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(54) METHOD FOR ESTABLISHING PROMOTIONAL PROGRESSIVE JACKPOT POOLS IN RESPONSE TO A CHANGE IN MODE

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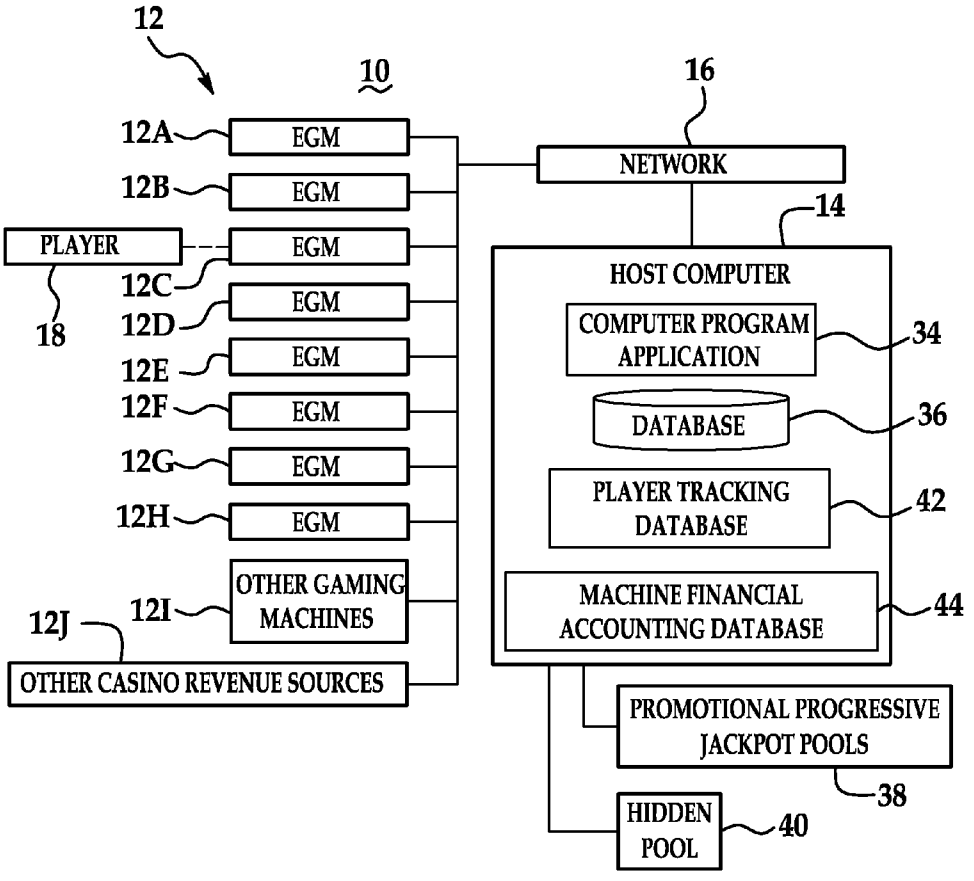
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A method for establishing promotional progressive jackpot and hidden pools are provided. The system includes a host computer and a plurality of gaming machines playable by a plurality of players, connected to the host computer. Each gaming machine is playable in first and second modes selectable by the player and allows the player to select one of the first and second modes and to play the gaming machine in the selected one of the first and second modes. The promotional progressive jackpot pool is associated with the plurality of gaming machines. The host computer opens a data session on the host computer and records information in the data session on the host computer related to the player's play of the selected one of the gaming machines during the data session. The host computer closes the data session in response to the player choosing to play the game in the other of the first and second modes. Moreover, the method broadens the traditional scope of the progressive jackpot system to incorporate all slot machines and other casino revenue sources to be part of the promotional progressive jackpot system.



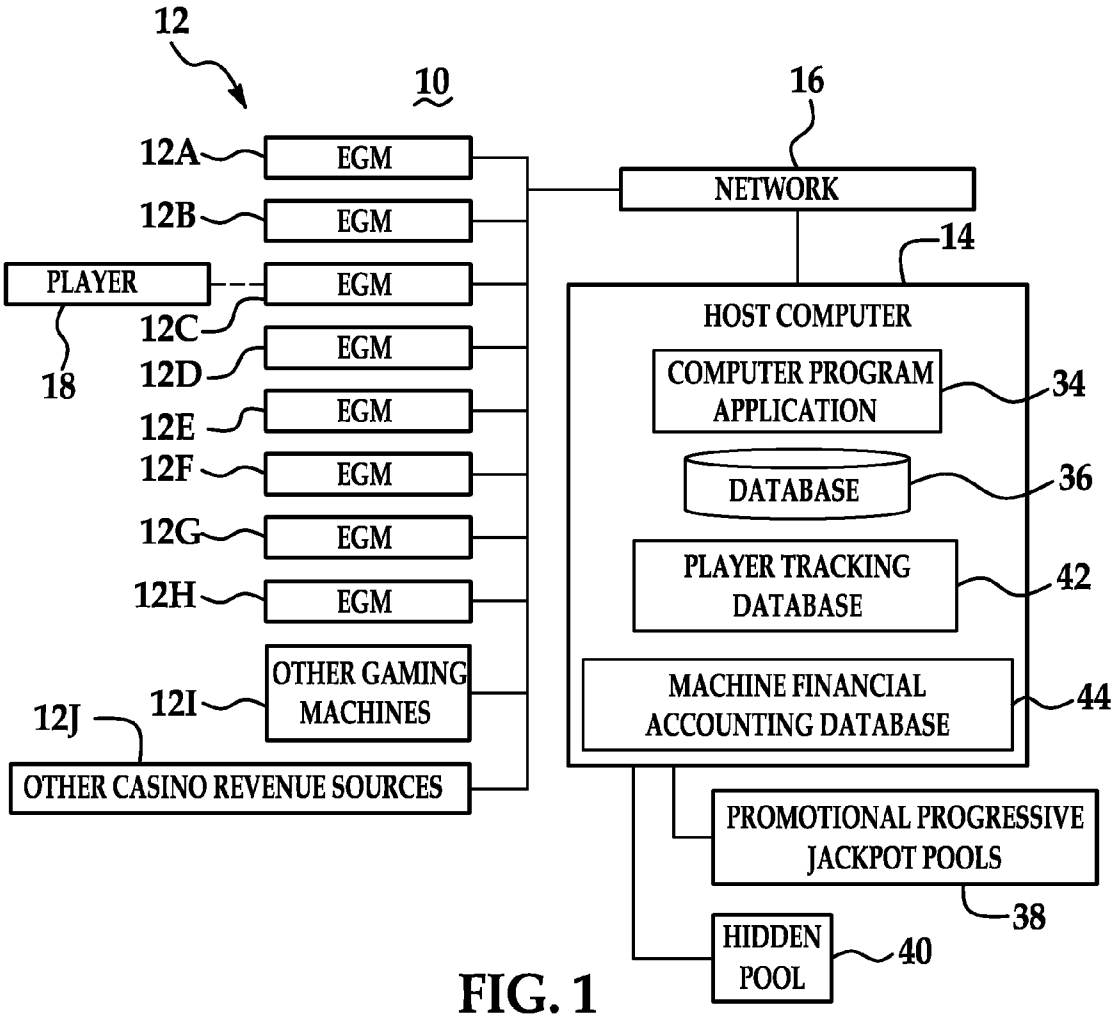

12
10
16
12A
EGM
NETWORK
12B
EGM
14
PLAYER
EGM
HOST COMPUTER
12C
EGM
COMPUTER PROGRAM APPLICATION
34
18
12D
EGM
12E
EGM
DATABASE
36
12F
EGM
PLAYER TRACKING DATABASE
42
12G
EGM
12H
EGM
MACHINE FINANCIAL ACCOUNTING DATABASE
44
OTHER GAMING MACHINES
12I
12J
OTHER CASINO REVENUE SOURCES
PROMOTIONAL PROGRESSIVE JACKPOT POOLS
38
HIDDEN POOL
40

FIG. 1

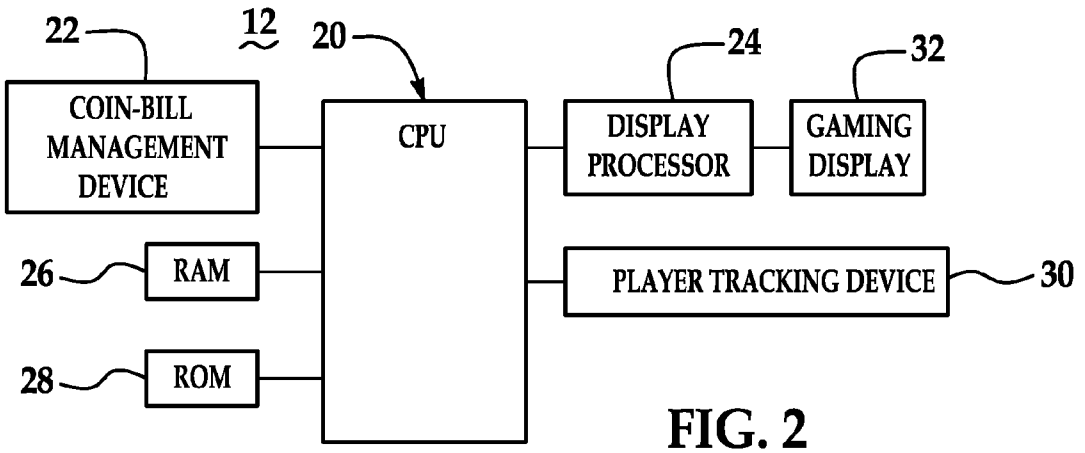

22
12
20
24
32
COIN-BILL MANAGEMENT DEVICE
CPU
DISPLAY PROCESSOR
GAMING DISPLAY
26
RAM
PLAYER TRACKING DEVICE
30
28
ROM

FIG. 2

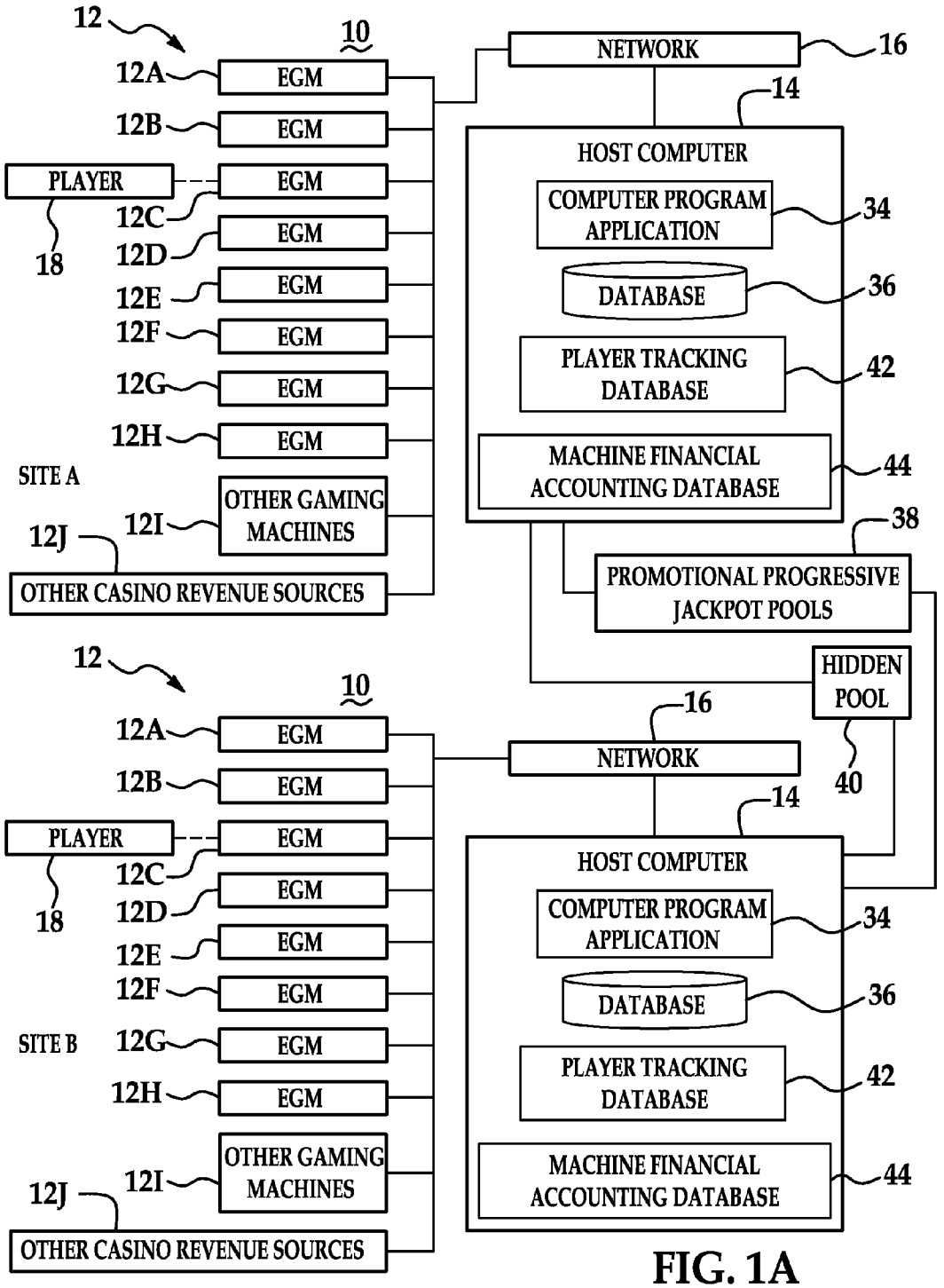

12
10
12A
EGM
12B
EGM
PLAYER
EGM
12C
EGM
18
12D
EGM
12E
EGM
12F
EGM
12G
EGM
12H
EGM
SITE A
OTHER GAMING MACHINES
12I
12J
OTHER CASINO REVENUE SOURCES
NETWORK
16
14
HOST COMPUTER
COMPUTER PROGRAM APPLICATION
34
DATABASE
36
PLAYER TRACKING DATABASE
42
MACHINE FINANCIAL ACCOUNTING DATABASE
44
38
PROMOTIONAL PROGRESSIVE JACKPOT POOLS
HIDDEN POOL
40
SITE B

FIG. 1A

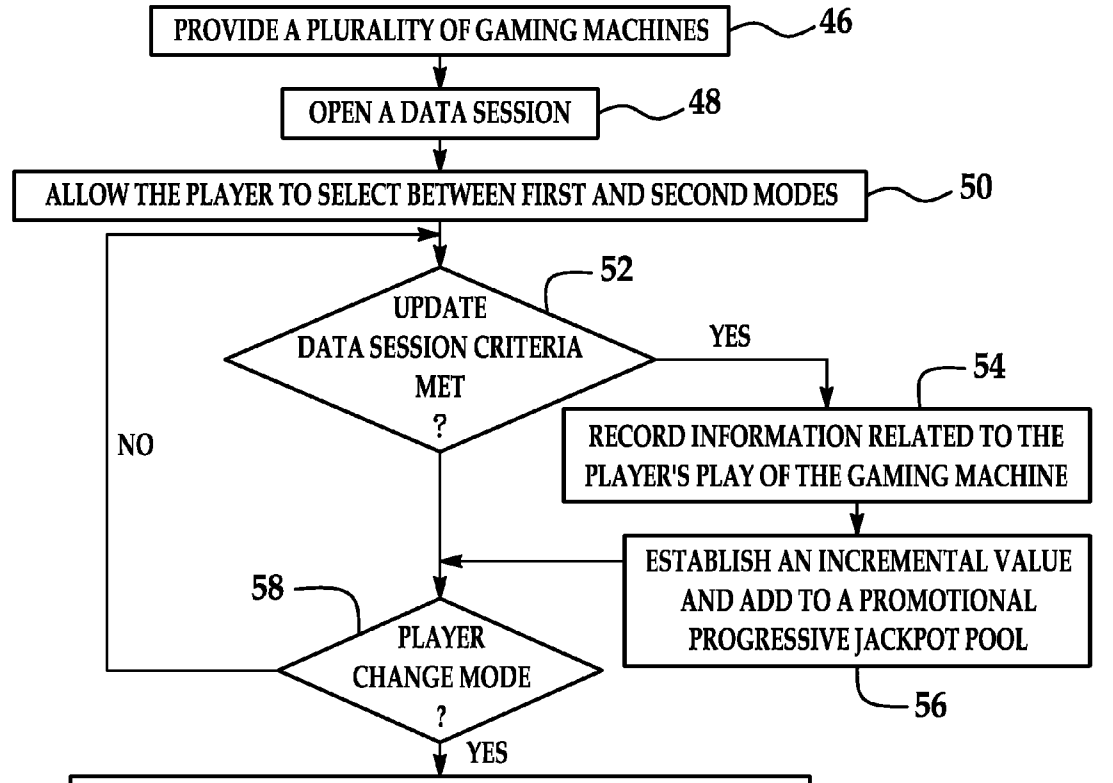

PROVIDE A PLURALITY OF GAMING MACHINES
46
OPEN A DATA SESSION
48
ALLOW THE PLAYER TO SELECT BETWEEN FIRST AND SECOND MODES
50
52
UPDATE DATA SESSION CRITERIA MET ?
YES
NO
54
RECORD INFORMATION RELATED TO THE PLAYER'S PLAY OF THE GAMING MACHINE
ESTABLISH AN INCREMENTAL VALUE AND ADD TO A PROMOTIONAL PROGRESSIVE JACKPOT POOL
56
58
PLAYER CHANGE MODE ?
YES
CLOSE THE DATA SESSION AND RECORD INFORMATION RELATED TO THE PLAYER'S PLAY OF THE GAMING MACHINE
60
ESTABLISH AN INCREMENTAL VALUE AND ADD TO A PROMOTIONAL PROGRESSIVE JACKPOT POOL
62
END

FIG. 3

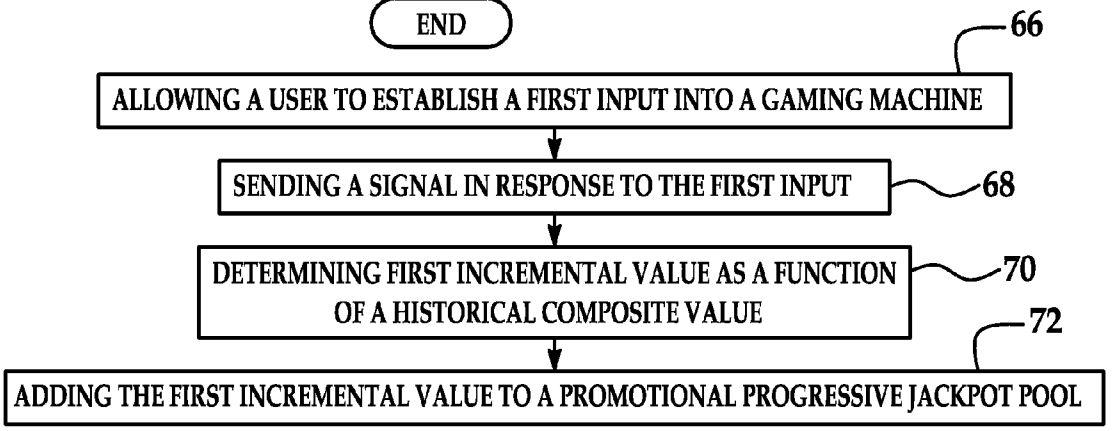

66
ALLOWING A USER TO ESTABLISH A FIRST INPUT INTO A GAMING MACHINE
SENDING A SIGNAL IN RESPONSE TO THE FIRST INPUT
68
DETERMINING FIRST INCREMENTAL VALUE AS A FUNCTION OF A HISTORICAL COMPOSITE VALUE
70
72
ADDING THE FIRST INCREMENTAL VALUE TO A PROMOTIONAL PROGRESSIVE JACKPOT POOL

FIG. 4

METHOD FOR ESTABLISHING PROMOTIONAL PROGRESSIVE JACKPOT POOLS IN RESPONSE TO A CHANGE IN MODE

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS FROM WHICH PRIORITY IS CLAIMED

[0001] This application claims priority to U.S. Provisional Application Ser. No. 60/863,639, filed on Oct. 31, 2006, PCT Application Serial No. PCT/US2007/022956, filed Oct. 31, 2007 and U.S. patent application Ser. Nos. 11/066,064 and 12/235,237, filed Feb. 25, 2005 and Sep. 22, 2008, respectively, which are hereby incorporated by reference in their entirety.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates generally to gaming machines, and more particularly, to a system and method for accumulating one or more progressive and hidden pools and for awarding promotional prizes or promotional progressive jackpots to one or more players from the pool(s).

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] The growth and competition in the casino gaming market in recent years and the increasingly sophisticated and complex technology being integrated into the gaming environment, at the individual game, casino management, and auditing levels, presents both challenges and opportunities to game manufacturers, gaming establishment operators, and regulatory agencies. The technological capabilities and requirements of, for example, advanced electronic games, multi-site gaming operations, detailed player tracking, wide area progressive jackpots, and various alternatives to the use of currency and coins by players, all present a potentially huge pool of ever-changing data which can be of great value to casino operators (from a management standpoint) and to regulators from an audit/compliance stand point.

[0004] One area that has received a lot of attention in recent years has been providing added incentives to players of electronic gaming machines, such as mechanical reel, video slot machines and video poker machines to increase play and casino revenue. In order to attract more players to such gaming machines thereby increasing casino revenue, progressive gaming systems were developed. Progressives add to the excitement of play, the individual gaming machines are linked together to allow players to compete for an additional common awards or "progressive jackpot." The progressive jackpot award can amount to large cash awards. Progressive gaming systems are also found in casinos throughout the world. In some environments, the progressive jackpot award is an expensive vehicle, such as a motorcycle or sports car.

[0005] The linking of a plurality of gaming machines to form a progressive system with a progressive jackpot is common in the casino gaming industry. There are various ways in which the progressive jackpot may be determined. One way, for example, is to use a percentage of game play on each of the linked machines in order to accumulate a progressive jackpot. Consequently, the jackpot value progresses until a win transpires at one of the linked gaming machines. When a win occurs, the monetary value of the progressive jackpot is paid to the winning party. After the win, the system resets to a base jackpot value. This course of action then repeats as jackpots are won and game play continues. Traditionally in a progressive gaming system, a programmed controller is provided for linking the machines together. The controller receives the unit bets from the linked machines as well as machine identification information from each machine and supplies to the players, either through displays provided on their respective machines and/or a common overhead display, information as to the common progressive jackpot.

[0006] A progressive controller links the gaming machines to form the progressive system and provides the means to accomplish, among other things, the course of action delineated above. In addition, electronic translators have been interposed between gaming machines and the progressive controller in order to link machines with different denominations, coin-in, hit frequencies, and other differing play characteristics. The following prior art reflects the state of the art of which applicant is aware and is included herewith to discharge applicant's acknowledged duty to disclose relevant prior art. It is stipulated, however, that none of these references teach singly nor render obvious when considered in any conceivable combination the present invention as disclosed in greater detail hereinafter and as particularly claimed.

[0007] Prior Art for Progressive Gaming Systems

U.S. Pat. No.	ISSUE DATE	INVENTOR
4,837,728	Jun. 6, 1989	Barrie, et al.
5,116,055	May 26, 1992	Tracy
5,249,800	Oct. 5, 1993	Hilgendorf, et al.
5,344,144	Sep. 6, 1994	Canon
6,110,043	Aug. 29, 2000	Olsen

[0008] U.S. Pat. No. 4,837,728 to Barrie, et al. teaches the use of rapidly incrementing multiple progressive gaming systems. One or more gaming controllers are coupled to a progressive controller. Coin drop and win information at each gaming controller is provided to and accumulated by the progressive controller. Meter amounts generated at the progressive controller are transmitted back to the gaming controllers to provide multiple continually incrementing progressive bonus values. Upon game win, all gaming controllers not in play are reset to an initial starting value. Gaming controllers in play during a win are allowed to complete play at a progressive bonus value as established at beginning of game play. Any additional wins generated during the completion interval are paid at this progressive bonus value. A current progressive value is provided to update the game controller either continually or upon game completion. The game payouts are frozen upon detection of the coin drop so that the player knows the value(s) being played for.

[0009] U.S. Pat. No. 5,116,055 to Tracy teaches the use of a progressive gaming system in which the gaming machines are linked to the system have different play characteristics, e.g. different Denominations and Hit Frequencies, and wherein the system is further adapted such that the dollars contributed to the progressive jackpot for a machine per win on that machine is approximately equal for the different machines.

[0010] U.S. Pat. No. 5,249,800 to Hilgendorf, et al. teaches the use of a progressive controller and communication unit. The communication unit is used to control the information transmitted between a group of gaming machines and the progressive controller. The communication unit collects coin-

in information from each of the gaming machines and transmits this information to the progressive controller in response to periodic signals from the progressive controller.

[0011] U.S. Pat. No. 5,344,144 to Canon teaches the use of an accumulator for a multiple jackpot gaming system wherein the accumulator has the facility for date stamping jackpot-wins, recording the identification of devices and changes being made by such devices to its data and/or programming, allocating coins-in to one or more jackpot groups and/or to one or more increment rates assigned to a particular jackpot group, operate its jackpot stack so as to clear stack positions immediately upon clearing a jackpot, and control jackpot handling from its main programming loop.

[0012] U.S. Pat. No. 6,110,043 to Olsen teaches a method of operating of controller-based progressive gaming system having a plurality of gaming machines wherein each gaming machine generates unit bet information indicative of a number of unit bets supplied to a machine for playing a game. The method comprises the steps of randomly selecting a bonus mode activation value between a high and low limit, providing a current value, providing a base value, incrementing the current value when the gaming machines are played so that the current value is incremented by a fixed amount of each unit bet received by each gaming machine. A bonus mode time period is entered when the incremented current value is equal to or exceeds the bonus value. Eligible machines are locked-in and random bonus jackpots are made during the bonus time period. Each bonus award decrements the current value by the amount of each award and the bonus mode time period is ended when the current value is less than or equal to the base value.

[0013] The common thread in the prior art disclosed above is the use "jackpot controllers" to link a plurality of gaming machines together and the method in which the progressive pool is accumulated. Traditionally, the progressive jackpot pool is a constantly accumulating the progressive jackpot based on coin or credit-in, i.e., the tokens played by players, on a plurality of predetermined gaming machines which are physically linked to a "jackpot controller or device". The progressive jackpot pool normally starts at a predetermined minimal value that continuously increases with player activity until some randomly chosen triggering event occurs. The progressive jackpot award is awarded to the player under some predetermined conditions, usually the prior art includes a randomly established maximum value as the trigger event.

[0014] As discussed in the prior art above, the progressive jackpot systems utilize fixed add-on progressive controllers which operate independent of the host player tracking system. For example, when a casino wants to set up a progressive jackpot system, the progressive controller-based system is limited to specific gaming machines linked to the progressive controller. A separate progressive controller must either be installed for each gaming machine or the gaming machine physically linked to a shared separate progressive controller which is then in communication with the progressive jackpot system. One of the problems associated with this type of system is that each of the gaming machines, such as a slot machine, must be physically connected to the progressive controller be part of a progressive jackpot. Furthermore, the configuration, i.e., the gaming machines included in the progressive system are fixed and not easily changed. And finally, other casino revenue sources such as tables, bingo, sports book, internet gaming, retail, hotel, services and so once cannot be part of a progressive jackpot.

[0015] Previously, progressive jackpot systems pay a progressive jackpot award from a pool. Contributions to the pool are made in response to each credit wagers made by the players. The contributions are, typically, deducted from the wagers. Often each gaming machine that is part of the linked progress must be manually configured to apply a percentage of its pay table or independent of its base pay table to one or more progressive jackpots. One problem with such a system deducting a portion of the wagers made to the gaming machine increases the complexity of the casino's accounting and reporting. For example, the coin-in and payout for each gaming machine must be recorded and, generally, reported to a governmental jurisdictional body, to ensure that the gaming machine meets the jurisdiction's specifications. Removing a portion of the wager to place in the pool, and then paying it out in a progressive jackpot award, greatly increases the complexity in meeting these requirements. Additionally, the casino is typically not able to deduct the progressive jackpot awards or any other bonus tied to the progressive jackpot from their gross gaming revenue.

[0016] The prior art progressive jackpot systems are inflexible, require physical connections to jackpot controllers, require manual configuration at the gaming machine and do not provide the casino operator with the maximum benefit and advantages available from the information and systems now available. The present invention is aimed at providing a promotional progressive jackpot system that accumulates one or more promotional progressive jackpot and hidden pool(s) based on the ever-changing data gathered by the casino operators. Moreover, the present invention broadens the traditional scope of the progressive jackpot system to incorporate all gaming machines as well as, other casino revenue sources by eliminating the need for a physical connection to a physical jackpot controller and manual configuration to be part of the progressive jackpot. Additionally, since in one embodiment of the present invention, the promotional progressive jackpot and other bonus awards can be cashable or non-cashable electronic promotions, where allowed, the casino can deduct the awards from their gross gaming revenue. Furthermore, in one embodiment of the present invention, the associated hidden pool can not only be used to fund (be the initial value of) a subsequent promotional progressive jackpot but be used to fund smaller prizes and bonuses associated with the promotional progressive jackpot.

[0017] As disclosed in the cross reference to related applications, the player tracking device and system is used in conjunction with the host computer (player tracking database) to accumulate the promotional progressive jackpot and hidden pools and award promotional prizes and promotional progressive jackpot. By providing promotional progressive functionally using the casino management system infrastructure, the hardware and staff cost saving and flexibility of this invention to the casino operation is clearly an advantage over traditional external progressive gaming systems.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0018] In a first aspect of the present invention, a method for establishing promotional progressive jackpot and hidden pools is provided. The method includes the step of providing a plurality of gaming machines playable by a plurality of players. Each gaming machine is playable in first and second modes selectable by the player. The promotional progressive jackpot and hidden pools being are with the plurality of gaming machines. The method includes the steps of opening a

data session on the host computer (player tracking database) in response to a first input by one of the players on a selected one of the gaming machines, allowing the player to select one of the first and second modes and to play the gaming machine in the selected one of the first and second modes, and recording information, in the data session on the host computer, related to the player's play of the selected one of the gaming machines during the data session. The method further includes the steps of closing the data session in response to the player choosing to play the game in the other of the first and second modes and responsively (1) establishing a first incremental value as a function of the recorded information in the data session and adding the first incremental value to the promotional progressive jackpot pool and (2) awarding at least a portion of the promotional progressive jackpot pool to a winning one of the players in response to an occurrence of predetermined promotional progressive jackpot conditions.

[0019] In a second aspect the present invention, a method for establishing promotional progressive jackpot and hidden pools. The method including the step of providing a plurality of gaming machines playable by a plurality of players. Each gaming machine is playable in first and second modes selectable by the player. The promotional progressive jackpot and hidden pools are associated with the plurality of gaming machines. The method includes the steps of opening a data session on the host computer (player tracking database) in response to a first input by one of the players on a selected one of the gaming machines, allowing the player to select one of the first and second modes and to play the gaming machine in the selected one of the first and second modes, detecting an occurrence of update data session criteria and responsively (1) recording information, in the data session on the host computer, related to the player's play of the selected one of the gaming machines during the data session and (2) establishing a first incremental value as a function of the recorded information in the data session and adding the first incremental value to the promotional progressive jackpot and hidden pools. The further includes the steps of closing the data session in response to the player choosing to play the game in the other of the first and second modes, the step of closing the data session including (1) recording information, in the data session on the host computer, related to the player's play of the selected one of the gaming machines during the data session and (2) establishing a second incremental value as a function of the recorded information in the data session and adding the first incremental value to the promotional progressive jackpot and hidden pools.

[0020] In a third aspect of the present invention, a system for establishing promotional progressive jackpot and hidden pools. The system includes a host computer (player tracking database) and a plurality of gaming machines. The plurality of gaming machines are playable by a plurality of players and are operatively connected to the host computer. Each gaming machine is playable in first and second modes selectable by the player. The promotional progressive jackpot and hidden pools are associated with the plurality of gaming machines. The host computer for opening a data session on the host computer in response to a first input by one of the players on a selected one of the gaming machines. Each gaming machine allows the player to select one of the first and second modes and to play the gaming machine in the selected one of the first and second modes. The host computer records information in the data session on the host computer related to the player's play of the selected one of the gaming machines during the data session and closes the data session in response to the player choosing to play the game in the other of the first and second modes and responsively (1) establishing a first incremental value as a function of the recorded information in the data session and adding the first incremental value to the promotional progressive jackpot and hidden pools and (2) awarding at least a portion of the promotional progressive jackpot pool to a winning one of the players in response to an occurrence of predetermined promotional progressive jackpot conditions.

[0021] In a fourth aspect of the present invention, a system for establishing promotional progressive jackpot and hidden pools is provided. The system includes a host computer (player tracking database), gaming machines and other casino revenue sources such as, bingo, sports book, retail, hotel and associated services, and so on. The host computer receives a signal logging into and/or playing and/or using the associated casino services. The host computer receives the signal and responsively determines a first incremental value as a function of a historical composite value in response to receiving the signal from the gaming machine and other casino revenue sources and responsively adding the first incremental value to the promotional progressive jackpot and hidden pools.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0022] Other advantages of the present invention will be readily appreciated as the same becomes better understood by reference to the following detailed description when considered in connection with the accompanying drawings wherein:

[0023] FIG. **1** is a block diagram of a promotional progressive jackpot system, according to an embodiment of the present invention;

[0024] FIG. **1***a* is a block diagram of a multi-site system for providing promotional progressive jackpot and hidden pools, according to a second embodiment of the present invention;

[0025] FIG. **2** is a block diagram of a gaming machine of the system;

[0026] FIG. **3** is a flow diagram of a method for accumulating progressive jackpot and hidden pools according to an embodiment of the present invention; and,

[0027] FIG. **4** is a flow diagram of a method for accumulating progressive jackpot and hidden pools according to another embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF INVENTION

[0028] The present invention is a system **10** and a method for establishing one or more promotional progressive and hidden bonus pool(s). Referring to the Figures, wherein like numerals indicate corresponding parts throughout the several views, the system is generally shown at **10** in FIG. **1**. The system **10** includes one or more gaming machines **12** and a host computer **14** in communication via a network **16** with each gaming machine **12**.

[0029] In one aspect of the present invention, the system **10** is part of a player tracking system. In the player tracking system **10**, the player **18**, such as a player or other patron is identified via a player tracking card and/or a player identification number entered into a player tracking device (not shown) at each EGM **12**. The player tracking device and system is disclosed in commonly assigned U.S. patent application Ser. No. 12/235,237, filed on Sep. 22, 2008 (Docket No. 060790-00131), which is hereby incorporated by refer-

ence in it entirety. Player tracking accounts may be used, generally, to provide bonuses to a player, in addition to the award designated by, in the case of a video slot or poker machine, the EGM's **12** pay table. These bonuses may be awarded to the player **18** based a set of criteria, including, but not limited to, a) the player's play on the machine **12**, b) the player's overall play, c) play during a predetermined period of time, and d) the player's birthday or anniversary, or e) any other definable criteria. Additionally, bonuses may be awarded on a random basis, i.e., to a randomly chosen player or randomly chosen game **12**. Bonuses may also be awarded in a discretionary manner or based on other criteria, such as, purchases made at a gift shop or other affiliated location. In one aspect, the bonuses may be in the form of bonus points or advanced incentive points which may be exchanged for goods and/or services or downloaded to a gaming machine **12** for use and/or play. Downloaded bonus points may be cashable or non-cashable.

[0030] In one aspect of the present invention, the promotional progressive jackpot and hidden pools are used to fund a promotional progressive jackpot which is awarded to one or more players under a set of predetermined rules. For example, a promotional progressive jackpot may be awarded to a player whose contribution to the promotional progressive jackpot and hidden pools results in the pool reaching or surpassing a predetermined value. In another example, a promotional jackpot game may be initialized under a set of predetermined rules. A promotional progressive jackpot may be paid from the promotional progressive jackpot pool to one or more winners of the promotional progressive jackpot game. Contributions may also be made to one or more hidden pools, which may be used to initial or seed the promotional progressive pool, when the pool is initialized or after a promotional progressive jackpot has been awarded. One system for awarding a promotional progressive jackpot is disclosed in commonly assigned U.S. patent application Ser. No. 11/779,537, filed on Jul. 18, 2007 (Docket No. 060518-00648), which is hereby incorporated by reference in it entirety.

[0031] A promotional progressive jackpot may be a number of advanced incentive points (which may be designated as cashable or non-cashable) or may be for a specified good and/or service (which may have a value defined in terms of advanced incentive points).

[0032] Gaming Machines

[0033] Gaming machines **12**A-**12**I include, but are not limited to, electronic gaming machines (EGM) (such as video slot, video poker machines, video arcade games or slot machines with mechanical reels), virtual gaming machines, e.g., for online gaming, an interface to a table management system for table games, online bingo, online keno, point of sale terminals, online hotel folios, kiosk devices or any other device connected to the system. In the illustrated embodiments, eight electronic gaming machines **12**A-**12**H are shown in FIG. **1**. However, it should be noted that the present invention is not limited to any number or type of gaming machines. In one embodiment, the gaming machines **12** are organized in banks, with each bank containing a plurality of gaming machines. Other types of gaming machines **12** which may be included are indicated with reference number **12**I. Other types of machines or other casino revenue sources, such as kiosks, point of sale devices, are designated **12**J.

[0034] Alternatively, the gaming machines **12** could be grouped by various dollar denominations or specific game designs or themes (not shown) as is well known in the art. For example, each gaming machine **12** may be playable using different denominations, e.g., a penny video slot machine game or a nickel video slot machine. In one embodiment, the denomination used or played is selectable by the casino. In another embodiment, the player may be given a choice of denominations.

[0035] Additionally, a gaming machine **12** may be able to play different games or the same game with different themes, symbols, etc. . . .

[0036] The gaming machine **12** allows each player **18** to establish a first input on the gaming machine **12**C. The first input is related to the player's usage of gaming machines **12**. The first input could include the player logging into, playing and/or using the gaming machine **12** for other transactions. The other transactions could include, but are not limited to, playing the game, a table game, use of a point of sale terminal, kiosk transactions with the player's account or purchases. The first input is accomplished via mechanical switches, buttons, a touch screen interface, player input sensing device (not shown), etc. Such gaming machines **12** are well known in the art and are therefore not further discussed. The gaming machine **12**C in response to the first input by the player **18** sends a signal to the host computer **14** (player tracking database).

[0037] The gaming machines **12** are playable by a plurality of players. Each player **18** selects one gaming machine **12**C to play and insert cash, credit, coupon, player tracking card, etc. into the gaming machine **12**C. Generally, the gaming machines **12** have an associated number of credits or coins required in order to play. In the case of video slot or poker games, the game is played and an award in the form of credits may be awarded to the player based on a pay table associated with the gaming machine. Referring to FIG. **2**, a block diagram of a suitable gaming machine **12**C is shown. The gaming machine **12**C comprises a game controller, or central processing unit **20** (CPU), a coin-bill management device **22**, a display processor **24**, a RAM **26** (generally provided as a memory device), and a ROM **28** (generally provided as an EPROM), and a player tracking device **30** (described in more detail below). The CPU **20** performs various calculations and motion control necessary for the progress of the game. The coin-bill management device **22** detects the insertion of the coins and/or the bills and performs a necessary process for managing the coins and the bills. The display processor **24** interprets commands issued from the CPU **20** and displays desirable images on a gaming display **32**. The RAM **26** temporarily stores programs and data necessary for the progress of the game, and the ROM **28** stores, in advance, programs and data for controlling basic operation of the gaming machine **12**C, such as the booting operation thereof, game code, and graphics.

[0038] Host Computer (Player Tracking Database)

[0039] The gaming machines **12** are connected via the network **16** to one or more host computers **14**. The host computer **14** is generally located at a remote or central location, and is generally shown in FIG. **1**. The host computer **14** includes a computer program application **34** which maintains one or more databases **36**, which in one embodiment, determines an incremental value as a function of a historical composite value, and accumulates a promotional progressive jackpot pool **38**, and hidden pool **40**. As shown in FIG. **1***a*, the promotional progressive gaming system **10** could further include additional host computers **14**. The host computers **14** in this embodiment are in communication via the network **16** to

determine the promotional progressive jackpot **38** and hidden pool **40** over multiple sites or casino properties.

[0040] In one embodiment, the database(s) **36** of the promotional progressive jackpot system **10** are Oracle database (s). The computer program application **34** utilizes databases **36** to record, track, and report accounting information regarding the gaming machines **12** and the players. Additionally, the computer program application **34** and the databases **36** are used to maintain information related to the player **18** and the gaming machine **12**C in communication with the host computer **14**. The host computer **14** could incorporate a player or player tracking system or an additional player tracking system may be utilized to identify for the host computer **14** the player **18** at each gaming machine **12**. The computer program application **34** logs the first inputs of the player **18** and various additional activities on the gaming machine **12** in a database **36** on the host computer **14**.

[0041] In the illustrated embodiment, the host computer **14** includes a player tracking database **42** for each player **18** registered with the casino or gaming facility, also known as a carded player or player to those skilled in the art. In addition, the host computer **14** includes a machine financial accounting database **44** for each gaming machine **12** in communication with the host computer **14**. The host computer **14** through either communication with the gaming machine **12** and the player tracking database **42** or optionally through the player tracking system identifies the player **18** at the gaming machine **12**C. The computer program application **34** stores the identified player's first inputs as data in the player tracking database **42**. The player tracking database **42** can further include additional data related to activity by the player **18** on the gaming machine **12**. Such additional data may include, but not limited to, the player's usage on the gaming machine **12**, the wagers, the amount won, the amount lost, and the purchases by the player **18**. The flexibility of the system allows for the casino operator to configure the gathering of additional data and/or additional databases **36** to understand the activity of the player **18** in the gaming facility.

[0042] The machine financial accounting database **44** includes as data the first inputs for each gaming machine **12** in communication with the host computer **14**. The machine financial accounting database **44** may include as data the wagers placed at each gaming machine **12**, the amount won or paid out to the player **18**, the amount lost by the player **18** at the gaming machine **12**, and the purchases placed at the gaming machine **12**. The machine financial accounting database **44** can further include as data such information about the player **18** that has established the first input into the gaming machine **12**. In addition, the casino operator can configure the storing of additional parameters for determining or tracking the gaming activity at each gaming machine **12**A-**12**I.

[0043] The computer program application **34** utilizes various parameters programmable or configurable by the casino or gaming facility to determine a contribution to the promotional progressive jackpot pool **38** and/or the hidden pool **40**.

[0044] Player Session Ratings

[0045] In one aspect of the present invention, a contribution to the promotional progressive jackpot pool and/or the hidden pool is made when a session is updated with data and/or at the termination of a session. A session is a period during which a gaming machine **12** is being used by a player and during which information related to the player(s)' use of the gaming machine is recorded, e.g., wager, coin-in, and payout information. The recorded information may be used to determine whether a contribution to the promotional progressive jackpot pool and/or hidden pool is made, and if so, the value thereof.

[0046] In one aspect of the present invention, a session may be opened:

[0047] (a) when a player logs (or is logged) onto a gaming machine **12** and begins using the gaming machine **12** through play or use (such as through a purchase on a point of sale device or viewing of information on a kiosk or property management system or remote or Internet gaming systems associated with the casino),

[0048] (b) while a player is logged in and after a closing of the previous session (see below),

[0049] (c) at the start of anonymous use of the gaming machine **12**, and/or

[0050] (d) other predetermined criteria.

[0051] In another aspect of the present invention, a session may be updated:

[0052] (a) after a predetermined amount of use (based on time and/or amount wagered during the current session,

[0053] (b) when the player logs out,

[0054] (c) when a transaction is completed, e.g., at a point of sale terminal,

[0055] (d) other predetermined criteria.

[0056] In one aspect of the present invention, the data session is updated when the data session is closed. In one aspect of the present invention, the data session is closed when the player changes modes, for example:

[0057] (a) at a gaming machine which offers different games and/or themes, when the player changes games and/or themes, and/or,

[0058] (b) at a gaming machine which offers the ability to play at different denominations, when the player changes denominations.

[0059] In another aspect, the data session may be closed:

[0060] (a) after a predetermined amount of use (e.g., based on time and/or amount wagered during the current session,

[0061] (b) when the player logs out,

[0062] (c) when a transaction is completed, e.g., at a point of sale terminal, and/or

[0063] (d) other predetermined criteria.

[0064] Typically, a contribution to the promotional progressive jackpot pool and/or hidden pool is made when the session is updated and/or at the close of each session. The value of the contributions, i.e., the first and second incremental values, may be determined as a function of the total amount of wagers or transactions in the session and/or a historical composite value and/or a theoretical win percentage. Typically, one or more of the following may be multiplied by predetermined percentage(s) in determining the value of the contribution and/or other values, such as the total number of wagers or purchases in the session.

[0065] Theoretical Win or Hold Percentage

[0066] The contribution to either pool may be determined as function of a predetermined theoretical win or hold percentage. In one aspect of the invention, each gaming machine **12** has a theoretical hold percentage. The theoretical hold percentage may be defined as the casino or establishment's estimated, average revenue percentage. For example, if the gaming machine **12** is a slot machine, the hold percentage is the expect house's estimate, average take or revenue for a particular machine. For a point of sale terminal, such as a cash register, the theoretical hold percentage may be set to an estimated profit percentage for the given cash register or the merchandise or service.

[0067] The contribution to either pool may therefore be determined by multiplying the theoretical hold percentage by one or more other values: including, but not limited to:

[0068] (a) total value of wagers or purchases or transaction in the session and/or

[0069] (b) total number of wagers or purchases or transaction in the session and/or

[0070] (c) a predetermined or constant percentage and/or

[0071] (d) a historical composite value (see below).

[0072] One system and method for establishing A promotional progressive jackpot pool as a function of a theoretical hold percentage is disclosed in commonly assigned, U.S. patent application Ser. No. 11/066,064, filed on Feb. 25, 2005 and titled, "SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR ESTABLISHING A PROGRESSIVE JACKPOT AWARD", which is hereby incorporated by reference.

[0073] Historical Composite Value

[0074] In one aspect of the present invention, the contribution is determined as a function of a historical composite value to calculate a first incremental value and, optionally, one or more second incremental value(s). The host computer **14** and the computer program application **34** determine the first incremental value and optionally the second incremental value in response to each signal from the plurality of gaming machines **12** in communication with the host computer **14**.

[0075] The parameters to determine the historical composite value could include various data gathered by the promotional progressive jackpot system **10** and stored within the databases **36**. The historical composite value is then multiplied by a percentage or other function to determine a first incremental value and optionally a second incremental value to be added to the promotional progressive jackpot pool **38** and the hidden pool **40** respectively.

[0076] In one aspect, the historical composite value could be established from a variety of the data stored in the player tracking database **42** and/or the machine financial accounting database **44**. The historical composite value could be determined based on the data stored in the player tracking database **42**. The computer program application **34** can determine the historical composite value as data averaged over a period of time. The period of time is configurable by the casino operator to have the historical composite value equate to an average wager, an average amount won, and/or an average loss by the player identified at the gaming machine **12**. The computer program application **34** uses the historical composite value to determine the first incremental value as a function, usually a percentage, of the historical composite value. The computer program application **34** determines the first incremental value each time the gaming machine **12** sends a signal indicating the first input by the player **18** on the gaming machine **12**C.

[0077] In a second aspect, the historical composite value could be established base on various data stored and gathered within the machine financial accounting database **44** by the promotional progressive jackpot system **10**. The historical composite value can be data averaged over a period of time such as the wagers, amount won, amount lost or the house take from the gaming machine **12**. The period of time is configurable by the casino operator to have the historical composite value equate to an average wager, an average amount won, and/or an average amount lost and/or an average house take from each gaming machine **12**. The computer program application **34** uses the historical composite value to determine the first incremental value as a function, usually a percentage, of the historical composite value. The computer program application **34** determines the first incremental value each time the gaming machine **12** sends a signal indicating the first input by the player **18** on the gaming machine **12**C.

[0078] In one aspect of the present invention, the historical composite value does not include, or is not based on, the current (or last) wager or sets of wagers. In another aspect of the present invention, the historical composite value is only based on data from closed data sessions.

[0079] Alternatively, the historical composite value could be determined by various data stored in either the player or machine databases **42**, **44**. The historical composite value could be determined over a period of time to generally equate to the average take, average coins wagered, or any combination of the data stored in the player tracking database **42** and the machine financial accounting database **44**. In addition, the historical composite value could be a configurable parameter in the computer program application **34** sampled over a period of time and include data specific to the player, the player tracking database **42**, and/or data specific to the gaming machine **12**, the machine financial accounting database **44** and alternatively any combination thereof.

[0080] The contribution to either pool may therefore be determined by multiplying the historical composite value by one or more other values: including, but not limited to:

[0081] (a) total value of wagers or purchases or transaction in the session and/or

[0082] (b) total number of wagers or purchases or transaction in the session and/or

[0083] (c) a predetermined or constant percentage and/or

[0084] (d) the theoretical hold percentage (see above).

[0085] Promotional Progressive Jackpots

[0086] In one aspect of the present invention, the promotional progressive jackpot pool **38** is accumulated by the host computer **14**. The host computer **14** continuously updates the promotional progressive jackpot pool **38** by adding the first incremental value in response to the signal from the gaming machine **12**.

[0087] With reference to FIG. **3**, a flow diagram of an exemplary embodiment of the present invention is shown. FIG. **3** shows a method for establishing A promotional progressive jackpot pool. In a first step **46**, a plurality of gaming machines **12** playable by a plurality of players is provided. In one aspect, each gaming machine **12** may be playable in first and second modes selectable by the player. The promotional progressive jackpot pool may be associated with the plurality of gaming machines **12**. In a second step **48**, a data session may be opened on the host computer **14** in response to a first input by one of the players on a selected one of the gaming machines. As discussed above, the input may be the act, by the player, of logging onto the selected one of the gaming machines. Or if the player's play is anonymous, by use of the machine by the player.

[0088] In a third step **50**, the player is allowed to select one of the first and second modes and to play the gaming machine **12** in the selected one of the first and second modes. As discussed above, the modes may be related to the player's choice of games on a multi-game gaming machine and/or a choice of denomination on a multi-denomination gaming machine and/or number of credits wagered. After the player's choice is made, the player may begin using or playing the gaming machine. In a first decision block **52**, if predefined criteria requiring an update of the session are met (see above), then the method proceeds to a fourth step **54**. Otherwise the method proceeds to the second decision block **58**.

[0089] In a fourth step **54**, information related to the player's play of the game, for example, wagers or wager information, is recorded on the host computer in the data session. In one aspect, the information recorded may be related to the player's play of the selected one of the gaming machines during the data session (see above).

[0090] In a fifth step **56**, an incremental value may be established as a function of the recorded information in the data session and added to a promotional progressive jackpot pool. In one embodiment, the step of establishing the incremental value as a function of the recorded information in the data session adding the first incremental value to a promotional progressive jackpot pool is performed each time wager information is updated in the data session. In one embodiment, the first incremental amount is established as a function of the updated wager information.

[0091] In the second decision block **58**, if the player changes mode, e.g., by changing the game or denomination being played, then control proceeds to a sixth step **60**. Otherwise, the method returns to the first decision block **52**.

[0092] In the sixth step **60**, the data session may be closed in response to the player choosing to play the game in the other of the first and second modes and the data session is updated. For example, in a multi-game gaming machine **12**, if the player changes games, the data session may be closed. Or if the gaming machine **12** may be played with different denominations, then if the player switches denominations, then the current data session may be closed. Or if the gaming machine **12** may be placed with different credit wager amounts, i.e., may credit or a number of credits less than max credit, then if the player switches denominations, then the current data session may be closed. In one aspect of the present invention, a new data session may be automatically opened when the previous data session is closed (unless the data session is closed because the player has logged out or otherwise terminated play).

[0093] In a seventh step **62**, an incremental value may be established as a function of the recorded information in the data session and adding the first incremental value to A promotional progressive jackpot pool. In one embodiment, the step of establishing a first incremental value as a function of the recorded information in the data session and adding the first incremental value to A promotional progressive jackpot pool is performed each time wager information is updated in the data session. In one embodiment, the first incremental amount is established as a function of the updated wager information.

[0094] In one embodiment the first incremental amount is a function of the updated wager information multiplied by a predetermined percentage. In another embodiment, the first incremental amount is a function of the updated wager information multiplied by a theoretical hold percentage associated with the selected one of the gaming machines.

[0095] In one aspect of the present invention, the theoretical hold percentage is dependent upon the selected one of the first and second modes. For example, in a multi-game game, each game playable on the selected one of the gamine machines **12** may have a different theoretical hold. Thus, the incremental amount may be determined as a function of the theoretical hold of the game in the mode being played.

[0096] In a seventh step **58**, at least a portion of the promotional progressive jackpot pool may be awarded to a progressive winning one of the players in response to an occurrence of predetermined progressive jackpot conditions.

[0097] Additionally, a current data session may be closed (and a new data session may be opened) in response to:

[0098] (a) passage of a predetermined amount of time;

[0099] (b) after the one of the players logs out;

[0100] (c) after a predetermined number of wagers in the data session; and,

[0101] (d) after a predetermined value of wagers in the data session and (e) other predetermined criteria.

[0102] With reference to FIG. **4**, in one exemplary embodiment of the present invention, in a first step **66**, the promotional progressive jackpot system **10** allows the player **18** to establish a first input into the gaming machine **12**C. As previously discussed, the first input may include, but not limited to, the player logging into, playing and/or using the gaming machine for other transactions. In a second step **64**, the gaming machine **12**C sends the signal in response to the first input by the player **18**. The promotional progressive jackpot pool **38** is contributed to by the plurality of gaming machines **12** in communication via the network **16** with the host computer **14**. There may be additional restrictions or qualifications that the player **18** must meet to win and/or contribute to the promotional progressive jackpot pool **38**, i.e., maximum wager, identified player or some other configurable parameters or restrictions set by the casino operator.

[0103] In a third step **70**, the host computer **14** determines the first incremental value upon each signal received from the plurality of gaming machines **12**A-**12**I indicating the first input by the player **18** on the gaming machine **12**C. The first incremental value is determined as a function of the historical composite value. The function in the illustrated embodiment is a percentage of the historical composite value. However, the first incremental value could also be determined the function and configurable by the casino operator. In a fourth step **66**, the first incremental value is responsively added into the promotional progressive jackpot pool **38**. The promotional progressive jackpot pool **38** is continuously updated by the host computer **14** with each addition of the first incremental value as determined based on signals received from the plurality of gaming machines **12**.

[0104] The computer program application **34** may include parameters to allow for the casino operator to set the function that determines the first incremental value and optionally a second incremental value. The function and second function used can be a percentage of the historical composite value, or any additional function configurable within the computer program application **34** by the casino operator.

[0105] In the illustrated embodiment, the promotional progressive jackpot system **10** may include a hidden pool **40**. The hidden pool **40** can be used to initially fund the promotional progressive jackpot pool **38** to a minimum value after a triggering event. In addition, the hidden pool **40** could be used to fund secondary prizes. The secondary prizes may include compensation for entertainment ticket, credits at the casino, food and/or rooms comps as just a few examples of the potentially unlimited secondary prizes.

[0106] The hidden pool **40** is accumulated by the computer program application **34** determining a second incremental value as a second function of a historical composite value. The second function in the illustrated embodiment is usually a percentage and may be the same as the function to determine the first incremental value. However, the second function is configurable by the casino operator to satisfy the funds needed to maintain the promotional progressive jackpot pool **38**. The host computer **14** determines the second incremental

value upon each signal received from the plurality of gaming machines **12** indicating the first input by the player **18** on the gaming machine **12**C. The second incremental value is responsively added into the hidden pool **40**. The hidden pool **40** is continuously updated by the host computer **14** with each addition of the second incremental value. The hidden pool **40** can be configured by the casino operator establishing a maximum value for the hidden pool **40**. The second incremental value is determined and added to the hidden pool **40** only when the hidden pool **40** is below the maximum value. The hidden pool **40** can be transferred into the promotional progressive jackpot pool **38** after the awarding of the promotional progressive jackpot pool **38** to establish a minimum value or initial value of the promotional progressive jackpot pool **38**.

[0107] Awarding

[0108] At least a portion of the promotional progressive jackpot pool **38** is awarded to the player **18** in response to the occurrence of a trigger event. The host computer **14** determines if the trigger event has occurred. The host computer **14** awards the promotional progressive jackpot pool **38** in response to the trigger event to the player **18** that satisfied or caused the trigger event. The trigger event could include a playing of a promotional progressive jackpot game and the winning of the promotional progressive game as the trigger event. Such promotional progressive jackpot games may include, but not limited to, a game of chance, a lottery, a lotto-type game, a random drawing, and a game of skill and/or strategy.

[0109] In another embodiment the trigger event could be defined as the promotional progressive jackpot pool **38** being greater than or equal to a trigger value. The promotional progressive jackpot pool **38** is awarded to the player **18** that the first incremental value in response to that player's first input when added to the promotional progressive jackpot pool **38** became greater than or equal to the trigger value. Typically in this instance the host computer **14** randomly establishes the trigger value and awards the promotional progressive jackpot pool **38** when the promotional progressive jackpot pool **38** is greater than or equal to the trigger value.

[0110] In another embodiment based upon the promotional progressive jackpot triggering event, supplemental prizes, such as cashable or non-cashable electronic promotional credits and other prizes may be awarded to the player **18** from the hidden pools **40** based upon various casino operator criteria configured in the promotional progressive jackpot game. Furthermore, the supplemental prizes may be fixed or variable amount either based upon the casino operator criteria or based upon player activity criteria from the player tracking database **10**.

[0111] The invention has been described in an illustrative manner, and it is to be understood that the terminology which has been used is intended to be in the nature of words of description rather than of limitation. Obviously, many modifications and variations of the present invention are possible in light of the above teachings, and the invention may be practiced otherwise than as specifically described within the scope of the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for establishing a promotional progressive jackpot pool, the method including the steps of:

providing a plurality of gaming machines playable by a plurality of players, each gaming machine being playable in first and second modes selectable by the player, the promotional progressive jackpot pool being associated with the plurality of gaming machines, wherein each of the first and second modes has a respective theoretical hold percentage associated therewith;

opening a data session on a host computer in response to a first input by one of the players on a selected one of the gaming machines;

allowing the player to select one of the first and second modes and to play the gaming machine in the selected one of the first and second modes;

sending information, in the data session, from the selected one of the gaming machine to the host computer, related to the player's play of the selected one of the gaming machines during the data session and recording the information in a database on the host computer in response to a predetermined trigger; and,

closing the data session in response to the player choosing to play the game in the other of the first and second modes and responsively (1) establishing, by the host computer, a first incremental value as a function of the recorded information in the data session and the theoretical hold percentage associated with the selected one of the first and second modes and adding the first incremental value to the promotional progressive jackpot pool and (2) awarding at least a portion of the promotional progressive jackpot pool to a winning one of the players in response to an occurrence of predetermined promotional progressive jackpot conditions.

2. A method, as set forth in claim **1**, wherein the first input is an occurrence of the one of the players logging onto the selected one of the gaming machines, the method including the step of opening a new data session after the previous data session has been closed.

3. A method, as set forth in claim **2**, wherein the information recorded in the data session includes wager(s) placed by the one of the players, the data session being updated with wager information in response to each wager being made.

4. A method, as set forth in claim **3**, wherein the step of establishing a first incremental value as a function of the recorded information in the data session and adding the first incremental value to the promotional progressive jackpot pool is performed each time wager information is updated in the data session.

5. A method, as set forth in claim **4**, wherein the first incremental amount is established as a function of the updated wager information.

6. A method, as set forth in claim **5**, wherein the first incremental amount is a function of the updated wager information multiplied by a predetermined percentage.

7. A method, as set forth in claim **5**, wherein the first incremental amount is a function of the updated wager information multiplied by the theoretical hold percentage associated with the selected one of the first and second modes.

8. A method, as set forth in claim **1**, including the step of closing the data session in response to one of the following:

(a) passage of a predetermined amount of time;

(b) after the one of the players logs out;

(c) after a predetermined number of wagers in the data session; and,

(d) after a predetermined value of wagers in the data session.

9. A method, as set forth in claim **1**, wherein the selected one of the gaming machines allows the player to play a game in first and second denominations, the player allowed to play

the game in the first denomination in the first mode and in the second denomination in the second mode.

10. A method, as set forth in claim **1**, wherein the selected one of the gaming machines allows the player to play a first game and a second game, the player allowed to play the first game in the first mode and the second game in the second mode.

11. A method for establishing A promotional progressive jackpot pool, the method including the steps of:

providing a plurality of gaming machines playable by a plurality of players, each gaming machine being playable in first and second modes selectable by the player, the promotional progressive jackpot pool being associated with the plurality of gaming machines;

opening a data session on a host computer in response to a first input by one of the players on a selected one of the gaming machines;

allowing the player to select one of the first and second modes and to play the gaming machine in the selected one of the first and second modes, wherein each of the first and second modes has a respective theoretical hold percentage associated therewith;

detecting an occurrence of update data session criteria and responsively (1) sending information, in the data session, from the selected one of the gaming machines to the host computer, related to the player's play of the selected one of the gaming machines during the data session and recording the information on the host computer and (2) establishing a first incremental value as a function of the recorded information in the data session and the theoretical hold percentage associated with the selected one of the first and second modes and adding the first incremental value to the promotional progressive jackpot pool; and,

closing the data session in response to the player choosing to play the game in the other of the first and second modes, the step of closing the data session including (1) sending information, in the data session, from the selected one of the gaming machines to the host computer, related to the player's play of the selected one of the gaming machines during the data session and recording the information on the host computer and (2) establishing a second incremental value as a function of the recorded information in the data session and the theoretical hold percentage associated with the other of the first and second modes and adding the second incremental value to the promotional progressive jackpot pool.

12. A system for establishing A promotional progressive jackpot pool, comprising:

a host computer; and,

a plurality of gaming machines playable by a plurality of players and being operatively connected to the host computer, each gaming machine being playable in first and second modes selectable by the player, the promotional progressive jackpot pool being associated with the plurality of gaming machines wherein each of the first and second modes has a respective theoretical hold percentage associated therewith, the host computer for opening a data session on the host computer in response to a first input by one of the players on a selected one of the gaming machines, each gaming machine for allowing the player to select one of the first and second modes and to play the gaming machine in the selected one of the first and second modes, the selected one of the game machines for sending information related to the player's play of the selected one of the gaming machines to the host computer, the host computer for recording the information in the data session on the host computer, for closing the data session in response to the player choosing to play the game in the other of the first and second modes and responsively (1) establishing a first incremental value as a function of the recorded information in the data session and the theoretical hold percentage associated with the selected one of the first and second modes and adding the first incremental value to the promotional progressive jackpot pool and (2) awarding at least a portion of the promotional progressive jackpot pool to a winning one of the players in response to an occurrence of predetermined promotional progressive jackpot conditions.

13. A system, as set forth in claim **12**, wherein the first input is an occurrence of the one of the players logging onto the selected one of the gaming machines, the host computer for opening a new data session after the previous data session has been closed.

14. A system, as set forth in claim **13**, wherein the information recorded in the data session includes wager(s) placed by the one of the players, the data session being updated with wager information in response to each wager being made.

15. A system, as set forth in claim **14**, wherein the host computer establishes a first incremental value as a function of the recorded information in the data session and adds the first incremental value to the promotional progressive jackpot pool each time wager information is updated in the data session.

16. A system, as set forth in claim **15**, wherein the first incremental amount is established as a function of the updated wager information.

17. A system, as set forth in claim **16**, wherein the first incremental amount is a function of the updated wager information multiplied by a theoretical hold percentage associated with the selected one of the gaming machines.

18. A system, as set forth in claim **12**, the host computer for closing the data session in response to one of the following:

(a) passage of a predetermined amount of time;

(b) after the one of the players logs out;

(c) after a predetermined number of wagers in the data session; and,

(d) after a predetermined value of wagers in the data session.

19. A system, as set forth in claim **12**, wherein the selected one of the gaming machines allows the player to play a game in first and second denominations, the player allowed to play the game in the first denomination in the first mode and in the second denomination in the second mode.

20. A system, as set forth in claim **12**, wherein the selected one of the gaming machines allows the player to play a first game and a second game, the player allowed to play the first game in the first mode and the second game in the second mode.

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