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(54) FANTASY FOOTBALL POKER

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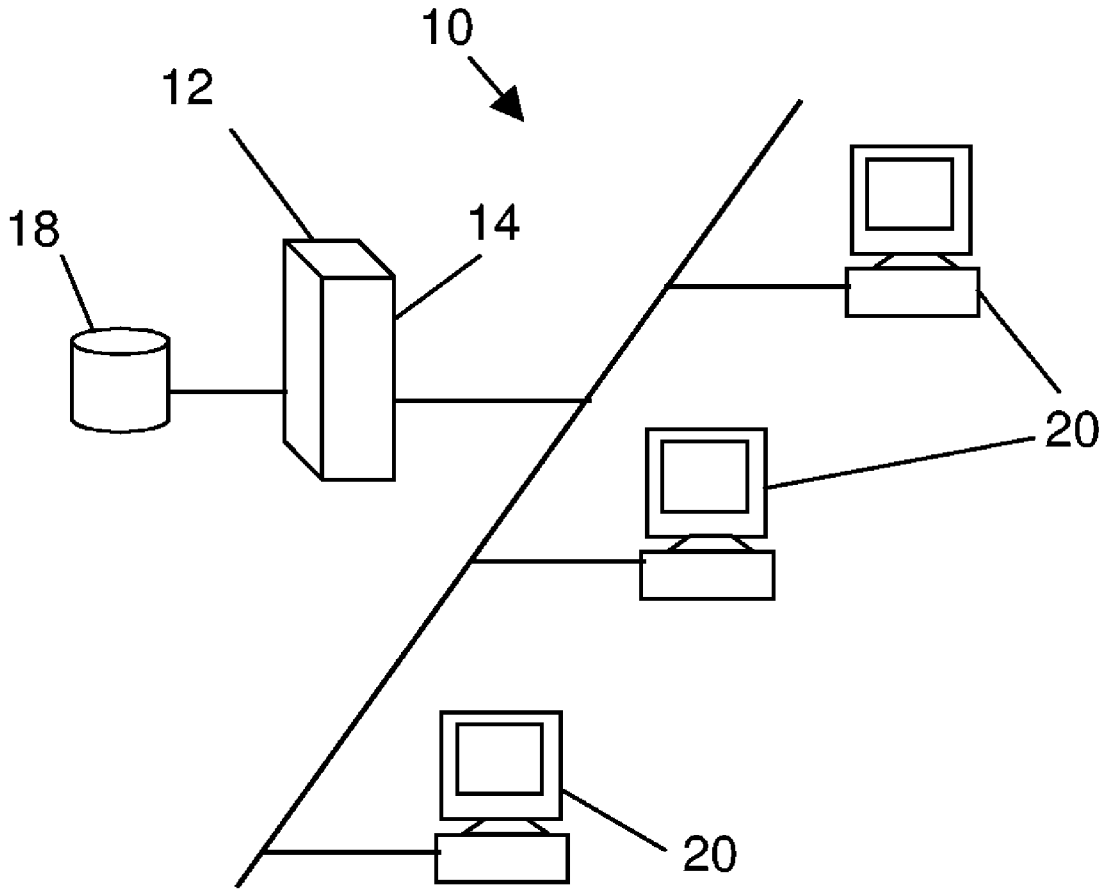
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A game for a set of participants has a deck with cards of n suits, each uniquely identified according to a player position in a team sport. There are m cards within each suit, each of the m cards assigned to one of a set of m sports teams, and assigned to a sports player selected from the sports team who has the player position corresponding to the suit. For each suit, there is one card in the deck associated with each of the m sports teams within the suit. The deck has at least n times m cards. The card for each sports player has a point value according to sports game statistics during a specified time period. The value of the cards of a participant is determined according to both the combination of sports teams in the hand and the point values for one or more cards.



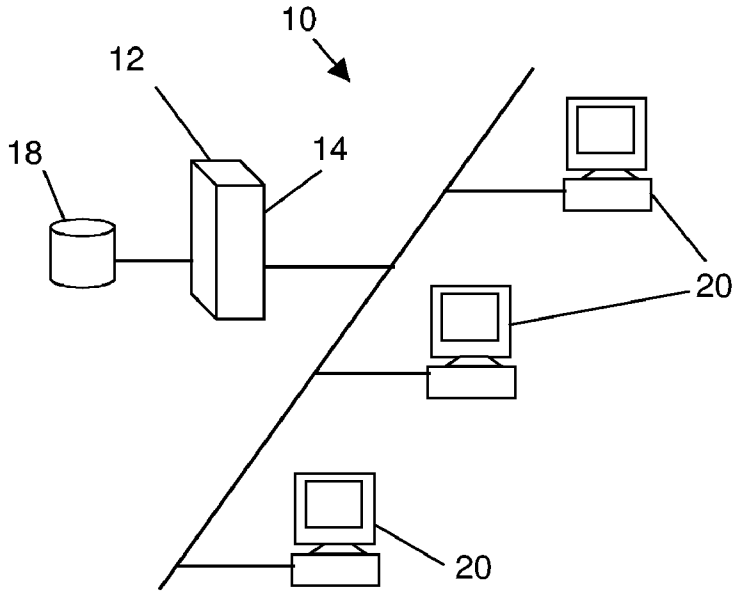

10
12
18
14
20
20

Fig. 1

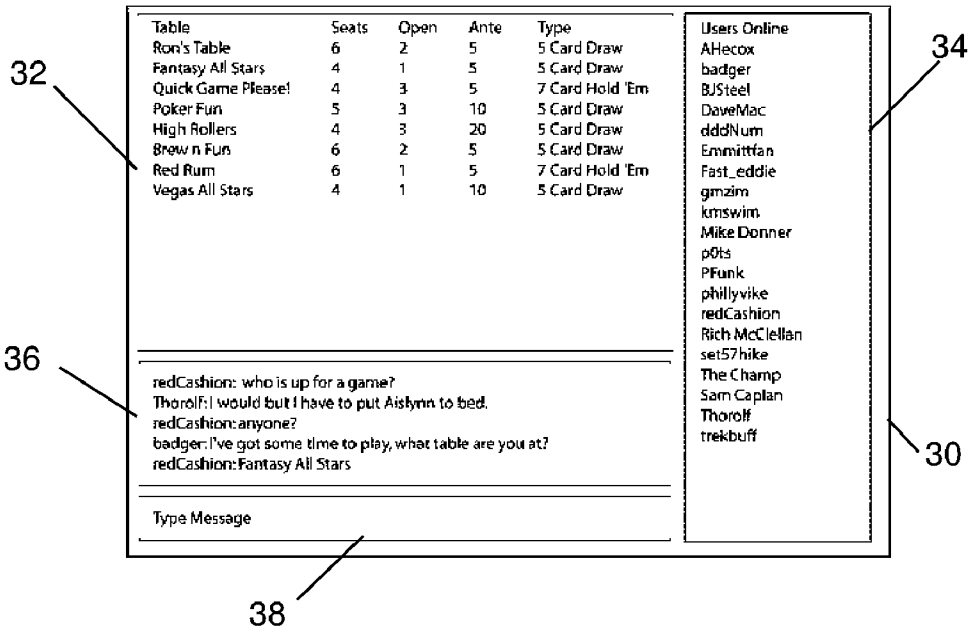

32
34
36
30
38
Table
Seats
Open
Ante
Type
Ron's Table 6 2 5 5 Card Draw
Fantasy All Stars 4 1 5 5 Card Draw
Quick Game Please! 4 3 5 7 Card Hold 'Em
Poker Fun 5 3 10 5 Card Draw
High Rollers 4 3 20 5 Card Draw
Brew n Fun 6 2 5 5 Card Draw
Red Rum 6 1 5 7 Card Hold 'Em
Vegas All Stars 4 1 10 5 Card Draw
Users Online
AHecox
badger
BJSteel
DaveMac
dddNum
Emmittfan
Fast_eddie
gmzim
kmswim
Mike Donner
p0ts
PFunk
phillyvike
redCashion
Rich McClellan
set57hike
The Champ
Sam Caplan
Thorolf
trekbuff
redCashion: who is up for a game?
ThorolF: I would but I have to put Aislynn to bed.
redCashion: anyone?
badger: I've got some time to play, what table are you at?
redCashion: Fantasy All Stars
Type Message

Fig. 2

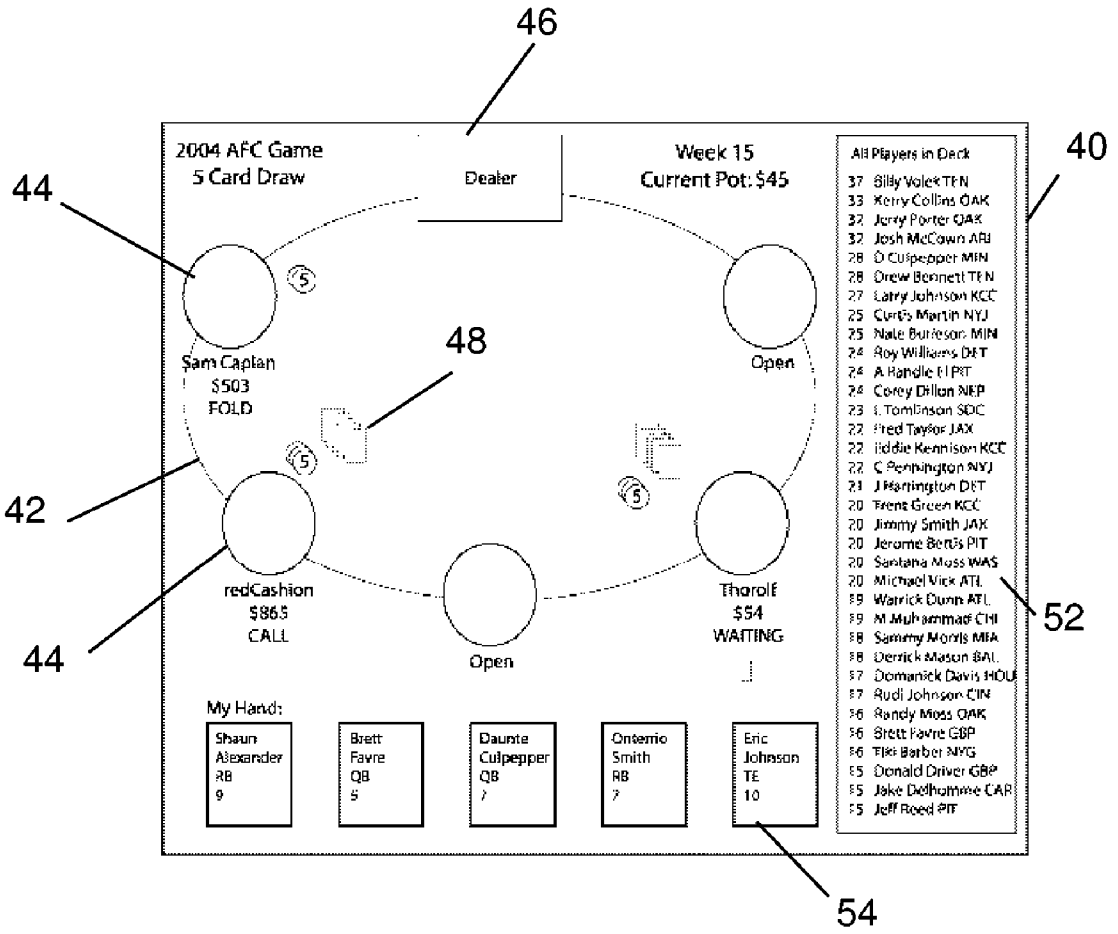

46
2004 AFC Game
5 Card Draw
Dealer
Week 15
Current Pot: $45
40
44
All Players in Deck
37 Billy Volek TEN
33 Kerry Collins OAK
32 Jerry Porter OAK
32 Josh McCown ARI
28 D Culpepper MIN
28 Drew Bennett TEN
27 Larry Johnson KCC
25 Curtis Martin NYJ
25 Nate Burleson MIN
24 Roy Williams DET
24 A Randle El PIT
24 Corey Dillon NEP
23 L Tomlinson SDC
22 Fred Taylor JAX
22 Eddie Kennison KCC
22 C Pennington NYJ
21 J Harrington DET
20 Trent Green KCC
20 Jimmy Smith JAX
20 Jerome Bettis PIT
20 Santana Moss WAS
20 Michael Vick ATL
19 Warrick Dunn ATL
19 M Muhammad CHI
18 Sammy Morris MIA
18 Derrick Mason BAL
17 Domanick Davis HOU
17 Rudi Johnson CIN
16 Randy Moss OAK
16 Brett Favre GBP
16 Tiki Barber NYG
15 Donald Driver GBP
15 Jake Delhomme CAR
15 Jeff Reed PIT
48
Sam Caplan
$503
FOLD
Open
42
redCashion
$865
CALL
Open
Thorolf
$54
WAITING
44
52
My Hand:
Shaun Alexander RB 9
Brett Favre QB 5
Daunte Culpepper QB 7
Ontemio Smith RB 7
Eric Johnson TE 10
54

Fig. 3

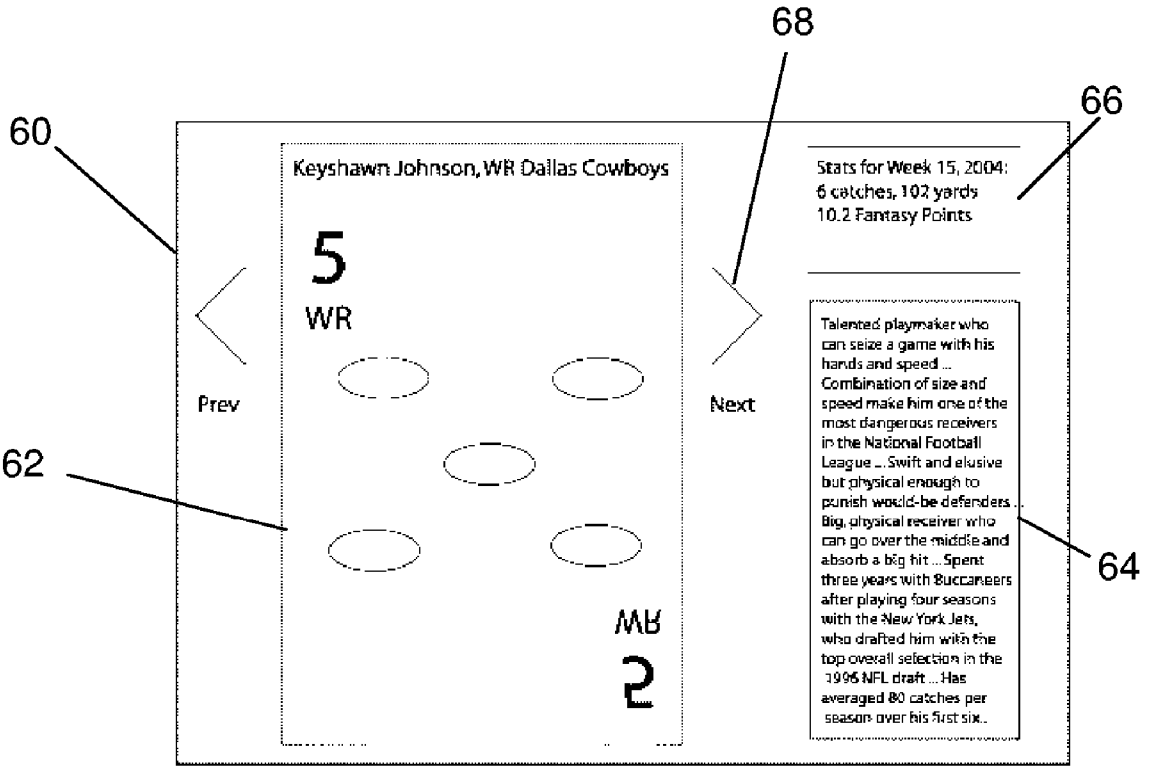

68
66
60
Keyshawn Johnson, WR Dallas Cowboys
Stats for Week 15, 2004:
6 catches, 102 yards
10.2 Fantasy Points
5
WR
Prev
Next
62
Talented playmaker who can seize a game with his hands and speed ... Combination of size and speed make him one of the most dangerous receivers in the National Football League ... Swift and elusive but physical enough to punish would-be defenders ... Big, physical receiver who can go over the middle and absorb a big hit ... Spent three years with Buccaneers after playing four seasons with the New York Jets, who drafted him with the top overall selection in the 1996 NFL draft ... Has averaged 80 catches per season over his first six...
64

Fig. 4

FANTASY FOOTBALL POKER

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention generally relates to card games and more particularly relates to a version of poker played in a fantasy sports context.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Fantasy Football and similar sports-related games have enjoyed considerable enthusiasm from sports enthusiasts. Participants in Fantasy Football draft their own teams from the pool of a past or present NFL (National Football League) sports players and compete against each other using results of simulated games based on actual week-to-week performance statistics for those players. Within a relatively short time, Fantasy Football has grown from a "seasonal" activity played during the professional football season to a year-round activity, with a host of available on-line servers that administer participant leagues, such as Xpert Sports at internet site address www.xpertsports.com for example. A good general introduction to how this game is played can be found, for example, in U.S. Pat. No. 4,918,603 entitled "Computerized Statistical Football Game" to Hughes et al.

[0003] The card game of poker has been a long-time favorite, particularly in the U.S. The game of poker combines various elements that make it particularly compelling, including chance and skill, and requiring intuition, wagering, nerves, and calculation from its participants. There are many variations of poker, with a more or less standard core of rules for values of card combinations and play. Traditionally played around a table, poker is more recently accessible on-line, as evidenced by numerous sites such as those listed and advertised on the internet site online-poker-rules.net.

[0004] It can be readily recognized that Fantasy Football and poker are each games that have particularly compelling aspects that add to a participant's enjoyment. A game that can combine aspects of Fantasy Football with poker would have special recreational appeal.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] It is an object of the present invention to provide a game for a set of participants comprising:

[0006] a deck comprising a plurality of cards of a number n suits, wherein each suit is uniquely identified according to a player position in a team sport;

[0007] wherein there are another number m cards within each suit,

[0008] wherein each of the m cards within each suit is assigned to one of a set of m sports teams, and assigned to a sports player selected from the sports team who has the player position corresponding to the suit,

[0009] such that, for each suit, there is one card in the deck associated with each of the m sports teams within the suit,

[0010] the deck comprising at least the product n times m cards thereby,

[0011] wherein the card corresponding to each sports player is assigned a point value according to sports game statistics for said sports player during a specified time period;

[0012] and wherein the value of the set of cards of a participant is determined according to both:

[0013] (i) the combination of sports teams for cards in the hand of the participant; and,

[0014] (ii) the point values for one or more cards in the hand of the participant.

[0015] From another aspect, the present invention provides a game for a set of participants comprising:

[0016] a) a deck comprising a plurality of cards of a number n suits, wherein each suit is uniquely identified according to a player position in a team sport;

[0017] wherein there are another number m cards within each suit,

[0018] wherein each of the m cards within each suit is assigned to one of a set of m sports teams, and assigned to a sports player selected from the sports team who has the player position corresponding to the suit,

[0019] such that, for each suit, there is one card in the deck associated with each of the m sports teams within the suit,

[0020] the deck comprising at least the product n times m cards thereby;

[0021] b) a control logic processor for distributing cards from the deck to each member of the set of participants according to a poker hand distribution rule, such that each participant is dealt a hand of cards,

[0022] wherein the control logic processor is in communication with a database of sports game statistics for each of the sports players corresponding to the n times m cards in the deck, wherein the sports game statistics are based on sports player performance within a specified time period,

[0023] the control logic processor assigning a point value to each card dealt to a participant according to said sports game statistics;

[0024] wherein the control logic processor manages the game sequence between participants according to predetermined rules and computes results.

[0025] It is a feature of the present invention that it provides a game that combines the pastimes of card playing with sports fantasy gaming.

[0026] It is an advantage of the present invention that it allows either on-line or local play of a game for sports and poker enthusiasts.

[0027] These and other objects, features, and advantages of the present invention will become apparent to those skilled in the art upon a reading of the following detailed description when taken in conjunction with the drawings wherein there is shown and described an illustrative embodiment of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0028] While the specification concludes with claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter of the present invention, it is believed that the

invention will be better understood from the following description when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

[0029] FIG. **1** is a block diagram of a typical network infrastructure for playing Fantasy Football Poker over a computer network;

[0030] FIG. **2** is a plan view of an interface screen layout for game entry and setup;

[0031] FIG. **3** is a plan view of an interface screen layout for game play and sequencing; and,

[0032] FIG. **4** is a plan view of an interface screen layout for viewing information on an individual game card.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0033] The present invention provides a card game employing poker rules and play sequence, with cards arranged and assigned value based on Fantasy Football sports players. For the description of the game that follows, it is important to observe the following distinction in terminology:

[0034] "Player" or "sports player" refers to a NFL team player who is assigned to a card in the Fantasy Football card game. In a broader context, the term "sports player" refers to a team sports player who plays a player position on an organized sports team, which could include other sports, such as baseball, basketball, hockey, and soccer, for example.

[0035] "Participant" refers to a person who is playing the Fantasy Football poker game.

[0036] "Dealer" refers to the agent that distributes cards as needed to support game play. Where this game is played on printed cards, the dealer function could be performed by one of the participants or by someone who is not currently playing. Where the game is played on-line at a computer terminal, the dealer function is performed by a computer or other control logic processor of some kind, situated either locally or over a network. An appropriate card distribution rule, such as a poker hand distribution rule in the embodiments described in detail subsequently, is followed by the dealer, based on the version of the game that is played.

[0037] The term "season" has its conventional meaning for a sports season, usually a period of consecutive months during which games are played, followed by an "off-season" period.

[0038] In the context of game play, the terms "deck", "cards", "suit", and "hand" have the conventional meanings familiar to anyone who has played cards. Where this game is played with actual printed cards, the conventional meanings of these terms apply. Where this game is played on-line, such as using the display monitor and keyboard, mouse, or other pointing/selection device of a personal computer, a "card" is, of course, available as a displayed screen representation, or a "virtual" card. A "deck" would be a virtual deck, such that there is a fixed number of cards available for use in the game, organized according to rules such as those described herein. Of course, when played on a computer terminal, only those cards from the deck that are in the participant's hand need be displayed. Again, with its conventional meaning, the term "hand" refers to the subset of cards held by, or in temporary possession of, a participant during the game. Of course, a "hand" can also refer generally to a "round" or portion of game play, as the term is conventionally used among card players.

[0039] Infrastructure

[0040] In one embodiment, Fantasy Football poker is played online, allowing a set of participants of a Fantasy Football league or sports enthusiasts in general to play this game remotely. In order to better understand on-line play, it is instructive to review the computer network infrastructure that can be used for Fantasy Football as well as for Fantasy Football poker. Referring to FIG. **1**, there is shown a computer network **10** for Fantasy Football and associated games. A workstation **12** is configured as a networked server **14**, a control logic processor executing the game software and interacting with each of a number of participants at their networked computers **20**. To manage play of the game, server **14** accesses a database **18** that provides performance statistics for numerous sports players. These statistics are maintained for current games and may include results from previous week's games, including game statistics from previous seasons' play.

[0041] Among its functions, networked server **14** executes administrative software to allow access and interaction with each participant and to enroll participants and maintain participant accounts and provide a necessary measure of security. In controlling play of the game itself, networked server **14** sets up sessions appropriately with each participant, records and stores play instructions from each participant, executes the game sequence, informs each participant of cards in that participant's hand and of the game play status, manages betting, provides scoring and results, and stores information about each game played. Where there are fees requiring collection, server **14** supports this account management function.

[0042] It can be appreciated that the overall arrangement of FIG. **1** admits a number of possible variations. For example, while the internet is used as network **10** in the embodiment of FIG. **1**, a privately operated network could also be employed. Various security measures can be used for participant identification and access.

[0043] Rules

[0044] The basic set of rules parallels the rules of poker, adapted for play in a Fantasy Football context. A game is played with a limited number of participants, normally more than two, but generally not more than about eight participants.

[0045] A deck of cards is organized into a number n of suits. Within each suit, there is a fixed number m of cards, each card having an associated sports player and sports team. In one embodiment, four suits of cards are provided (n=4), each suit related to a player position. For example, in an embodiment with four suits, each of the following player positions is a suit:

[0046] Quarterback (QB)

[0047] Running Back (RB)

[0048] Tight End (TE)

[0049] Wide Receiver (WR)

[0050] Obviously, other arrangements are possible, using other player positions or allowing more than four suits, for example.

[0051] Within each suit, a number m of cards are arranged by sports team. For example, where m=16, the following teams could be represented:

[0052] 1. Arizona

[0053] 2. Atlanta

[0054] 3. Carolina

[0055] 4. Chicago

[0056] 5. Dallas

[0057] 6. Detroit

[0058] 7. Green Bay

[0059] 8. Minnesota

[0060] 9. New Orleans

[0061] 10. New York Giants

[0062] 11. Philadelphia

[0063] 12. San Francisco

[0064] 13. St Louis

[0065] 14. Seattle

[0066] 15. Tampa Bay

[0067] 16. Washington

[0068] Card values, such as numbers 1-16 in the example listing given above, are used as one factor for determining the total value of cards in a participant's hand. It must be emphasized that the card value could be other than a number. For example, alternative card values similar to those used for conventional playing cards could be used, where values Ace, King, Queen, Jack, and so on are designated. Some other indicator such as color could alternately be used to provide a card value of this type.

[0069] Various schemes for organization of the m cards within each suit may be appropriate, such as designation of teams in the deck by conference, for example the American Football Conference (AFC) or National Football Conference (NFC) in the case of football. Each card then represents a top fantasy scorer on its respective team. For example, a sports player card such as Aaron Brooks, QB NO (New Orleans) would be assigned a team number of "9". This number is used to build combinations of cards, such as pairs and straights in poker, as described subsequently.

[0070] For example, the following are possible cards in the hand of one participant, from five cards selected from the deck at random, listed in order by card value; sports player name; suit:

[0071] 4—Chicago; Rex Grossman; QB

[0072] 5—Dallas; Julius Jones; RB

[0073] 5—Dallas; Jason Whitten; TE

[0074] 11—Philadelphia; Donovan McNabb; QB

[0075] 14—Seattle; Shaun Alexander; RB

[0076] With this arrangement of cards, the deck thus has at least the product n times m cards, plus any additional cards, such as those used as wild cards, for example, depending on the version of the game that is played.

[0077] The card value assigned to each card, based on the team identification as noted above (number 1-16 in this example embodiment), is used for obtaining combinations within the poker hand, as described subsequently. No hierarchy of values or ranking is necessarily implied by this numbering system. Thus, cards with a card value of 1 do not need to have an inherently higher or lower rank than cards numbered 2, 3, 4, etc. An important distinction can be made: in conventional poker, a hierarchy of sports player card values is used to determine who wins a hand when no participant has a pair or other combination of greater value; this hierarchy, however, is not needed within Fantasy Football poker.

[0078] Point Values Assigned to Cards

[0079] For each game of Fantasy Football poker, each of the m cards in each suit is assigned a variable point value, based on the performance of the identified sports player for the previous week's play, or for some earlier week's play. In this way, the point value assigned to 11 Philadelphia Donovan McNabb QB, for example, can vary depending on how well he performed during the past week.

[0080] A number of alternative point value schemes may be employed for a game of Fantasy Football poker. As just one example, a fantasy point (FP) value is assigned to each sports player of each suit, based on a particular week of play, as follows:

[0081] 6 points per rushing or receiving TD.

[0082] 4 points per passing TD.

[0083] 2 points for every 2-point conversion.

[0084] 1 point for every 10 yards rushing or receiving.

[0085] 1 point for every 25 yards passing.

[0086] −1 point for every fumble.

[0087] The fantasy points for the group of sports players in a hand are then summed to provide a total point value for the hand held by the participant. It can be seen that, using this scheme, the same hand of five cards can have a different total point value from one week to the next.

[0088] Given this schema, each playing card, then is assigned both of the following:

[0089] (i) a card value, used for making combinations within the hand held by the participant; and,

[0090] (ii) a point value for the corresponding sports player listed on the playing card, the point value variable according to the particular week, or other time period, of play during one or more seasons.

[0091] In whatever type of card game is played using these cards, scoring for a participant's hand is based on both of the values assigned in (i) and (ii) above. For one embodiment, the game of poker is played, as described subsequently.

[0092] Values of Poker Combinations

[0093] To compute a participant's poker score for any hand of cards, the total accumulated point value for that

participant's hand can be further multiplied by an odds factor. The odds factor is determined by the poker combination in the participant's hand. For example, the following combinations are assigned the indicated odds factors:

[0094] Royal Flush. A royal flush is the highest possible hand, with all five cards of the same suit and in sequence, for example 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 all of RB. Odds factor: 649,739

[0095] Straight Flush. A straight flush has all five cards of the same suit and in sequence. For example: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 all of QB. Odds factor: 64,973.

[0096] Four of a Kind. Four cards having the same number. These correspond to sports players on the same team. For example: 4-4-4-4, 12-12-12-12. Odds factor: 4,164.

[0097] Full House. Three cards of one number, three of another. For example: 4-4-4 and 12-12. Odds factor: 693.

[0098] Flush. Five cards in the same suit, but not in sequence. For example: 1, 4, 7, 11, 12 of TE. Odds factor: 508.

[0099] Straight. Five cards in sequence, not all of the same suit. For example: 4-5-6-7-8, 9-10-11-12-13 Odds factor: 254.

[0100] Three of a Kind. For example 3-3-3, 5-5-5, 11-11-11. Odds factor: 46.

[0101] Two Pairs. For example: 3-3, 8-8. Odds factor: 20.

[0102] One Pair. For example: 13-13. Odds factor: 1.25.

[0103] To compute the score for a hand, then, requires two steps:

[0104] 1. Determine the total point value for the hand.

[0105] 2. Multiply the point value times any odds factor that might apply.

[0106] The odds factor is generally based on the likelihood of each of the various poker card combinations, using the card value described hereinabove. While it may be based on a statistical probability formula of some kind, there is no requirement that a strict computation or formula be needed to derive an odds factor. In one embodiment, the odds factor is set at a level that would make it difficult for a hand of very high total points value (from sports player fantasy points as outlined above) with a low odds factor to beat a hand with relatively low total points value but with a higher odds factor. For example, in conventional poker, the three of a kind combination beats two pairs. However, using the computation described above, it could be possible, depending on total fantasy points assigned to the sports players in a hand, for one participant's hand with two pairs to have a higher score than the hand of another participant with three of a kind. This can be prevented by adjusting the odds factor appropriately. Conversely, this possibility may enhance enjoyment of the game, arguing for reduction of the odds factor for one or more combinations of cards. An odds factor of 1 could be used as the default. Participants may be given the option to agree to a set of odds factors beforehand.

[0107] Setup and Play

[0108] In one embodiment, Fantasy Football Poker is played on-line, with each game organized about a virtual table. To enroll in a game, a potential participant first logs on to a web site and is presented with the option to join in one or more games. The example of FIG. **2** shows an entry window **30** that can be displayed to a potential game participant. A tables listing section **32** identifies tables that are currently available. Typical information in tables listing section **32** includes table name, number of total seats, and number of open seats. To enroll in a game, a potential participant may click on an entry icon or double-click on the listing for that game. A participant may also enter a command that generates a new table. A participant listing section **34** lists names of participants who are currently online, this list could be used to detect which participants are not currently playing a game to decide whom to send an invitation to. Participants who receive an invitation could either accept it, and join the table that the inviter set up, or decline it. Options for the particular game may also be listed, such as ante, poker game type, minimum bet values, league used for the deck (such as NFC, AFC, or all).

[0109] The example window of FIG. **2** also shows a number of other possible utilities that can be made available on entry window **30** for the convenience of participants. An optional chat message section **36** may provide a listing of comments received from participants. A chat entry section **38** would enable the participant to enter an appropriate chat message to other participants. Optionally, a participant may also be able to contact another participant individually, such as by double-clicking on that participant's name in participant listing section **34**, for example.

[0110] A number of display windows or screens can be provided to support play once the game is initiated. Referring to FIG. **3**, there is shown a table display window **40** that can show game progress and results for each participant. A table graphic **42** shows a participant symbol or icon **44** representing each participant in the game. Various information on table display window **40** indicates game type, identifies weekly statistics and season, name assigned to a table, values of current pot, etc. A dealer icon **46** represents the position and status of the virtual dealer in dealing out electronic cards according to the rules for the type of poker that is being played. Card icons **48** indicate the number of cards dealt to each participant.

[0111] Table display window **40** can also display other information useful to support game play. For example, various points listing sections **52** can be provided, to list fantasy points for all sports players in the deck and for sports players in the hand of the viewing participant, for example. In one embodiment, cards in the hand of the participant are displayed in a highlighted form (such as using bold text or highlighted text, for example) in points listing section **52**.

[0112] An optional chat message section (not shown in FIG. **3**) can also be available for recording comments from one or more individual participants. Icons, highlighting, or other graphic effects indicate which of the participants has the current turn. Card icons **54** can be displayed for the participant's hand. An arrow or other graphic symbol or treatment can be used to indicate the current actor whose turn it is.

[0113] During play, the controlling networked server **14** (FIG. **1**) provides only the information that would be avail-

able to each participant during a card game. That is, each participant has a hand of cards that is visible only to that participant as card icons **54**; the cards of other participants are not visible to each other.

[**0114**] The participant can also view information provided about a playing card. For example, by double-clicking on a sports player in one of points listing windows **52** of FIG. **3**, the sports player card window **60** of FIG. **4** can be displayed. A card icon **62** shows various details about the sports player, such as the team number, player position (suit), and sports player name. Sports player card window **60** can also provide a sports player information section **64** and a sports player statistics section **66**. These sections can give more detailed information on recent performance as well as links to other sites for the individual sports player or team. Interface traversal icons **68** are provided, allowing the viewing participant to return to table display window **40** or move through the cards in the deck or in the participant's own hand.

[**0115**] It can be readily appreciated that the windows shown in FIG. **2**, **3**, and **4** are exemplary only and allow a number of variations, improvements, and options to suit the requirements of the Fantasy Football Poker game. For example, sports player card window **60** may display as if overlaid on top of table display window **40**, allowing one or more sports player card windows **60** to be displayed or "tucked away" on the interface screen as needed. Conventional operator interface tools can be used to move between the various types of display windows or to enter chat text. For example, double-clicking on card icon **54** in table display window **40** (FIG. **3**) could cause the corresponding sports player card window **60** to be presented.

EXAMPLE

[**0116**] An example of game play could occur with the following order of events:

[**0117**] 1. A participant X signs in to the site.

[**0118**] 2. Participant X clicks on an icon that allows him to set up his own "table".

[**0119**] 3. Participant X enters parameters related to the nature of the game he wants played at this table. In this example, he enters "NFC" conference, $1 minimum bet, 5 seats, 2004 sports players and stats, and "Performance" Scoring. In one embodiment, performance scoring is equal to 1 point per 10 yards rushing or receiving, 6 points for rushing or receiving touchdown (TD), 1 point per 25 yards passing, 4 points for passing TD, −2 points for Interception.

[**0120**] 4. Participant X uses the main chat window to let people know that he is looking for other participants to join the table that has just been set up.

[**0121**] 5. A participant Y clicks on an open seat icon from within the table list, and is seated at the table.

[**0122**] 6. A participant Z enters the room from the table list, and then clicks on a seat icon at the table, and is seated.

[**0123**] 7. Each participant unclicks a checkbox labeled "I will sit out the next hand".

[**0124**] 8. A new hand begins with the display of the randomly chosen week, Week 3.

[**0125**] 9. An ante of $1 is automatically withdrawn from each participant's purse and enters the pot in the middle of the table.

[**0126**] 10. In accordance with a poker hand distribution rule, five cards are dealt to X, Y, and Z starting with X and moving clockwise (see FIG. **3**).

[**0127**] 11. Each participant sees the value of his or her respective cards but all other dealt cards appear face down.

[**0128**] 12. At the end of the dealing, the cards held by each participant are as follows:

[**0129**] a. Participant X:

[**0130**] Sports player: Aaron Brooks. Suit: QB. Card value: 9 (Team: New Orleans Saints).

[**0131**] Sports player: Brian Westbrook. Suit: RB. Card value: 11 (Team: Philadelphia Eagles).

[**0132**] Sports player: Peerless Price. Suit: WR. Card value: 2 (Team: Atlanta Falcons).

[**0133**] Sports player: Darrel Jackson. Suit: WR. Card value: 14 (Team: Seattle Seahawks).

[**0134**] Sports player: Eric Johnson. Suit: TE. Card value: 12 (Team: San Francisco 49ers).

[**0135**] b. Participant Y:

[**0136**] Sports player: Amani Toomer. Suit: WR. Card value: 10 (Team: New York Giants).

[**0137**] Sports player: Tiki Barber. Suit: RB. Card value: 10 (Team: New York Giants).

[**0138**] Sports player: Michael Pittman. Suit: RB. Card value: 15 (Team: Tampa Bay Buccaneers).

[**0139**] Sports player: Jason Witten. Suit: TE. Card value: 5 (Dallas Cowboys).

[**0140**] Sports player: Jake Delhomme. Suit: QB. Card value: 3 (Carolina Panthers).

[**0141**] c. Participant Z:

[**0142**] Sports player: Randy Moss. Suit: WR. Card value: 8 (Team: Minnesota Vikings).

[**0143**] Sports player: Mark Brunell. Suit: QB. Card value: 16 (Team: Washington Redskins).

[**0144**] Sports player: Brett Favre. Suit: QB. Card value: 7 (Team: Green Bay Packers).

[**0145**] Sports player: Joey Harrington. Suit: QB. Card value: 6 (Team: Detroit Lions).

[**0146**] Sports player: Keyshawn Johnson. Suit: WR. Card value: 5 (Team:Dallas Cowboys).

[**0147**] 13. Participant X has the option to bet, and does not by clicking the appropriate button.

[**0148**] 14. Participant Y has the option to bet, and enters the amount of 1.00 and clicks the Bet icon.

[**0149**] 15. Participant Z has the option to raise, call, or fold and chooses to call by clicking the appropriate button.

[**0150**] 16. Participant X leaves the betting for this hand by clicking the Fold button.

[0151] 17. Now each participant is prompted with the option to return up to 5 of their current cards for new ones. Action proceeds as follows:

[0152] Participant Y returns Michael Pittman and Jason Witten.

[0153] Participant Y receives Marc Bulger. Suit: QB. Card value: 13 (Team: St. Louis Rams).

[0154] Participant Y receives L. J. Smith. Suit: TE. Card value: 11 (Team: Philadelphia Eagles).

[0155] Participant Z returns Keyshawn Johnson and Randy Moss.

[0156] Participant Z receives Donovan McNabb. Suit: QB. Card value: 11 (Team: Philadelphia Eagles).

[0157] Participant Z receives Boo Williams. Suit: TE. Card value: 9 (Team: New Orleans Saints).

[0158] 18. Now the cards held by each participant are as follows:

[0159] a. Participant Y:

[0160] Sports player: Amani Toomer. Suit: WR. Card value: 10 (Team: New York Giants).

[0161] Sports player: Tiki Barber. Suit: RB. Card value: 10 (Team: New York Giants).

[0162] Sports player: Jake Delhomme. Suit: QB. Card value: 3 (Carolina Panthers).

[0163] Sports player: Marc Bulger. Suit: QB. Card value: 13 (Team: St. Louis Rams).

[0164] Sports player: L. J. Smith. Suit: TE. Card value: 11 (Team: Philadelphia Eagles).

[0165] b. Participant Z:

[0166] Sports player: Mark Brunell. Suit: QB. Card value: 16 (Team: Washington Redskins).

[0167] Sports player: Brett Favre. Suit: QB. Card value: 7 (Team: Green Bay Packers).

[0168] Sports player: Joey Harrington. Suit: QB. Card value: 6 (Team: Detroit Lions).

[0169] Sports player: Donovan McNabb. Suit: QB. Card value: 11 (Team: Philadelphia Eagles).

[0170] Sports player: Boo Williams. Suit: TE. Card value: 9 (Team: New Orleans Saints).

[0171] 19. Betting resumes with Participant Y, who clicks enters $0.25 and clicks the Bet button.

[0172] 20. Participant Z enters $1.00 and clicks the Raise button.

[0173] 21. Participant Y clicks the Call button, and betting for this hand has ended.

[0174] 22. The cards and point total for each hand is revealed.

[0175] 23. Points are totaled as follows:

[0176] a. Participant Y

[0177] Sports player: Amani Toomer. Suit: WR. Card value: 10. Week 3 stats: 126 yards receiving. Point total: 12.

[0178] Sports player: Tiki Barber. Suit: RB. Card value: 10. Week 3 stats: 106 yards rushing. 48 yards receiving. 1 rushing TD. Point total: 20.

[0179] Sports player: Jake Delhomme. Suit: QB. Card value: 3. Week 3 stats: 308 yards passing. 2 interceptions. 13 yards rushing. Point total: 9.

[0180] Sports player: Marc Bulger. Suit: QB. Card value: 13. Week 3 stats: 358 yards passing. 1 passing TD. 18 yards rushing. 1 rushing TD. Point total: 23.

[0181] Sports player: L. J. Smith. Suit: TE. Card value: 11. Week 3 stats: 74 yards receiving. Point total: 7.

[0182] Total points: 71. Multiplier based on pair of 10s: 1.25. Adjusted total points: 88.75.

[0183] b. Participant Z:

[0184] Sports player: Mark Brunell. Suit: QB. Card value: 16. Week 3 stats: 325 yards passing. 2 passing TDs. Point total: 21.

[0185] Sports player: Brett Favre. Suit: QB. Card value: 7. Week 3 stats: 360 yards passing. 4 passing TDs. Point total: 30.

[0186] Sports player: Joey Harrington. Suit: QB. Card value: 6. Week 3 stats: 199 yards passing. 2 passing TDs. 10 yards rushing. Point total: 14.

[0187] Sports player: Donovan McNabb. Suit: QB. Card value: 11 (Team: Philadelphia Eagles). Week 3 stats: 356 yards passing. 2 passing TDs. −2 yards rushing. 1 rushing TD. Point total: 26.

[0188] Sports player: Boo Williams. Suit: TE. Card value: 9 (Team: New Orleans Saints). Week 3 stats: 41 yards receiving. Point total: 4.

[0189] Total points: 95.

[0190] 24. Participant Z wins a pot of $7 with 95 total points, beating a hand with 88.75 total points.

[0191] Variations

[0192] Fantasy Football Poker can be played during the regular football season, using current or upcoming weekly game statistics, as well as year-round, using results from some previous week's play, including play from previous seasons. For play using other season statistics, a randomizer can be used to select a previous weeks' sports player statistics. A season (year) is selected, either at random or by the participants. The week of the selected season may be chosen at random. Statistics for that week could then be made available to the participants, who would then be able to determine the relative values of various cards for that particular week. A team on bye during the specified week could have their cards removed from the deck for that hand, for example.

[0193] While Fantasy Football Poker is particularly well-suited to on-line play with a networked server as the control logic processor, this game could alternately be played using printed playing cards, preferably with some type of computational assistance for providing statistics, assigning point values, and generating scores. For example, cards for a particular season could be provided on some substrate in printed form, with a database of statistics for that season and algorithms for computing and maintaining scores provided

on a removable storage medium, such as a diskette or CD, or could be made available to a networked computer that is operated as the control logic processor by one or more of the participants during the game. A hand-held game play device could also be provided as a type of control logic processor for controlling the game play sequence and/or for maintaining statistics, computing results, and keeping score, for example. Where a control logic processor is used, this apparatus is in communication with a database of sports statistics, used to generate point values for each card.

[0194] In alternate embodiments, a control logic processor would not be needed for game play. Cards could be preprinted on paper for a specific week, with player statistics and point values on each card so that participants themselves need not have access to a computer or to a sports statistics database in order to play. Cards for a specified time period could be printed out as needed, including printing onto paper or other suitable substrate at the game site itself or at some other location, for example.

[0195] Wagering

[0196] Fantasy Football Poker could be used for wagering in any of a number of ways. A minimum ante could be required or an account established for each participant before the game, from which the participant could draw chips, add more funds or extract winnings.

[0197] Subscription

[0198] Participants may be presented with various options for subscribing to Fantasy Football Poker games and for payment. For example, subscribing members to an existing Fantasy Football league may be given free access to one or more games, such as monthly. Subscribers may have some type of allowance or credit account usable for game participation.

[0199] As is well known, there are numerous versions of poker and related types of card games, characterized by some form of betting, by a sequence that includes discarding of one or more cards in exchange for alternate cards with the hope of obtaining improved combinations, and by playing multiple hands as part of a game. While the above description focuses on game play for types of poker, the present invention can be readily adapted to any number of game types. Aspects of play such as type of game, card distribution rules, game play sequence, betting, and other parameters can vary according to factors such as the interest of the participants and the advantages to the provider of the game. The present invention may be used to play any of a number of different types of poker. Additionally, the structure provided by the present invention could be used to play other types of card games, such as rummy, euchre, etc., with corresponding changes to rules. Cards in addition to the m times n cards could be used, including wild cards, for example, depending on the type of card game that is played. For any type of game played, the total value of a hand of cards for each participant could be based on some combination of card values that are based on player position (suit) and team, and point values that are based on player performance over a specified time period.

[0200] The invention has been described in detail with particular reference to certain preferred embodiments thereof, but it will be understood that variations and modifications can be effected within the scope of the invention as described above, and as noted in the appended claims, by a person of ordinary skill in the art without departing from the scope of the invention. For example, a team could be excluded from the deck during a bye week. Participants may be given the option to select from a range of values for odds factors and other values.

[0201] The game can be played using sports team and sports player statistics for any number of sports, including both professional and non-professional games, such as college games, for example. When on-line, games could be accompanied by a range of display and animation features to enhance the playing experience. Time limits could be imposed to speed the game along or to deter cheating or sharing of information between participants during game play. Particularly where wagering is involved, statistics and play patterns could be maintained on various participants, such as to forestall combinations of two or more participants who exhibit suspicious play patterns or to alert potential participants as to another participant's win/loss record. Betting limits could be imposed as a safeguard against possible high losses or manipulation.

[0202] Some type of database is needed in order to assign values to cards in the deck. For on-line play, the same database used to store sports game statistics for each of the sports players for Fantasy Football or similar fantasy sports games could serve as the database needed for the fantasy sports game of the present invention. Where this game is played apart from Fantasy Football network access, any number of conventional storage devices or apparatus could be used to maintain a database sufficient for game play.

[0203] Thus, what is provided is an apparatus and method for playing poker or other card games in a fantasy sports context.

PARTS LIST

[0204] **10**. Network

[0205] **12**. Workstation

[0206] **14**. Server

[0207] **18**. Database

[0208] **20**. Networked computer

[0209] **30**. Entry window

[0210] **32**. Tables listing section

[0211] **34**. Participant listing section

[0212] **36**. Chat message section

[0213] **38**. Chat entry section

[0214] **40**. Table display window

[0215] **42**. Table graphic

[0216] **44**. Participant icon

[0217] **46**. Dealer icon

[0218] **48**. Card icon

[0219] **52**. Points listing section

[0220] **54**. Card icons

[0221] **60**. Sports player card window

[0222] 62. Card icon

[0223] 64. Sports player information section

[0224] 66. Sports player statistics section

[0225] 68. Traversal icon

What is claimed is:

1. A game for a set of participants comprising

a deck comprising a plurality of cards of a number n suits, wherein each suit is uniquely identified according to a player position in a team sport;

wherein there are another number m cards within each suit,

wherein each of the m cards within each suit is assigned to one of a set of m sports teams, and assigned to a sports player selected from the sports team who has the player position corresponding to the suit,

such that, for each suit, there is one card in the deck associated with each of the m sports teams within the suit,

the deck comprising at least the product n times m cards thereby,

wherein the card corresponding to each sports player is assigned a point value according to sports game statistics for said sports player during a specified time period;

and wherein the value of the set of cards of a participant is determined according to both:

(i) the combination of sports teams for cards in the hand of the participant; and,

(ii) the point values for one or more cards in the hand of the participant.

2. A game according to claim 1 wherein the deck comprises printed cards.

3. A game according to claim 1 wherein cards for at least one participant are displayed on a terminal.

4. A game according to claim 1 wherein a control logic processor deals the cards according to a poker hand distribution rule.

5. A game according to claim 1 wherein the team sport is football.

6. A game according to claim 1 wherein the specified time period is a week chosen from a season.

7. A game for a set of participants comprising:

a) a deck comprising a plurality of cards of a number n suits, wherein each suit is uniquely identified according to a player position in a team sport;

wherein there are another number m cards within each suit,

wherein each of the m cards within each suit is assigned to one of a set of m sports teams, and assigned to a sports player selected from the sports team who has the player position corresponding to the suit,

such that, for each suit, there is one card in the deck associated with each of the m sports teams within the suit,

the deck comprising at least the product n times m cards thereby;

b) a control logic processor for distributing cards from the deck to each member of the set of participants according to a poker hand distribution rule, such that each participant is dealt a hand of cards,

wherein the control logic processor is in communication with a database of sports game statistics for each of the sports players corresponding to the n times m cards in the deck, wherein the sports game statistics are based on sports player performance within a specified time period,

the control logic processor assigning a point value to each card dealt to a participant according to said sports game statistics;

wherein the control logic processor manages the game sequence between participants according to predetermined rules and computes results.

8. The game of claim 7 wherein the deck further comprises wild cards.

9. The game of claim 7 wherein the game is played over a computer network.

10. The game of claim 7 wherein the database is provided on a removable data storage medium.

11. The game of claim 7 wherein the sports teams are football teams.

12. The game of claim 7 wherein the specified time period is a week during a sports season.

13. The game of claim 7 wherein the control logic processor is a hand-held computing device.

14. A method for providing a card game comprising:

a) providing a deck comprising a plurality of cards of a number n suits, wherein each suit is uniquely identified according to a player position in a team sport;

wherein there are another number m cards within each suit,

wherein each of the m cards within each suit is assigned to one of a set of m sports teams, and assigned to a sports player selected from the sports team who has the player position corresponding to the suit,

such that, for each suit, there is one card in the deck associated with each of the m sports teams within the suit,

the deck comprising at least the product n times m cards thereby;

b) dealing cards from the deck to each of a set of card game participants according to a poker hand distribution rule, such that each participant is dealt a hand of cards;

c) assigning a point value to each card in the hand of cards dealt to each participant according to sports performance statistics for the corresponding sports player within a specified time period;

d) managing play from one participant to the next according to game rules; and,

e) computing scores for one or more portions of the game.

15. The method of claim 14 wherein the card game is played by the participant at a computer terminal.

16. The method of claim 14 wherein the step of providing a deck comprises the step of printing onto a substrate.

17. The method of claim 14 wherein the step of computing scores comprises multiplying the total accumulated point value for a participant's hand by an odds factor, wherein the odds factor is selected according to a combination of cards in that participant's hand.

18. The method of claim 14 wherein the team sport is football.

19. The method of claim 14 wherein the specified time period is a week chosen from a previous season.

20. The method of claim 17 wherein the odds factor is 1.

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