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- **Painter, David**
Hocklet Heath, Solihull, B94 6QE (GB)
- **Davies, Adrian**
Roath, Cardiff, CF23 5PG (GB)

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(74) Representative:
James, Michael John Gwynne et al
Wynne-Jones, Lainé & James,
33, St. Mary Street
Cardiff CF10 1AF (GB)

(71) Applicant: **JPM International Limited**
Cardiff CF11 8AQ (GB)

(72) Inventors:
• **Short, Kevin**
Coventry, CV3 2SL (GB)

(54) **A prize awarding system for gaming machines**

(57) A prize awarding system allows for higher prizes on the results of a series of linked gaming machines than can be achieved on the play of an individual machine. A primary fund (represented by a solid line) builds up steadily until, after n_1 games, a major prize is won. This is awarded to the player and the primary fund reverts to its base level, only to build up again as further games are played. After a total of n_2 games, it reaches a permitted maximum, at which point the proportion of the stake money previously allocated to the primary fund

is directed to the reserve fund (represented by a broken line), which builds up in a similar manner as further games are played. If another major win is achieved after a total of n_3 games, then the player is awarded a maximum prize. This exhausts the primary fund down to its base level, but there is an instant transfer from the reserve fund to the primary fund, which therefore starts to build up again from well above its base level. When it reaches maximum again, the reserve fund starts to be replenished.

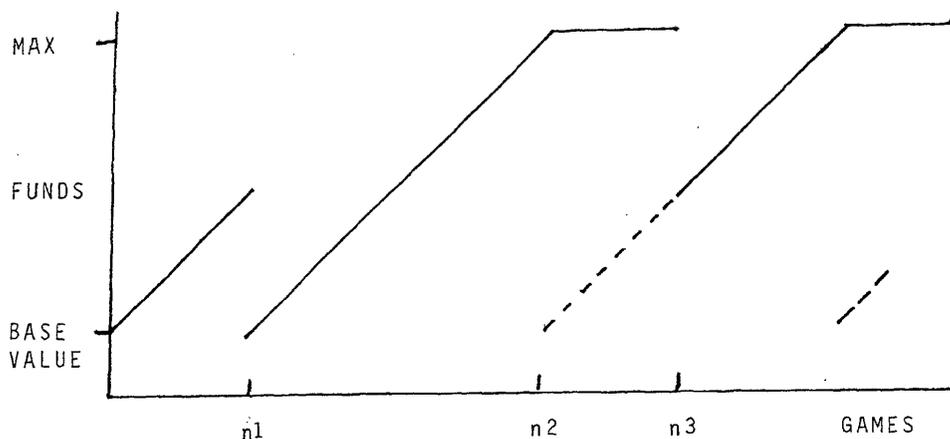


FIGURE 1



European Patent
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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
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DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT					
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.7)		
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X	US 5 984 779 A (BRIDGEMAN STEPHANIE ET AL) 16 November 1999 (1999-11-16) glossary * column 6 - column 8 * * column 11, line 55 - column 12, line 3 * * claim 1 * * claim 3 *	1-20	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl.7)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>G07F</td> </tr> </table>	TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl.7)	G07F
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X	US 5 344 144 A (CANON JOSEPH W) 6 September 1994 (1994-09-06) * abstract * * claim 1 *	1-20			
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The present search report has been drawn up for all claims					
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 18 November 2003	Examiner Bohn, P		
<p>CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS</p> <p>X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document</p>		<p>T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document</p>			

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**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
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This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report. The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on
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