the present invention, as described below, can be deployed on most any gaming machine now available or hereafter developed. For a more detailed description of cashless systems, see U.S. patent application Ser. No. 10/114,006, (IGT P057/P-485), filed on Mar. 29, 2002, by Paulsen et al., and entitled “CASHLESS BONUS-ING FOR GAMING MACHINES,” which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety for all purposes.

[0042] **FIG. 1B** is a diagrammatic representation of one embodiment of a user interface for a player tracking unit. As described above with regard to **FIG. 1A**, a player tracking unit can be located at the base of a top box **6** on a gaming machine **2** (**FIG. 1A**) in some applications. In the present embodiment, the player tracking user interface can include interfaces with player tracking devices such as speaker **209**, headphone jack **944**, display **215**, bezel **217**, light panel **216**, buttons **810**, keypad **220**, card reader **225**, light panel **211**, proximity sensor **960**, and the like. These player tracking devices can be mounted to or with respect to a face plate (not shown), which is covered with a decorative skin **265**.

[0043] Display **215** may be an LED, LCD, vacuum fluorescent, plasma display screen, touch screen, touch pad, or any other type of display technology. In one application, video clips may be presented on the display **215** and audio clips may be projected through the speakers **209** or a player may be able to listen to the audio clips via headphones connected to a headphone jack **944**. In addition to video clips, various messages, graphics, text, and the like, can be displayed on display **215**. Furthermore, speakers **209** and headphone jack **944** can project various audio signals.

[0044] Bezel **217** can be located adjacent to display **215**. As shown, bezel **217** can surround display **215** and can include a light panel **216** region and openings for buttons **810**. The light panel **216** region may be made of a translucent or transparent material that allows light from LEDs or other light sources to be visible through the light panel **216** region. Although a bezel is shown surrounding display **215**, other configurations can be included within the scope of the present invention, such as when a light panel **216** is located adjacent to display **215** without a bezel, or when a light panel **216** is located adjacent to one or more sides of the display **215**.

[0045] As described above, card reader **225** can be used to receive player tracking cards, and the like. A light panel **211** region can be located adjacent to the card reader. For example, the light panel region **211** can surround card reader **225** or can be located with respect one or more sides of the card reader. As shown, the light panel **211** region is adjacent to three sides of the card reader **225**. The light panel **211** region may be made of a translucent or transparent material that allows light from LEDs or other light sources to be

visible through the light panel **211** region. In some embodiments, light panel **211** can be omitted.

[0046] Various input devices can be used to make selections. For instance, a touch screen or touch pad can be used to detect input selections. Selections also may be made using input buttons **810** or key pad **220**. Any combination of these input devices can be used. For instance, if a touch screen is used, input buttons **810** and keypad **220** may be omitted. However, in other applications, even if a touch screen is used, more than one of the input devices can be used, thereby appealing to a wider array of players that may prefer to use different input devices.

[0047] A player tracking interface can be used to allow players to participate in a player tracking program associated with a gaming establishment. In general, player tracking programs may be applied to any game of chance offered at a gaming establishment. In particular, player tracking programs are very popular with players of mechanical slot gaming machines and video slot gaming machines. In a gaming machine, a player tracking program is implemented using a player tracking unit installed in the gaming machine and in communication with a remote player tracking server. Player tracking units are usually manufactured as an after-market device separate from the gaming machine. Many different companies manufacture player tracking units as part of player tracking/accounting systems. These player tracking/accounting systems are used in most casinos. Most casinos utilize only one type of player tracking system (i.e. from one manufacturer) while the type of player tracking system varies from casino to casino.

[0048] Typically, when a game player wants to play a game on a gaming machine and utilize the player tracking services available through the player tracking unit, a game player inserts a player tracking card, such as a magnetic striped card, into a card reader located on a player tracking unit of a gaming machine. After the magnetic striped card has been so inserted, the player tracking unit may detect this event and receive certain identification information contained on the card. For example, a player's name, address, and player tracking account number encoded on the magnetic striped card, may be received by the player tracking unit. In general, a player must provide identification information of some type to utilize player tracking services available on a gaming machine. For current player tracking programs, the most common approach for providing identification information is to issue a magnetic-striped card storing the necessary identification information to each player that wishes to participate in a given player tracking program. However, various instruments can be used to provide identification information. Such instruments can include a smart card, Java card, memory stick, wireless device, or the like. Examples of wireless devices include PDAs, cell phones, Bluetooth-related items, RFID devices, etc. In some instances, a wearable RFID "club card" can automatically provide player tracking information to a gaming machine. In other instances, a player can input player tracking identification information into a cell phone to provide player tracking information to a gaming machine.

[0049] During game play on the gaming machine, the player tracking unit may poll the gaming machine for game play information such as how much money the player has wagered on each game, the time when each game was

initiated, and the location of the gaming machine. The game play information is sent by the player tracking unit to a player tracking server. While a player tracking card is inserted in the card reader, the player tracking server may use the game play information provided by the player tracking unit to generate player tracking points and add the points to a player tracking account identified by the player tracking card. In addition, from the game play information stored in a player's player tracking account, members of special groups can be identified so that gaming establishments can provide additional services to these players. The player tracking points generated by the player tracking server are stored in a memory of some type on the player tracking server. For more examples of player tracking interfaces and units, see U.S. patent application Ser. No. _____, (IGT P094/P-810), by Nguyen et al., and entitled "MATCHING BONUSING METHOD USING A PLAYER TRACKING CARD," which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety for all purposes.

[0050] Turning now to **FIG. 2**, shown is a block diagram of one embodiment of a gaming system configured to present bonuses based on access to a player tracking account. More particularly, gaming system **100** can include gaming machines **102**, floor controllers **106**, and various servers **108**, **110**, **112**, **114**, and **116**, coupled by a network that can include an Internet, wired, wireless, or other connection. Furthermore, gaming system **100** can be connected to any number of LANs, WANs, and/or the Internet. Gaming system **100** can be a gaming establishment such as a casino, group of affiliated casinos, or the like.

[0051] Gaming machines **102** are coupled to servers **108**, **110**, **112**, **114**, and **116** through floor controllers **106**. Various servers such as bonus server **108**, player tracking server **110**, cashless server **112**, accounting server **114**, and fulfillment server **116** can be included in gaming system **100**. In some embodiments, one or more of the servers can be combined or omitted. Similarly, additional servers can be included depending on the application.

[0052] As shown, gaming machines **102** can include player tracking units **104**. These player tracking units can be used to communicate player tracking information to and from player tracking server **120**. Player tracking server **120** stores player tracking account information, which can include player identification, records including the number of player tracking points previously accumulated by a player, records including the rewards or awards won by the player, player preferences, and the like. In some embodiments, the player account information may not specify the identity of a player holding the account, such as when anonymous cards are distributed to a tour group. In addition, the player account information can be associated with a virtual player tracking card, which specifies a player account number that allows a person to access a player tracking account over an Internet connection via a terminal such as a personal computer, or the like. Bonus server **108** can use player tracking information stored on player tracking server **120** to determine if a primary or secondary bonus should be provided to a player, and if so, what type and level of bonus should be provided.

[0053] Other servers such as cashless server **112**, accounting server **114**, and fulfillment server **116** can also be included in gaming system **100**. For instance, cashless server

112 can provide cashless services, such as validating printed ticket vouchers used as indicia of credit. Furthermore, accounting server 114 can keep records of a player's casino financial account, and fulfillment server 116 can enable the fulfillment of in-kind prizes as part of a player's redemption of a prize or following an award of an in-kind prize.

[0054] In the present embodiment, gaming system 100 can be connected to computers or other machines, such as those engaged in Internet gaming. For instance, any number of personal computers 162 can be connected to gaming system 100 through an Internet 160 connection. As shown, the Internet connection can be coupled to one or more servers in system 100, thereby allowing access to a plurality or all of the servers.

[0055] Although a particular configuration of servers and gaming machines is shown in gaming system 100, it should be recognized that modifications can be made within the scope of the present invention. For instance, although three gaming machines 102 are shown coupled to each of floor controllers 106, it should be recognized that any number of gaming machines 102 and any number of floor controllers 106 can be included. Furthermore, various servers shown can be combined or omitted. Additional servers can also be included within the scope of the present invention. For instance, additional bonus servers can be added, especially where separate bonus servers are used to provide primary and secondary bonuses. In addition, Internet connection 160 can join any number of personal computers 162 to gaming system 100 through any of the servers 108, 110, 112, 114, and 116 or any other gaming system 100 component.

[0056] With reference to FIG. 3A, shown is a flow diagram depicting one embodiment of a process for providing a secondary bonus to a player using a player tracking account. More particularly, a primary game can be presented on a gaming machine at 300. As described above, a primary game is typically executed on the gaming machine during normal play and has its own awards for winning outcomes. Next, at 302, a primary bonus can be provided. As described above, this primary bonus can be a bonus game, bonus award, multiple (e.g. 4x the primary game award), and the like. This primary bonus can be based on the amount of play during a primary game, a random event, etc.

[0057] At 304, during the primary bonus, an opportunity can be provided for a secondary bonus. This opportunity can be a passive or active opportunity. For instance, a passive opportunity can include providing a player with a bonus game, bonus award, multiple, or the like, if the player tracking information associated with a player includes specified information. This specified information can be indicated by use of a player tracking card, a smart card, Java card, memory stick, wireless device, or the like. Examples of wireless devices include PDAs, cell phones, Bluetooth-related items, RFID devices, etc. In some instances, a wearable RFID "club card" can automatically provide player tracking information to the gaming machine. In other instances, a player can input player tracking identification information into a cell phone to provide player tracking information to the gaming machine.

[0058] The specified information can indicate that the player is a preferred player, a member of a special group, a single win recipient, or the like. One example of a preferred player or a member of a special group includes a member of

a platinum players club, which indicates that the player is associated with a particular level of patronage at the gaming establishment. Another example includes members of a group who have participated in a particular frequency or level of patronage within a specified time period. Yet another example includes special guests of the gaming establishment, members of a particular tour group or conference group, or the like. The player tracking information used to determine whether a player is eligible for a secondary bonus can be stored on player tracking server 110 (FIG. 2).

[0059] An active opportunity can include providing a player with a bonus game, bonus award, multiple, or the like, if the player participates in a specified activity while the opportunity is offered. In one embodiment, an opportunity for a secondary bonus can be offered based on player tracking information, as described above with regard to passive opportunities, and the opportunity can be met if the player engages in a specified activity. For instance, once it is determined that a player is eligible for an opportunity, the gaming machine can provide a specified event, such as an audio and/or visual message to insert a cashless instrument into the gaming machine, hit a particular button or buttons on the gaming machine, or the like, in order to activate the secondary bonus. For a more detailed description of cashless instruments that can be used with the present embodiment, see U.S. patent application Ser. No. 10/114,006, (IGT P057/P-485), filed on Mar. 29, 2002, by Paulsen et al., and entitled "CASHLESS BONUSING FOR GAMING MACHINES," which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety for all purposes. Furthermore, an active opportunity can be met by using a player tracking card, a smart card, Java card, memory stick, wireless device, or the like. As described above, examples of wireless devices include PDAs, cell phones, Bluetooth-related items, RFID devices, etc.

[0060] In some embodiments, the specified event can be saved as game state information in the event of a power outage or other game interruption. Game state information can be saved to an associated gaming device such as a server. For more detailed description of storing game state information, see co-pending U.S. application Ser. No. 10/040,239, (IGT P078/P-671), filed on Jan. 3, 2002, by LeMay et al., titled, "Game Development Architecture that Decouples the Game Logic from the Graphics Logic," which is incorporated herein in its entirety and for all purposes. In another embodiment, a player that has not already inserted a player tracking card but has been offered a primary bonus may be offered an opportunity for a secondary bonus if the player inserts a player tracking card when prompted with a specified event.

[0061] In other embodiments, a player may have to complete a series of events prior to receiving a secondary bonus. For instance, the player may be required to view or collect a series of symbols, messages, tickets, or the like, from one or more gaming machines to earn a bonus award. In other examples, the player may be required to play a series of games to complete the set of events. In some instances, a gaming machine may remind players of what events to look for during game play. Also, a player may receive instructions on a printed ticket or through access to some other instrument, such as a smart card, etc. that may have the information stored on it. One example of a scenario employing a series of events includes issuing a ticket to a player that asks the player to go to a particular type of gaming machine and

play a game. When a specified event “x” occurs during game play, then the player can perform a specified action “y” to win a secondary bonus. The specified event “x” can include the appearance of a symbol, message, sound, or the like, and action “y” may include pressing a particular button, inserting the ticket having the instruction printed on it, or the like. In some embodiments, the player may have to insert the ticket or other instrument to notify the gaming machine of the secondary bonus status, i.e. that the occurrence of “x” and “y” should activate a secondary bonus. The gaming machine may then confirm that the ticket is valid with a remote server.

[0062] In another example, the series of events may be spread out over a number of gaming machines like a treasure hunt. For instance, when a game is played at gaming machine “A,” or a game “B” is played at any gaming machine, players can be asked to look for event “C.” When found, then a new instruction will be issued. This instruction may ask the player to go to gaming machine “D” or play game “E” at any specified gaming machine and look for event “F.” A printed ticket or display on the gaming machine can apprise the player of their status toward the treasure. For instance, the following status can be displayed to a player: “you have completed tasks 1-4 in the hunt and need to gather only one item to earn a secondary bonus.” In some embodiments, the “treasure hunt” can span multiple casinos, such as various casinos on the Las Vegas Strip.

[0063] For each of the passive or active bonuses described above, the opportunity to win such bonuses may be time and/or place restricted. For instance, a secondary bonus can be won during a certain time period and/or at a particular casino.

[0064] Various embodiments described above encourage players to participate in player tracking programs, which can enhance game play for the player and provide gaming establishments with valuable information about player preferences and game playing patterns. Furthermore, these embodiments allow gaming establishments to reward particular players, such as loyal customers, thereby enhancing these players’ experiences and encouraging them to engage in further game play at the gaming establishment.

[0065] Next, at 306, the process determines whether the opportunity has been met. In one example, a passive opportunity has been met if the player tracking information associated with a player includes specified information, as described above. In another example, an active opportunity has been met if the player inserts a player tracking card when prompted by an audio and/or video signal during or in response to a primary bonus. In yet another example, an active opportunity has been met if the player has been offered an opportunity for secondary bonus based on player tracking information and the player engages in a specified activity, as described above. Once the opportunity has been met, then at 308, a secondary bonus can be provided. As described above, this secondary bonus can be a bonus game, bonus award, multiple (e.g. 4× the primary bonus game award), and the like. In some embodiments, a bonus or prize can include promotional credits. Furthermore, in a video game, secondary bonuses may “unlock” hidden features or levels of a game that is being played. These “unlocked” features or levels may constitute the secondary bonus in some embodiments. If the opportunity has not been met,

then a secondary bonus is not provided and the process can end. In some embodiments, the primary bonus and/or primary game can resume.

[0066] In addition to the items shown and described in the present embodiment, bonus award progress can be displayed on the gaming machine. For instance, primary and/or secondary bonuses can be bonus games that allow a player to make progress towards a particular award, prize, or the like. Outcomes of these bonus games can be applied to the bonus award progress, in the form of credits, pieces of a puzzle, or the like. In one embodiment, bonus award progress can be shown as a puzzle. Pieces of the puzzle can be obtained during either or both the primary and/or secondary bonus game, and displayed with respect to the puzzle on the gaming machine. When the puzzle is complete, or otherwise satisfies a winning configuration, an award, prize, or the like, can be provided to the player. In another embodiment, bonus award progress can be shown as a diagram. For example, a line graph can show the players progress during bonuses, and can indicate a level at which a winning configuration is achieved. When the line graph reaches this level, an award, prize, or the like, can be provided to the player. Other configurations are also possible.

[0067] With reference now to FIG. 3B, shown is a flow diagram depicting another embodiment of a process for providing a secondary bonus to a player using a player tracking account. In particular, the present embodiment depicts one implementation of a passive opportunity, as introduced above with regard to FIG. 3A. At 300, a primary game is presented, as described in more detail above. Next, at 302, the primary bonus event can be provided, as also described above. At 310, player tracking information can be received by the gaming machine. Although receipt of player tracking information 310 is shown in the present embodiment as following a primary bonus event 302, it should be recognized that receipt of player tracking information can occur prior to or concurrently with presentation of the primary game or provision of a primary bonus event, depending on the application. For instance, a player can insert a player tracking card at the beginning of a gaming session, in which case the gaming machine can receive player tracking information before a primary game is presented at 300. In another example, a player can insert a player tracking card during a primary bonus event 302 either out of the player’s own volition or in response to a specified event, such as an audio and/or visual message to insert the player tracking card into the gaming machine. As described above with regard to FIG. 3A, player tracking information can be provided by a player tracking card or other instruments such as a smart card, Java card, memory stick, wireless device, or the like. Examples of wireless devices include PDAs, cell phones, Bluetooth-related items, RFID devices, etc.

[0068] Once player tracking information has been received, then at 312, is determined whether the player tracking information meets a specified criteria or otherwise includes specified information. For instance, the specified criteria can include player tracking accounts indicating that the player associated with the player tracking account has played at least a certain dollar amount within the last two hours. In addition, as described above, the specified information can indicate that the player is a preferred player, a member of a special group, a single win recipient, or the like.

[0069] In the present embodiment, if the player tracking information meets the specified criteria or otherwise includes specified information, then at 308, a secondary bonus can be provided. However, if the player tracking information does not meet specified criteria or does not otherwise include specified information, then a secondary bonus is not provided and the process can end. In some embodiments, the primary bonus and/or primary game can resume.

[0070] Conclusion

[0071] Although the above generally describes the present invention according to specific exemplary processes and apparatus, various modifications can be made without departing from the spirit and/or scope of the present invention. For instance, the embodiments described can be used with stand alone machines, linked machines, Internet gaming, or the like. Therefore, the present invention should not be construed as being limited to the specific forms shown in the appended figures and described above.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for providing a bonus on a gaming machine comprising:

providing a first bonus to a player on a gaming machine;

providing an opportunity for a second bonus during the first bonus;

determining if the opportunity has been met using player tracking information; and

providing the second bonus if the opportunity has been met.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the opportunity is met if the player tracking information indicates that the player associated with the player tracking information is a preferred player, a member of a special group, or single win recipient.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the opportunity is met if a player tracking card is inserted into the gaming machine and a specified activity is performed in response to a specified event.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein the specified event is an audio signal, a visual signal, or both an audio and visual signal.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the specified event is saved to the gaming machine or an associated gaming device as game state information.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the opportunity is met if a player tracking card is inserted into the gaming machine in response to a specified event.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein the specified event is an audio signal, a visual signal, or both an audio and visual signal.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein the specified event is saved to the gaming machine or an associated gaming device as game state information.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the second bonus is a multiple of the first bonus.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein the second bonus is a bonus game.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein the second bonus is a monetary prize, an in-kind prize, credits, or a combination thereof.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein the second bonus is redeemable during a subsequent gaming session.

13. The method of claim 1, further comprising displaying progress towards a bonus award, wherein one or more outcomes from the second bonus are used to progress towards the bonus award.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the progress displayed is in the form of a puzzle, wherein a plurality of outcomes are used to complete the puzzle for the bonus award.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein the bonus award is a multiple amount, a bonus game, credits, a monetary prize, an in-kind prize, or a combination thereof.

16. The method of claim 13, wherein the progress displayed is in the form of a diagram.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein the bonus award is a multiple amount, a bonus game, credits, a monetary prize, an in-kind prize, or a combination thereof.

18. The method of claim 1, wherein the player tracking information is associated with a player tracking card inserted into the gaming machine.

19. The method of claim 1, wherein the player tracking information is associated with a player tracking card, a smart card, Java card, memory stick, or wireless device.

20. The method of claim 19, wherein the wireless device is a PDA, cell phone, Bluetooth-related item, or RFID device.

21. The method of claim 1, wherein the player tracking information is associated with a virtual player tracking card used during an Internet gaming session.

22. A method for providing a bonus award on a gaming machine comprising:

providing a first bonus to a player on a gaming machine;

receiving player tracking information associated with the player, wherein the player tracking information includes player status information; and

providing a second bonus during or for an outcome of the first bonus if the player tracking information meets a specified criteria.

23. The method of claim 22, wherein the player status information includes whether the player is a preferred player, a member of a special group, or a combination thereof.

24. The method of claim 23, wherein the specified criteria is met if the player status information indicates that the player is a preferred player, a member of a special group, or a combination thereof.

25. The method of claim 22, wherein the player status information includes the player's level of patronage, frequency of game play, or a combination thereof, and wherein the specified criteria is a minimum level of patronage, frequency of game play, or a combination thereof.

26. The method of claim 25, wherein the level of patronage is determined by the number of game plays, denomination of one or more gaming machines played, the amount of credits bet during game play, or a combination thereof, by the player during a time interval.

27. The method of claim 26, wherein the time interval accounts for the player's entire game playing history.

28. A gaming system for providing a bonus award on a gaming machine comprising:

logic for providing a primary game, wherein the primary game is a game of chance;

logic for providing a first bonus, wherein the first bonus is provided based on player tracking information, a random event, or a combination thereof; and

logic for providing a second bonus, wherein the second bonus is provided during or for the first bonus, and wherein the second bonus is based on player tracking information.

29. The gaming system of claim 28, wherein the logic for providing the first and second bonus is provided by a bonus server.

30. The gaming machine system of claim 28, wherein the logic for providing the first and second bonus is provided by a master gaming controller associated with a gaming machine of the gaming system.

31. The gaming machine system of claim 28, wherein the second bonus is a multiple of the first bonus.

32. The method of claim 28, wherein the second bonus is a bonus game, a monetary prize, an in-kind prize, an indicia of credits, or a combination thereof.

33. The method of claim 28, wherein the player tracking information is stored on a player tracking server.

34. The method of claim 28, further comprising logic for displaying progress towards a bonus award, wherein one or more outcomes from the second bonus are used to progress towards the bonus award.

35. The method of claim 34, wherein one or more outcomes from the first bonus are used to progress towards the bonus award.

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