

ware) that effects the method disclosed herein with reference to **FIGS. 8 and 9**. While a single processor **52** may be used in gaming device **50**, different processors **52** may be used, for example, to effect the primary game and the bonus game. Each processor **52** communicates, by way of signals transported along carrier waves, with memory **53** of a known type, including read-only memory (ROM), random access memory (RAM), a hard drive, a CD-ROM, or the like, a display **54** of a known type (e.g., a cathode ray tube (CRT) monitor, a plasma monitor, a liquid crystal display, or other flat panel display, etc. in an electronic device or mechanical reels in an electromechanical device), input elements **56** of a known type, such as the illustrated lever, or pull arm, and buttons or touch-sensitive locations on an electronic display **54**, as well as with other known types of output devices, such as bells, whistles, other alarms, and audio devices. Of course, gaming device **50** may also include one or more wagering input components **58** and payout components **59** of known types. The various ways in which the various elements of gaming device **50** may be associated with processor **52** and with each other are well known in the art.

[0061] The programming that controls processor **52** causes various logic circuits or groups of logic circuits of processor **52** to execute various functions, or elements of the inventive method. In the exemplary reel type embodiment of the inventive method, which is described herein with reference to **FIGS. 8 and 9**, one logic circuit of processor **52** (**FIG. 10**) may identify selected paylines **35** as a wager of the money credits or tournament points indicated by memory **53** (**FIG. 7**) to be available is placed thereon. Another logic circuit may randomly assign symbols **36**" of a predetermined set to image sites **32**" of array **30**" or cause adjacent reels with series of symbols **36**" thereon to spin and stop in random positions, with the shown, adjacent symbols **36**" of each reel forming a column of symbols **36**" of array **30**". Yet another logic circuit of processor **52** may determine whether a winning combination of symbols **36**" is present along any selected payline **35**" and, if so, determine the corresponding award, while another logic circuit may cause the amount credit stored in memory **53** to be increased accordingly. Still another logic circuit may determine whether a bonus triggering event has occurred, either in or along a selected payline **35**" or at a trigger site **32**". Logic circuits of processor **52**, under control of appropriate programming, may also effect the appropriate bonus events, including both bonus games and increases in awards, as well as other elements of the inventive methods.

[0062] The apparatus illustrated in **FIGS. 7 and 10** may comprise stand-alone gaming devices **40, 50** or stand-alone computers, or may (see **FIG. 11**) be networked to a central computer **60** (e.g., a server or game controlling computer) of a casino, or directly to other gaming devices **40, 50**, by way of a network card **61** and appropriate links **62** therefor (i.e., a local area network (LAN)), by use of a modem or other communication component that facilitates the use of broadband telecommunications between gaming devices **40, 50** or of gaming devices **40, 50** with a central computer **60** (i.e., a wide area network (WAN) or the World-Wide Web (WWW)), or otherwise, as known in the art. Accordingly, gaming devices **40, 50** may be linked to a central computer **60** and/or other gaming devices **40, 50** that are located at the same site or at remote sites (e.g., in other casinos or even other geographic locations). Exemplary ways in which gaming devices **40, 50** may be linked to one another are

described in co-pending U.S. application Ser. No. 09/675, 829, filed on Sep. 29, 2000 (which discloses linking gaming devices for the purpose of tournament play), and in U.S. Pat. No. 6,039,648, the disclosures of each of which are hereby incorporated in their entireties by this reference.

[0063] Although the foregoing description contains many specifics, these should not be construed as limiting the scope of the present invention, but merely as providing illustrations of some of the presently preferred embodiments. Similarly, other embodiments of the invention may be devised which do not depart from the spirit or scope of the present invention. Moreover, features from different embodiments of the invention may be employed in combination. The scope of the invention is, therefore, indicated and limited only by the appended claims and their legal equivalents, rather than by the foregoing description. All additions, deletions, and modifications to the invention, as disclosed herein, which fall within the meaning and scope of the claims are to be embraced thereby.

What is claimed is:

1. A gaming method, comprising:

randomly assigning symbols from a predetermined set to an array of image sites in a primary game;

determining whether one of a plurality of winning combinations of symbols is present in at least one selected payline within said array; and

determining whether a triggering event is present in at least one of said at least one selected payline and at a predetermined or prespecified trigger site of said array and, if said triggering event is present, awarding an option of initiating a bonus game similar in type to said primary game.

2. The gaming method of claim 1, wherein said randomly assigning symbols comprises randomly assigning cards from a deck of cards to said array of image sites.

3. The gaming method of claim 2, further comprising randomly replacing at least one selected card with another undealt card from said deck.

4. The gaming method of claim 2, wherein said determining whether one of said plurality of winning combinations of symbols is present comprises determining whether at least one specific poker combination is present on at least one selected payline across said array.

5. The gaming method of claim 1, wherein said randomly assigning symbols comprises randomly assigning reel type slot machine symbols to said array.

6. The gaming method of claim 5, wherein said determining whether one of said plurality of winning combinations of symbols is present comprises determining whether a predetermined number of symbols are the same on at least one selected payline across said array.

7. The gaming method of claim 1, wherein said determining whether said triggering event is present comprises determining whether a predetermined or preselected trigger symbol is present in at least one selected payline.

8. The gaming method of claim 1, wherein said determining whether said triggering event is present comprises determining whether a specific combination of symbols is present along at least one selected payline.

9. The gaming method of claim 1, wherein said determining whether said triggering event is present comprises