

GAME AND GAME APPARATUS

This application is a national stage filing under 35 U.S.C. 371 of International Application PCT/AU2004/001 219 filed on Sep. 9, 2004 which claims priority from AU Provisional Application No. 2003 904910 filed Sep. 9, 2003 and AU Application No. 2004 901035 filed Mar. 2, 2004. The entire teachings of the referenced application is incorporated herein by reference. International Application PCT/AU2004/001219 was published under POT Article 21(2) in English.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to the field of games, card games, wagering card games and electronic games, especially casino wagering games.

Throughout the specification, unless the context requires otherwise, the word “comprise” or variations such as “comprises” or “comprising”, will be understood to imply the inclusion of a stated integer or group of integers but not the exclusion of any other integer or group of integers.

BACKGROUND

As a leisure time activity poker and other card games have been popular for many years. The capital requirements for playing poker and other table card games are very low. All that are needed are one or more decks of cards, a playing surface and a few participants. Five card poker is a game that most people know how to play and many games have been developed using the same basic priority or rank order of winning poker hands: Royal Flush, Straight Flush, Four of a kind, Full House, Straight, Three of a kind, Two Pair, One Pair, and High Card(s) in hand.

For some time, it had been difficult to adapt the rules of poker into a casino table game in which each player plays against the house, rather than against other players. Although club-type games with players wagering against each other have been popular, it was desirable for a game to be played where the house received a more direct payback from the game. In a conventional poker game, a number of players (greater than one) are each dealt a poker hand by one player (or the house dealer who does not play in the game) who acts as the dealer. The player with the highest ranking hand based on the established priority ranking of poker hands wins. Each player in turn deals a hand as the game continues. It is usually essential to have wagering steps in the game to maintain the interest and excitement of the game. In the absence of wagering, there is little to commend the play of poker.

Many places, both within and without Australia, have legalized gaming. Poker is one of the games of chance offered in both casinos and gaming venues. In a conventional house poker game, the house provides a dealer, the playing cards, the table and chairs, but the house does not play a hand. The house collects a nominal percentage of each players bet (house percentage) that compensates the house for providing the facilities to the players. Alternatively, the house may charge each player a set amount per hand or for a specified length of time of play. Each player is competing not against the house, but against all the other players with the highest hand winning the total of all the wagers made on that hand.

Many people do not like to play house poker because each player is competing against his fellow players, not against the house. Many people would rather attempt to win money from an impersonal source, the house or the casino, rather than from their fellow players with whom they may be acquainted. House poker also tends to not offer any bonus payments for

particularly good hands, although bonuses are sometimes paid for highest hands in tournaments or for specific combinations of hands at poker tables (eg, a losing hand of at least a full house). While a Royal Flush is a rare occurrence and generates a thrill for any poker player, the player collects the same total wager that he would have collected if the hand was won with a Three of a Kind.

In the past fifteen years, a number of card games have been introduced to provide poker type card games as house-banked casino table games. These games have focused on a number of elements in providing excitement and staying power for the games. The games must be quickly understood by players.

The rules must be simple and clear. The resolution of wagers by the dealer must be easily accomplished. The reading of hands by a dealer must not be complex. In addition, the games must provide a high enough win frequency to appeal to players, yet allow the house to retain a profitable portion of the wagers. These needs have limited the number of successful games that have been designed and successfully introduced into the casino gaming market.

Among the successful games are Let It Ride Bonus. RTM. Poker, Three Card Poker. RTM. Game and Caribbean Stud. RTM. Poker. These games have each achieved a level of commercial success with different formats and attributes.

In Caribbean Stud. RTM. Poker, a player makes an initial ante wager, and five cards are dealt to each player and to a dealer. The dealer exposes one of the five cards to influence the player. The player decides if the dealt player hand is of sufficient rank to compete against the dealer's hand. The player may fold the player's hand at that time, or continue the game by placing an additional wager (referred to as the “Bet”) that is usually required to be twice the value of the ante. The dealer's hand qualifies for active play against the bet with a rank of at least Ace-King. If the dealer qualifies, the rank of the player's hands are compared with the rank of the dealer's hand. Players with hands of higher rank than the dealer's hand win both the ante and the bet. Players with hands of lower rank than the dealer's hand lose both the ante and the bet. If an initial side bet (often referred to as the jackpot side bet) has been made by the player, ranked hands of particularly high values (eg, at least a flush) are paid absolute bonus amounts or may be paid out of a progressive jackpot. This bonus side bet is paid whether or not the player's hand rank exceeds the rank of the dealer's hand.

Problems with most poker games and especially the above mentioned, occur for the player in the wagering structure whereby players have to place an ante wager and then must place additional wagers at multiple odds to continue to participate in the game.

With the above games, players do have the option to fold their hand and forfeit their ante wager. These games have a fold rate of in excess of 21%. This can make games unattractive to the recreational player as the player will become bored. The player normally folds early in the game, leaving the player lengthy periods of downtime before the commencement of the next game.

It is always desirable to explore alternative games for play in the field of gaming tables to provide players with varied experiences and alternatives to known games.

DISCLOSURE OF THE INVENTION

One variation of the present invention relates to a card game that can be played in a casino or in a gaming venue. More particularly, it relates to a hybrid version of a poker game.