SPORTS NETWORKING PLATFORM

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The invention relates to the field of the Internet, and more particularly relates to a sports networking platform.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Social networking websites are formed for individuals to create connectivity with each other having a similar background/hobby/interest and to build and maintain a social relationship via groups. Many social networking websites such as facebook, orkut etc. allows its registered members to manage their profile by adding friends, posting wall posts, sharing photos/videos to their profile.

Few sports based online communities are known in the art. The members of these websites are formed by the association of a specific kind of sports players for e.g. MyAFL is an official community of the Arena Football League. NHL Connect is an official fan community of the National Hockey League. However, a common social networking portal for members with sports background is not yet proven. Because of lack of such a social networking portal, many individual athletes are left unnoticed. Further, a player of particular sport may not be aware of information about the various events conducted in his neighborhood, information on sports enthusiasts who play similar sports, and so on.

OBJECTIVE OF THE INVENTION

The primary objective of the invention is to provide a sports networking platform for sports enthusiasts.

Another objective of the invention is to allow members to manage their profile by adding or removing similar community of sports enthusiasts from their member's list.

Yet another objective of the invention is to allow members to stay connected with the sports enthusiasts worldwide and develop an Internet sports network web space to play, meet, interact, advertise, discuss, announce, invite, etc.

Yet another objective of the invention is to allow a member who is interested or a member who plays more than one sport to join different sports groups and add members to the associated sports, further to make him aware about other sports related information like rules to play that sport, prestigious tournament of that sport, members of that sports group, criteria to get the membership of a particular sport/club etc.

Yet another objective of the invention is to update latest news alert about a particular sport that the member is interested in.

Yet another objective of the invention is to allow members to collect membership details of a particular sport/club/organization/group etc. and further to introduce a new member to the sport club/organization/group etc.

Yet another objective of the invention is to allow members of a particular sports group to watch a related sports event in the sports networking space and provide comment about an event online.

Yet another objective of the invention is to allow a member to advertise himself via his profile by including his sports related information in the profile and by adding videos on important and breaking moments of his sports life etc.

Yet another objective of the invention is to create a sports event online/with a phone application and let other members of the sports network participate in the sports event based on the venue, timing and type of the sport event.

Yet another objective of the invention is to create an open event thereby automatically notifying the members of the sports networking website who are near the venue of the event for participating in the event based on the location of the member, time of play and type of the sports which they are interested in.

Yet another objective of the invention is to allow members to view a geographical location map where the invited sport event is conducted.

Yet another objective of the invention is to allow members to collect funds by organizing an event.

Yet another objective of the invention is to allow members to advertise and add sponsors for a sport event.

Yet another objective of the invention is to trace members of a particular sports group via Global Positioning System (GPS) or profile preference or from the location of the events they have played.

Yet another objective of the invention is a Global sport calendar (GSP) for sports enthusiasts to view one consolidated calendar of all major sporting events in the world along with details such as month, date and time of the major sports events. The global sport calendar also has links for booking tickets for these events. This calendar also has links to television timings of these events and allows video streaming of these events.

Yet another objective of the invention is to allow members of the network to have access to a specially prepared catalogue of all products related to sport from which they can make product purchases online.

Yet another objective of the invention is to allow members to bid auction, exchange, buying and selling of used sports products/goods with other members in the network.

Yet another objective of the invention is to allow members of the network to fix sport events amongst themselves in various locations of their choice.

Yet another objective of the invention is to provide a rating system which enables members to enter their game scores after their sports events/matches/rounds amongst other members of networks. The rating system rates the members of the network based on their scores and provides seeding/ranking for the members regionally and globally.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides a sports networking platform. The present invention provides an online platform for sports enthusiasts having one or more client devices and at least one server connected to the one or more client devices via a network. The server is configured for enabling sports enthusiasts to connect and communicate in a sports networking space. The server includes a processor and a memory. The memory includes a profile module, an event management module, a geographical location map module, a global sport calendar, an e-commerce module, an auction module and a rating module. Each of these modules may be stored in the memory in the form of instructions that when executed by the processor, enables the processor to provide various functionalities described in the description that follows.

The profile module is configured for creating a profile of a user (e.g., sports enthusiast) having interest in a particular sport to join the sports networking platform. The user profile includes profile information of the user including but not limited to his hobbies, interest, the type of sport(s) he is interested in, his location, his preferred club where he plays the sport(s) of his preference and the like. After obtaining all the required information, the profile module enables the user to join the online platform and become a member of the sports networking space.

The profile module enables each member to share his profile information with other members. The profile information may include but not limited to his personal information, pictures, videos, forums/club where he is a member of, and any other activities he is participating in. The profile module further enables members to invite other members of the sports networking platform. Furthermore, the profile module enables members to join a preferred sports group and add other members to a preferred sports group, advertise himself via his sports profile, etc.

The event management module enables a member to create two types of event invite viz. standard invite and open invite, for inviting the members of the sports networking platform to participate in a particular game/sport. The invited members can play/participate in the game/sport/event by confirming his/her participation to the event creator. In the standard event, the event management module enables a member to invite other members of a similar sport from his members list for a game/sport/event and the invited member/members can confirm their participation to the game/sport/event to the event creator. In open invite, the event management module enables a member to send a general invite (not specifically to any member) for playing/participating in a game/sport/event and the other members can confirm their participation to the event creator. The event management module further enables the members playing similar sports to connect with each other, create,

organize and participate in the sporting events, provide the feedback about the event, update and follow up on individual performances and growth.

The event management module also enables the members to find and invite a list of members interested in similar sports and a particular location/area where the event is being organized and share the event details and the participant's details with the identified members who have preferred to receive such information in their profile. The event management module also enables the members to organize a social meet or a party for the members (e.g., sports enthusiasts playing similar or different sports) connected through the sports networking platform.

The geographical location map module enables the members to view the location map of the particular event. It further allows the member to view the tournament of a particular sport and provide comments about the event online.

The global sport calendar module enables the members to view a consolidated calendar showing all major sporting events around the globe along with details such as month, date and time of the major sporting events. The global sport calendar also enables the members to book tickets online for any of these events. The global sport calendar also enable members to facilitate travel bookings, hotel stay, flight bookings online for any of these events. This calendar also provides information on telecast timings of these events. The global sports calendar also provides video streaming of these events.

The e-commerce module facilitates the members of the sports networking platform to have access to a specially prepared catalogue of all products related to sports from which they can make product purchases online.

The auction module enables the members to bid auction, exchange, buy and sell used sports products/goods with other members in the sports networking platform.

The rating module enables members to enter their game scores after completion of sports events/matches/rounds. The rating module is configured for rating the members of the sports networking platform based on their scores and providing seeding/ranking for the members regionally and globally. This enables rankings of "non-professional and non-amateur" sports people across the globe.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a block diagram illustrating an exemplary sports networking system, according to one embodiment.

Figure 2 is a block diagram which depicts different modules of a server such as those depicted in **Figure 1**, according to one embodiment.

Figure 3 is a screenshot view depicting a member's profile, according to one embodiment.

Figure 4 is a screenshot view depicting a member's sports related information on his profile, according to one embodiment.

Figure 5 depicts a screenshot view of managing connections in a profile, according to one embodiment.

Figure 6 depicts a screenshot view of an e-commerce interface, according to one embodiment.

Figure 7 depicts the screenshot view of an auction interface, according to one embodiment.

Figure 8 is a screenshot view depicting the options for inviting members for a sports event, according to one embodiment.

Figure 9 depicts a screenshot view of creating a standard invite for inviting sports enthusiasts from member's list, according to one embodiment.

Figure 10 depicts a screenshot view of creating an open invite for inviting the sports enthusiasts of the sports networking platform to join an event, according to one embodiment.

Figure 11 depicts a screenshot view of an event creator's profile calendar, according to one embodiment.

Figure 12 depicts a screenshot view of a member's profile who is invited for the event, according to one embodiment.

Figure 13 depicts a screenshot view of a location map displayed in member's profile who is invited for the event, according to one embodiment.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides a sports networking platform. **Figure 1** is a block diagram illustrating an exemplary sports networking system 100. The sports networking system 100 includes a server 102, a network 116 and client devices 118A-N. The server 102 includes a processor 104, a memory 106 and a network interface 114. The memory 106 includes a social networking platform 108. The client devices 118A-N are connected to the server 102 via the network 116.

The sports networking platform 108 is an online platform for sports enthusiasts to connect and communicate in a sports networking space. The sports networking

platform 108 includes a profile module 110 and an event management module 112 stored in the form of instructions that when executed by the processor 104 enables the sports enthusiasts to connect and communicate in a sport networking space. In one embodiment, the profile module 110 enables an interested sports enthusiast to create a profile in the sports networking platform 108 by registering his user id and password for the sports networking space 108. The event management module 112 enables the members to create and/or share an event about a particular sport with other members in his list. Although, the sports networking platform 108 is illustrated as having the profile module 110 and the event management module 112, it can be noted that the sports networking platform 108 may includes additional modules for providing various functionalities to the member of the sports networking space as shown in **Figure 2**.

Figure 2 is a block diagram illustrating different modules of the sports networking platform 108 such as those depicted in **Figure 1**, according to one embodiment. As shown, the sports networking platform 108 additionally includes a groups module 202, an e-commerce module 203, a connection module 204, an auction module 205, a geographic location map module 206, a notification module 208, a preference module 210, a rating module 211, a global sport calendar module 212 and a sponsors module 213. The sports networking platform 108 also includes databases 214 such as a profile database 216, a location database 218, a preference database 220, an e-commerce database 222, a sponsor's database 224, a sports database 226, a rating database 228, a calendar database 230, a group's database 232, a member's database 234 and a connections database 236 etc.

The profile module 110 enables an interested sports enthusiast to create a profile in the sports networking platform 108 by registering his user id and password for the sports based social networking space 108. The profile module 110 allows the user of the client device 114 to input his basic sports related information including but not

limited to his hobbies, interest, the type of sport(s) he is interested in, his location, his preferred club where he plays the sport(s), number of tournaments he played, etc. After obtaining the required basic information, the profile module 110 enables the user to join the sports networking platform 108 and become a member of the sports networking space. Once the user of the client device 118 becomes a member of the sports networking platform 108, the profile module 204 adds the member in its member's database 234 and the associated profile information is stored in the profile database 216.

The connection module 204 is configured for managing connections between a plurality of member in a sports networking space. For example, the connection module 204 may manage a degree of connections between two members which may be connected to each other directly or through other member(s) of the sports networking platform 108.

The profile module 110 further enables the member of the sports networking platform 108 to share his profile information with other members of the sports networking platform 108. The profile information may include but not limited to his personal information, pictures, videos, forums/club where he is a member of, and any other activities he is participating in. The profile module 110 further enables the member to invite other users who may be interested in joining the sports networking platform and/or connect with other existing members and share the information about each other and/or their choices, preferences and /or hobbies, etc. Furthermore, the profile module enables the member to join a preferred sports group and add other members to a preferred sports group, advertise himself via his sports profile, etc.

The groups module 202 enables the member to search and join different groups and displays a list of groups associated with the member. For example, the groups module 202 enables the member to search a particular group he wishes to join by

allowing the member to search from the list of groups available in the sports networking platform 108 and retrieving the list from the group's database 232.

The event management module 112 enables the members to create and/or share an event about a particular sport with other members in his list. The invited members can participate in the event by confirming his participation to the event creator. The event management module 112 further enables the members playing similar sports to connect with each other, create, organize and participate in the sporting events, provide the feedback about the event, update and follow up the individual performances and growth.

The event management module 112 further enables the members to create an open event invite to find and invite a list of members interested in similar sports based on a particular location/area where the event is being organized/taking place and share the event details with the identified members who have preferred to receive such information in their profile. For example, when a member creates an open event for a sport A by providing the venue of the sport event, then the event management module 112 automatically tracks all the members in the sports networking platform 108 who lives near the venue or the members who have selected the particular location in their preferences or the members who are active players of that sport in the network. The event management module 112 interacts with the location module 206 and the preferences module 210 to identify the members for open invite event using the location database 218 and the preferences database 220.

The event management module 112 also enables the members to organize a social meet or a party for the members (e.g., sports enthusiasts playing similar or different sports) connected through the sports networking platform 108.

The e-commerce module 203 facilitates the members of the sports networking platform 108 to have access to a catalogue of products related to different sports

retrieved from the e-commerce database 222 which allows the members of the sports networking platform 108 to buy the sports related products online. The auction module 205 enables the members to bid, auction, exchange, buy and sell used sports products/goods with other members in the sports networking platform 108.

The geographic location map module 206 enables the members of the sports networking platform 108 to view geographic location where the particular event is conducted along with the details of the venue, details of the participating members, etc. in the particular event. Further, the location module 206 provides the direction to reach the particular place where the sports event is conducted. Apart from viewing location associated events, members can also see 'open' events which other users have created. The geographic location map module 206 thus enables a member who created the event, a member who is a part of a particular event and the member who is a part of the sports networking space 108 interested in the particular sport (for which the event is created), to view the location map and to get details about other participants of the particular sport event.

The notification module 208 notifies any notification in the member's profile. For example, if the member receives an event notification, then the notification module 208 notifies the member that there is an event notification sent by member X for the sport event A at location L and venue V. The notification module 208 further allows the member to accept or reject the notification by providing relevant options and thereby intimating the event creator regarding the participation of the member in the sport event. In another example of a member addition request from a sports enthusiast Y to the sport member X, the notification module 208 notifies the member X regarding the request of addition of member request from the sports enthusiast Y and intimates the member X to accept or reject the request.

The rating module 211 enables the members to maintain their individual performance record in a particular sport and share the same over network which may be used for the benefits of members like creating ratings for a particular sport. Creating rating is basically an average of the scores posted by the members after each event. Once these scores are posted, the rating module 211 rates them based on their scores. For example, the ratings may be computed at the end of every month which means it would be an average of the scores played during the month. This enables rankings of "non-professional and non-amateur" sports people across the globe. The rating scheme would apply for all sport as long as the scores are posted. Eventually, the rating would encompass 'New York No 1' to 'USA No 1' (similarly other cities and countries as well) and "World No 1" in a particular geographic area and in a particular category using the rating database 228. The top rated sport/event may be provided with various incentive and reward programs.

The global sport calendar module 212 enables the member to view all the sporting events and their schedules in one place. If they would like to travel to these events, the global sport calendar module 212 provides a direct link to ticketing, tour operators etc. by picking the relevant information from the calendar database 230. It further provides a direct link to television timings and video streaming of these events and lists all major events connected to the member's interested sports. For example, a user who plays tennis and football might be able to see events such as Wimbledon, The French Open and The Euros in their calendar. It will also include scores and statistics for each of these events.

The sponsor's module 213 enables the member to view a list of sponsors retrieved from the sponsor's database 224. The member can send a request to a sponsor to get sponsorship for an event.

Figure 3 is a screenshot view depicting a member's profile 300. Once the member provides the authentication information, the profile module 110 displays the

associated members profile in the client device 114. The profile 300 displays the information like name of the sport he plays (for e.g. Tennis, cricket, volley ball etc.), other sport he is interested in, for example a member may play different sports or he might be interested to play or gather information about different sports apart from his favorite sport. The profile further includes information like number of tournaments the member participated, preferred clubs/organizations the member regularly plays, clubs/organization the member is willing to play in future, members preferred locations to play the sport, whether member is willing to receive any event notifications in the nearby geographical locations etc. The profile also enables the member to add/remove sports enthusiasts in the members profile, join in various groups by tracing a particular sport (as explained above in figure 2). The profile also displays the member's sports related information and the members in his list in each sport.

Figure 4 is a screenshot view depicting member's sports related information on his profile. Once the member clicks the sports link, the sports database 224 retrieves all the sports related information stored in the associated member's profile. The profile module 110 displays multiple sports the member plays and the associated information retrieved from the sports database 224. For example if the member plays multiple sports like tennis, volley ball, cricket, football etc., the profile module 110 displays all these sports details including the geographical locations where he played these sports, venue details, the name of the tournaments the member played etc.

Figure 5 depicts a screenshot view of managing connections in a profile. The member can manage his connections by adding or removing a member from a particular list via the profile module 110. For example, if the member clicks on the tennis link, a list of tennis players in his members list will be displayed, the member can add more tennis players to his members list or he can remove a tennis player from his list by selecting the appropriate options. This type of structured connections

enables the member to identify the list of members associated with one kind of sport thereby allowing the member to organize an event and send the invitation to a particular set of members in the list.

Figure 6 depicts a screenshot view of an e-commerce interface, which enables the member to shop sports goods online. The e-commerce module 203 facilitates the sports networking space 108 member's to buy any sports goods online. For example, once the member of the sports networking platform 108 clicks the e-commerce option in his profile, the e-commerce module 203 gets triggered and allows the member to have access to a specially prepared catalogue of all products related to sports, retrieved from the e-commerce database 222. The member can select a particular sports/brand of a product, the e-commerce module 203 allows the member to order the product online or add to his shopping cart to purchase it later. It further provides information associated with the product like the price of the product, selling price and the discount on that product if any etc.

Figure 7 depicts the screenshot view of an auction interface, which enables the member to exchange or auction his used sports goods or bid for another member's used sports goods online. The auction module 205 facilitates the member with an auction option, which when clicked in the members profile allows the member to auction his used sports goods or bid for another members used sports goods. The auction module 205 also enable members to bid for famous sport's personality's sports goods, sports memorabilia etc. online.

Figure 8 is a screenshot view depicting options for inviting members for a sports event. The member can create but not limited to two types of invite. Once the member clicks the option for event invite, the event management module 112 displays the options of "creating an event invite" on the client device 114. In one aspect, if the member selects the option of choosing from the members list (which is also known as standard event), then as shown in **Figure 9,** the member has to

provide basic details like location, venue, type of sport etc., and select the list of associated sports enthusiasts from associated member's list. Once the member selects the list of sports enthusiasts the server sends the invitation notification to the selected members. The associated members list will be a list collected from the associated sports members from the creator's friends list.

In another aspect, if the member selects the option of "creating an open invite", then as shown in **Figure 10**, the member has to provide the basic details like location, venue, type of sport etc., and select the option of sending the invitation notification to the interested sports enthusiasts. The server automatically retrieves the list of members of the sports networking space 108 but not limited to the sports member who are near the venue location, or the members who have given the associated location preference in their profile, or based on their GPS location etc.

Figure 11 depicts a screenshot view of the event creator's profile calendar. A profile calendar of the member's profile shows the status of the event he created. For example, if member A is the creator of an event X, then his profile calendar will show the status of the event he has created which includes but not limited to team name he belongs to, status of the event he created, number of players he has invited, number of players and their details who accepted the invitation, number of players and their details who has not accepted/pending to accept the invitation, requested sponsors, accepted sponsors etc.

Figure 12 depicts a screenshot view of the member's profile who is invited for the event. For example if a member A invites a member B for the event X, then as shown in **Figure 12** member B's profile shows the status of the event invited including but not limited to, the number of events the member is participating, the details of each sport event, number of players participating in each sport event along with their profile details, details of the ground the event is taking place (e.g.

grass ground, more than 10000 audience seating, ticket details etc.), location details along with the map, event details, sponsors details etc.

Figure 13 depicts a screenshot view of the location map displayed in the member's profile who is invited for the event. The geographical location map module 206 derives information from the location database 218 and displays the location map based on the information from member B's profile. As shown in **Figure 13**, the location map displayed in member B's profile includes but not limited to the direction from the members residence to the event location along with the number of kilometers covered. It further displays a push beans representing each members participating in the event which when clicked will displays the profile of that particular member, the distance from the residence to the event location etc. retrieving the same from the profile database 216.