



US 20250262519A1

(19) **United States**
(12) **Patent Application Publication** (10) **Pub. No.: US 2025/0262519 A1**
Ostrick (43) **Pub. Date: Aug. 21, 2025**

(54) **PLAYING CARD DECK AND METHODS OF GAME PLAY COMBINING POKER AND SLOT SYMBOLS** (52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC *A63F 1/04* (2013.01); *A63F 1/02* (2013.01); *A63F 2001/005* (2013.01); *A63F 2001/027* (2013.01); *A63F 2001/0475* (2013.01); *A63F 2300/80* (2013.01)
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(21) Appl. No.: **19/055,593** (57) **ABSTRACT**
(22) Filed: **Feb. 18, 2025**

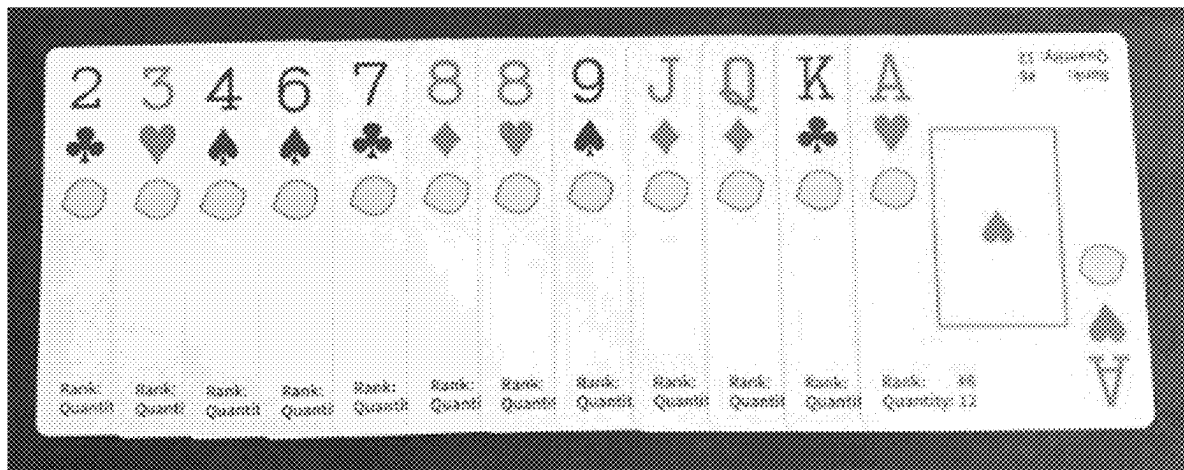
Related U.S. Application Data

(60) Provisional application No. 63/555,087, filed on Feb. 18, 2024.

Publication Classification

(51) **Int. Cl.**
A63F 1/04 (2006.01)
A63F 1/00 (2006.01)
A63F 1/02 (2006.01)

A deck of playing cards is provided in which the cards are each marked with equally-distributed ranks and suits, and are further marked with unequally distributed slot machine symbols. The deck enables games in which hands may be ranked according to whether they constitute winning combination of slot machine symbols combined with their ranking as poker hands. The playing cards may be provided in the form of a physical deck or as digital images shown on a digital display.



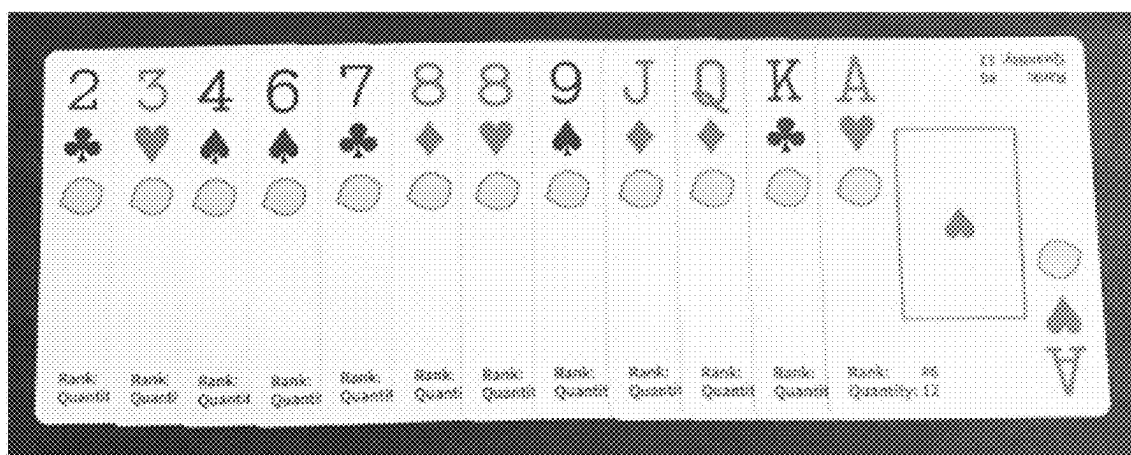


FIG. 1

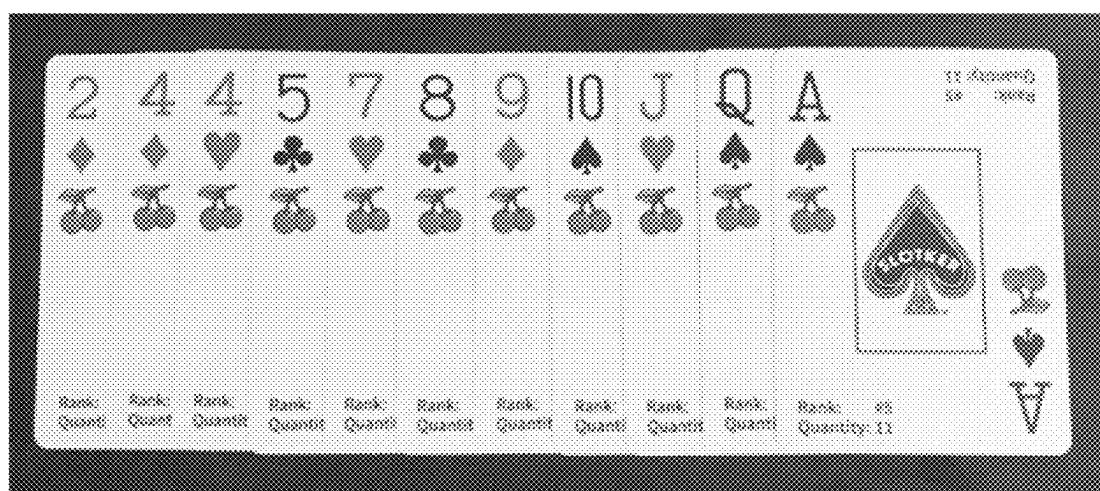


FIG. 2

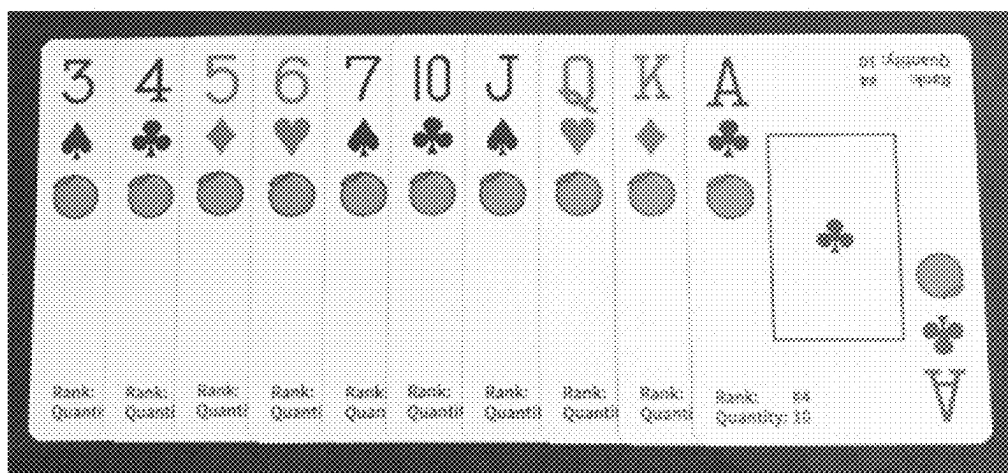


FIG. 3

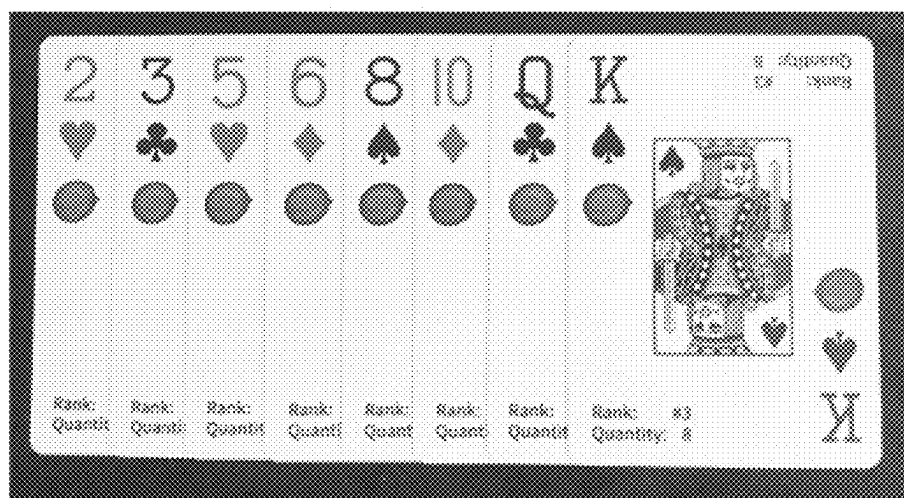


FIG. 4

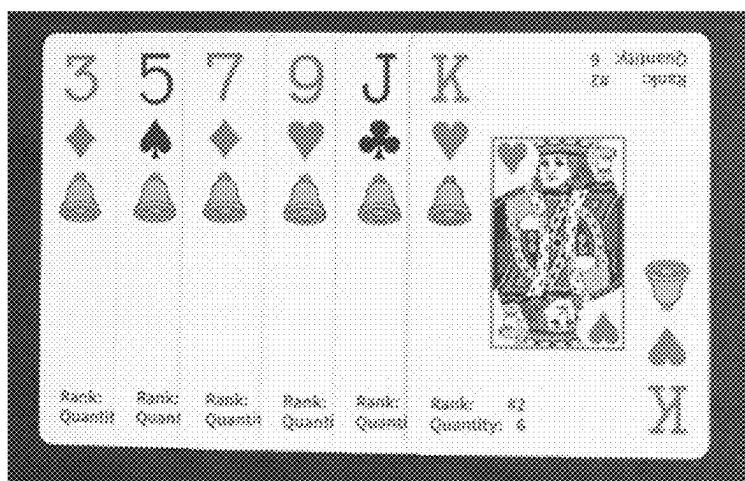


FIG. 5

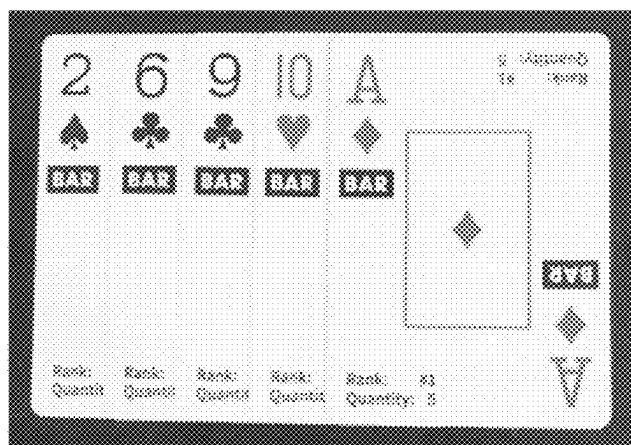


FIG. 6

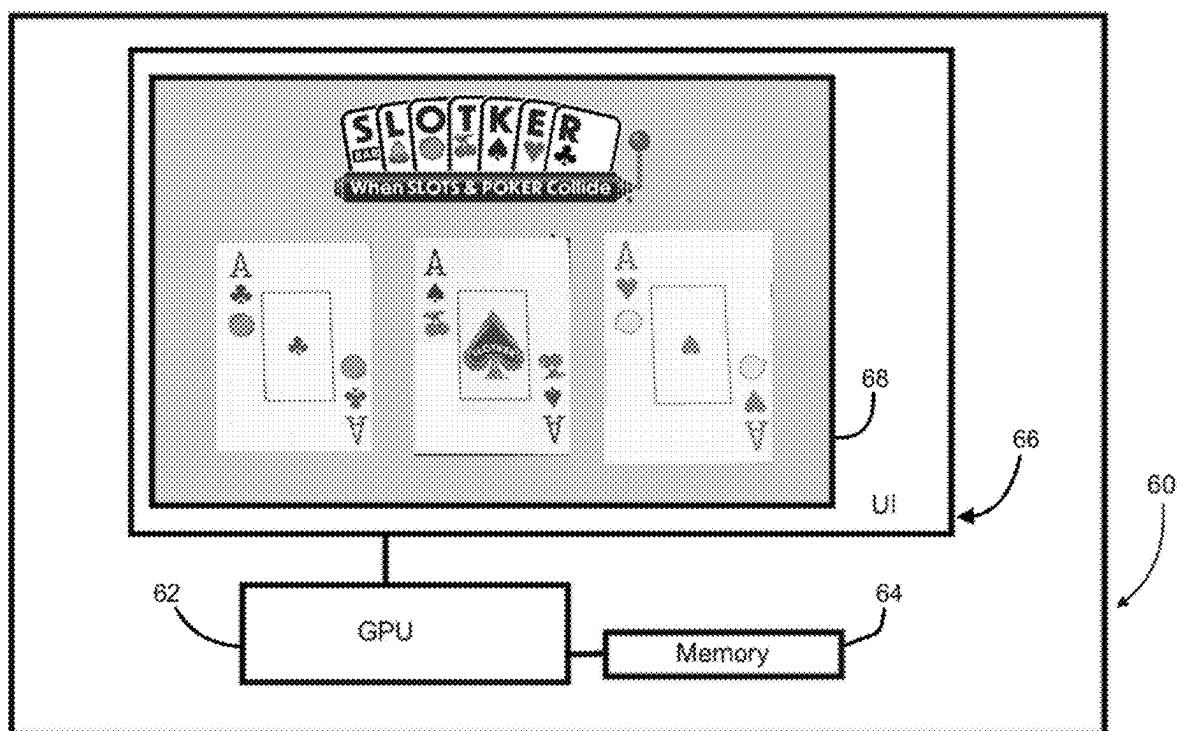


FIG. 7

PLAYING CARD DECK AND METHODS OF GAME PLAY COMBINING POKER AND SLOT SYMBOLS

[0001] The present invention relates to the field of card games.

BACKGROUND

[0002] Casino games have broadly consisted of card games or slot games. For card games, a standard poker deck of cards are used to play games such as baccarat, blackjack or poker and many variations thereof. Slot games evolved from machines having several spinning reels bearing symbols, for which obtaining various combinations of the symbols pays a defined prize. While card games remain a staple of live action casino gaming, they have also been rendered in video card game formats. The migration of game formats has been largely one way, as slot-combination type games are generally not available in a live action format. Likewise, video gaming machines tend to maintain a division between card type games such as video poker and blackjack, and virtual-reel slot games which have evolved in complexity but still often pay homage to traditional reel machine symbols.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0003] In accordance with the present invention, there is provided a deck of cards having ranks and suits, comparable to a traditional poker deck, and wherein the cards have been augmented by addition of slot machine symbols, such as fruit, bars and bells. The slot machine indicia are assigned to the cards in addition to the ranks and suits in order to produce slot machine combinations in addition to various poker hands, in order to rank hands among players, or between players and the house. In an additional embodiment, a set of dice preferably bearing slot machine indicia are provided to further enhance gameplay combining a card game, slot play, and dice.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0004] FIGS. 1-6 collectively show a deck of playing cards of the present invention and in which:

[0005] FIG. 1 is a spread view of a subset of the deck of cards bearing the lemon slot symbol;

[0006] FIG. 2 is a spread view of a subset of the deck of cards bearing the cherry slot symbol;

[0007] FIG. 3 is a spread view of a subset of the deck of cards bearing the orange slot symbol;

[0008] FIG. 4 is a spread view of a subset of the deck of cards bearing the plum slot symbol;

[0009] FIG. 5 is a spread view of a subset of the deck of cards bearing the bell slot symbol;

[0010] FIG. 6 is a spread view of a subset of the deck of cards bearing the bar slot symbol; and

[0011] FIG. 7 is a block diagram of an electronic embodiment of the invention.

SPECIFICATION

A. The Deck and Basic Game Play

[0012] The deck of cards according to a preferred embodiment is shown in FIGS. 1-6. The deck is based on a standard 52-card deck of poker/playing cards marked with a rank and

a suit, and in which each playing card additionally displays one of six classic and familiar slot machine symbols below the card suit, with each card in a hand thus representing a reel of a slot machine. While there are an equal number of cards of each rank and suit, the slot machine symbols are unequally distributed throughout the deck. As can further be seen in FIGS. 1-6, the cards may further be annotated with the relative ranking of the assigned slot symbol and the number of such symbols distributed throughout the deck. The deck enables a variety of games to be played, preferred variations of which are herein described.

[0013] In one preferred three-card game, the object is to obtain the highest-ranking three-of-a-kind set, with either three-matching poker card values (from three Deuces up to three Aces) or three-matching slot-machine symbols (from three LEMONS up to three BARs), in which the rankings of three-of-a-kind sets transition up from slot-machine symbols (LEMONs up to BARs), and then up into poker card values (Deuces up to Aces), and all three-of-a-kind poker card sets are ranked higher than any three-of-a-kind slot-machine symbols.

[0014] While poker card values are ranked by their numerical values (Deuces up to Aces), the rankings of slot-machine symbols are ranked, based on the quantity of each slot-machine symbol in the deck. As can be seen in FIG. 1, there are 12 cards in the deck with LEMONs. As seen in FIG. 2-6, there are 11 cards with CHERRIES (FIG. 2), 10 cards with ORANGES (FIG. 3), 8 cards with PLUMs (FIG. 4), 6 cards with BELLS (FIG. 5) and 5 cards with BARs (FIG. 6).

[0015] When two or more players are tied with the same three-matching slot-machine symbols, then the highest-ranking 3-card poker hand, associated with those three-matching slot-machine symbols, determines the winner. For example, if two players have three cards with CHERRIES, one player may hold CHERRIES-10-of-Spades, CHERRIES-Jack-of-Hearts, CHERRIES-Queen-of-Spades, and the second player may hold CHERRIES-Ace-of-Spades, CHERRIES-4-of-Hearts, CHERRIES-2-of-Diamonds. Under the ranking system of the present invention, the first player's hand wins with three CHERRIES with a Queen-high straight poker hand, while Player 2 only has three CHERRIES with an Ace-high card poker hand.

[0016] Rankings of the 3-card poker card hands, associated with 3-matching slot-machine symbols, are ranked using standard poker rankings, from lowest to highest: high-card hand, a pair, straight, flush.

[0017] Three-of-a-kind card suits (clubs, spades, hearts, diamonds) are only considered to be a flush, when they are associated with three-matching slot-machine symbols, and a 3-card poker hand only matters when used with three-matching slot-machine symbols, and can be considered a tie-breaker between two or more players with the same 3-matching slot-machine symbols.

[0018] The 52 cards in the deck are distinguished by their Slot-Machine-Symbol+Card Rank and Suit. For example, in a preferred embodiment, the slot symbols are distributed unequally among each of the 52 cards according to the assignments shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Rank	Spade	Diamond	Club	Heart
2	BAR	CHERRY	LEMON	PLUM
3	ORANGE	BELL	PLUM	LEMON
4	LEMON	CHERRY	ORANGE	CHERRY
5	BELL	ORANGE	CHERRY	PLUM
6	LEMON	PLUM	BAR	ORANGE
7	ORANGE	BELL	LEMON	CHERRY
8	PLUM	LEMON	CHERRY	LEMON
9	LEMON	CHERRY	BAR	BELL
10	CHERRY	PLUM	ORANGE	BAR
J	ORANGE	LEMON	BELL	CHERRY
Q	CHERRY	LEMON	PLUM	ORANGE
K	PLUM	ORANGE	LEMON	BELL
A	CHERRY	BAR	ORANGE	LEMON

B. Game Variations

[0019] There are various games that can be played with the cards of the present invention. Three particularly preferred games are 3-Card, 4-Card and 5-Card.

3-Card Gameplay

[0020] The cards are shuffled. Preferably, a single deck is used. In an alternative embodiment, cards are dealt from a shoe holding multiple shuffled decks.

[0021] All players ante 1 chip to the pot.

[0022] Players are then dealt three cards face up.

[0023] Players may then discard one card and receive a replacement. Alternatively, the ability to discard may be conditioned on having a particular combination of cards, such as either two matching poker card values or two matching slot machine symbols.

[0024] The player with the highest-ranking hand, with three matching poker card values (deuces up to aces) or three matching slot-machine symbols (LEMONs up to BARs), wins the pot, and a new round begins.

[0025] If two or more players are tied with same 3-matching slot-machine symbols, the player with the highest-ranking 3-card poker hand, associated with their three-matching slot-machine symbols, wins the pot.

[0026] If no player has made any three-of-a-kind hand, then all players contribute another chip to the pot, and a new round is dealt, with players competing for a progressively-increasing pot.

[0027] It is possible, with 3 cards, to have two matching poker cards and two matching slot machine symbols. For example, with the ORANGE-Queen-of-Hearts, ORANGE-King-of-Diamonds and BELL-King-of-Hearts. The player could discard the BELL-King-of-Hearts and draw for a third ORANGE. Or the player could discard the ORANGE-Queen-of-Hearts and draw for a third King. But the player must first discard one card before receiving a replacement card from the dealer.

[0028] In this example, it is much more likely to make a winning hand by discarding the BELL-King-of-Hearts, and drawing for a third ORANGE. However, as all hands are visible, and if all of the cards are being dealt from a single deck, the player could see that another player has already been dealt a higher-ranking three-of-a-kind hand (such as 3 PLUMs or 3 BELLs), and thus could not win with three ORANGEs, so the player should discard the ORANGE-Queen-of-Hearts to draw for a third King. In an alternative embodiment, the cards may be dealt from a shoe containing

multiple decks, in which case, there may be additional ORANGE cards yet to be dealt.

[0029] When two or more players are tied with the same three slot-machine symbols, then the 3-card poker hand is played to determine the winner, and this is when the card suits can be used when making a flush.

[0030] Three-card poker hands are ranked using standard poker rankings, from lowest to highest: High Card, Pair, Straight or Flush. Three-of-a-kind or straight flush hands, associated with three matching slot machine symbols, are not possible in single deck play using the preferred embodiment of distributing the slot indicia among the cards.

[0031] Three-of-a-kind slot machine symbols are ranked, from lowest to highest: LEMONs, CHERRIES, ORANGEs, PLUMs, BELLs, and BARs. Each card preferably displays slot ranking information below the slot machine symbol, for quick and easy reference, including the rank of the slot machine symbol and the quantity of that slot machine symbol in the deck.

[0032] In the preferred 3-Card embodiment, no reshuffle is required after each round of hands, as long as there are enough cards remaining in the deck to deal each player three cards plus a replacement card. While this may eliminate some combinations that could be made, this may also add some advantage for the players who can remember certain cards that have been previously played.

4-Card Gameplay

[0033] The cards are shuffled. Preferably, a single deck is used. In an alternative embodiment, cards are dealt from a shoe holding multiple shuffled decks.

[0034] All players ante 1 chip to the pot.

[0035] Players are then dealt four cards face up.

[0036] Players may then discard and replace cards. For example, any player with at least two matching poker card values or two machine slot machine symbols may discard one card, and will be dealt a replacement card from the dealer.

[0037] The player with the highest-ranking hand, with three matching poker card values or three matching slot-machine symbols, wins the pot, and a new round begins.

[0038] If two or more players are tied with same 3-matching slot-machine symbols, the player with the highest-ranking 3-card poker hand, associated with their three-matching slot-machine symbols, wins the pot.

[0039] If no player has made any three-of-a-kind hand, then all players contribute another chip to the pot, and a new round is dealt, with players competing for a progressively-increasing pot.

[0040] Even if a player has been dealt three matching slot machine symbols, the player can still discard one card for a replacement card from the dealer, hoping to make a stronger 3-card poker hand.

[0041] For example, a player has been dealt: LEMON-7-of-Clubs, LEMON-8-of-Diamonds, LEMON-Jack-of-Diamonds and the BELL-5-of-Spades. This three-card poker hand, with three LEMONs would only be a Jack-High hand.

[0042] By discarding the BELL-5-of-Spades, the player's replacement card could be the LEMON-8-of-Hearts, giving the player a pair of 8s.

[0043] Or the replacement card could be the LEMON-9-of-Clubs, making the 3-card poker hand a 9-high straight.

[0044] Or the replacement card could be the LEMON-Queen-of-Diamonds, which would make a Queen-High Diamond Flush.

[0045] In the preferred 4-Card gameplay, no reshuffle is required after each round of hands, as long as there are enough cards remaining in the deck to deal each player three cards plus a replacement card. While this may eliminate some combinations that could be made, this may also add some advantage for the players who can remember certain cards that have been previously played.

5-Card Gameplay

[0046] The cards are shuffled. Preferably, a single deck is used. In an alternative embodiment, cards are dealt from a shoe holding multiple shuffled decks.

[0047] All players ante 1 chip to the pot.

[0048] Players are then dealt five cards face up.

[0049] The players may then discard and replace cards. For example, any player with at least two matching poker card values or two matching slot machine symbols may discard one card and will be dealt a replacement card from the dealer.

[0050] The player with the highest-ranking hand, with three matching poker card values or three matching slot-machine symbols, wins the pot, and a new round begins.

[0051] If two or more players are tied with the same 3-matching slot-machine symbols, the player with the highest-ranking 3-card poker hand, associated with their three-matching slot-machine symbols, wins the pot.

[0052] If no player has made any three-of-a-kind hand, then all players contribute another chip to the pot, and a new round is dealt, with players competing for a progressively-increasing pot.

[0053] Just as with 4-Card gameplay, even if a player has been dealt three matching slot machine symbols, a player can still discard one card for a replacement card from the dealer, hoping to make a stronger or much-higher ranking three-of-a-kind hand, with more possibilities, making 5-Card gameplay more thought-provoking and interesting.

[0054] In the preferred 5-Card gameplay, no reshuffle is required after each round of hands, as long as there are enough cards remaining in the deck to deal each player three cards plus a replacement card.

C. Symbol Distribution and General Hand Ranking Principles

[0055] In games such as described above and other variations made possible by the deck of the present invention, there are two different sets of rankings for three-of-a-kind hands. Rankings for three matching poker cards, such as three deuces or three Kings, and rankings for three matching slot-machine symbols, such as three BELLS or three PLUMs.

[0056] For three-of-a-kind poker hands, there are thirteen rankings of three-of-a-kind sets: three deuces, three 3s, three 4s . . . all the way up to three Aces.

[0057] For three-of-a-kind slot-symbol hands, there are only six rankings: from three LEMONs, to three CHERRIES, three ORANGES, three PLUMs, three BELLS and three BARs.

[0058] Although there are more three-of-a-kind rankings for poker hands, most winning 3-Card hands will consist of three matching slot-machine symbols.

[0059] The slot indicia distribution among the playing cards of the present invention has been arranged so that three-of-a-kind poker hands associated with any three-matching slot-machine symbols are limited to flushes, straights, single-pair, and high-card hands, and use standard 5-card and 7-card poker hand rankings, in which flushes beat straights. In the preferred embodiment, the symbol distribution among the cards is selected as follows.

[0060] Based on a standard 52-card deck of poker playing cards, the deck of the present invention further has integrated six classic slot-machine symbols throughout the deck, in different quantities, thus establishing the relative ranking of each slot-machine symbol. There are 5 cards with BARs, 6 cards with BELLS, 8 with PLUMs, 10 with Oranges, 11 with CHERRIES, and 12 with LEMONs, for a total of 52 cards.

[0061] One such distribution of symbols, in the preferred embodiment, is shown in FIGS. 1-6 and summarized in Table 1.

[0062] The distribution of symbols shown in FIGS. 1-6 and Table 1 gives rise to certain properties of possible hands. For example, looking at 3-card "three-of-a-kind" slot symbol hands, the following properties arise.

[0063] With three BARs, the best 3-card poker hand is a high-card hand with the Ace of Diamonds, with no pair, no straight, no flush possible.

[0064] With three BELLS, the best 3-card poker hand is a high-card hand with the King of Hearts, with no pair, no straight, no flush possible.

[0065] With three PLUMs, the best 3-card poker hand is a high-card hand with the King of Spades, with no pair, no straight, no flush possible.

[0066] With three ORANGES, the best 3-card poker hand is an Ace-high club flush, no pair possible, but with two combinations of flushes and six combinations of straights possible.

[0067] With three CHERRIES, the best 3-card poker hand is an Ace-high spade flush, with three combinations of flushes, four combinations of straights and nine combinations with a pair of 4s.

[0068] With three LEMONs, the best 3-card poker hand is an Ace-high heart flush. There are four combinations of flushes possible, eight combinations of straights possible and ten combinations with a pair of 8s.

[0069] Accordingly, the quantities of each slot-machine symbol and their distribution across poker card values is selected so that the range of poker hand rankings among three-of-a-kind slot symbols, increases with the frequency of each slot symbol in the deck. The slot-machine symbols have also been arranged so that there can be no ties between multiple players holding the same three slot-machine symbols in a single deck game. For example, if two or three players each have three LEMONs, the highest-ranking 3-card poker hand, associated with each respective players' three LEMONs, determines the winning hand.

[0070] Furthermore, 3-card poker hands, associated with any three-matching slot-machine symbols, are limited to flushes, straights, pairs and high-card hands, and use standard 5-card and 7-card poker hand rankings in which flushes beat straights.

[0071] It will be appreciated that many other game variations are enabled by the deck of the present invention, including solitaire games, and games in which card combinations are ranked other than by their value as poker hands.

In such variations, the addition of slot symbols to the traditional suits of cards provides an additional ranking dimension and enhanced tactical possibilities as discussed above.

[0072] In yet a further embodiment of the invention, single-player hands can be played against a house hand or ranked against a payout table. Additionally, such single-player variants can be embodied in the form of an electronic game. Such an embodiment is shown in FIG. 7 wherein the game system **60** comprises a general processing unit **62** which is interoperably connected with a memory **64** containing a digital representation of the deck and is programmed to execute the rules of play and to evaluate wins, losses and payouts according to the hand ranking principles such as those described above. The GPU **62** is further connected with a user interface **66** comprising a display, such as a touch-screen display **68**, upon which the cards are shown and selected by the user in the form of digital images made visible thereon.

[0073] Still other variations beyond those specifically set forth herein shall be made apparent hereby within the scope of the appended claims.

That which is claimed is:

1. A deck of playing cards, comprising cards upon which are marked (a) a rank and a suit such that the cards of each suit are equally numerous, and (b) a slot machine symbol chosen from an unequally-distributed set of slot machine symbols.

2. The deck of claim **0** in which the deck consists of fifty-two cards, four suits of cards ranked from two to ace.

3. The deck of claim **2** in which the slot machine symbols comprise at least one of cherries, lemons, bells, oranges, plums and bars.

4. The deck of claim **0** in which the cards consist of digital images made visible on an electronic display.

5. The deck of claim **0** in which set of slot machine symbols are distributed in decreasing frequency.

6. The deck of claim **5** in which the deck consists of fifty-two cards, four suits of cards ranked from two to ace, and in which the slot machine symbols are distributed such that (a) the range of poker hands which can be formed among three cards with the slot machine symbol increases with the frequency of that same slot machine symbol, (b) no three-of-a-kind poker hand can be formed with cards having the same slot symbol, and (c) no tying poker hands can be formed with cards having the same slot symbol.

7. The deck of claim **5** in which each card is marked with a slot machine symbol.

8. The deck of claim **7** in which the set of slot machine symbols consists of six slot machine symbols, distributed in groups of five, six, eight, ten, eleven and twelve among the fifty-two cards.

9. The deck of claim **2** in which the slot machine symbols comprise at least one of cherries, lemons, bells, oranges, plums and bars.

10. The deck of claim **0** in which the cards consist of digital images made visible on an electronic display.

11. A deck of playing cards comprising fifty cards ranked from two to ace, marked in four equal suits and further marked with slot machine symbols chosen from an unequally-distributed set of slot machine symbols.

12. A method of playing a card game comprising:

- a) dealing a hand of a fixed number of cards to a player from a deck of cards each having (a) a rank and a suit such that the cards of each suit are equally numerous, and (b) a slot machine symbol chosen from an unequally-distributed set of slot machine symbols,
- b) ranking the hand based on its ranking within a ranking system including poker hand rankings in addition to slot symbol combinations.

13. The method of claim **12** further comprising the steps of:

- a) placing a bet prior to dealing the hand,
- b) providing an option of discarding and replacing cards in the hand, and
- c) paying a win amount based upon whether the ranking of the hand exceeds a defined threshold rank.

14. The method of claim **13** wherein the defined threshold is a fixed rank and the win amount is defined by a pay table.

15. The method of claim **13** wherein the step of placing a bet comprises placing an ante by each of multiple players into a pot, the step of dealing a hand comprises dealing a hand to each of multiple players, and the defined threshold is the second highest ranking hand among the players.

16. The method of claim **15** wherein the step of paying a win amount comprises paying a win amount proportional to the number of players.

17. The method of claim **13** wherein the step of dealing a hand consists of dealing a hand of three cards, and the step of ranking the hand comprises the steps of:

- a) determining whether the hand includes three of the same rank,
- b) determining whether the hand includes three of the same slot machine symbol,
- c) ranking the hand more highly by rank if it has three of the same rank than three of the same slot machine symbol; and
- d) ranking the hand by its poker hand ranking among hands having three of the same slot machine symbol.

18. The method of claim **13** wherein the step of dealing a hand comprises the step of displaying the cards to a player as digital images shown on an electronic display.

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