

[0083] FIG. 10 is a flowchart 330 of an alternative embodiment of a light valve control routine that may be performed during operation of the gaming unit 20. Referring to FIG. 10, at block 331, the routine may power up the gaming unit 20 by going through a normal power up sequence. The routine 330 may then cause the light valve 69 to become opaque at block 332 and block all viewing areas from view. This may include blocking view of the slot reels 68, the bonus viewing area, the mechanically moveable member, and any other viewing areas provided.

[0084] The routine 330 may then cause the gaming unit 20 to operate in an attract, normal, bonus, or idle mode at block 334 as well as causing the light valve 69 (whether light valve 69 is a single light valve, or multiple light valves) to be opaque for the bonus viewing area on the electronic display unit 70 and transparent for the slot reels 68, as shown at block 336. Depending on the particular light valve 69 being utilized, causing the light valve 69 to become transparent may involve either applying (or increasing) a voltage to the light valve 69 or discontinuing (or decreasing) the voltage being applied to the light valve 69.

[0085] The slot reels 68 may have an illumination element to enhance their visibility to a player. Other mechanically moveable members, if provided, may correspond to the game and may be activated as part of the game.

[0086] At block 337, the routine may determine if the gaming unit 20 is in a bonus mode. A bonus mode may be entered when the player wins a select outcome on the slots game. If it is determined at the block 337 that the gaming unit 20 is not in a bonus mode, the routine 330 may return to the block 334. If a bonus mode is detected at the block 337, the routine 330 may cause the light valve 69 to become opaque and block the view of the slot reels 68 at a block 338 and to cause one of a plurality of light valves 69 in front of the electronic display unit 70 to become transparent to un-block the view of the bonus viewing area at a block 340.

[0087] The routine 330 may then generate a bonus game display and allow a player to play the bonus game at a block 342. When it is determined at a block 344 that the bonus game is completed, the routine 330 may cause the light valve 69 to become opaque for the bonus viewing area. At a block 348, the routine 330 may return to the main game operation at the block 334.

Video Poker

[0088] Where the gaming unit 20 is designed to facilitate play of a video poker game, the electronic display unit 70 may comprise a video display unit. FIG. 11 is an exemplary display 350 that may be shown on the electronic display unit 70 during performance of the video poker routine 210 shown schematically in FIG. 6. Referring to FIG. 11, the display 350 may include video images 352 of a plurality of playing cards representing the player's hand, such as five cards. To allow the player to control the play of the video poker game, a plurality of player-selectable buttons may be displayed. The buttons may include a "Hold" button 354 disposed directly below each of the playing card images 352, a "Cash Out" button 356, a "See Pays" button 358, a "Bet One Credit" button 360, a "Bet Max Credits" button 362, and a "Deal/Draw" button 364. The display 350 may also include an area 366 in which the number of remaining credits or value is displayed. If the electronic display unit 70 is

provided with a touch-sensitive screen, the buttons 354, 356, 358, 360, 362, 364 may form part of the video display 350. Alternatively, one or more of those buttons may be provided as part of a control panel that is provided separately from the electronic display unit 70.

[0089] FIG. 13 is a flowchart of the video poker routine 210 shown schematically in FIG. 6. Referring to FIG. 13, at block 370, the routine may determine whether the player has requested payout information, such as by activating the "See Pays" button 358, in which case at block 372 the routine may cause one or more pay tables to be displayed on the electronic display unit 70. At block 374, the routine may determine whether the player has made a bet, such as by pressing the "Bet One Credit" button 360, in which case at block 376 bet data corresponding to the bet made by the player may be stored in the memory of the controller 100. At block 378, the routine may determine whether the player has pressed the "Bet Max Credits" button 362, in which case at block 380 bet data corresponding to the maximum allowable bet may be stored in the memory of the controller 100.

[0090] At block 382, the routine may determine if the player desires a new hand to be dealt, which may be determined by detecting if the "Deal/Draw" button 364 was activated after a wager was made. In that case, at block 384 a video poker hand may be "dealt" by causing the electronic display unit 70 to generate the playing card images 352. After the hand is dealt, at block 386 the routine may determine if any of the "Hold" buttons 354 have been activated by the player, in which case data regarding which of the playing card images 352 are to be "held" may be stored in the controller 100 at block 388. If the "Deal/Draw" button 364 is activated again as determined at block 390, each of the playing card images 352 that was not "held" may be caused to disappear from the video display 350 and to be replaced by a new, randomly selected, playing card image 352 at block 392.

[0091] At block 394, the routine may determine whether the poker hand represented by the playing card images 352 currently displayed is a winner. That determination may be made by comparing data representing the currently displayed poker hand with data representing all possible winning hands, which may be stored in the memory of the controller 100. If there is a winning hand, a payout value corresponding to the winning hand may be determined at block 396. At block 398, the player's cumulative value or number of credits may be updated by subtracting the bet made by the player and adding, if the hand was a winner, the payout value determined at block 396. The cumulative value or number of credits may also be displayed in the display area 366 (FIG. 11).

[0092] Although the video poker routine 210 is described above in connection with a single poker hand of five cards, the routine 210 may be modified to allow other versions of poker to be played. For example, seven card poker may be played, or stud poker may be played. Alternatively, multiple poker hands may be simultaneously played. In that case, the game may begin by dealing a single poker hand, and the player may be allowed to hold certain cards. After deciding which cards to hold, the held cards may be duplicated in a plurality of different poker hands, with the remaining cards for each of those poker hands being randomly determined.