

modes selected by the player (block 1950). The game must always have a payout which is statistically provable and within predetermined limits (e.g., 90% return to player). Therefore, if player selections change the structure of the game, certain variables within the game must also change to keep the payout substantially constant.

[0165] Specifically, depending on the “Z” interaction, the game style and the game mode, the win evaluation process may select certain pay tables, reel strip layouts, and/or game rules from a plurality of preprogrammed pay tables, reel strip layouts, and/or game rules. Pay tables contain the credit values that can be won for a particular symbol combination. An exemplary pay table 2000 is illustrated in FIG. 31. Reel strip layouts determine game operation by defining the symbol combinations for the game. An exemplary reel strip layout 2100 is illustrated in FIG. 32. Letters 2102 and numbers 2104 in the reel strip layout 2100 represent various pictures and symbols which characterize the game. In this example, the “Z” symbol 2106 appears twice in the first reel, twice in the second reel, once in the third reel, once in the fourth reel, and once on the fifth reel. Of course, any number and combination of symbols may be used to control the overall return percentage of the game. The “Z” symbol 2106 may represent a free game, a bonus, an interaction with other layers, etc. In addition, a person of ordinary skill in the art will readily appreciate that the reel strip layout 2100 may be linked to special modifier tables that have algorithmic rules attached. The pay table(s), 2000 reel strip layout(s) 2100, and game rule(s) determine the games overall percentages return structure.

[0166] Many modifications to the pay table(s) 2000, reel strip layout(s) 2100, and game rule(s) which affect the overall percentages return structure of a game are well known. By adding a “Z” dimension, additional modifications to the pay table(s) 2000, reel strip layout(s) 2100, and game rule(s) which affect the overall percentages return structure of a game are provided. For example, each play layer may be evaluated separately using traditional methods, and then the individual results may be combined. In this embodiment, transparent overlays or “symbol within symbol” graphics may be used to present the layers to the player.

[0167] A flowchart illustrating one embodiment of this individual layer evaluation method 2200 is illustrated in FIG. 33. First, the controller 100 activates the base layer XY game and allows player interaction (block 2202). For example, the player may change the number of pay lines, the number of credits to bet, or activate a layer via a user input device. The controller 100 then performs “normal” XY game evaluations and processes the results (block 2204). For example, three of a kind (in this layer) might pay one hundred credits. Next, the controller 100 activates the “Z” layer XY game and allows player interaction (block 2206). The controller 100 then performs additional “Z” evaluations and processes the results (block 2208). For example, “Z” layer symbols may be combined with base layer symbols to create a pay line which crosses between the two layers. Of course, a person of ordinary skill in the art will readily appreciate that more than two layers may be evaluated in this manner. The results of the individual determinations are then combined into one win statement which is presented to the player (block 2210). For example, if the player won one

hundred credits from the base layer and one thousand credits from the “Z” layer the player may be informed that he won eleven hundred credits.

[0168] In another multi-layer win evaluation method, one or more “Z” layers may extend a base layer as illustrated in FIG. 34. In this example, traditional 3×5 base layer symbols 2302 are extended to a 3×10 reel layout by adding “Z” layer symbols 2304. As a result, new win evaluation methods such as six of a kind, seven of a kind, eight of a kind, nine of a kind, and ten of kind are possible. Of course, a person of ordinary skill in the art will readily appreciate that any number of layers and n-kind extensions are possible. As a result, extremely large prizes are possible for players wishing to gamble at higher levels. In this embodiment, both layers may be viewed simultaneously by overlaying “Z” layer symbols 2304 inside of base layer symbols 2302. Specifically, a portion of a base layer symbol 2302 may be obstructed by a relatively smaller version of a “Z” layer symbol 2304. Optionally, the overlaid “Z” layer symbols 2304 may be semi-transparent.

[0169] In yet another multi-layer win evaluation method, one or more “Z” layers may interact with the base layer. For example, if a five of a kind win occurs on the base layer, one additional occurrence of the same symbol on the “Z” layer may be used to multiply the five of a kind payout by two. Two additional occurrences may multiply the five of a kind payout by three. Three additional occurrences may multiply the five of a kind payout by four. Four additional occurrences may multiply the five of a kind payout by five. Five additional occurrences may multiply the five of a kind payout by six. In the same embodiment, one additional occurrence of the same symbol on the “Z” layer may be used to turn a four of a kind win on the base layer into a five of a kind win. Two additional occurrences may be used to turn a four of a kind win on the base layer into a five of a kind win and multiply the five of a kind win by two. A person of ordinary skill in the art will readily appreciate that this scheme may be easily extended to additional combinations of base layer wins and “Z” add-ons. For example, as shown in FIG. 35, a three of a kind scatter win 2402 on the base layer 1604 with four additional scatters symbols 2406 on the “Z” layer 2302 may result in a five of a kind win multiplied by three.

[0170] A symbolic representation of additional “Z” layer win evaluation methods is illustrated in FIG. 36. In this example, three “Z” layer win evaluation methods are shown. A three of a kind win 1602 in the “Z” dimension is shown. In some embodiments, this type of three of a kind win 2502 may require a “special modifier symbol.” A special modifier symbol is a symbol which transforms one or more underlying symbols into substitute symbols and/or scatter symbols. A four of a kind win 2504 in the “Z” dimension, and a two of a kind win 2506 in the “Z” dimension are also shown in FIG. 36.

[0171] In addition, a person of ordinary skill in the art will readily appreciate that many other multi-layer win evaluation methods are possible within the scope and spirit of the present invention. For example, a “Z” overlaid symbol matching a base layer symbol may provide a free game and/or some other prize. One or more “Z” overlaid symbols forming a pay line with one or more base layer symbols may provide a free game and/or some other prize. One or more