

a certain number of plays (or within a certain time period). In a preferred embodiment of the jointly played game, players acting as a team may each be commonly assigned a plurality of types and/or classes of games of chance for play.

[0144] For example, each of the players on separate but cooperatively linked gaming machines **70** may be assigned the same blackjack game, video poker game, reel slot machine game, and keno game on their respective gaming machines. Each player would then play their own set of these games (e.g., in any desired order or simultaneously) until one of the players in the group achieves a specific outcome in at least type of game (e.g., blackjack). The game class or type with the specific outcome then “locks up” for each of the players, and the players are then given a predetermined number of plays or a predetermined time period in which to achieve a specific outcome in at least one of the remaining games. The achievement of a specific outcome by any jointly playing player in any of the remaining three games will cause that game to lock up for all the players, and the players are again given a predetermined number of plays or predetermined time period in which to achieve a specific outcome in at least one of the remaining games, and so on. If the players are able to jointly achieve required specific outcomes in all of the initially displayed games, the players may jointly share in a “grand prize” or other appropriate award.

[0145] With further regard to joint play, one skilled in the art will recognize that the gaming machines of the present invention may be adapted for simultaneous play by more than one player physically present at the machine. As shown in **FIG. 6**, a gaming machine **170** may be configured with a single display screen **172** as previously described, except that two or more sets of player input controls **176a** and **176b** are provided. While two sets of player input controls **176a** and **176b** are shown in **FIG. 6**, the provision of more than two sets of player controls are within the scope of the present invention.

[0146] Player input controls **176a** and **176b** allow two players to control and access games of chance, gaming information, gaming events, and other gaming functions available on gaming machine **170**. The operation and functionality of player input controls **176a** and **176b** may be configured in a variety of ways. For example, there may be a hierarchy of control among the player input controls **176a** and **176b**, or the controls may have equal priority and access to gaming machine **170**.

[0147] Preferably, player input controls **176a** and **176b** will provide primary control over games and other types of “windows” to be operated on predetermined respective areas of single display **172**. For example, single display screen **172** may be graphically divided into two halves **172a** and **172b**, with player input controls **176a** and **176b** responsible for the operation and conduct of games or other windows as selected for display within the respective halves **172a** and **172b**. Separate wagering input components **182a** and **182b**, credit meters **184a** and **184b**, coin trays **186a** and **186b**, game selection buttons **177a** and **177b**, play buttons **178a** and **178b**, wagering buttons **179a** and **179b**, master start buttons **180a** and **180b**, and keyboard **181a** and **181b**, etc., are contemplated in this embodiment.

[0148] Still referring to **FIG. 6**, the games of chance selected for simultaneous play by each player in a [multi-

player]multiplayer configuration of gaming machine **170** may be of any of the variety of games previously described for play herein. The games of chance played by one player on gaming machine **170** may be played completely independently from games played by other players on gaming machine **170**, or the games may be configured to be interactive with one another.

[0149] In this regard, interactive methods of play as previously described are contemplated for use in this embodiment of the invention. In a gaming machine **170** configured for two players, for example, one or more selected outcomes by both or either of the players may lead to bonus games for the other [non-winning]nonwinning player or for both of the players. Further in this regard, the games played by both players may be configured to be played simultaneously or sequentially, with simultaneous or sequential winning outcomes by either or both of the players triggering bonus games and/or randomly selected multipliers to be applied to the winning outcomes of one or both players.

[0150] In one preferred embodiment of a method of playing a game of chance according to the present invention, gaming machine **170** is configured as previously described for simultaneous play by two or more players who compete against each other on the same single display screen **172** (e.g., compete in a [“mini-tournament”]“minitournament” against one another). As one example, gaming machine **170** may be activated for play of a “winner-take-all” mini-tournament, wherein the players will simultaneously play one or more of a variety of games for a predetermined time period, at the end of which the winner will be the player with the most tournament credits earned. The players may enter the tournament, for example, after the input of a suitable entry fee. Upon completion of the tournament time period, some or all of the loser’s credits won in the game and/or tournament entry fee may be automatically transferred to the winning player.

[0151] The games of chance played by each player in the above-described [mini-tournament]minitournament may be the same games of chance or different games of chance. For example, gaming machine **170** may be configured such that one player may choose one type or class of game of chance, e.g., a reel slot machine game of chance, while a second player may choose a different type or class of a game of chance, e.g., video poker. The players may then simultaneously compete against one another, for example, with the player having the most overall wins in their respective game being selected as the [“winner”]“winner,” with a transfer of some or all of the other players credits or tournament entry fee. This embodiment of the invention adds to player excitement by fostering competition between players in very close proximity to one another, and by allowing competition between differing “favorite games” of the respective players.

[0152] Still referring to **FIG. 6**, players at a [multi-player] multiplayer configuration of gaming machine **170** may opt to share in the wins and losses of all games played on the single display screen **172**. For example, all wins on gaming machine **170** may inure to the mutual benefit of each of the players, with winning credits being evenly distributed to the credit meters **184a** and **184b** and/or coin trays **186a** and **186b** of each player. In this embodiment, the input of amounts of casino-recognized currency into gaming machine **170** may similarly inure to the benefit of each of the