

or a multiplier (e.g., 2X, 3X, etc.) used in multiplying the payout associated with the primary game outcome **430** as is shown in **FIG. 5A**.

[**0057**] Turning now to **FIGS. 6A through 6E**, another embodiment of the present invention is disclosed. A game outcome **530** is shown on the display screen **210** of a gaming machine **200**. The game outcome **530** includes a plurality of array symbols **532A-532O** which may be arranged in one or more rows **534A-534C** and one or more columns or reels **536A-536E**. The array symbols **532A-532O** are randomly selected and positioned upon a placement of a wager and activation of the gaming device **200** by a player. One or more paylines **542** (shown in broken lines) may also be associated with the plurality of array symbols **532A-532O** to indicate potential payouts. One of the array symbols **532A-532O** includes an interactive symbol **532H**.

[**0058**] Upon the appearance of the interactive symbol **532H** in the game outcome **530**, or alternatively, upon the appearance of the interactive symbol **532H** at a predetermined position in the game outcome **530**, a second screen **544** may appear such as is shown in **FIG. 6B**. The second screen **544** includes the interactive symbol **532H** and various array symbols (indicated generally as **532**) in a non-array form. The second screen may include a maze **546** through which the interactive symbol **532H** may chase the other symbols **532**. The movements of the interactive symbol **532H** may be controlled by the player via the interactive symbol controller **214A**. Upon catching one of the other symbols **532K**, such as is shown in **FIG. 6C**, the caught symbol **532K** will perceptibly interact with the interactive symbol **532H** with the caught symbol **532K** being transformed into a new symbol **532K'** as is seen in **FIG. 6D**. After the transformation of the caught symbol **532K** into the new symbol **532K'**, all symbols may be placed back on the display screen in the array form of rows **534A-534C** and columns (reels) **536A-536E** with the new/transformed symbol **532K'** replacing the original symbol **532K** such that the paylines associated therewith reflected new payouts as is seen in **FIG. 6E**.

[**0059**] By allowing the player to control the movements of the interactive symbol **532H** during the "chase," the player is also permitted to select and pursue a particular symbol in anticipation of altering the payouts associated with specific paylines **542**. Variations of the "chase" might include designation of some array symbols, or introduction of additional symbols, for pursuit of the interactive symbol **532H**. If the interactive symbol **532H** was caught first (i.e., prior to the interactive symbol **532H** catching one of the other symbols **532**) then the screen might revert back to the original outcome **530** (**FIG. 6A**) or a penalty, for example the loss of credits, might be imposed.

[**0060**] Referring now to **FIG. 7**, an exemplary method **600** of conducting a game of chance commensurate with various aspects of the above-disclosed embodiments is shown. The method **600** includes providing a player with an opportunity to wager as indicated at **602**. As shown at **604**, it will be determined if a wager has been placed, and if so a primary game will be played as seen at **606**. If a wager has not been placed, the opportunity to wager will continue to be provided as at **602**. Upon play of the primary game **606**, it will be determined if initial criteria have been satisfied for enablement of interactive play as shown at **608**.

[**0061**] As discussed earlier, the initial criteria may include, for example, the placement of a maximum wager, the placement of a wager at a predetermined level greater than the minimum wager but less than the maximum wager, or wagering by the player at a predetermined rate of wagering or play of the primary game. Alternatively, if desired, the need for initial criteria may be waived and interactive play may be enabled as a default operating mode.

[**0062**] Upon satisfaction of the initial criteria, interactive play, through display and operation of an interactive symbol, is enabled as indicated at **610**. If the initial criteria is not satisfied, interactive play will remain disabled as indicated at **612** and a primary game outcome will be displayed as shown at **614**. Such a primary game outcome may include the display of a randomly generated combination of symbols positioned on at least one payline such as set forth with regard to some of the embodiments discussed above herein.

[**0063**] It is noted that the interactive symbol may appear in a gaming outcome, such as in step **614** even though interactive mode is disabled. In such a case, the interactive symbol might act as any other symbol representing a particular combination of randomly selected and displayed symbols from which a payout may be obtained.

[**0064**] If interactive play is enabled, it will be determined if secondary criteria have been met as indicated at **616**. As set forth above, secondary criteria may include, for example, the random selection of a specified symbol, such as the interactive symbol, for display at any location on the display screen. Alternatively, secondary criteria may include the random selection of a specified symbol for display at a specified location on the display screen. Depending on the embodiment employed, another criteria might include the payout associated with a particular payline being either greater than or less than a specified level. For example, a losing outcome might satisfy the secondary criteria and trigger interactive play for second chance winnings. Alternatively, it might be desirable to provide interactive play upon a winning hand, depending on an operator's preference.

[**0065**] If the secondary criteria has not been met, the primary game outcome will be displayed without any associated interactive play as indicated at **614**. If secondary criteria has been satisfied, the primary game outcome will be displayed including the display of an interactive gaming symbol as shown at **618**. Upon the display of an enabled interactive symbol, another symbol will be chosen for perceived interaction with the interactive symbol as shown at **620**. The selection of the symbol may be accomplished by player interaction via interactive controls supplied on the gaming machine. Alternatively, the selection of a symbol may be a random selection performed by the gaming unit. Another alternative of selecting a symbol for interaction with the interactive symbol might be a combination of both player selection and randomness. For example, the player might choose two or more symbols, with the gaming unit subsequently randomly selecting from the two or more player selected symbols.

[**0066**] After a symbol has been selected for perceived interaction with the interactive symbol, the selected symbol will be perceptibly transformed into a new, randomly selected symbol as shown at **622**. The transformation of the selected symbol may have the effect of altering the initial