US 20030042679A1

(54) **METHOD OF PLAYING A THREE-PART WAGERING GAME WITH BONUS FOR CONSECUTIVE WINS**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A method of playing a wagering game is described. The method requires the player to place three wagers to participate in a three-segment game. A fourth bet is played to participate in a bonus event. A first card is dealt to the dealer and each player. The high card wins the first bet. If the player and dealer tie, one-half of the player's bet is returned to the player. Additional cards are dealt according to the rules of blackjack, except a maximum of six cards are dealt in any hand. Aces may be split, and doubling down is allowed. The second bet is resolved according to the rules of blackjack, with ties pushing. Additional cards are dealt, if necessary to form a six-card hand. Hands are resolved according to standard poker rankings, and payouts are made according to a predetermined schedule, or pay table payout. If the bonus wager is made, an additional bonus payout is awarded for winning and/or pushing at least two consecutively played game segments.

FIG. 1

FIG. 2

POKER BLACK HIGH
JACK CARD

BONUS ACTION
PAYOUTS
ROYAL FLUSH ......100 TO 1
STRAIGHT FLUSH...50 TO 1
FOUR OF A KIND. . .25 TO 1
FULL HOUSE ......15 TO 1
FLUSH ....8 TO 1
STRAIGHT............5 TO 1
THREE OF A KIND ...3 TO 1
TWO PAIR ....2 TO 1
PAIR ACES. ....1 TO 1

FIG. 3

*FIG.*4

104   102   100

POKER   BLACK   HIGH
JACK   CARD

106

BONUS ACTION PAYOUTS	
ROYAL FLUSH	100 TO 1
STRAIGHT FLUSH	50 TO 1
FOUR OF A KIND	25 TO 1
FULL HOUSE	15 TO 1
FLUSH	8 TO 1
STRAIGHT	5 TO 1
THREE OF A KIND	3 TO 1
TWO PAIR	2 TO 1
PAIR ACES	1 TO 1

120

HAT
TRICK
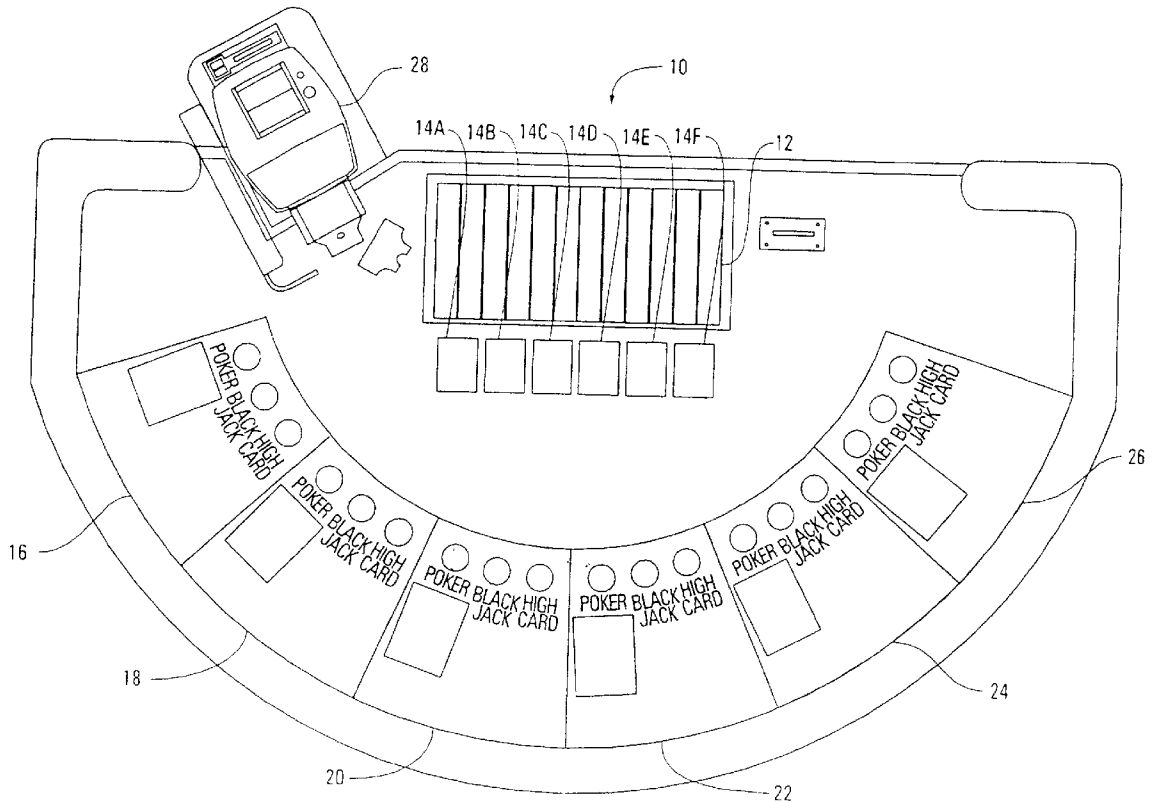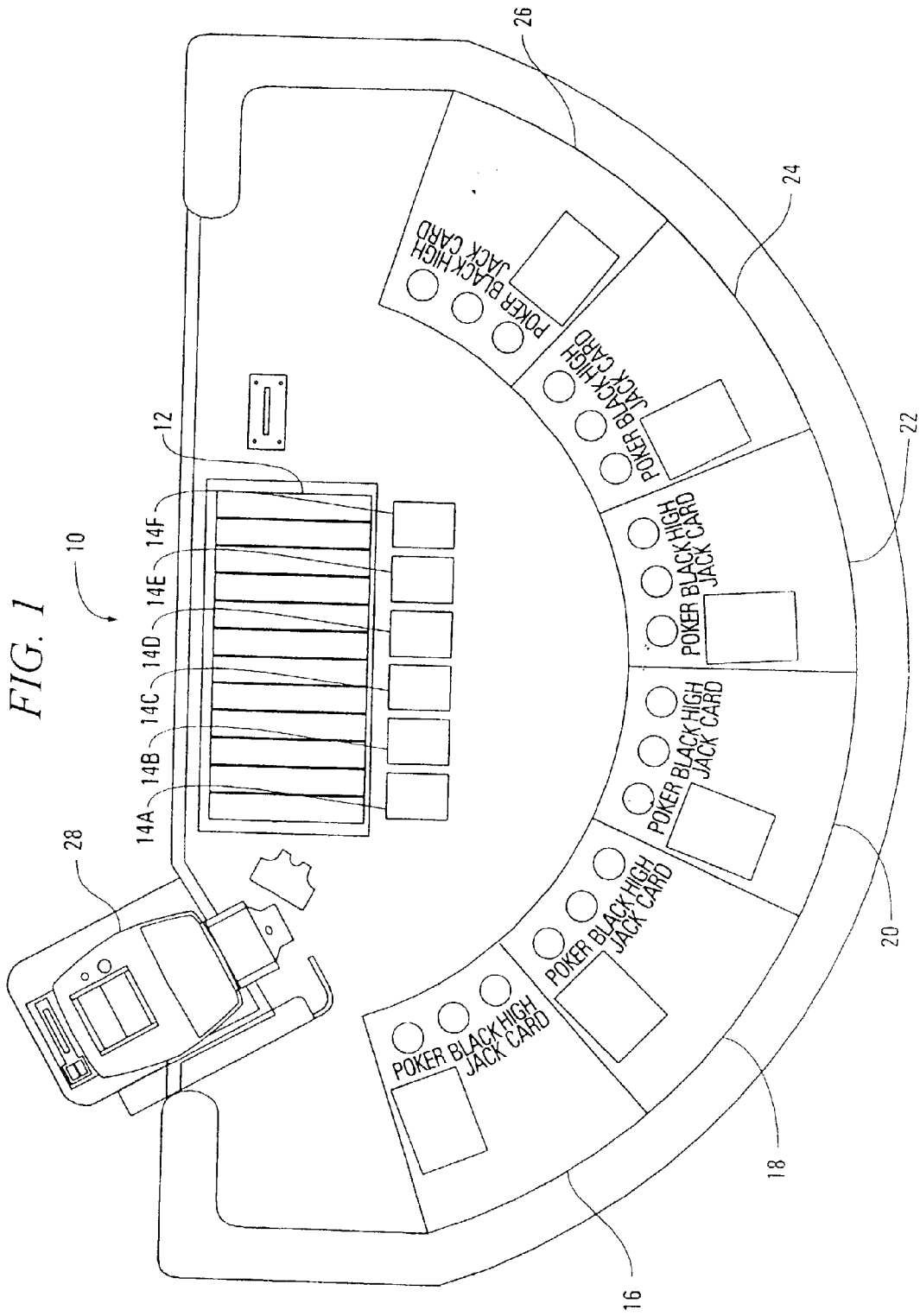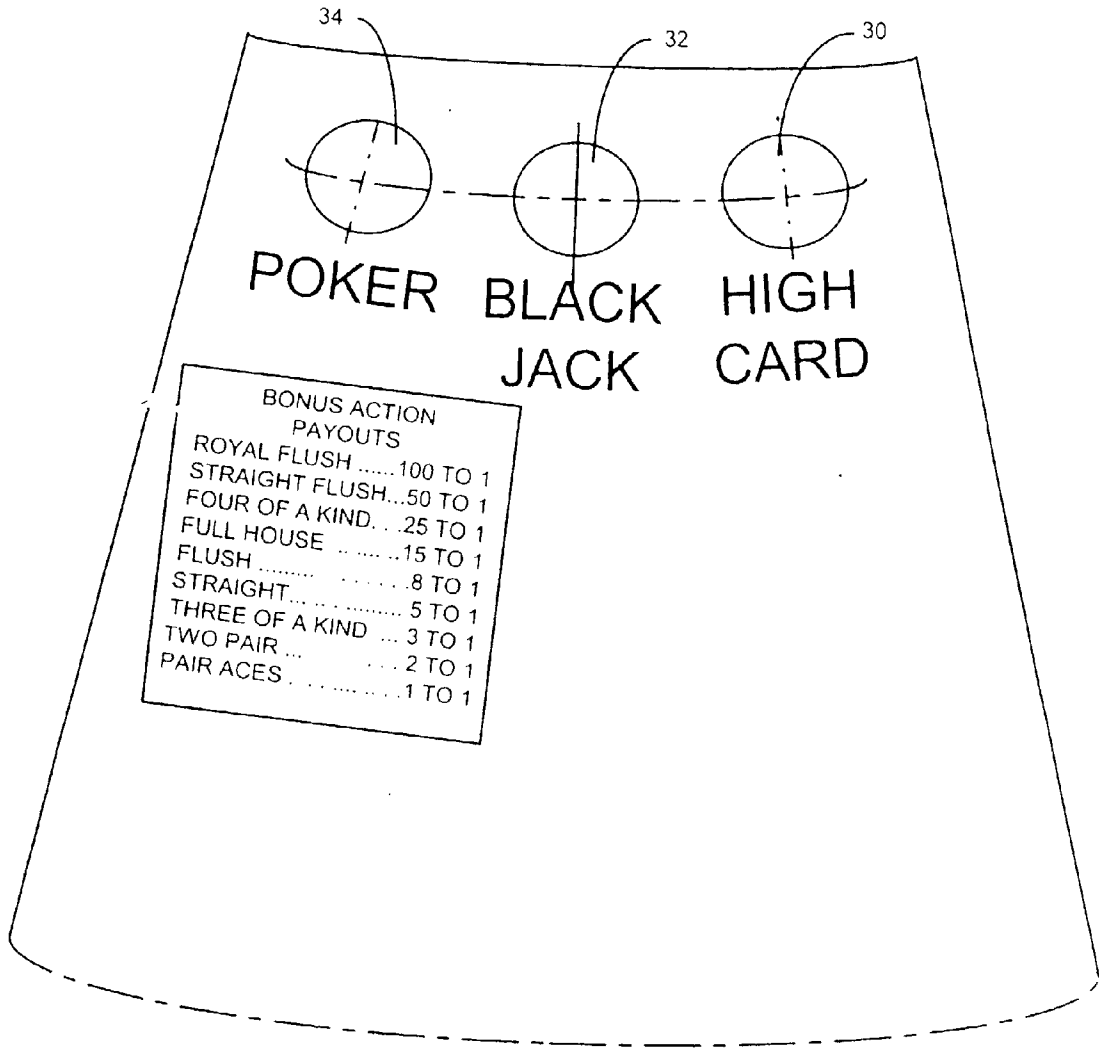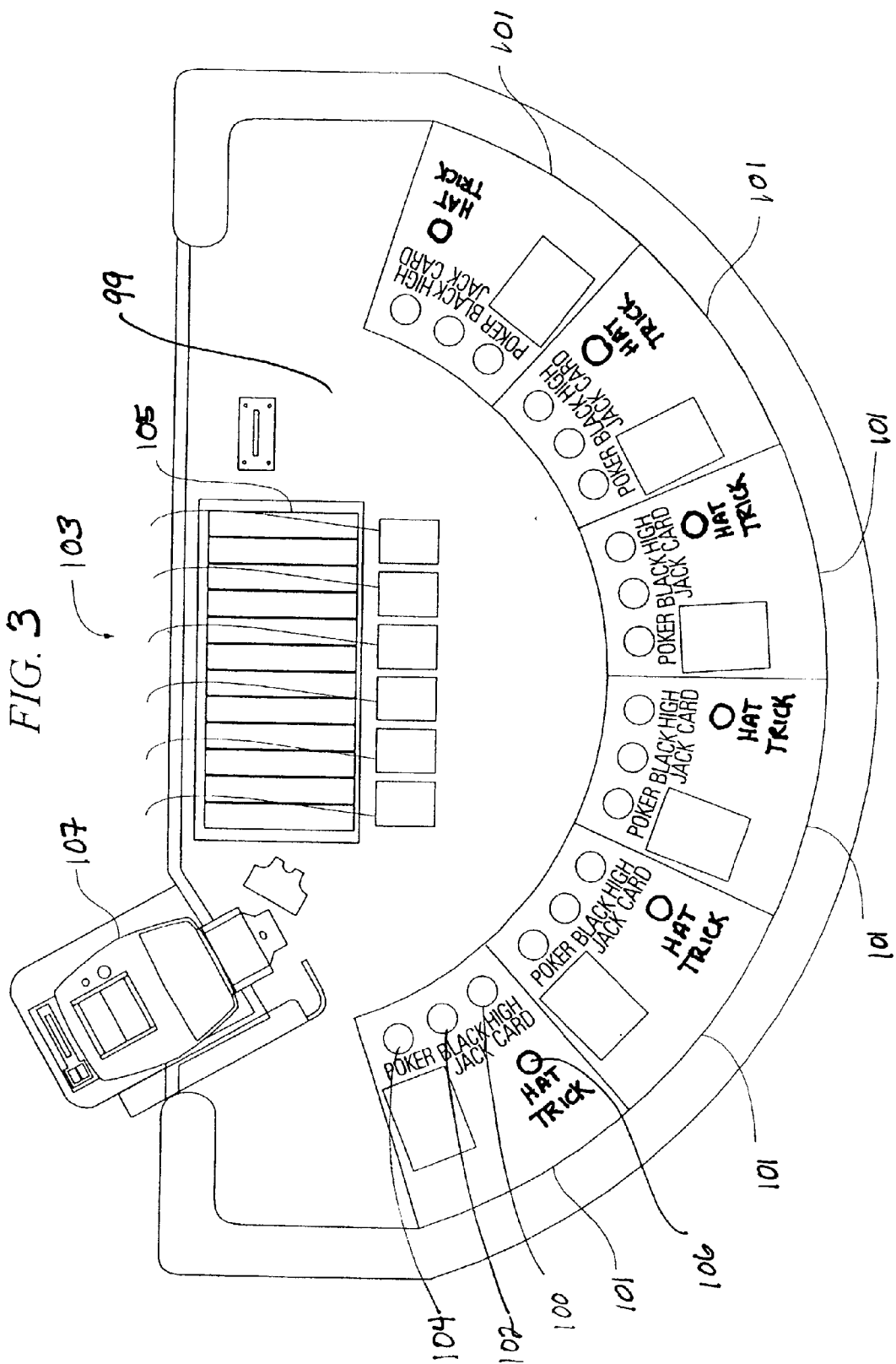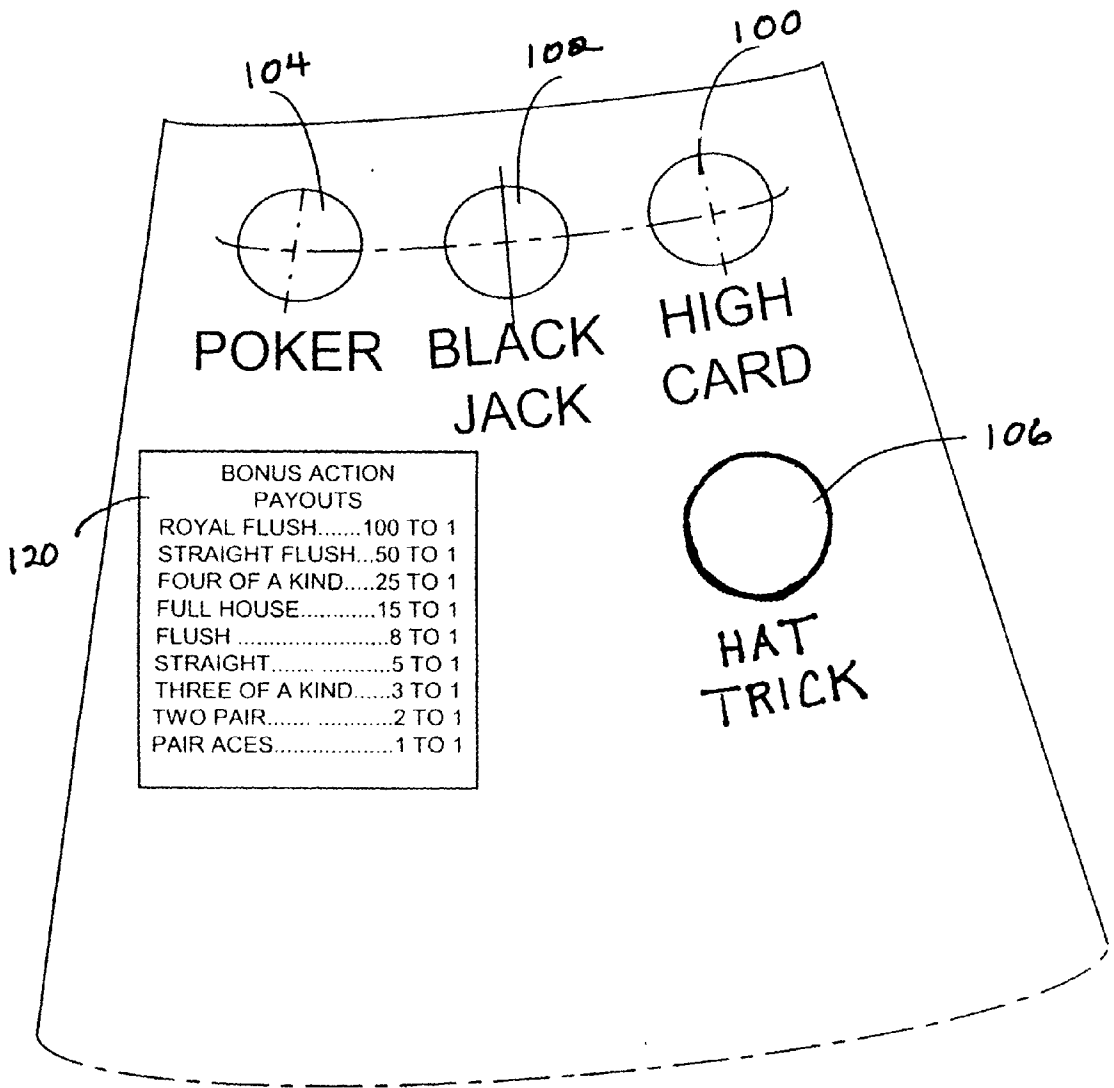
METHOD OF PLAYING A THREE-PART WAGERING GAME WITH BONUS FOR CONSECUTIVE WINS

RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is a Continuation-In-Part of pending U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/740,216 filed Dec. 18, 2000, entitled: Method of Playing a Three Part Wagering Game.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] 1. Field of the Invention

[0003] The present invention relates to wagering game play methods. In particular, it relates to a game play method that combines elements of several well-known games, such as high card, blackjack, baccarat and poker, and includes a unique bonus event on the occurrence of wins and/or pushes on consecutively played game segments.

[0004] 2. Background of the Art

[0005] It is only within the past fifteen years that casinos have expanded the range of table games that are available to players. In earlier days, casino table card games were primarily limited to blackjack and a few variations in stud poker. Now casino table card games may be found in a wide variety of games including Let It Ride® poker, Three Card™ poker, Caribbean Stud® poker, Spanish 21® blackjack, Casino War™, and the like. More recently, new casino table games have been introduced that include a number of different games that are played consecutively at various stages of play, with the same or different number of cards used in each of the games.

[0006] The prior art relevant to the play of multiple games includes a number of wagering games that include combinations of known game elements, such as is described in Awada U.S. Pat. No. 5,988,643. This reference describes a three part wagering game, consisting of three mandatory games of war, blackjack and poker—all against a dealer's hand. The player places a wager for each game segment. The player qualifies for play of each game segment regardless of the outcome of previously played game segments. For example, the player may lose the high card hand but still play out the blackjack and poker hands. This game lacks a bonus payout for consecutively won and/or pushed game segments. This reference is described in greater detail, below. Examples of other multi-part wagering games are described in the U.S. patents mentioned below.

[0007] Josephs U.S. Pat. No. 5,377,993 describes a casino wagering game in which a player places a bet and is dealt two cards to play a modified form of blackjack. The dealer may take additional cards according to conventional blackjack rules, but the player receives only two cards. The player has the option of doubling his initial bet, but in contrast to the standard rules of 21, he or she may not receive an additional card. No additional wager is required to participate in the second segment of the game. The dealer's two initial cards become community cards. The community cards are combined with the player's two cards to form a four-card poker hand. The poker hands are compared to a pay table of predetermined winning poker hands and corresponding odds, and payouts are made to all players who hold winning hands. Only players who beat the dealer in black-

jack advance to the poker round. This game lacks the feature of independently playing a sequence of games, regardless of the outcome of each individual game segment. The game also lacks the feature of a side bet on the occurrence of consecutive wins in the sequentially played game segments, and requires only a single bet for playing both game play segments.

[0008] Malek, U.S. Pat. No. 5,265,882 describes a multi-part game that allows each player to play against one another. The game is dealt from a six-deck shoe. The players must bet on at least two out of the three available games. Players simultaneously play 21, draw poker, and baccarat. The dealer initially deals one card to each player, and a card to him or herself, face down. The player with the highest-ranking card can place an additional bet against the other players. The remaining players can match the bets, but must bet as a group. This game does not include a sequence of games, and the player has the option to refrain from playing one of the segments.

[0009] Macaisa, U.S. Pat. No. 5,639,092 describes the sequential play of a series of five separate games. The players have the option of playing one or more of the games. The games are: 21, roulette, baccarat, poker and a poker jackpot game. In this game, it is not mandatory to play all game segments. The players and the dealer receive two cards each. If the player has a two-card point count of 12, the dealer collects the roulette bet. If the players hold a red and a black card, the dealer takes the roulette bet. If the player holds two red cards or two black cards, the dealer pays the player odds on the roulette bet.

[0010] The dealer deals additional optional cards to the player in accordance with the standard rules of blackjack, except that a maximum of five cards are dealt in the 21 game. If the player busts and does not have at least three of a kind or better, the player loses his blackjack, poker and bonus poker bet at the same time. If the player beats the dealer's 21 hand and has a pair of tens or higher, the player is paid only on the blackjack bet. In this game, each game segment is not mandatory, and there is no bonus bet and award for consecutive wins and/or pushes on the play of each game segment.

[0011] Awada, U.S. Pat. No. 5,921,550 describes a game in which the players place three equal wagers to participate in the game. Players are dealt a first card. Players having a first card with a value of 9 or higher win a payout on the first bet. Players are then dealt a second card. If the second card is 9 or higher, or the player holds a pair of 2's through 8's, the player is awarded a payout on the second bet. The players each receive three additional cards. Players combine the first two cards with the three additional cards to form a five-card poker hand. Poker hands are resolved against a pay table. Each game segment is against the house, and not against a dealer's hand. There is no bonus bet or side bet and there are no corresponding payouts for consecutively won/pushed game segments.

[0012] Awada, U.S. Pat. No. 5,988,643 describes a three-part wagering game, including a first high card game, a second blackjack game, and a third poker game. An optional side bet is offered on the poker hand only. All three games are played against a dealer, and are played in sequence. A standard deck of cards is used to play the game. This game is currently in a few casinos in the United States and is

marketed under the name 3 WAY ACTION® table game. In this game, the player places three (equal or unequal) bets in betting circles corresponding to each of the three games, or game segments. The optional bonus action bet may be placed on the third game segment at this time and cannot be placed after receipt of additional cards. The first three bets are mandatory. The dealer shuffles the cards, and deals out one card face up to each player, and one card face up to himself. If the player's card has a higher point value than the dealer's card, the player wins even money on the first bet. Court cards (Jacks, Queens and Kings) count as 10, and Aces are counted as 11 in this part of the game. If the player and dealer tie, the house takes one-half of the high card bet. If the player wins, he is awarded even money or 1:1 on his high card bet.

[0013] After all high card bets are resolved, the dealer deals one additional card to each player, face up, and deals himself one additional card, face down. The player combines his card from the high card game with the card dealt to form a blackjack hand. If the player has a two-card 21, also called a "Natural", the player wins, typically at 3:2 odds. The player may take hits or stand according to conventional blackjack rules, except that the maximum number of cards he may hold in his hand is seven.

[0014] Additionally, the dealer must take additional cards, or "hits" on his hand so long as his total card count is 16 or less. If he reaches 7 cards without achieving a 17 or greater, the player automatically wins. This rule is referred to as the "Seven Card Charlie" rule. With the Exception of the 7 Card Charlie situation, the player must beat the dealer in point count, without busting, to win. Winning hands are awarded a payout that is paid 3:2 odds. If the player and dealer hands tie, the second wager is a push, and the wager is returned to the player.

[0015] According to the current game play rules of 3 WAY ACTION® table game, players may split pairs on Aces only, and may double down on 21 wagers. The "double down" rule allows players to double the amount of the initial wager on their blackjack bet. In exchange for enhancing the potential amount of their win, the player must take only one more card. No additional cards can be dealt in the play of the blackjack game after the third card if the player opts to double down. According to one exemplary strategy, players may choose to double down when their two-card point count is close to or equal to eleven, or when the dealer's up card is a five or a six. As part of the strategy, players assume that the dealer's hole card has a count of ten, and that they are likely to draw a 10 count card.

[0016] At the conclusion of the blackjack game, game play advances to a poker segment. If the player holds fewer than seven cards at the conclusion of his blackjack game, the dealer first deals cards to each player so that all players hold seven cards. The dealer deals additional cards to himself, if necessary to make his own card count equal to 7. The players and dealer make their best hand with five of the seven cards. Players win on their initial seven-card poker wager if their best 5-card poker hand has a higher rank than the dealer's best 5-card poker hand rank.

[0017] The side bet pays odds on the occurrence of certain predetermined, high ranking poker hands. The side bet pays only for outcomes in the third game segment, not outcomes in the other game segments, or combinations of outcomes of two or more game segments.

[0018] A common mistake that is made by the dealer is to deal too many cards. When too many cards are delivered to the player, the dealer must declare a misdeal. Significant delays are experienced when the cards must be gathered, reshuffled and redealt. The dealer must count the number of cards held by each player and provide enough additional cards so that each player holds seven cards. In practice, such errors are common, and always result in misdeals because the players are allowed to set their own hands. Once the cards are touched by the players, the order in which they are dealt to the player is lost (since they are free to rearrange the order of the cards), and the dealer can no longer identify the last card dealt and take it back.

[0019] In scoring the hands, normal poker rules apply, except that each player plays against the dealer and not the other players. In traditional poker, only the higher hand between the dealer's hand and the highest player's hand wins, according to standard poker rankings (royal flush, straight flush, four of a kind, full house, flush, straight, three of a kind, two pairs, a pair, high card). In bad beat poker, the second highest hand is paid a jackpot from a "bad beat" side bet wager prize pool. Each player compares his poker hand to the poker hand of the dealer. All players who have a higher ranking hand than the dealer win even money, or 1:1 on the poker bet. This payout is also different from conventional poker as the hand pays odds of 1:1 instead of paying all or a portion of a pot (the "pot" defined as a pool of wagers collected from each participating player).

[0020] In the current form of play of the 3 WAY ACTION® table game, at the beginning of the game before any cards are dealt, the player has the option of placing a fourth bet on the occurrence of certain high ranking poker hands that pay increasing payouts as the conventional poker ranking increases. For purposes of this disclosure, a "pay table side bet" is an optional side bet that includes a set of two or more predetermined combinations (such as a royal flush, and a straight flush, for example) with odds that increase as the frequency of occurrence of the combination decreases. Typically the payout odds increase with less frequently occurring combinations. For example, a suitable pay table side bet for the game described above would pay the following odds:

Pay Table I	
Hand	Payout
Royal Flush	1000:1
Straight Flush	100:1
Four of a kind	25:1
Full house	7:1
Flush	5:1
Straight	3:1
Three of a Kind	3:1

[0021] Although this game has received some level of acceptance in the industry, it presents several drawbacks. First, blackjack dealers are trained to sweep cards off of the table when a player's hand count exceeds 21, or busts. Because the game utilizes the same cards in the poker hand, the dealer must learn to leave the cards on the table. This obstacle has successfully been reduced through dealer training.

[0022] Another more serious drawback is that the play of the game is too slow to achieve widespread acceptance in the industry. It is well known that casino managers have earnings goals for each table on the casino floor, and if the game does not perform, it is promptly removed.

[0023] When dealing the poker segment of the 3 WAY ACTION® table game, the dealer deals additional cards to each player, and waits until the players set their hands and discard two cards before turning up his seven cards, and "setting" his own hand. "Setting" for purposes of this disclosure is arranging cards to form the highest possible ranking poker hand. Setting the hands is time consuming, especially for dealers who have not been trained in poker-type games where the player competes against the dealer such as in Pai Gow poker and Caribbean Stud® poker. Sometimes it is necessary to assist the player in setting his hand, or resetting the hand if the player did not recognize a higher ranking hand that could have been made. This leads to further delay.

[0024] Most casinos that have the game allow players to pick up their poker hand and arrange their cards before the dealer sets his hand. Each player must put the cards in a desired order, check for flushes (same suit), straights (sequences of cards in descending order), and like combinations to determine how to play the hand. Additionally, the player must choose which cards to discard. In a casino environment, this process is time consuming and almost always causes delays in the game.

[0025] Although this feature is not described in the patent, in the current form of the game being offered in Nevada casinos, the dealer's hand must qualify by holding an Ace or higher in order for the player to win the poker hand. In other words, after the dealer deals out the remaining cards to make his or her seven card hand, the dealer must hold an Ace or better (for example, a pair of 2's beats an Ace), otherwise one-half of the player's poker bet is returned to the player and one-half of the bet is taken by the house.

[0026] The dealer qualification rule serves no advantage to the player, but provides the house with a distinct advantage. If for example, the player holds a royal flush and the dealer does not qualify, the player wins back only one-half of his bet. In most other poker games (with the exception of Caribbean Stud that also requires dealer hand qualification), a royal flush is always a winning hand. Players feel as if they have been short-changed when they achieve a high-ranking poker hand and lose part or all of the bet.

[0027] When the players and dealer have identified their best hands, each hand is compared to the dealer hand. This process is completed one hand at a time. The dealer is required to help the player set his or her best hand, which takes additional time. Security in a number of casinos requires the dealer to arrange his hand so that surveillance can observe how the hand is being scored. The arranging step takes additional time. Then the hands are compared to determine who has the higher hand. The comparison process is also time consuming. Payouts are made as the individual hands are resolved, taking additional time.

[0028] The long periods of time required to play this game has caused a number of operators to remove the game from the casino floor. Other operators have agreed to refrain from removing the game while the game is redesigned to speed its

play. It would therefore be desirable to modify the game so that the game play rate is increased, making the game more profitable for casino operators. It would also be desirable to modify the game rules so that players always win when holding high-ranking poker hands. It would additionally be desirable to offer additional betting opportunities without significantly increasing play time to increase casino revenue per a given amount of time.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0029] The present invention is a casino style wagering game that is a combination of at least three consecutively played game segments high card, "21" or a 21-like multiple card game such as baccarat, and a poker game that is played against the house. An additional "Hat Trick" bonus is awarded when the player places the optional bet, and either wins or pushes in all three consecutively played game segments. Unlike the game described in Awada U.S. Pat. No. 5,988,643, the poker hands can be resolved quickly, increasing the speed in which the game is dealt, and improving significantly the earnings per unit of time on the game. The Hat Trick bonus increases the amount of betting action, without significantly reducing the speed of game play. The number of wagers per unit time is therefore increased, increasing casino revenue.

[0030] The method of the present invention includes the following steps:

[0031] providing one or more decks of standard playing cards;

[0032] a player placing a first wager on a first game segment against a dealer;

[0033] a dealer dealing one or two cards to a player and a same number of cards to the dealer, forming player and dealer hands;

[0034] resolving the first wager by comparing a total point value of the player and dealer hands, and

[0035] awarding a payout to the player if the player hand beats the dealer hand, otherwise the dealer collecting the wager;

[0036] a player placing a second wager on a second game segment (usually at about the same time that the first wager was placed);

[0037] a dealer dealing additional cards to each player, a total number of cards held by each player when combined with the previously dealt cards not to exceed six to participate in a second game segment against the dealer, wherein the second game segment is selected from the group consisting of blackjack, baccarat or other game where the object is for the player to obtain a predetermined point count or a preferred point count compared to the point count of the dealer;

[0038] resolving the second wager using standard rules of the selected second segment game, modified by limiting a total number of cards dealt to the players to no more than 6;

[0039] a player placing a third wager on a third game segment requiring no more than 6 cards to play

(usually the third wager is placed at about the same time that the first wager was placed);

[0040] a dealer dealing each player additional cards, if any, so that all players hold six cards;

[0041] resolving the third wager by comparing each player's hand according to a set of predetermined winning hands according to the rules of the selected game (e.g., this is typically done with a pay table, and usually a pay table shown on the casino table or on a placard or sign in the vicinity of the casino table);

[0042] awarding a payout to the players holding predetermined winning hands;

[0043] a player optionally placing a fourth wager on the occurrence of winning or pushing on all three game segments (usually the third wager is placed at about the same time that the first wager was placed. This may include time frames where no player cards have been viewed by the player or where the first cards dealt to the player have been viewed by the player); and

[0044] awarding a bonus payout when the player either wins or pushes on each of (all three of) the three game segments.

[0045] Although the game can be played with any number of decks of cards, the game is preferably a single deck game, utilizing a standard 52 card deck of playing cards. Depending upon the individual game being played, it might be more desirable to deal the game from two or more decks. For example, the game might be played to award a progressive payout on a fifth optional pay table bet on the occurrence of five aces of spades. The prize pool would be funded from the side bet. This combination would not be possible unless the game was dealt from a five (or more) deck shoe.

[0046] The table layout used to practice the present invention preferably includes three betting circles detailed on each player station. Bets would otherwise be placed in order of the wagering events. The betting circles are preferably arranged in a straight row, the right hand circle for the high card game, the middle circle for the total point count game and the left hand circle for the poker style game. Although poker against a pay table is a preferred third segment, because it utilizes one preferred maximum number of cards equal to six in order to play, the third segment could be other games such as Pai Gow poker (with seven cards or a modified Pai Gow Poker with six cards and hands of 5-1 or 4-2 cards), a modified version of Gin Rummy or other game utilizing at least the number of cards used to play the second game.

[0047] According to one form of the game of the present invention, the player plays high card or war against the dealer, followed by blackjack modified by the fact that a maximum of six cards are dealt to the player, followed by a round of poker, where the player makes his best 5 card hand from his 6 cards. Payouts are awarded according to a pay table.

[0048] The player in one embodiment of the invention places three equal (or unequal) bets, on the high card, blackjack and poker betting circles.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0049] FIG. 1 is a diagrammatical top plan view of a gaming table layout useful to practice the method of the present invention.

[0050] FIG. 2 is an expanded view of one of the player stations on the gaming table layout.

[0051] FIG. 3 is a diagrammatical top plan view of a gaming table layout useful to practice the consecutive win/push bonus method of the present invention.

[0052] FIG. 4 is an expanded view of one of the player stations on the gaming table layout including a win/push bonus betting circle.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0053] The present invention is a novel casino style card game that can be played in a casino environment, on a gaming machine, on a personal computer for pure entertainment and practice, or in an Internet casino in jurisdictions that allow on-line wagering.

[0054] The method of the present invention in one form can be played on a gaming table such as the table 10 shown diagrammatically in FIG. 1. The gaming table has a chip tray 12, six-dealer card placement areas 14a-f, and six player positions 16, 18, 20, 22, 24 and 26 (more or fewer positions may be provided, up to a maximum of seven positions with a single deck shoe and six cards maximum hands for players). Dealer placement areas 14a-f are required only when the dealer has a limit of 6 cards. In the first example of the invention, the dealer can take an unlimited number of cards, and placement areas 14a-f are not necessary.

[0055] The table 10 is preferably equipped with an automatic card shuffler 28 such as the type described in Pending U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/688,597, filed Oct. 16, 2000, the disclosure of which is incorporated by reference. That card shuffler application, as well as the present application are commonly owned by Shuffle Master, Inc.

[0056] The dealer removes one or more decks of shuffled cards from the card shuffler 28, collects bets, awards payoffs and deals and collects cards according to standard casino dealing procedures and according to the procedures specified for the play of the game of this invention. In one preferred form of the invention, the shuffler 28 randomizes a single deck of cards. In other forms of the invention, the shuffler randomizes two or more decks of cards. Cards are either delivered as randomized hands, randomized decks or randomized groups of multiple decks of cards.

[0057] Each player position 16, 18, 20, 22, 24 and 26 is substantially identical. An exemplary player position is shown in FIG. 2. Each player position includes an area 30 to place a first game segment wager (in the first example, a high card wager either against the dealer or based on an absolute value of the first card, e.g., at least a rank of 9 or higher), an area for a second game segment wager 32 (in the first example, a 21 wager), and an area for a third game segment 34 (in the first example, a poker wager against the house or a pay table bet). Beneath the third betting area 34 is printed a pay table including a plurality of predetermined winning hands, and corresponding payout odds. As the frequency of occurrence of the winning hands decrease, the

payout odds increase. In the example shown in **FIG. 2**, there are nine predetermined winning hands when the third segment is poker, with payouts ranging between 1:1 and 100:1. The purpose and function of the pay tables will be described in more detail below.

[0058] A non-limiting method of playing the wagering game may comprise providing one or more decks of standard playing cards. A player may place a first wager on a first game segment of rank and/or count playing against a dealer. A dealer deals X number of cards to each player (preferably 1 or 2 cards) and a same number of cards to the dealer, forming player hands and a dealer hand. The first wager is resolved by comparing a total point value or rank of the player's hand and dealer's hands, and awarding a payout to the player if the player hand beats the dealer hand according to the rules of the first game segment. A player places a second wager on a second game segment (usually at or about the same time that the player placed a wager on the first game segment). A dealer deals additional cards, if needed, (as when two cards were dealt in the first game and the second game is blackjack and the player/dealer elects or must stay) to each player hand. The deal of cards is limited to a total number of cards held by each player and the dealer when combined with the previously dealt cards so as not to exceed six to participate in a second game against the dealer. The second game, for example, is selected from the group consisting of blackjack and baccarat. The second wager is resolved using standard rules of the selected second game. A player places a third wager on a third game segment (also at or about the same time that the first and second wagers were placed). A dealer deals each player additional cards, if any are needed, so that all players hold six cards. The third wager is resolved by comparing each player's hand (usually the best five card poker hand that may be set from the six cards in the player's hand) to a pay table. A payout is awarded to the players holding predetermined winning hands according to the pay table. The third game segment is preferably selected from the group consisting of poker and gin rummy. A player may have placed a fourth wager on a bonus game segment (again at or about the time that the first, second and third game segment wagers were placed). This fourth wager is resolved by paying the player a payout for at least two wins or pushes on played game segments, and preferably on consecutively played game segments.

[0059] The method may be played, for example, where all four wagers are placed prior to the dealer dealing any cards. The first three wagers may be mandatory, and the fourth bet may be optional. The method may be played, by way of non-limiting examples, where X is equal to 1, and the dealer deals one card to the player and one card to the dealer. One alternative of play is where the second game segment is 21 or a modified version of 21. Non-limiting examples of modified versions of 21 are where the modifications are selected from the group consisting of:

[0060] a maximum of six cards are dealt to player;

[0061] if the player receives 6 cards without reaching 21, and the dealer does not have a two card natural, the player wins the blackjack hand; and

[0062] players can split pairs only on Aces.

[0063] The method of the present invention includes providing one or more decks of standard playing cards to play

the game. Although this game can be dealt as a multiple deck game, in the first example of the invention, a standard fifty-two card deck of cards is used. The deck could also be modified by adding wild cards, removing certain cards, etc. to suit the particular game rules being followed. Special card decks could also be used.

[0064] According to the invention, players who participate in the game are required to participate in each of three game play segments. A winning outcome is not required to win a game segment in order to advance to the next game segment. Typically, a wager is placed on all three segments (and the optional bonus event side wager is placed) before the first card is dealt. In other examples of the invention, the player places a first wager only prior to the first card being dealt, and subsequent wagers in later stages of the game (with the side bet bonus wager placed at the time of the first or second wager).

[0065] According to one aspect of the invention, a player places a first wager on a first game against the dealer. In one example of the invention, each of the three wagers is equal in value. In other examples of the invention, unequal values may be bet, at the option of the player. The dealer then deals to himself and each player one card to participate in a high card game. If the player beats the dealer by holding a card with a higher count than the dealer, the dealer pays the player according to predetermined payout odds on the first bet. In the first example of the invention, the payout to the player is 1:1 for a winning high card hand. Aces count as 11 points in this segment of the game. A bonus payout for an Ace or for both the player and dealer receiving an Ace may be made (e.g., a payout of 3:2 against the first wager).

[0066] In the event that the player and dealer have the same point count, one-half of the player's bet is returned to the player. The other one-half of the bet is collected by the house. In another example, pushes are resolved in favor of the house. In a third example, pushes are resolved in favor of the player.

[0067] In a first example of the invention, the player places a second bet on the play of a 21 game or similar game whose object is to achieve a target point count, such as baccarat. As mentioned above, this wager is typically placed before the first card is dealt, and is typically equal in value to the first wager. When the selected game is 21, it is preferred that the number of cards dealt in the first hand is limited to 1. Otherwise, the dealer's hole card would be revealed in the first game segment and prior to the play of the 21 hand, interfering with the normal play of the game.

[0068] Because all cards in the first segment are carried forward into the second segment, the game rules must be selected so that one set of game rules does not interfere with the strategy of the other game segments. The player receives a second card from the dealer, and the dealer deals himself a card face down. Play continues according to the standard rules of blackjack with the following exceptions: 1) a maximum number of cards dealt to the player and dealer cannot exceed 6 for reasons explained below, 2) if the player holds six cards with a total point count less than 21, the player automatically wins unless the dealer has a 2 card 21 or a "natural", and 3) players can split pairs on Aces only. Doubling down (doubling the initial amount of 21 bet after receiving the first 2 cards and viewing the dealer's up card, and then receiving only a single additional card in the play

of the 21 game) under traditional 21 rules is permitted. Ties in the 21 game are a push, and the player's wager is returned to the player. As with traditional 21, the player may only have one more card to complete the 21 segment of play after doubling down, but in any event, the player cannot receive more than six cards. The number of cards dealt to each player in the first example of the game depends upon player preference. While some players may stand with two cards, others may request the full permitted number of six cards.

[0069] In another example of the invention, the dealer may take a total of only 6 cards. In this example, if the dealer does not achieve a point count of seventeen or higher by the time the dealer takes his sixth card, the player automatically wins the blackjack round.

[0070] It was discovered that by reducing the total number of cards being dealt in each hand from the prior art amount of seven as described in Awada, the rate of play of the second game segment, as well as the third game segment increases. Once dealers become accustomed to dealing only six cards total per person, the time spent in counting player card count totals and dealing additional cards will be reduced by having fewer cards on the table. Fewer cards also add additional security to the game. As the number of total cards handled by the player decreases, the chances of the cards being marked decreases also.

[0071] In another example of the invention, players receive only one additional card and the players combined two card point total must exceed the point total of the dealer in order to win the second bet. Although this is not a traditional method of playing blackjack, it simplifies the dealing procedures because every player holds the same number of cards in each segment of play. If each player received one card in the first segment, and one additional card in the second segment, each player would hold two cards at the beginning of the third segment. In the third segment of play, the dealer deals four additional cards until the total number of cards in each hand is 6. If the dealer gave each player four additional cards at the beginning of the third segment, the need to take an inventory of existing cards and count up to 6 would be eliminated, simplifying dealing procedures, speeding game play and eliminating misdeals.

[0072] In yet another form of the game, baccarat is played instead of 21 in the second gaming segment. The object of baccarat is to achieve a point count with the last digit of 9, and to beat the other hand by being closer to the last digit of 9. Banker and player hands are played. The player can bet on either of the hands. In order to win, the hand the player bet on must beat the other hand according to the rules of the game. Ten point cards count as zero, so in this example, the player cannot bust. The player can only draw a total of six cards, according to the invention.

[0073] Any game would be suitable for playing the second game segment as long as the maximum number of cards needed for successive games is not exceeded. For example, another "high card" game could be played with summing of the point count of three cards dealt (one card dealt in the first high card game, and two additional cards dealt in the second high card game). Or, a three-card poker game could be played as the second segment game.

[0074] It is preferable to select dissimilar games so that the effect of a poor hand in an earlier segment does not adversely affect the player's winning potential in playing later segments. If the strategy of each game is different, the players are more likely to win at least one segment, and have a positive gaming experience.

[0075] At the conclusion of play of the blackjack or other equivalent game, play proceeds to the third segment, regardless of the outcome in the first and second games. The dealer must take an inventory of the cards on the table, and deal enough additional cards to each player to give each player a total of six cards. The reduction in the number of cards from seven as shown in the prior art to six speeds the play of the game. However, it is believed that more cards can be dealt at an acceptable speed if the game segment that requires a player to compare his hand to a plurality of winning outcomes utilizes a pay table payout system.

[0076] In a first example of the invention, the third game segment is poker. Poker hands (formed from the best 5 out of 6 cards) are resolved against a pay table as shown in **FIG. 2**. Applicant has discovered that the primary reason why the prior art game described in Awada U.S. Pat. No. 5,988,643 plays too slowly, is because the poker hand takes too much time to resolve. In order to overcome this shortcoming, the poker hand is resolved against a pay table of predetermined winning outcomes or combinations, and payouts are made according to a table of corresponding payout odds. This method of play also eliminates the need for additional cards having to be dealt to the dealer and the time required to set the dealer's hand.

[0077] Applicant surprisingly discovered that eliminating competition against the dealer achieved a number of important improvements. First, the dealer qualification requirement in the prior art game was eliminated to speed up the game and eliminate a negative feature of the game. It is no longer necessary to take an inventory of dealer cards and deal additional dealer cards to make a seven-card hand (or a six card hand in the play of the present game). Second, reducing the number of player cards from seven to six reduces the amount of time needed to deal the entire game. Third, it has become possible to adjust the hit frequency and percentage hold on the game, which was not previously possible. Games that allow the supplier to vary the hit frequency and hold percentage generally appeal to more operators. If an operator is disappointed in the revenue generated off of a game, it is possible to modify the pay table in order to increase casino revenue and avoid having the game removed from the casino floor.

[0078] Two non-limiting examples of suitable pay tables for the poker game segment are provided in Tables A and B, below.

Hand	Payout
Table A	
Royal Flush	100:1
Straight Flush	50:1
Four of a Kind	25:1
Full House	15:1
Flush	8:1
Straight	5:1
Three of a Kind	3:1
Two Pair	2:1
Pair Aces	1:1
Hit Frequency:	23%
Percent Hold:	2.84%

-continued

Hand	Payout
Table B	
Royal Flush	100:1
Straight Flush	50:1
Four of a Kind	15:1
Full House	10:1
Flush	6:1
Straight	5:1
Three of a Kind	3:1
Two Pair	2:1
Pair Kings or higher	1:1
Hit Frequency:	27%
Percent Hold:	2.31%

[0079] As seen by comparing the theoretical outcomes of the pay tables shown in Tables A and B, both the hit frequency and percentage hold (the % of the wagers placed retained by the casino, expressed as a percentage of wagers placed) can be modified by altering the payouts on selected predetermined winning card combinations. In the first example of the invention, players are not permitted to pick up their cards. All cards are dealt face up. It was discovered that misdeals can be avoided most of the time by not letting the players touch the cards. As mentioned in the background section, one of the training issues with the prior art Awada game is taking a correct inventory of cards prior to dealing out the cards for the third segment of play. In the prior art form of play, each and every time a dealer deals too many cards, he must declare a misdeal, wait for the pit boss to confirm it, collect the cards, reshuffle the deck (or use a different newly shuffled deck), and redistribute the cards. One misdeal can conceivably cause up to 5 minutes of dead time at a table.

[0080] When players are not permitted to touch the cards, many misdeals can be resolved by the pit boss simply removing the extra card and giving it to the next player. If the error is caught prior to the remaining hands being dealt, a misdeal and corresponding delay can be completely avoided.

[0081] In a first example of the invention, each player uses his six cards to form the best possible five card poker hand. The dealer is responsible for setting the player's hand. In another example, the players can touch the cards and set their own hand. "Setting" for purposes of this disclosure is arranging cards and determining the best poker hand ranking for a given group of cards. In one preferred form of the game, the players set their own hands, and then the dealer is required to reset the hand to improve it, if possible.

[0082] Payouts are awarded, for example, according to one of the pay tables shown in Examples A and B. For example, if a player obtains a flush and pay table A applies, the player is paid 8:1 on the third segment bet. Although poker hand rankings and rules are well known, the present invention contemplates that the third game can be another game utilizing a fixed number of cards equal to or exceeding the number of cards used in the second segment, and having objects and rules that are substantially different from that of the second segment. For example, a modified form of gin rummy could be played with six cards. Players would look for pairs, three of a kind and runs. What is important is that

when the third segment is a game that requires the player to achieve one of a number of predetermined combinations, the payouts be according to a pay table rather than resolved against a dealer to maintain the speed of the game.

[0083] The examples described above are merely exemplary and are in no way intended to limit the scope of the invention. For example, although in one example all of the bets placed are equal, the invention contemplates allowing players to place unequal bets. Side bets on the occurrence of predetermined hands or events could be added to the game, and the game could further be modified to return greater amounts to the players, or the house, according to requests from casino customers.

[0084] An example of one side bet that can be added to the game to increase action and provide greater player enjoyment is a "hat trick" bonus. In the game of hockey, when a single player scores three goals in the same game, the achievement is referred to as a 'hat trick.' In the game of the present invention, players have the option to place a side wager on the occurrence of multiple wins on consecutively played game segments, preferably a win on all three game segments.

[0085] As shown in FIG. 3, a gaming table layout 99 is provided with multiple betting areas 101, each with three betting circles 100, 102 and 104. The layout 99 is mounted to a gaming table 103. A chip tray 105 is mounted in the gaming table, and a card shuffler 107 is provided for delivering randomized hands, decks or multiple deck groups of cards to the dealer.

[0086] The layout enables the player to play three separate game segments, as well as a bonus bet circle 106 that allows the player to optionally participate in the unique side bet feature of the present invention. In one preferred form of the invention, each player and the dealer receive a total of six cards by the conclusion of play of the third game segment. Dealer card positions 108, 110, 112, 114, 116 and 118 for positioning dealer cards for the first and/or second game segments. The third game segment is played against a pay table 120.

[0087] In a preferred form of the game, a hat trick bonus betting circle 106 is provided. Players may make a bet that is equal to one or more of the three previous bets, or are unequal. When the player either wins at least two, and preferably three consecutively played game segments, the player wins a payout on the hat trick bet. For example, when the first, second and third game segments are war, blackjack and poker (against a pay table), the player is entitled to a payout for winning the high card and blackjack games, the blackjack and poker games, or the high card, blackjack and poker games. In a preferred form of the invention, a payout is awarded only for three consecutively won and/or pushed game segments. In another preferred form of the invention, the player wins a payout for either consecutive wins or ties (pushes) or other combinations of wins and ties. For example, if the player and dealer tie in the high card game, and the player wins the blackjack and poker games, the player wins the hat trick bonus. It is preferred that the player wins or pushes all games played against the dealer in order to qualify to win the hat trick bonus.

[0088] A "win" in the poker game is defined as the minimum ranking hand that pays 1:1 or greater on the pay

table. In the example shown in **FIG. 4**, the player must hold a pair of aces or better to win the poker game. Below are two exemplary pay tables for the play of one preferred form of the invention, including high card, modified blackjack and 5 card poker against a pay table. In both examples, the bonus bet pays 6:1 on the occurrence of a win or push on the high card and 21 hands, and a win on the poker hand. It is to be understood that the selection of the payout odds on the side bet is a matter of choice and can be modified as necessary to make the game more player friendly, or more casino friendly. It is also possible to provide special awards for combinations of ranked wins in the three game segments, such as providing a special award for an Ace on the first card, a blackjack or baccarat (count of 9) on the second game segment, and at least 3-of-a-kind or higher in the poker segment.

Exemplary Pay Tables

[0089]

Pay Table 1	
ROYAL FLUSH	500 TO 1
STRAIGHT FLUSH	50 TO 1
FOUR OF A KIND	20 TO 1
FULL HOUSE	6 TO 1
FLUSH	5 TO 1
STRAIGHT	4 TO 1
THREE OF A KIND	2 TO 1
TWO PAIR	3 TO 2
JACKS OR BETTER	1 TO 1
Hit Freq:	34.60%
House edge:	5.59%
Hat Trick Bonus	6 to 1
Hit Freq:	12.50%
House edge:	12.40%
Pay Table 2	
ROYAL FLUSH	200 TO 1
STRAIGHT FLUSH	60 TO 1
FOUR OF A KIND	20 TO 1
FULL HOUSE	6 TO 1
FLUSH	5 TO 1
STRAIGHT	4 TO 1
THREE OF A KIND	2 TO 1
TWO PAIR	3 TO 2
JACKS OR BETTER	1 TO 1
Hit Freq:	34.60%
House edge:	5.78%
Hat Trick Bonus	6 to 1
Hit Freq:	12.5%
House edge:	12.4%

[0090] In both exemplary pay tables, the house edge is higher on the side bet than on the base game. This is a common feature of bonus games. The lower hit frequency allows for higher payouts when a player is lucky enough to win the bonus bet. The poker game pay tables can be modified to increase or decrease the house edge, and balance the trade-offs between attracting players and earning revenue.

[0091] The above description provides non-limiting examples of the practice of the invention, Many variations within the envisioned scope of practice of the invention have been provided, but additional variations are within the province of the ordinarily skilled artisan and are contemplated within the scope of the invention as claimed. The above examples are non-limiting in scope and provide support for a generic scope of practicing the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A method of playing a wagering game, comprising:

Providing one or more decks of standard playing cards;

A player placing a first wager on a first game segment against a dealer;

A dealer dealing X number of cards to each player and a same number of cards to the dealer, forming player and dealer hands;

Resolving the first wager by comparing a total point value of the player and dealer hands, and awarding a payout to the player if the player hand beats the dealer hand according to the rules of the first game segment;

A player placing a second wager on a second game segment;

A dealer dealing additional cards to each player hand, a total number of cards held by each player and the dealer when combined with the previously dealt cards not to exceed six to participate in a second game against the dealer, wherein the second game is selected from the group consisting of blackjack and baccarat;

Resolving the second wager using standard rules of the selected second game;

A player placing a third wager on a third game segment;

A dealer dealing each player additional cards, if any, so that all players hold six cards;

Resolving the third wager by comparing each player's hand to a pay table;

Awarding a payout to the players holding predetermined winning hands according to the pay table, wherein the third game segment is selected from the group consisting of poker and gin rummy;

A player placing fourth wager on a bonus game segment; and

Resolving the fourth wager by paying the player a payout for at least two wins or pushes on consecutively played game segments.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein all four wagers are placed prior to the dealer dealing any cards.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the first three wagers are mandatory, and the fourth bet is optional.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein X is equal to 1, and the dealer deals one card to the player and one card to the dealer.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the second game segment is 21 or a modified version of 21.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the second game segment is a modified version of 21 and the modifications include modifications that are selected from the group consisting of:

A maximum of six cards are dealt to player;

If the player receives 6 cards without reaching 21, and the dealer does not have a 2 card natural, the player wins the blackjack hand; and

Players can split pairs only on Aces.

7. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of collecting one-half of the player's wager on the first game segment if the player and dealer tie.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the third segment is poker.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the poker hands are resolved according to payout rates that are at least the rates of one of the following pay tables:

Pay Table 1	
ROYAL FLUSH	500 TO 1
STRAIGHT FLUSH	50 TO 1
FOUR OF A KIND	20 TO 1
FULL HOUSE	6 TO 1
FLUSH	5 TO 1
STRAIGHT	4 TO 1
THREE OF A KIND	2 TO 1
TWO PAIR	3 TO 2
JACKS OR BETTER	1 TO 1
Hat Trick Bonus	6 to 1
Pay Table 2	
ROYAL FLUSH	200 TO 1
STRAIGHT FLUSH	60 TO 1
FOUR OF A KIND	20 TO 1
FULL HOUSE	6 TO 1
FLUSH	5 TO 1
STRAIGHT	4 TO 1
THREE OF A KIND	2 TO 1
TWO PAIR	3 TO 2
JACKS OR BETTER	1 TO 1
Hat Trick Bonus	6 to 1

10. The method of claim 1, wherein a tie in a first game is resolved in favor of the house.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein players are not permitted to touch cards during game play.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein a payout is paid on the fourth wager for wins and/or pushes on three consecutively played game segments.

13. The method of claim 1, wherein the player is paid odds on the fourth wager.

14. The method of claim 1, wherein a payout is paid on the fourth wager for wins and/or pushes on at least two consecutively played game segments.

15. A method of playing a wagering game, comprising:

Providing a first wagering game segment with a first set of game rules, the first wagering game requiring a first number of cards of at least 1;

Providing a second wagering game segment with a second set of game rules that differ from the first set of game rules such that a losing outcome in the first wagering game does not disadvantage the player in the second game, and providing a second number of cards, wherein the second number of cards required to play the game is greater than or equal to the first number of cards;

Providing a third wagering game segment with a third set of game rules that differ from the second set of game rules such that a losing outcome in the second wagering game does not disadvantage the player in the third game, and providing a third number of cards, wherein a number of cards required to play the third wagering game is greater than or equal to the second number of cards;

Placing a wager on each of the first, second and third game segments;

Placing an optional fourth wager on the occurrence of at least two player wins and/or pushes in at least two consecutively played game segments;

Playing each of the three game segments, wherein each card used in a previous game segment is available to be used in subsequent game play segments; Scoring the segments whose rules of at least one of the game segments require comparison of the hand with a plurality of predetermined winning outcomes by utilizing only a pay table; and

Paying the player a payout for winning or pushing on at least two consecutively played game segments.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein the first game segment is high card.

17. The method of claim 15, wherein the second game segment is 21 or a variant of 21.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein the second game segment is played according to the rules of 21, modified by at least one rule change selected from the group consisting of:

A maximum of six cards are dealt to player;

If the player receives 6 cards without reaching 21, and the dealer does not have a 2 card natural, the player wins the blackjack hand; and

Players can split pairs only on Aces.

19. The method of claim 14, wherein the third game segment is poker.

Pay Table 1	
ROYAL FLUSH	500 TO 1
STRAIGHT FLUSH	50 TO 1
FOUR OF A KIND	20 TO 1
FULL HOUSE	6 TO 1
FLUSH	5 TO 1
STRAIGHT	4 TO 1
THREE OF A KIND	2 TO 1
TWO PAIR	3 TO 2
JACKS OR BETTER	1 TO 1
Hat Trick Bonus	6 to 1
Pay Table 2	
ROYAL FLUSH	200 TO 1
STRAIGHT FLUSH	60 TO 1
FOUR OF A KIND	20 TO 1
FULL HOUSE	6 TO 1
FLUSH	5 TO 1
STRAIGHT	4 TO 1
THREE OF A KIND	2 TO 1
TWO PAIR	3 TO 2
JACKS OR BETTER	1 TO 1
Hat Trick Bonus	6 to 1

20. The method of claim 19 wherein the pay table is one of the following:

21. The method of claim 15, wherein players are not permitted to touch cards.

22. The method of claim 15, wherein a maximum number of cards dealt to each player is 6 and the poker game uses five cards in determining the rank of the player's hand.

23. The method of claim 15, wherein the first and second segment games require the players to play against the dealer, and the third segment requires the player to play against a pay table.

24. The method of claim 15, wherein a payout is awarded on the fourth wager when the player wins or pushes on each of three consecutively played game segments.

25. A side bet method for a casino card game, comprising:

placing a wager on a multiple segment wagering game;

placing a side bet on the occurrence of a win and/or push on at least two consecutively played game segments;

resolving each segment of the multiple segment wagering game; and

awarding a payout for winning and/or pushing at least two consecutively played game segments.

26. The side bet method of claim 25, wherein the side bet is optional.

27. The side bet method of claim 25, wherein the wagering game has three segments.

28. The side bet method of claim 27, wherein a payout is made for each player winning and/or pushing all three game segments after the player has placed the side bet.

29. The side bet method of claim 27, wherein the three segments are a) high card, b) 21 or a variation of 21, and c) poker against a pay table.

30. The side bet method of claim 25, wherein the player is paid odds for winning and/or pushing three consecutively played game segments.

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