INSTANT ONLINE LOTTERY METHOD AND SYSTEM

RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a Continuation-In-Part application of U.S. Patent Application Number 11/044,427, filed on January 26, 2005, entitled MULTIPLE LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION IN A LOTTERY JACKPOT, which is Continuation-In-Part application of U.S. Patent Application Number, 11/043,913, filed on January 25, 2005, entitled LOTTERY TICKET PROVIDING FOR MULTIPLE GAMES, which are hereby incorporated by reference in their entireties. This application is also a Continuation-In-Part application of U.S. Patent Application Number 10/879,939, filed on June 28, 2004, entitled LOTTERY TICKET DISPENSING MACHINE FOR MULTIPLE Priced TICKETS BASED ON VARIABLE RATIOS, which is Continuation-In-Part application of U.S. Patent Application Number 10/876,390, filed on June 25, 2004, entitled MULTIPLE PRICING IN A LOTTERY BASED ON VARIABLE RATIOS, all of which are hereby incorporated by reference in their entireties. This application is also a Continuation-In-Part application of U.S. Patent Application Number 10/766/656, filed on January 27, 2004, entitled A SYSTEM AND METHOD OF PROVIDING A GUARANTEE IN A LOTTERY, and is also a Continuation-In-Part application of U.S. Patent Application Number 10/987,474, filed on November 12, 2004, entitled VIRTUAL LOTTERY, both of which are hereby incorporated by reference in their entireties.

BACKGROUND

1. Field of the Disclosure

A system and method are disclosed which generally relate to gaming, and more specifically to lotteries.

2. General Background

A lottery is generally a distribution of tokens such that a subset of the distributed tokens may win a prize. The token can be in the form of a ticket.

One of the most popular forms of lottery involves the distribution of lottery tickets. Each lottery ticket includes a lottery number. After the lottery tickets have been distributed to the lottery ticket holders, the winning number is chosen. The usual method of selecting the winning number involves a random selection of the winning number. A random number generator can be used to randomly select the winning number. Some lottery systems require the ticket to have the entire number that is randomly selected while other lottery systems require the ticket to have a subset of an ordered sequence of numbers that are randomly selected.

Online lotteries and games typically require a waiting period for a winning number to be drawn and a prize to be awarded. In some cases, the player must wait a week, or at least several days, to determine the draw results. In addition, higher odds are set for the higher-prized games (i.e. those offering higher minimum and average jackpots), thereby reducing the chance of winning the jackpot. Moreover, higher-prized online lotteries and games generally require longer waiting periods than lower-prized daily draw games or those conducted more than once per day. In addition, traditional online lotteries sell tickets for a single price. Additional customer expenditures permit the purchase of additional tickets or participating numbers, thereby improving the odds of someone winning a prize, but without affecting or increasing the prize which may be won. If there are multiple winners of a jackpot, the winners split the jackpot prize. Players desiring a higher jackpot must defer play until the jackpot builds to a player-acceptable level through the roll-over process. In addition, if a jackpot is won, the jackpot for the next game automatically reverts to the minimum jackpot level.

Furthermore, traditional instant games, such as peel-off or scratch-off-style games, involve pre-determined results reflected by pre-printed tickets. Generally, the results are blocked and the player must scratch off material or pull tabs to reveal the results of the instant game. A traditional instant game is generally offered at a single price, with each game having its own price and independent fixed prize structure. Players seeking higher prizes must choose a

different game; typically, a single game does not provide the player with prize and price options.

SUMMARY

A system and method for an instant online lottery game are disclosed. The instant lottery game provides players with the opportunity to purchase an instant online lottery ticket and instantly determine whether a prize has been won. Additionally, an instant game can also be offered to the instant online lottery game players in the same ticket as the instant online lottery game. As such, players are provided with an additional opportunity to win.

Alternatively, a game structure similar to the instant online lottery game can be applied to an online lottery game where there is a predetermined delay between providing the ticket to the player and the drawing of the winning number or numbers. For example, the predetermined delay can be one hour, or one day. Here too, the same ticket can contain an instant game without an additional charge, thereby providing the player with two independent opportunities to win a prize for the same purchase price.

In one aspect, there is an instant online lottery game unit for offering an instant online lottery game to a player. The instant online lottery game unit comprises a price selection input, a communication controller, and an instant online lottery processor. The price selection input receives a selection of an instant online lottery ticket price at which an instant online lottery ticket is to be purchased, wherein the instant online lottery ticket price can be selected from a plurality of instant online lottery ticket prices. Each of the instant online lottery ticket prices can correspond to a distinct known percentage of a progressive jackpot that increases in size based on a portion of ticket sales revenue and that can be won with one of a plurality of game-play combinations.

The communication controller receives an instant online lottery number and a plurality of game-play combinations from a server. The instant online lottery number can be generated by one random number generator at the server.

The plurality of game-play combinations can be generated by a separate random number generator at the server. The instant online lottery number and the plurality of game-play combinations is provided to the player at the time of purchase of the instant online lottery ticket. Finally, the instant online lottery processor can be configured to compare the instant online lottery number with each game-play combination in the plurality of game-play combinations after the instant online lottery number and the plurality of game-play combinations is received from the server and before the player can be provided with the instant online lottery number and the plurality of game-play combinations. The instant online lottery processor calculates a distribution of the progressive jackpot to the player based upon the distinct known percentage associated with the instant online lottery ticket price selected by the player if the instant online lottery number matches any one of the plurality of game-play combinations. A memory, which stores the value of the progressive jackpot, can also be part of the instant online lottery game unit.

In another aspect, the instant online lottery processor can be further configured to compare the instant online lottery number with each game-play combination in the plurality of game-play combinations. If the instant online lottery number includes a subset of numbers in any one of the plurality of game-play combinations, the player receives secondary prize distribution based upon the instant online lottery ticket price selected by the player. The secondary prize distribution can be guaranteed by a third party.

The plurality of game-play combinations can be printed on an instant online lottery ticket in the form of a matrix. Each of the rows of the matrix can provide a set of numbers that define a game-play combination. Each of the columns of the matrix can provide a set of numbers that define a game-play combination. Each of the diagonals of the matrix can provide a set of numbers that define a game-play combination. The plurality of game-play combinations can be defined by the set of numbers in each of the rows, columns, and diagonals of the matrix.

In another aspect, ticket sales revenue can be accumulated according to identical percentages, each of the identical percentages being associated with each of the instant online lottery ticket prices. In another aspect, ticket sales revenue can be accumulated according to distinct amounts, each of the distinct amounts being associated with each of the instant online lottery ticket prices. Ticket sales revenue can also be accumulated according to identical amounts, each of the identical amounts being associated with each of the instant online lottery ticket prices.

In yet another aspect, the instant online lottery ticket price selected by the player can be the most expensive price, and if the instant online lottery number matches one of the game-play combinations, the player can be awarded with the progressive jackpot. In another aspect, the instant online lottery ticket price selected by the player can be less than the most expensive price, and if the instant online lottery number matches in full one of the game-play combinations, the player can be awarded a pre-determined portion of the progressive jackpot. The server can send the decreased value of the progressive jackpot to each one of the plurality of instant online lottery units if the instant online lottery number from the player matches one of the game-play combinations.

In another aspect, the progressive jackpot can be a probabilistic progressive jackpot that has a value which can be greater than revenue generated from the sale of the instant online lottery tickets. The progressive jackpot can be guaranteed by a third party.

In another aspect, the instant online lottery unit can be linked to a plurality of instant online lottery units, the instant online lottery unit and the plurality of instant online lottery units being connected through the server. The server can send the increased value of the progressive jackpot to each one of the plurality of instant online lottery units.

In yet another aspect, an instant game can be provided together with the instant online lottery game. The communication controller further receives a plurality of playing number-symbol combinations and a plurality of winning

number-symbol combinations from the server, wherein the instant game processor compares each one of the plurality of playing number-symbol combinations with each one of the plurality of winning number-symbol combinations to determine if the player has won an instant game prize. The instant game prizes are guaranteed by a third party, whether an individual or an entity. In another aspect, the instant online lottery unit can be part of a traditional lottery unit configured to offer future-draw online lottery tickets.

In one aspect, there is a system for an instant online lottery game comprising a server and a plurality of instant online lottery units. The server stores a progressive jackpot that can be won with an instant online lottery number, wherein the progressive jackpot increases in size based on a portion of ticket sales revenue. The server can have a first random number generator that generates the instant online lottery number and a second random number generator that generates a plurality of game-play combinations. The instant online lottery number and the plurality of game-play combinations can be provided to the player at the time of purchase of the instant online lottery ticket. The plurality of instant online lottery units can be in communication with the server, with each of the plurality of instant online lottery units receiving the progressive jackpot value from the server. Each of the instant online lottery units can have a price selection input that receives a selection of an instant online lottery ticket price at which an instant online lottery ticket is to be purchased, the instant online lottery ticket price being selected from a plurality of instant online lottery ticket prices. Furthermore, each of the instant online lottery ticket prices corresponds to a distinct known percentage of a progressive jackpot, wherein at least one of the plurality of instant online lottery units receives the plurality of game-play combinations and the instant online lottery number.

In another aspect, the server compares the instant online lottery number with each game-play combination in the plurality of game-play combinations to determine if the instant online lottery game has been won by the player. In addition, the server can compare the instant online lottery number with each

game-play combination in the plurality of game-play combinations. The server can calculate a secondary prize distribution to the player based upon the instant online lottery ticket price selected by the player if the instant online lottery number includes a subset of numbers in any one of the plurality of game-play combinations. The secondary prize distribution can be guaranteed by a third party.

In yet another aspect, each of the plurality of instant online lottery units can be part of a traditional lottery unit configured to offer future-draw online lottery tickets. In another aspect, each of the plurality of instant online lottery units can be a traditional lottery online unit configured to offer future-draw online lottery tickets.

In another aspect, the plurality of game-play combinations can be printed on an instant online lottery ticket in the form of a matrix. Each of the rows of the matrix can provide a set of numbers that define a game-play combination. Each of the columns of the matrix can provide a set of numbers that define a game-play combination. Each of the diagonals of the matrix can provide a set of numbers that define a game-play combination. The plurality of game-play combinations can be defined by the set of numbers in each of the rows, columns, and diagonals of the matrix.

In a further aspect, an instant game can be provided together with the instant online lottery game. The server can further utilize a third random number generator that generates a plurality of playing number-symbol combinations for the instant game and a fourth random number generator that generates a plurality of winning number-symbol combinations. The server can compare each one of the plurality of playing number-symbol combinations with each one of the plurality of winning number-symbol combinations to determine if the player has won an instant game prize. The instant game prize can be guaranteed by a third party.

In another aspect, an instant game can be provided together with the instant online lottery game in which the first random number generator can

generate a plurality of playing number-symbol combinations for the instant game and the second random number generator can generate a plurality of winning number-symbol combinations. The server can compare each one of the plurality of playing number-symbol combinations with each one of the plurality of winning number-symbol combinations to determine if the player has won an instant game prize. Again, the instant game prize can be guaranteed by a third party.

In a further aspect, after an instant online lottery ticket is purchased at one of the plurality of instant online lottery units, the server can send an increased progressive jackpot value to each of the plurality of instant online lottery units so that each of the plurality of instant online lottery units can provide the player with a current progressive jackpot value. The server can decrease the progressive jackpot value after a player has won an instant online lottery game. In addition, the server can send the decreased progressive jackpot value to each of the instant online lottery units so that the instant online lottery units can provide the player with the current progressive jackpot value.

In one aspect, an exemplary embodiment can be a method of operating an instant online lottery game. A selection of an instant online lottery ticket price can be received, wherein the selection can be made by a player of an instant online lottery game. A percentage of a progressive jackpot value that increases in size based on a portion of instant online lottery ticket sales revenue can be determined. The percentage of the progressive jackpot can be won according to the selection of the instant online lottery ticket price. The first set of numbers can be generated by a first random number generator in a first format. The second set of numbers being generated by a second random number generator in a second format. The first set of numbers can be compared with the second set of numbers to determine if the first set of numbers matches a subset of the second set of numbers. The percentage of the progressive jackpot to be awarded to a player can be determined if the first set of numbers matches a subset of the second set of numbers. The first set of numbers can be displayed on the instant online lottery ticket using the first format. The second set of

numbers can be displayed on the instant online lottery ticket using the second format. In addition, the second set of numbers can be arranged as a matrix. The player can be awarded with a secondary prize distribution if a subset of the first set of numbers matches a subset of the second set of numbers. The secondary prize distribution can be guaranteed by a third party.

In another aspect, the second set of numbers can be arranged as a matrix. A subset of the second set of numbers can comprise the numbers in a row of the matrix. The subset of the second set of numbers can also comprise the numbers in a column of the matrix. The subset of the second set of numbers can also comprise the numbers in a diagonal of the matrix.

In yet another aspect, an instant game can be provided together with the instant online lottery game. Here, a plurality of playing number-symbol combinations and a plurality of winning number-symbol combinations can be randomly generated. Each one of the plurality of playing number-symbol combinations can be compared with each one of the plurality of winning number-symbol combinations to determine if the player has won an instant game prize.

In another aspect, there can be a method of operating an online lottery game combined with a second game in the form of an instant game. A selection of a combined game ticket price can be received, wherein the selection can be made by a player of the combined online lottery game and instant game. A percentage of a progressive jackpot value can be determined. The progressive jackpot value can increase in size based on a portion of combined game ticket sales revenue. The percentage of the progressive jackpot can be won in accordance with the selection of the combined game ticket price. A plurality of game-play combinations can be randomly generated and provided to the player at the time of purchase by the player of the combined game ticket. A plurality of playing number-symbol combinations can be randomly generated and provided at the time of purchase by the player of the combined game ticket. A plurality of winning number-symbol combinations can be randomly generated and provided at the time of purchase by the player of the combined game ticket. Each one of

the plurality of playing number-symbol combinations can be compared with each one of the plurality of winning number-symbol combinations to determine if the player has won an instant game prize. An online lottery number can be randomly generated and provided through a daily draw. The online lottery number can be compared with each game-play combination in the plurality of game-play combinations to determine if the progressive jackpot or any secondary prize has been won by the player in the online lottery game portion of the combined game ticket.

Brief Description of the Drawings

By way of example, reference will now be made to the accompanying drawings.

Figure 1 illustrates an instant online lottery game system.

Figure 2 illustrates an instant online lottery system with multiple lottery units.

Figure 3 illustrates a lottery ticket dispensing machine.

Figure 4 illustrates the internal components of the housing of the lottery ticket dispensing machine.

Figure 5 illustrates an instant online lottery ticket.

Figures 6A-6C illustrate a configuration of playlines or number sets or game-play combinations on a seven-by-seven matrix.

Figure 7 illustrates a set of game-play combinations and an instant online lottery number.

Figure 8 illustrates a prize distribution in an instant online lottery game.

Figures 9A-9C illustrates an instant online lottery game where the instant online lottery number matches all of the numbers in a game-play combination.

Figure 10 illustrates an instant online lottery game where the instant online lottery number partially matches the numbers in a game-play combination.

Figure 11 illustrates an instant online lottery game that utilizes an eight-by-eight matrix.

Figure 12 illustrates a configuration in which a server sends game-play combinations to the lottery ticket dispensing machine.

Figure 13 illustrates a process for operating the instant online lottery game wherein the player selects the lottery number.

Figure 14 illustrates a configuration in which a server sends game-play combinations and the instant online lottery number to the lottery ticket dispensing machine.

Figure 15 illustrates a process for operating the instant online lottery game wherein the sever generates the game-play combinations and the instant online lottery number.

Figure 16 illustrates an instant online lottery game system that utilizes multiple pricing.

Figure 17 illustrates an example of a winnings table for the instant online lottery game system of Figure 16.

Figure 18 illustrates an instant online lottery system.

Figure 19 illustrates a process for operating a multi-priced instant online lottery game.

Figure 20 illustrates the instant online lottery unit.

Figure 21A illustrates a three-dollar ticket in a multi-priced instant online lottery game, with the ticket having a game-play combination with five matching numbers.

Figure 21B illustrates a four-dollar ticket in a multi-priced instant online lottery game, with the ticket having a game-play combination with five matching numbers.

Figure 22A illustrates a three-dollar ticket in a multi-priced instant online lottery game, with the ticket having a game-play combination with six matching numbers.

Figure 22B illustrates a four dollar-ticket in a multi-priced instant online lottery game, with the ticket having a game-play combination with six matching numbers.

Figure 23 illustrates an instant online lottery system with a progressive jackpot.

Figure 24 illustrates a multi-priced instant game ticket.

Figure 25 illustrates a process for operating the instant game.

Figure 26 illustrates a table of prizes in a multi-priced instant game.

Figure 27A illustrates an instant game ticket in a first price category.

Figure 27B illustrates an instant game ticket in a second price category.

Figure 28 illustrates the prize distributions for an instant online lottery game in combination with a separate instant game offered online.

Figure 29 illustrates a three-dollar ticket for an instant online lottery game in combination with an instant game offered online.

Figure 30 illustrates a four-dollar ticket for an instant online lottery game in combination with an instant game.

Figure 31 illustrates a probabilistic instant online lottery game system.

Figure 32 illustrates a probabilistic software configuration that can be used with the probabilistic lottery system in conjunction with the multiple pricing shared jackpot system.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

A system and method are disclosed for an instant online lottery game. A lottery player can purchase an online lottery ticket and determine instantly whether the purchased ticket has a winning lottery number, rather than having to

wait days or even a week for a drawing with respect to a traditional online lottery game. In essence, the instant online lottery player can be provided with a similar experience to playing an electronic gaming machine at a casino that can be networked with other machines to offer a wide-area progressive jackpot. As such, a player can play a lottery game offering relatively high jackpots every day without having to wait for a drawing.

By way of contrast, in the casino-style game, only the highest-priced ticket holder or maximum-unit player has an opportunity to win the progressive jackpot. In the disclosed system and method, any player, without regard to ticket price or amount spent per play, can win a progressive jackpot prize and can determine through player choice the pre-established percentage of the jackpot for which he or she desires to play. In addition, the participating lottery or lottery operator does not have to invest substantial sums in purchasing new freestanding machines to offer the game. Rather, the lottery operator can use its existing online terminals for game play and can use the existing ticket distribution network to maximize the opportunities for play.

INSTANT ONLINE LOTTERY GAME

Figure 1 illustrates an instant online lottery game system 100. A lottery operator 102 establishes the lottery. The lottery operator 102 can be a jurisdiction such as a country, state, province, city, town, municipality, or any division or department thereof. Further, the lottery operator 102 can be a private organization that a jurisdiction hires to coordinate the lottery. The lottery operator 102 can also be a private organization independent of any jurisdiction. The lottery operator 102 performs functions such as establishment, maintenance, operation and oversight and/or winnings determination of the lottery games.

The lottery operator 102 can advertise that a lottery game has a prize. For example, the lottery operator 102 can advertise that the lottery game prize can be a minimum of ten million dollars. The lottery operator 102 can provide the largest lottery prize as a jackpot 104. In one embodiment, the jackpot 104

can be a progressive jackpot that increases through allocation of a portion of the ticket sales. The lottery operator 102 can also provide a fixed prize 106. In one embodiment, ticket holders 108 can purchase tickets at a price of $x per ticket from a ticket seller 110. The ticket seller 110 can then send the ticket requests for each of the tickets to the lottery operator 102, typically through a computer network 102. The lottery operator 102 can transmit randomly generated instant online lottery numbers to the terminal maintained by the ticket seller 110. The numbers can be printed on the ticket that is provided to the ticket holders 108. In another embodiment, the numbers can be displayed on a computer screen. In another embodiment, the numbers can be displayed on a ticket display.

In one embodiment, the lottery operator 102 can use a random number generator (not shown) to determine the winning number. In another embodiment, the lottery operator 102 can use a ball draw machine to randomly select the winning number. If one of the ticket holders 108 wins the lottery, the lottery operator 102 can disburse the jackpot 104 to the ticket holder 108. Typically, in an instant online lottery drawing there is a single winner because the instant online lottery number and the game-play combinations are provided simultaneously.

Figure 2 illustrates an instant online lottery system 200 with multiple lottery units. In one embodiment, a server 202 can communicate with a first instant online lottery unit 204, a second instant online lottery unit 206, and a third instant online lottery unit 208. The server 202 can communicate with these units through a network 210 such as a Local Area Network ("LAN"), a Wide Area Network ("WAN"), the Internet, cable, satellite, etc. Alternatively, the server 202 can be hardwired to the instant online lottery units.

In one embodiment, the first instant online lottery unit 204, the second instant online lottery unit 206, and the third instant online lottery unit 208 can all be linked to one another. For instance, the server 202 can provide updated jackpot information based on lottery wins and/or losses to the first instant online lottery unit 204, the second instant online lottery unit 206, and the third instant

online lottery unit 208. Thus, the jackpot can change in value according to the wins and/or losses of any of the players at the first instant online lottery unit 204, the second instant online lottery unit 206, and the third instant online lottery unit 208. In another embodiment, the server 202 is not needed to update the jackpot information because the instant online lottery units can communicate with one another. When the player at the first instant online lottery unit 204 requests a ticket, the player is essentially purchasing a lottery ticket for a drawing in which that lottery ticket is the only lottery ticket that exists. Accordingly, the player can instantly determine if a winning lottery ticket has been purchased. Each instant online lottery unit may be identical to the units deployed for a lottery's traditional online game.

Similar to a traditional online lottery game, the first instant online lottery unit 204 can provide the player with the opportunity to select an instant online lottery number or to have the first instant online lottery unit 204 randomly generate a "quick pick" for the player. The first instant online lottery unit 204 can then randomly select the game-play combinations or winning instant online lottery numbers. Further, the first instant online lottery unit 204 can compare the instant online lottery number to determine if the player won the instant online lottery game. If the player won the instant online lottery game, then a pre-established portion of the jackpot or the jackpot in its entirety can be provided to the player and can be deducted from the jackpot for future play. On the other hand, if the player does not win the instant online lottery jackpot, the jackpot can remain available to future players of the instant online lottery game. If only a portion is won, the remaining portion can remain available to future players. If there is only a partial match of numbers, non-jackpot secondary prizes can be won, depending on the extent of the match and the amount wagered in the game (e.g. price selection as discussed later).

In yet another embodiment, the player can select the instant online lottery number by entering the number of the instant online lottery ticket without having a quick pick option. In yet another embodiment, the player can select the instant

online lottery number by selecting the quick-pick option and does not manually enter the numbers of the instant online lottery tickets. In yet another embodiment, the player does not select game numbers, and the game numbers are only selected by the random number generator or other selection device and are reported automatically to the instant online lottery unit.

In one embodiment, the jackpot 212 can be probabilistic. In other words, a relatively large amount is indicated at the onset as being the jackpot 212 in order to induce the purchase of instant online lottery tickets regardless of whether sufficient sales of instant online lottery tickets have occurred to cover the jackpot 212. Accordingly, there is an increased likelihood that the sales of the instant online lottery tickets can suffice to cover the jackpot 2412 because players are more likely to purchase instant online lottery tickets for a large jackpot than for a low jackpot. In one embodiment, prize indemnity insurance can be purchased from a third party to provide a guarantee that the jackpot will be paid in the event that the instant online lottery ticket sales are insufficient to cover the jackpot 212 and fixed secondary prizes.

Figure 3 illustrates a lottery ticket dispensing machine 300. In one embodiment, instant online lottery units 204, 206 and 208 can be implemented with the use of the lottery ticket dispensing machine 300, which can be positioned at various point-of-sale locations. The lottery ticket dispensing machine can have a housing 302 that stores the internal components of the lottery ticket dispensing machine 300. In addition, the lottery ticket dispensing machine 300 can also have a user input device 304 on which a user can input data for the sale of a lottery ticket. For instance, the vendor can input the instant online lottery number. In one embodiment, the vendor can also input player price selection. As described below, a player can also select a ticket price category in order to participate in other winning opportunities.

The instant online lottery number that the vendor enters can be displayed on a screen 308 of a display 306. In one embodiment, the display 306 is a graphical user interface. In another embodiment, the display 306 communicates

data other than the instant online lottery number such as the jackpot 212. When a player purchases a lottery ticket, the vendor can enter the purchase information into the lottery ticket dispensing machine 300 via the user input device 304. In one embodiment, the user input device can be a keyboard. In another embodiment, the user input device can be operated by using a computer mouse. In an alternate embodiment, the user input device can be a touch screen. In yet another embodiment, the user input device can be voice activated. In an alternative embodiment, the display 306 can communicate the purchase information that is entered via the user input device 304.

In one embodiment, the lottery ticket dispensing machine 300 can have a payment reception module (not shown) that receives a payment for the purchase of a lottery ticket. In another embodiment, the payment reception module can receive an electronic payment.

After the vendor inputs the data needed to sell a ticket, a ticket 312 can be printed from a lottery ticket printer 310. In one embodiment, the ticket printer 310 can be housed within the housing 302. In another embodiment, the lottery ticket printer 310 can be positioned outside of the housing 302 and can be operably connected to the lottery ticket dispensing machine 300. In yet another embodiment, the lottery ticket printer 310 can receive data from the lottery ticket dispensing machine 300 through a wireless connection.

Figure 4 illustrates the internal components of the housing 302 of the lottery ticket dispensing machine 300. The housing 302 can include a lottery unit processor 406, a memory 414, a communication controller 410, a number selection input 402, a random number generator 404, and a payment acceptor 412.

The lottery unit processor can coordinate the various operations of the first instant online lottery unit 204. For instance, the lottery unit processor 406 can receive the instant online lottery number from the number selection input 402 that was selected by the player. The lottery unit processor 406 can then store the instant online lottery number in a memory 414. In addition, the lottery

unit processor 406 can receive the winning instant online lottery number from the random number generator 404 and can store the winning instant online lottery number in the memory 414. The lottery unit processor 406 can then retrieve the instant online lottery number in the memory 414. The lottery unit processor 406 can then retrieve the instant online lottery number to compare the two numbers. If the two numbers are the same in entirety, then the player wins a known percentage of the instant online lottery prize. If subsets of the two numbers are the same, then the player wins a secondary prize which is a fixed prize.

In one embodiment, a communication controller 410 in the instant online lottery unit 204 can communicate with the server 2402. The communication controller 410 can receive data such as the value of the jackpot. The communication controller 410 can store this value on the memory 414 so that the lottery unit processor 406 can compute a known percentage of the jackpot that can be won by the player. In another embodiment, the lottery unit processor 406 can communicate with the communication controller 410 after data is received by the communication controller 410 from the memory 414. The lottery unit processor 406 can then store the data in the memory 414.

In one embodiment, a payment acceptor 412 can accept payment for an instant online lottery ticket. The lottery unit processor 406 can store the amount provided by the player. In one embodiment, the payment acceptor 412 can be a bill acceptor that accepts paper currency. In another embodiment, the payment acceptor 412 can be a coin acceptor that can accept coins for payment. In yet another embodiment, the payment acceptor can accept cashless payment. Various forms of cashless payment can include a credit card, a smart card, a stored value card purchased at a kiosk, a stored value card received in a promotion, a code such as a number that is printed on a ticket, etc. In yet another embodiment, the payment, in cash or other form, can be received, and deposited independent of the unit, by the vendor, who then can record and confirm the payment and receipt of the payment.

The first instant online lottery unit 204 can be implemented in a number of different combinations. Any type of computing device, such as a personal computer, can be utilized. Further, various displays can be operably attached or integrated into the first instant online lottery unit 204 to provide the player with data such as the jackpot value, the instant online lottery ticket, and the winning instant online lottery number. Other embodiments may provide displays with other pertinent information.

Figure 5 illustrates an instant online lottery ticket 312. In one embodiment, the instant online lottery ticket can include an instant online lottery number 500, a player's game board 502, a ticket identifier 504 and a timestamp 506. In one embodiment, the instant online lottery number 500 can include a number combination that is utilized to compare against one or more game-play combinations in order to determine whether the player has won. Each game-play combination can be an unordered collection of numbers. The instant online lottery number 500 can also be an unordered collection of numbers.

The instant online lottery number matches the game-play combination in full when all of the numbers in the instant online lottery number are present in the game-play combination. In one example, if the instant online lottery number is {2, 4, 6}, a game-play combination {2, 4, 6} matches in full the instant online lottery number. In another example, if the instant online lottery number is {2, 4, 6}, a game-play combination {4, 2, 6} matches in full the instant online lottery number. In yet another example, if the instant online lottery number is {2, 4, 6}, a game-play combination {6, 4, 2} matches in full the instant online lottery number.

The instant online lottery number matches the game-play combination partially when only some of the numbers in the instant online lottery number are present in the game-play combination. In one example, if the instant online lottery number is {2, 4, 6}, a game-play combination {2, 4} partially matches the instant online lottery number. In another example, if the instant online lottery number is {2, 4, 6}, a game-play combination {4, 6} partially matches the instant online lottery number. In yet another example, if the instant online lottery

number is {2, 4, 6}, a game-play combination {6, 2} partially matches the instant online lottery number.

In order to improve the player's odds of winning, the player can be provided multiple game-play combinations. Thus, the player can be provided with a set of game-play combinations.

The ticket identifier 504 can be, for example, a serial number, a bar code, etc., that can uniquely identify the instant online lottery ticket among other instant online lottery tickets. In addition, a time stamp 506 can also be provided on the instant online lottery ticket 312 to display the time at which the ticket was printed and presented to the player. In another embodiment, the time stamp 506 can correspond to the time at which the set of game-play combinations was generated.

In one embodiment, the player's game board 502 can be a matrix or grid containing a set of game-play combinations. In another embodiment, the set of game-play combinations can be printed as a listing on the instant online lottery ticket 312. In another embodiment, the set of game-play combinations can be displayed as a listing on the screen 308 of the lottery ticket dispensing machine 300. In one example, the player's game board 502 can be a seven-by-seven matrix that includes forty-nine numbers from a range of one to forty-nine and sixteen play-game combinations of seven numbers. In one embodiment, all of the numbers in the matrix can be unique. It will be apparent to one skilled in the art that matrices with other ranges of numbers as well as different numbers of rows and columns can be used. In another embodiment, for example, a seven-by-seven matrix that includes forty-nine numbers can have a range of fifty-one to one-hundred. In another embodiment, an eight-by-eight matrix can be utilized wherein the matrix includes sixty-four numbers having a range of one to sixty-four and provides eighteen combinations of eight numbers.

Figure 6A, 6B and 6C illustrate a configuration of playlines or number sets or game-play combinations on a seven-by-seven matrix. The configuration of the playlines define the set of game-play combinations. In one embodiment, the

playlines are the seven horizontal lines across the rows of the matrix shown in matrix 602, the seven vertical lines across the columns of matrix 604, and the two diagonal playlines across diagonals 608 and 610 of matrix 606.

Thus, a seven-by-seven matrix yields sixteen game-play combinations of numbers or potential winning combinations. Seven of the game-play combinations are defined by the horizontal playlines as illustrated in Figure 6A. Another seven of the game-play combinations are defined by the vertical playlines as illustrated in Figure 6b. Finally, two additional game-play combinations are defined by the diagonal playlines 608 and 610 as illustrated in Figure 6C.

In another example, a six-by-six matrix yields fourteen different sets of game-play combinations. Six of the game-play combinations are defined by the horizontal playlines, another six of the game-play combinations are defined by the vertical playlines, and two additional playlines are defined by the diagonals of the matrix.

Figure 7 illustrates a set of game-play combinations and an instant online lottery number. In one embodiment, the set of game-play combinations 700 can be presented to the user in a form of a list. The set of game-play combinations 700 can correspond to the sixteen sets of seven numbers derived from a seven-by-seven matrix. The set of game-play combinations 700 illustrates the seven sets of numbers derived from each of the horizontal playlines across seven rows, the seven sets of numbers derived from each of the vertical playlines across the seven columns, and the two sets of seven numbers derived from the diagonal playlines. Thus, the set of game-play combinations 700 can continue to have a matrix relationship of rows, columns, and diagonals, even if the set of game-play combinations 700 is presented in the form of a list.

For example, the first row in the player's game board 502 includes the numbers {10, 38, 4, 28, 44, 16, 30}. The first column of the player's game board 502 includes the numbers {10, 48, 6, 32, 11, 36, 24}. These two sets of numbers have the number ten at the beginning. As such, the sets of seven numbers

corresponding to the first row and the first column of the matrix can have the first number in common. Each of the other sets of numbers of the set of game-play combinations can have a number in common with one or more other sets depending on where the game-play combinations are placed in the game-board matrix 700.

In another embodiment, the set of game-play combinations 700 can be a list of numbers that are independent of each other and randomly generated. As such, there would be no matrix relation between each of the randomly generated game-play combinations.

Figure 8 illustrates a prize distribution in an instant online lottery game. The prize distribution can be stored in a computer memory 800. In one embodiment, the computer memory 800 can be the same as memory 214 in server 202. In another embodiment, the computer memory 800 can be the same as memory 414 in the instant online lottery unit 204. In yet another embodiment, the computer memory 800 can be the same as both memory 214 and memory 414. A jackpot 802 can be stored in memory 800. In one example, the jackpot 802 can be $500,000. The instant online lottery ticket price 804, and prize distributions, 806, 808, 810, and 812, can also be stored in memory.

In one embodiment, the prize distribution can be for a matching of the entirety of the lottery number with any of the game-play combinations. In a seven-by-seven matrix, for example, the jackpot is the prize distribution for matching the entire game-play combination of seven numbers. Thus, if all seven numbers of the lottery number match the seven numbers of one of the game-play combinations, without regard to the order of the numbers, the ticket holder instantly wins the jackpot 802. Thus, a jackpot prize distribution 804 can be awarded to the ticket holder.

In another embodiment, the prize distributions can be for a partial matching of the lottery number with any one or more of the set of game-play combinations. In the seven-by-seven matrix, a secondary prize distribution 808 can be the prize awarded for matching six numbers of any of the game-play

combinations. If the lottery number contains six numbers of the seven numbers in the game-play combination, the ticket holder can instantly win a secondary prize distribution 808, by way of example, of one thousand dollars. A secondary prize distribution 810, or a specific amount, can result from matching six numbers of any of the game-play combinations. If the lottery number contains five numbers of the seven numbers in the game-play combination, the ticket holder can instantly win a secondary prize distribution 810, by way of example, of ten dollars. A secondary prize distribution 812, or a specified amount, may result from matching four numbers of any of the game-play combinations. If the lottery number contains four numbers of the seven numbers in the game-play combination, the ticket holder can instantly win a secondary prize distribution 812 of, for example, two dollars. A prize distribution can result from the matching of any subset of numbers and the prizes can vary as determined by the lottery operator to induce play of the game based on the matching combinations. In one embodiment, the prize distribution can be a fixed prize. In another embodiment, the prize distribution can be a percentage of the jackpot or a percentage of ticket sales revenue. In yet another embodiment, the prize distribution can be a fixed prize plus a percentage of the jackpot.

Figure 9A illustrates an instant online lottery game where the instant online lottery number matches all of the numbers in a game-play combination. In one embodiment, an instant online lottery number 902 is a winning number if the numbers contained in the instant online lottery number 902 match the numbers in any of the game-play combinations. If all the numbers are matched then the instant online lottery number 902 wins the jackpot. For example, the instant online lottery number 902 can be {13, 40, 41, 20, 18, 6, 2}. The third row in the player's game board 502 provides a game-play combination {6, 18, 41, 13, 40, 2, 20}. The instant online lottery number 902 wins the jackpot because all of the numbers in the game-play combination {6, 18, 41, 13, 40, 2, 20} are in the instant online lottery number 902. Thus, the ticket holder can win a prize distribution 806 as shown in Figure 8.

Figure 9B illustrates an instant online lottery game where the instant online lottery number partially matches the numbers in a game-play combination. In one embodiment, an instant online lottery number 904 can be a winning number if the numbers contained in the instant online lottery number 904 partially match the numbers in any of the game-play combinations. In a seven-by-seven matrix, if six numbers are matched then the instant online lottery number 904 wins a prize distribution 808. For example, the instant online lottery number 904 can be {25, 40, 42, 30, 34, 24, 2}. A diagonal 908 in the player's game board 502 provides a game-play combination {24, 42, 34, 22, 40, 25, 30}. Six of the seven numbers of this game-play combination are found in the instant online lottery number. Namely, {25, 40, 42, 30, 34, 24} are found in the game-play combination {24, 42, 34, 22, 40, 25, 30}. Thus, the ticket holder can win a prize distribution 808 as shown in Figure 8.

Figure 9C illustrates an instant online lottery game where the instant online lottery number partially matches the numbers in a game-play combination. In one embodiment, an instant online lottery number 908 can be a winning number if the numbers contained in the instant online lottery number 908 partially match the numbers in any of the game-play combinations. In a seven-by-seven matrix, if five numbers are matched then the instant online lottery number 908 wins a prize distribution 810. For example, the instant online lottery number 908 can be {16, 7, 49, 20, 31, 24, 2}. The sixth column in the player's game board 502 provides a game-play combination {16, 25, 2, 7, 49, 23, 31}. Five of the seven numbers of this game-play combination are found in the instant online lottery number. Namely, {16, 2, 7, 49, 31} are found in the game-play combination {16, 25, 2, 7, 49, 23, 31}. Thus, the ticket holder can win a prize distribution 810 as shown in Figure 8.

Figure 10 illustrates an instant online lottery game where the instant online lottery number partially matches the numbers in a game-play combination. In one embodiment, an instant online lottery number 1002 can be a winning number if the numbers contained in the instant online lottery number 1002

partially match the numbers in any of the game-play combinations. More than one combination can be partially matched. In a seven-by-seven matrix, for example, if four numbers of a first game-play combination are matched then the instant online lottery number 1002 wins a prize distribution 812. If four numbers of a second game-play combination are matched, then the instant online lottery number 1002 wins another prize distribution 812. For example, the instant online lottery number 1002 can be {13, 7, 41, 20, 31, 25, 2}. The sixth column in the player's game board 502 provides a game-play combination {16, 25, 2, 7, 49, 23, 31}. Four of the seven numbers of the game-play combination are found in the instant online lottery number. Namely, {25, 2, 7, 31} are found in the game-play combination {16, 25, 2, 7, 49, 23, 31}. In addition, the third row in the player's game board 502 provides a second game-play combination {6, 18, 41, 13, 40, 2, 20}. Four of the seven numbers of the second game-play combination are found in the instant online lottery number. Namely, {41, 13, 2, 20} are found in the second game-play combination {6, 18, 41, 13, 40, 2, 20}. Thus, the ticket holder can twice receive a prize distribution 812 as shown in Figure 8. Other secondary prize distributions can be established depending on the number and extent of the matches. For example, a secondary prize distribution can be awarded for matching three numbers of seven. In another example, a secondary distribution can be awarded for matching two numbers of seven. In yet another example, two or more secondary distributions can be awarded in the same game, if the instant online lottery game ticket provides two or more partial matches between the instant online lottery number and subsets of two or more game-play combinations.

Figure 11 illustrates an instant online lottery game that utilizes an eight-by-eight matrix. In one embodiment, the eight-by-eight matrix yields a set of eighteen game-play combinations. Eight of the game-play combinations are defined by the horizontal playlines; another eight of the game-play combinations are defined by the vertical playlines, and two additional playlines are defined by the diagonals of the matrix. Furthermore, the winning number 1102 includes eight different numbers that can match any of the eighteen game-play

combinations. The player's game board is a grid of sixty-four squares including the numbers one to sixty-four in each of the boxes.

As discussed above, the full jackpot can be the prize distribution for matching the entire game-play combination. In an eight-by-eight matrix, each game-play combination has eight numbers. Thus, if all eight numbers of the lottery number 1102 match the eight numbers of one of the eighteen game-play combinations, the ticket holder can instantly win a jackpot. Thus, a jackpot prize distribution can be awarded to the ticket holder. In another embodiment, the prize distributions can be for a partial matching of the lottery number with any one of the set of game-play combinations. For example, matching seven numbers of one of the game-play combinations with seven numbers in the instant online lottery number 1102 would win a secondary prize as discussed above.

Figure 12 illustrates a configuration in which a server 1202 sends game-play combinations to the lottery ticket dispensing machine 300. The server 1202 can include a random number generator 1204. The random number generator 1204 can be utilized to generate the set of game-play combinations while the player can manually select the instant online lottery number. In one embodiment, the server 1202 first receives the instant online lottery number selected by the player such that the game-play combinations can be compared at the server 1202 against the selected instant online lottery number. If there is matching, the server 1202 reduces the jackpot by the prize distribution to the winning player. In another embodiment, the server 1202 does not receive the instant online lottery number and simply transmits the game-play combinations to the lottery ticket dispensing machine 300 to be compared against the various instant online lottery number, which can also be transmitted by the server. The lottery ticket dispensing machine 300 can then utilize lottery unit processor 406 to make the comparison. If there is a matching, the lottery unit processor 406 transmits a confirmation of the win, the extent of the match and the applicable prize or prizes to the server 1202.

In another embodiment, the random number generator 1204 can randomly generate a quick pick instant online lottery number. In another embodiment, the random number generator 1204 can randomly generate an instant online lottery number and the set of game-play combinations.

Figure 13 illustrates a process 1300 for operating the instant online lottery game wherein the player can select the lottery number. At a process block 1302, the player can select an instant online lottery number. The player can manually enter the instant online lottery number through the input module 304 on the instant online lottery machine 300. At a process block 1304, the game-play combinations can be generated. In one embodiment, the instant online lottery unit 204 can generate the set of game-play combinations using the random generator 404. In another embodiment, the server can generate the game-play combinations using the random number generator 1204. In one embodiment, a second random generator can generate the instant online lottery number to be matched against the game-play combinations.

At a process block 1306, a comparison can be made between instant online lottery number and the set of game-play combinations. In one embodiment, the instant online lottery unit 204 can perform this comparison. In another embodiment, the server can perform this comparison. At a process block 1308, a determination can be made if the instant online lottery number matches any one of the game-play combinations partially or entirely. If the instant online lottery number partially or entirely matches one of the game-play combinations, the process 1300 can proceed to a process block 1310 where the winner is provided with the appropriate prize distribution. The process 1300 can then proceed to the end block 1310. If the instant online lottery number does not match any one of the game-play combinations, in whole or in part, the process 1300 can proceed to the end block 1310.

Figure 14 illustrates a configuration in which a server 1402 sends game-play combinations and the instant online lottery number to the lottery ticket dispensing machine 300. The server 1402 can include a first random number

generator 1404 and a second random number generator 1406. The first random number generator 1404 can randomly generate the set of game-play combinations while the second number generator can randomly generate the instant online lottery number. In one embodiment, the game-play combinations can be compared at the server 1402 against the instant online lottery number. If there is complete matching, the server 1402 can reduce the jackpot by the prize distribution to the winning player. In the case of a partial match, where one or more fixed secondary prizes are won, the jackpot is not reduced.

Figure 15 illustrates a process 1500 for operating the instant online lottery game wherein the sever can generate the game-play combinations and the instant online lottery number. At a process block 1502, the game-play combinations can be generated. In one embodiment, the instant online lottery unit 204 can generate the set of game-play combinations using the random number generator 404. In another embodiment, the server 1402 can generate the game-play combinations using the random number generator 1404. At a process block 1502, the instant online lottery number can be randomly generated. In one embodiment, the instant online lottery unit 204 can generate the lottery number using the random number generator 404. In another embodiment, the server 1402 can generate the game-play combinations using the random number generator 1406.

In one embodiment, the player can elect to have an instant online lottery number be randomly generated. The player can choose a quick pick button to have the instant online lottery unit 300 randomly generate the instant online lottery number for the player. In another embodiment, the lottery ticket can be randomly generated by default.

At a process block 1506, a comparison can be made between the instant online lottery number and the set of game-play combinations. In one embodiment, the instant online lottery unit 204 can perform this comparison. In another embodiment, the server can perform this comparison. At a process block 1508, a determination can be made if the instant online lottery number

matches any one of the game-play combinations partially or entirely. If the instant online lottery number partially or entirely matches one of the game-play combinations, the process 1500 can proceed to a process block 1510 where the winner is provided with the prize distribution. The process 1300 can then proceed to the end block 1510. If the instant online lottery number does not match any one of the game-play combinations, the process 1500 can proceed to the end block 1510. In one embodiment, a minimum starting jackpot can be offered. Thus, if a jackpot is won, in whole or in part, and is thereby reduced, the balance of the jackpot can be the starting jackpot amount for the next game, or it can be combined with the starting jackpot amount for the next game, so as to provide greater inventive for players to buy tickets for the next game.

MULTIPLE PRICING

An instant online lottery game with multiple levels of participation is provided. Players can select the price of the ticket to be purchased. In one embodiment, the price of the ticket can increase or reduce the odds of winning. In another embodiment, the price of the ticket can increase or reduce the prize distribution but the odds are the same for all ticket holders. All of the above-described features can be applied to a multiple pricing instant online lottery game.

Figure 16 illustrates an instant online lottery game system 1600 that utilizes multiple pricing. Instant online lottery players can be provided with a selection of price categories and associated prize distributions. In one embodiment, a ticket holder 1604 can purchase a lottery ticket from a ticket seller 1602 in a first price category. The first price category can be for lottery tickets purchased for $w. The instant online lottery ticket in the first price category can be purchased from a ticket seller 1602. The first price category can be associated with a first prize distribution of a lottery prize that can be won. For example, the ticket holder 206 may have purchased the instant online lottery ticket for five dollars in order to play for a chance to win one hundred percent of the jackpot.

In another embodiment, a ticket holder 1606 can purchase an instant online lottery ticket in a second price category. The instant online lottery ticket can be purchased from a ticket seller 1602. For instance, the second price category can be lottery tickets purchased for $x. The second price category can be associated with a second distribution of an instant online lottery prize that can be won. For example, the ticket holder 1606 may have purchased the instant online lottery ticket for four dollars in order to play for a chance to win sixty percent of the jackpot.

In yet another embodiment, a ticket holder 1608 can purchase an instant online lottery ticket in a third price category. The instant online lottery ticket in the third price category can be purchased from a ticket seller 1602. For instance, the third price category can be lottery tickets purchased for $y. The third price category can be associated with a third distribution of an instant online lottery prize that can be won. For example, the ticket holder 1608 may have purchased the instant online lottery ticket for three dollars in order to play for a chance to win forty percent of the jackpot.

In another embodiment, a ticket holder 1610 can purchase an instant online lottery ticket in a fourth price category. The instant online lottery ticket in the fourth price category can be purchased from a ticket seller 1602. For instance, the fourth price category can be lottery tickets purchased for $z. The third price category can be associated with a fourth distribution of an instant online lottery prize that can be won. For example, the ticket holder 1610 may have purchased the instant online lottery ticket for two dollars in order to play for a chance to win twenty percent of the jackpot.

Although, in the above discussion, the first price category was associated with the ticket holder 204, the second price category with the ticket holder 206, and the third price category with the ticket holder 208, the ticket holders can be associated with different price categories. For instance, the first price category can be associated with the ticket holder 204 and the third price category can be associated with the ticket holder 206. Further, the methodologies discussed

above can be extended to any number of price categories. For instance, there could be a fifth price category. Any number of price categories can be used. Also, the price categories can represent not only an opportunity to win a distinct pre-established portion of a jackpot but also a differing set of secondary prizes. The secondary prizes can be greater for a winning higher-priced ticket. Furthermore, the holder of a higher-priced ticket can qualify for the award of a secondary prize for the matching of a subset of numbers which would not qualify the holder of a lower-priced ticket for a prize.

Figure 17 illustrates an example of a winnings table for the instant online lottery game system of Figure 16. For example, a lottery can have a jackpot of two and a half million dollars. Lottery players can purchase a five-dollar ticket, a four-dollar ticket, a three-dollar ticket, and a two-dollar ticket.

The five-dollar ticket holder could receive the full jackpot of two million five hundred thousand dollars if the instant online lottery number of the five-dollar ticket matches in full any one of the game-play combinations. The four-dollar ticket gives the ticket holder a chance at receiving sixty percent of the jackpot. Therefore, the four-dollar ticket holder could at best receive one million five hundred thousand dollars if the instant online lottery number of the four-dollar ticket matches in full any one of the game-play combinations.

The three-dollar ticket could give the ticket holder a chance at receiving forty percent of the jackpot. Therefore, the three-dollar ticket holder could at best receive one million dollars if the instant online lottery number of the three-dollar ticket matches in full any one of the game-play combinations.

Finally, the two-dollar ticket could give the ticket holder a chance at receiving twenty percent of the jackpot. Therefore, the two-dollar ticket holder could at best receive five hundred thousand dollars if the instant online lottery number of the two-dollar ticket matches in full any one of the game-play combinations.

Figure 18 illustrates an instant online lottery system. The internal components of the housing 302 of the lottery ticket dispensing machine 300 can

include a controller 1804, a price category reception module 1806, a user input module 1808, and a lottery ticket printer 1810. The controller 1804 coordinates the operation of these internal components.

The price category reception module 1806 can receive the different price categories in which lottery tickets can be purchased in the instant multi-priced lottery system. In one embodiment, the price category reception module can receive the different price categories and the associated distributions for each of the respective price categories. In one embodiment, a vendor can manually input the different price categories into the lottery ticket dispensing machine 300. In another embodiment, the vendor can electronically input the different price categories into the lottery ticket dispensing machine 300 by inserting a computer readable medium into the lottery ticket dispensing machine 300. In yet another embodiment, the price category reception module 1806 can receive the data related to the price category reception module from a server through a network.

In one embodiment, the user input module 1808 can receive a user input from the user input device 304. The user input module 1808 can communicate with the controller 1504 so that the controller can provide an instruction to the lottery ticket printer 1810 to print the lottery ticket.

In one embodiment, the lottery ticket dispensing machine 300 can communicate with a server 1812 to receive a price category and the associated distribution of the price category. The server 1812 can provide a price category through a network 1814 to the price category reception module 1806 in the lottery ticket dispensing machine 300. In one embodiment, multiple price categories can be sent simultaneously with their associated distributions. In another embodiment, each price category can be sent by itself with its associated distribution.

The lottery ticket dispensing machine 300 can communicate with a server 1812 to transmit a ticket request. In one embodiment, the housing 302 can also house a lottery ticket purchase transmission module 1816. The lottery ticket purchase transmission module 1816 can determine when a ticket has been

purchased and can transmit a ticket request to a server 1812 through a network 1814. The ticket request received at the server 1812 can trigger the server 1812 to randomly generate lottery numbers as well as provide price categories to the lottery dispensing machine 300.

In another embodiment, the server 1812 can send price category information or data to the lottery ticket dispensing machine 300. The server 1812 can provide instructions to a price category module 1818 and to a price category transmission module 1820. The price category module 1818 can determine price categories and distributions in a multi-priced instant online lottery distribution as discussed above. The price category transmission module 1820 can then transmit the price category and the associated distribution through the network 1814 to the lottery ticket dispensing machine 300. In one embodiment, the price category reception module 1806 can receive information or data with respect to the price categories and associated distributions.

In another embodiment, the server 1812 can send random number ticket data to the lottery ticket dispensing machine 300. The server 1812 can provide instructions to a first random number generator module 1822 and to a second random number generator module 1824. The first random number generator module 1822 can randomly generate the instant online lottery numbers. The second random number generator 1824 can randomly generate a set of game-play combinations. In one embodiment, the controller 1802 can receive the data concerning price categories and associated distributions.

In another embodiment, the server can also send the ticket identifier 504 to be printed on the instant online lottery ticket. Thus, upon a lottery ticket holder winning a distribution, the lottery operator can verify that the ticket holder purchased a valid lottery ticket by confirming that the ticket identifier printed on the ticket matches the ticket identifier stored at the server 1812 and transmitted to the lottery operator.

Figure 19 illustrates a process 1900 for operating a multi-priced instant online lottery game. At a process block 1902, a selection of an instant online

lottery ticket price can be received. A determination of the potential distribution of the jackpot that can be won can be made at a process block 1904. If the lottery ticket price is associated with a percentage of the jackpot, the percentage of the current jackpot can be calculated and displayed to the player. In one embodiment, this calculation can be performed and displayed for all of the price categories prior to the player's selection at the process block 2802. Calculations can be performed to continuously enhance the jackpot based on the ongoing purchase of tickets. Thus, players can always be provided with updated jackpot prize distribution information through the linked instant online lottery units. If the secondary prizes for partial matching are fixed, then a calculation update is not needed for the secondary prizes.

At a process block 1906, an instant online lottery number can be randomly selected. In an alternative embodiment, the player can choose the quick pick button to have the instant online lottery unit 204, or a separate random number generator, randomly generate the instant online lottery number for the player. At a process block 1908, the game-play combinations for the instant online lottery numbers can be generated.

At a process block 1910, a comparison can be made between the instant online lottery number and various game-play combinations printed on the instant online lottery ticket. In one embodiment, the instant online lottery unit 204 can perform this comparison. In another embodiment, the server can perform this comparison.

At a process block 1912, a determination can be made as to whether the instant online lottery number matches a set of game-play combinations. If the instant online lottery number matches in full one of the game-play combinations, the process 19 can proceed to a process block 1914 where the winner can be provided with the percentage of the jackpot associated with the instant online lottery ticket price. Alternatively, if the instant online lottery number partially matches one of the game-play combinations the winner can be provided with a secondary prize which is determined based on the instant online lottery ticket

price. Process 1900 can then proceed to the end block 1916. If the instant online lottery number does not match, in full or in part, the winning instant online lottery number, the process 1900 can proceed to the end block 1916.

Figure 20 illustrates the instant online lottery unit 204. The instant online lottery unit can have a jackpot display 2014 that indicates the jackpot value. In one embodiment, the server 1812 can send the jackpot value to the instant online lottery unit for display on the jackpot display 2014. The instant online lottery unit can also have an instant online lottery price display 2002 that displays prices for instant online lottery tickets and associated known prize distributions for each of the instant online lottery ticket prices.

An indication can also be provided as to whether an instant online lottery ticket allows for secondary prizes. In one embodiment, the secondary prizes can vary according to the number of matched numbers and the price of the instant online lottery ticket. In another embodiment, the secondary prices can vary only according to the number of matched numbers between the instant online lottery number and the set of game-play combinations.

In one example, the secondary prize distributions for a seven-by-seven matrix can be provided as part of the lottery ticket price display 2002. A two-dollar instant online lottery ticket can be purchased to potentially win a secondary prize. In one embodiment, the secondary prize value can depend on the partial matching of instant online lottery numbers with one or more of the game-play combinations. As previously discussed, each of the sixteen game-play combinations in a seven-by-seven matrix includes seven numbers. In one example, a two-dollar instant online lottery number matching six numbers of the game-play combination can win one thousand dollars. A two-dollar instant online lottery number matching five numbers of a game-play combination can win ten dollars. Finally, a two-dollar instant online lottery number matching four numbers of a game-play combination can win two dollars.

In another example, a three-dollar instant online lottery ticket can be purchased to potentially win a secondary prize. In a seven-by-seven matrix, a

three-dollar instant online lottery number matching six numbers of the game-play combination can win one thousand five hundred dollars. A three-dollar instant online lottery number matching five numbers of a game-play combination can win fifteen dollars. Finally, a three-dollar instant online lottery number matching four numbers of a game-play combination can win three dollars.

In yet another example, a four-dollar instant online lottery ticket can be purchased to potentially win a secondary prize. In a seven-by-seven matrix, a four-dollar instant online lottery number matching six numbers of the game-play combination can win two thousand hundred dollars. A four-dollar instant online lottery number matching five numbers of a game-play combination can win twenty dollars. Finally, a four-dollar instant online lottery number matching four numbers of a game-play combination can win four dollars.

In another example, a five-dollar instant online lottery ticket can be purchased to potentially win a secondary prize. In a seven-by-seven matrix, a five-dollar instant online lottery number matching six numbers of the game-play combination can win two thousand five hundred dollars. A five-dollar instant online lottery number matching five numbers of a game-play combination can win twenty-five dollars. Finally, a five-dollar instant online lottery number matching four numbers of a game-play combination can win five dollars.

A plurality of price selection inputs 2004 can be provided so that the player can select the instant online lottery ticket that the player would like to purchase. For instance, the player can press the two-dollar button if the player would like to purchase the two-dollar instant online lottery ticket to potentially win the jackpot distribution prize of five hundred thousand dollars, which can represent twenty percent of the jackpot, or any of the associated secondary prizes. Further, the player can press the three-dollar button if the player would like to purchase the three-dollar instant online lottery ticket to potentially win the jackpot distribution prize of one million dollars, which can represent forty percent of the jackpot, or any of the associated secondary prizes. In addition, the player can press the four-dollar button if the player would like to purchase the four-

dollar instant online lottery ticket to potentially win the jackpot distribution prize of one million five hundred thousand dollar, which can represent sixty percent of the jackpot, or any associated secondary prizes. Finally, the player can press the five-dollar button if the player would like to purchase the five-dollar instant online lottery ticket to potentially win the jackpot of two million five hundred thousand, which can represent one hundred percent of the jackpot, or any of the associated secondary prizes. In a further aspect, in lieu of providing ticket process buttons, the player can inform the ticket vendor of his or her ticket price selection, either orally or through use of a ticket purchase form. The ticket vendor can then enter the appropriate data, including ticket price information.

The player can enter a selection of an instant online lottery number through an input module 2006. In one embodiment, the input module 2006 can be a keypad. In another embodiment, the input module 2006 can be a touch screen. Alternatively, the player can press a quick pick button 2008 to have the instant online lottery unit 204 select the instant online lottery number for the player. The player can press an instant online lottery initiation button 2010 to begin lottery play. Further, the payment module 2012 can receive one of the various forms of payment described above.

In one embodiment, the instant online lottery unit 202 can have the plurality of buttons illustrated, such as the input module 2006 and the quick pick button 2008, to determine the instant online lottery number. In another embodiment, a menu can be provided that provides the player with the ability to make a choice of a manual selection or of a quick pick selection of the instant online lottery number. The menu can be provided on a computerized display such as a liquid crystal display or a plasma display.

Figure 21A illustrates a three-dollar ticket in a multi-priced instant online lottery game ticket, with the ticket having a game-play combination with five matching numbers. The ticket 2100 can include the price designation 2102, the instant online lottery number 2104, and a player's game board 2106. The player's game board can include the game-play combinations (for example

sixteen game-play combinations in a seven-by-seven matrix). In one example, the prize distribution can be the prize distribution illustrated in Figure 20. A player that purchases a three-dollar ticket for an instant online lottery game can have the opportunity to win a jackpot percentage of forty percent or one million dollars, or secondary prizes according to the prize distribution illustrated in Figure 20. The instant online lottery ticket 2100 shows that the instant online lottery number matches five numbers of the third row of the players game board 2106. In one embodiment, there can be sixteen game-play combinations. Based on the prize distribution illustrated in Figure 20, the three-dollar instant online lottery number matching five numbers of a game-play combination can win fifteen dollars.

Figure 21B illustrates a four-dollar ticket in a multi-priced instant online lottery game ticket, with the ticket having a game-play combination with five matching numbers. A player that purchases a four-dollar ticket for an instant online lottery game can have the opportunity to win a percentage of the jackpot that amounts to one million five hundred thousand dollars, or secondary prizes according to the prize distribution illustrated in Figure 20. The instant online lottery ticket 2108 shows that the instant online lottery number matches five numbers of the third row of the player's game board 2106. In one embodiment, there can be sixteen game-play combinations. Based on the prize distribution illustrated in Figure 20, the four-dollar instant online lottery number matching five numbers of a game-play combination can win twenty dollars. As such, the four-dollar ticket holder can win five more dollars in comparison with the three-dollar ticket holder, even when the instant online lottery number and the game-play combinations are the same.

Figure 22A illustrates a three-dollar ticket in a multi-priced instant online lottery game, with the ticket having a game-play combination with six matching numbers. Ticket 2200 is a three-dollar ticket for an instant online lottery game that can provide the player with the opportunity to win prizes according to the prize distribution illustrated in Figure 20. The instant online lottery ticket 2108

shows that the instant online lottery number matches six numbers of the third row of the player's game board 2106. Thus, the three-dollar instant online lottery number matching six numbers of a game-play combination can win one thousand five hundred dollars.

Figure 22B illustrates a four dollar-ticket in a multi-priced instant online lottery game, with the ticket having a game-play combination with six matching numbers. A player can likewise purchase a ticket 2202 with the same instant online lottery number and game-play combination numbers for a four-dollar price. Based on the prize distribution illustrated in Figure 20, the player having the four-dollar ticket 2202 with a six-number match can instantly win two thousand dollars. Accordingly, in comparison with the three-dollar ticket holder, the four-dollar ticket holder can win an additional five hundred dollars. Thus, players have an incentive to buy higher-priced tickets, because of the potential of winning higher fixed secondary prizes and/or the potential to win a higher portion of the available jackpot.

PROGRESSIVE JACKPOT

Figure 23 illustrates an instant online lottery system 2300 with a progressive jackpot 2312. The lottery system 2300 depicted in Figure 23 is the lottery system depicted in Figure 2 with a jackpot that is illustrated as being progressive. Because the lottery system of Figure 23 utilizes a progressive jackpot, the ticket holder can win a larger jackpot than initially advertised. In one embodiment, the jackpot can be increased with a portion of the revenue from each instant online lottery ticket sold.

In one embodiment, the server 202 can communicate with the first instant online lottery unit 204, the second instant online lottery unit 206, and the third instant online lottery unit 208. As players provide payment to enter or initiate an instant online lottery game at one of the units, at least a portion of the payment can be added to a progressive jackpot 2312 stored in the memory 214. As discussed above, the instant online lottery units can be stand-alone terminals configured to interact directly with the players. In another embodiment, the

instant online lottery units can be configured within the existing terminals used by a lottery operator to provide the traditional online future-draw lottery games. In another embodiment, the instant online lottery units can be the existing terminals used by a lottery operator to provide the traditional online future-draw lottery games. Utilization of existing infrastructure can allow a lottery operator to avoid costs associated with the creation, acquisition and installation of a new distribution network, terminals and servers.

The networking capability between several instant online lottery units can allow each of the several units to access and report changes in a single progressive jackpot 2312. Furthermore, instant online lottery units can be linked together through a server 202 and network 212 such that data reported by one instant online lottery unit can be broadcast or communicated to the other instant online lottery units. For example, an increase in the jackpot 202 can be immediately broadcast or communicated to the rest of the linked instant online lottery units. Thus, the progressive jackpot 2312 can be shared among instant units 204, 206, and 208. In one embodiment, a minimum amount of ticket sales is not required and a starting jackpot can be provided and guaranteed with regard to ticket sales. The lottery prize can be a variable prize from the outset, increasing with each ticket sold. Accordingly, a percentage of each ticket sale can be contributed to the progressive jackpot 2312, with a greater amount contributed by higher-priced tickets.

In one embodiment, a fixed amount of money can be added to the jackpot for each ticket sold regardless of the value of the ticket. This would make the progressive jackpot increase in direct proportion to the number of tickets sold.

In another embodiment, a percentage of the value of each ticket sold can be added to the jackpot. This would make the progressive jackpot increase in direct proportion to the total sales of instant online lottery tickets.

By having the instant online lottery units connected through the network 210, the progressive jackpot 2312 can build up based on the quantity and the utilization of the instant online lottery units. Players do not have the time

constraints of having to wait for a lottery drawing with a traditional online lottery game. Further, players do not have to wait for selections of other players. Accordingly, the progressive jackpot can build up quickly through this type of configuration. The progressive jackpot 2312 can also build up in a similar manner and more quickly, so as to create a larger jackpot, if the instant online lottery units are linked to one another.

In addition, the instant online lottery game having a progressive jackpot can be offered by a lottery operator at different ticket prices. Thus, the instant online lottery game can have a progressive jackpot where the tickets are multi-priced. As discussed above, different ticket prices provide a player with the opportunity to play for a pre-determined percentage of the progressive jackpot, or the progressive jackpot in its entirety, with the choice of ticket price and associated prizes being made by the player. For example, a one-dollar ticket holder can participate and play for a lower percentage of the progressive jackpot, while a three-dollar ticket holder can play for a higher percentage or, if the three-dollar ticket is the most expensive ticket, for the entire progressive jackpot. In addition, the offering of multi-priced tickets can afford the opportunity to quickly generate large increasing jackpots if the contribution to the progressive jackpot is a percentage of ticket sales.

Furthermore, the progressive jackpot feature can continue to operate after a prize is distributed to a winning ticket holder and the jackpot need not automatically revert to the minimum or starting jackpot if the winning ticket holder purchased other than the highest-priced ticket. For example, if a one-dollar instant online lottery ticket holder wins, the progressive jackpot distribution can be a portion of the progressive jackpot, leaving the balance of the progressive jackpot for subsequent players. This balance can be enhanced through additional contributions to the jackpot through, for example, an insurance-backed third-party prize guarantee. As such, the progressive jackpot can continue to increase as new instant online lottery tickets are purchased.

In one embodiment, both the one-dollar ticket holder and the three-dollar ticket holder can participate with the same odds but for different prizes. In contrast, traditional online lotteries only offer single-priced tickets.

In one embodiment, the instant online lottery ticket is associated with a percentage of the progressive jackpot 2312 based on the instant online lottery ticket price. For example, instant online lottery tickets can be offered at three different prices: one dollar, two dollars, and three dollars. In another example, a greater or lesser number of ticket price categories can exist. A player with a one-dollar ticket could win twenty-five percent of the progressive jackpot, a player with a two-dollar ticket could win fifty percent of the progressive jackpot, and a player with a three-dollar ticket could win one hundred percent of the progressive jackpot. Consequently, the percentage of the possible jackpot winnings associated with each ticket price can vary. This can afford a player purchasing an instant online lottery ticket at a lower price the benefit of participating in a jackpot where other players purchasing an instant online lottery ticket at higher prices are contributing even more to the progressive jackpot. For example, a player with a one-dollar ticket can have an associated percentage of the progressive jackpot that the player can win, and a player with a two-dollar ticket or a three-dollar ticket can also have an associated and higher percentage of the progressive jackpot that the player can win. If the one-dollar ticket holder wins, the one-dollar ticket holder benefits from the portion of the ticket sales revenues contributed by the purchase of two-dollar tickets and three-dollar tickets to the progressive jackpot. In essence, multiple levels of participation can be allowed in a progressive jackpot. Even though the one-dollar ticket holder is limited to winning a lesser percentage, for example, twenty-five percent, the one-dollar ticket holder can benefit from the increase in the jackpot prize resulting from the sale of higher-priced tickets.

If the majority of potential ticket buyers are induced to purchase three-dollar tickets, the potential ticket holders that can only afford to purchase a one-dollar ticket are still provided with an incentive to participate in the lottery

because these ticket holders can still win a portion of a progressive jackpot 2312 that can potentially grow quite large. The growth of the progressive jackpot 2312 can be enhanced further with the percentage contribution from the higher-priced tickets and relatively high starting jackpots resulting from probability-based third-party prize guarantees, as compared with the more traditional pari-mutuel-based single-priced-online lottery model. The potential ticket holders that can afford the higher-priced instant online tickets can be even further induced to purchase higher-priced tickets due to the prospect of winning a larger portion of the progressive jackpot and higher secondary prizes. As stated previously, lottery players have an incentive to buy three-dollar tickets where the more expensive tickets provide the opportunity to win a greater distribution percentage. With a progressive jackpot, players have an even greater incentive to buy tickets that are more expensive because the jackpot keeps increasing and the potential distribution grows larger.

Furthermore, when a multiple pricing scheme is utilized, players are further encouraged to buy instant online lottery tickets. In traditional lotteries, when the jackpot is won, the next game starts anew with a starting-level jackpot that is generally low. When a multiple pricing scheme is utilized, however, the jackpot is on average maintained at higher levels than without a multiple-pricing scheme.

That is, following the matching of the instant online lottery number with any one of the game-play combinations, the progressive jackpot is reduced for ongoing games. For example, instant online lottery tickets can be offered at three different prices: one dollar, two dollars, and three dollars. A player with a one-dollar ticket could win twenty-five percent of the progressive jackpot, a player with a two-dollar ticket could win fifty percent of the progressive jackpot, and a player with a three-dollar ticket could win one hundred percent of the progressive jackpot. If the player with the three-dollar instant online lottery ticket was the winner, the progressive jackpot can be reduced by the full amount of the jackpot. Then, the jackpot can start at zero or at a minimum guaranteed amount.

If the player with a one-dollar instant online lottery ticket was the winner, such winner could win only twenty-five percent of the jackpot, and the remaining seventy-five percent could carry over for continuing play. Similarly, if the winner was a purchaser of a two-dollar instant online lottery ticket, such winner could only win fifty percent of the jackpot, and the balance of fifty percent could be carried over for continuing play. In essence, a rollover is provided when no player wins the progressive jackpot, and a limited rollover is provided even when there is a winner, as long as the winner has a lower-denomination or lower-priced ticket. Accordingly, where the jackpot is on average at a significantly higher level potential customers or players can be induced to participate and purchase lottery tickets or to increase the amount spent in the purchase of a ticket. This is in contrast to traditional online lottery games, which only permit the purchase of single-priced tickets and, therefore, do not have the potential for limited rollovers and have jackpots that fall to minimum levels after each jackpot win. Traditional online lottery games do not provide the same inducement to potential lottery ticket holders to purchase or increase the amount spent on lottery tickets as the multi-priced instant online model described herein.

As it is well known in the art, higher jackpots attract more players to the game. An instant online lottery game that has both a progressive jackpot that continuously grows with the instant online lottery ticket sales and a multiple-level pricing scheme can maintain the average progressive jackpot at higher levels. Higher average progressive jackpots can also be achieved through higher-starting jackpot amounts resulting from a probabilistic model and use of third-party prize guarantees. Higher average progressive jackpots further induce play and increase ticket sales revenue.

DAILY ONLINE LOTTERY

The lottery game described in Figures 5-11 can alternatively be provided as a daily-draw or delayed draw lottery game, as an alternative to an instant online lottery game. In one embodiment, an instant online lottery number can be selected first when the ticket is purchased and, at the end of the game day,

following the last ticket purchase, by a draw of each of the game-play combinations. In another embodiment, an instant draw or selection can be made by a random number generator for all of the game-play combinations in the form of a matrix or grid and set forth in the purchased ticket. Upon the completion of the game there can be a subsequent draw for the selection of the winning lottery number. Two or more ticket holders can have instant online lottery numbers that provide a match and qualify for the jackpot or a percentage of the jackpot. In one embodiment, the jackpot distribution can be shared among the winning ticket holders.

Inter-sharing and intra-sharing methodologies can be implemented in this daily online lottery game. For instance, if two players win a progressive jackpot following the same draw, the two players can intra-share if they purchased daily online lottery tickets for the same price or can inter-share if they purchased daily online lottery tickets for different prices. If multiple players win at the same time, the players can inter-share across price categories and can intra-share within the same price category.

In one example, there can be a three-dollar ticket winner and a one-dollar ticket winner. The jackpot can be for ten million dollars. The three-dollar ticket winner can share the jackpot with the one-dollar ticket winner. The one-dollar ticket winner can receive one million two hundred fifty thousand dollars through an inter-sharing distribution. Further, the three-dollar ticket winner can receive one million two hundred fifty thousand dollars through an inter-sharing distribution formula. Finally, the three-dollar ticket winner can receive seven million five hundred thousand dollars through an intra-shared distribution.

INSTANT GAME - MONEY SQUARES

In one embodiment, a second multi-priced instant game can be provided. The instant game can be similar in certain respects to the traditional instant peel-off or scratch-off games but can be offered and played with a ticket that is printed at a traditional online lottery terminal instead of using a traditional pre-printed instant-style ticket. In addition, the multi-priced instant game can include a

multiple pricing scheme that offers ticket purchasers the option of playing for larger prizes if a higher-priced ticket is purchased and for smaller prizes if a lower-priced ticket is purchased. In one embodiment, the instant game can be provided by itself. In another embodiment, the instant game can be offered in combination with the lottery game described in Figures 5-11 and without any separate charge. In another embodiment, the instant game can be offered as an add-on game requiring a second or optional purchase.

Figure 24 illustrates a multi-priced instant game ticket 2400. In one embodiment, the instant game ticket can include a set of winning combinations 2402, a set of playing combinations 2404, a ticket identifier 2406 and a timestamp 2408. In one embodiment, the set of winning combinations 2402 can include squares each having a number and symbol combination that is utilized to compare against the playing combinations 2404. In addition, the set of playing combinations 2404 can each have a number and symbol combination. The symbol utilized in the playing combinations 2404 and the winning combinations 2402 can be a word, a color, a picture, a geometrical figure, a Greek symbol, a Latin symbol, a Hebrew symbol, to name a few. In another embodiment, the combination utilized can be a symbol-symbol combination, etc. The ticket identifier 2406 can be, for example, a serial number, a bar code, etc., that can uniquely identify the instant game ticket among other instant game tickets. In addition, a time stamp 2408 can also be provided on the instant online lottery ticket 2400 to display the time at which the ticket was printed and presented to the player.

In one embodiment, all of the playing combinations in the set of playing combinations can have a number and symbol combination. In another embodiment, only some of the playing combinations in the set of playing combinations can be seeded with number and symbol combinations. For example, only playing combinations 2420, 2422, 2424, 2426, and 2428 are seeded with a number and symbol combination.

In another embodiment, the playing combinations having a number and symbol combination can include a prize designation. For example, playing combination 2420 includes a prize designation of $100, playing combination 2428 includes a prize designation of $200, playing combination 2422 includes a prize designation of $300, playing combination 2424 includes a prize designation of $400, and playing combination 2426 includes a prize designation of $500.

A player can win if one of the squares in the set of playing combinations 2404 matches one of the winning combinations 2402 as to both the number and symbol combination. For example, playing combination 2428 includes a {7, Red} combination. Winning combination 2410 also includes a {7, Red} combination. Therefore, instant game ticket 2400 can win two hundred dollars according to the prize designation in playing combination 2428.

In another example, winning combination 2412 includes a {41, Yellow} combination. "Yellow" only appears in playing combination 2420 which includes a {10, Yellow} combination. Thus, instant game ticket 2400 does not win based on winning combination 2412.

In yet another example, winning combination 2414 includes a {30, Green} combination. The number "30" only appears in playing combination 2430, and has no symbol in combination with this number. Therefore, instant game ticket 2400 does not win based on winning combination 2414 either.

Figure 25 illustrates a process 2500 for operating the instant game. At a process block 2502, a selection of an instant game ticket price can be received. A determination of the instant prizes that can be won can be made at a process block 2504. In one embodiment, the instant prizes that can be won can be displayed for all of the price categories prior to the player's selection at the process block 2802. The instant prizes that can be won can depend upon the price of the instant game ticket. A higher ticket price can increase the number of instant prizes that can be won, as well as the amount of the prizes.

At a process block 2506, the winning combinations can be randomly selected. In one embodiment, a quick pick can be utilized to randomly select the

winning combinations. The player can choose the quick-pick button to have the instant game unit randomly generate the winning combinations for the player. In another embodiment, the instant game unit can receive randomly generated winning combinations from a server. At a process block 2508, the playing combinations can be generated. In one embodiment, the instant game unit can generate the playing combinations. In another embodiment, the server can generate the playing combinations.

At a process block 2510, a comparison can be made between each of the winning combinations and each of the playing combinations. In one embodiment, the instant game unit can perform this comparison. In another embodiment, the server can perform this comparison. At a decision block 2512, a determination can be made if a winning combination matches a playing combination. If there is a match, the process 2500 can proceed to a process block 2514 where the winner can be provided with the instant prize associated with the selected instant game ticket price. In one embodiment, the instant prize awarded to the winning player can be printed in the matching playing combination. The process 2300 can then proceed to the end block 2516. If none of the playing combinations matches any of the winning combinations, process 2500 can proceed to the end block 2516.

Figure 26 illustrates a table of prizes in a multi-priced instant game. Each price category can have an associated set of prizes. The associated set of prizes for a first price category 2602 can be, for example, a set of six different prizes. In another embodiment, the number of prizes for the first price category can be any other number of prizes. In one example, the first price category 2602 can be a two-dollar category. The first price category 2602 can have a set of prizes that includes one thousand dollars, one hundred dollars, twenty dollars, ten dollars, five dollars and a free ticket prize. Each of the prizes in the set of prizes can have associated odds. In one embodiment, the odds associated with each of the prizes in the first price category can determine whether the generated winning combinations match the playing combinations. Thus, tickets

in the first price category 2602 can be seeded in the appropriate playing combinations according to odds that the lottery operator sets. For example, the odds for a twenty-dollar prize for the first price category can be 1/750.

In another embodiment, there can be a second price category 2604. The associated set of prizes for the second price category 2604 can be, for example, a set of seven different prizes. In another embodiment, the number of prizes for the second price category can be any other number of prizes. In one example, the second price category 2604 can be a three-dollar category. The second price category 2606 can have a set of prizes that includes two thousand five hundred dollars, two hundred and fifty dollars, fifty dollars, twenty dollars, ten dollars, five dollars and a free ticket prize. Each of the prizes in the set of prizes can have associated odds. In one embodiment, the odds associated with each of the prizes in the second price category can determine whether the generated winning combinations match the playing combinations. Thus, tickets in the second price category 2604 can be seeded in the appropriate playing combinations according to odds that the lottery operator sets. For example, the odds for a twenty-dollar prize for the second price category can be 1/750. As a result, ticket holders for a first price category and a second price category can have a chance at winning a twenty-dollar prize based on the same odds. That is, the odds of winning a twenty-dollar prize for a first price category, and the odds of winning a twenty-dollar prize for a second price category, can both be 1/750. In another embodiment, there can be different odds applicable to the same prize for different price categories.

In yet another embodiment, there can be a third price category 2606. The associated set of prizes for the third price category 2606 can be, for example, a set of eight different prizes. In another embodiment, there can be a fourth price category 2608. The associated set of prizes for the fourth price category 2608 can be, for example, a set of nine different prizes. In yet another embodiment, the set of prizes can be the same in number for different price categories but differ in amount or with respect to the odds of winning a prize of a fixed amount.

Figure 27A illustrates an instant game ticket in a first price category. In one embodiment, the first price category can be a three-dollar ticket price. A playing combination 2420 can include the number-symbol combination {41, Yellow}. An associated prize with the playing combination 2420 can be two thousand five hundred dollars. Therefore, if the ticket includes a matching winning combination of {41, Yellow}, the ticket holder can win the prize of two thousand five hundred dollars. Winning combination 2412 includes the number-symbol combination {41, Yellow}. Accordingly, the three-dollar ticket holder can win two thousand five hundred dollars.

Figure 27B illustrates an instant game ticket in a second price category. In one embodiment, the second price category can be a four-dollar ticket price. A similar set of winning combinations and playing combinations as those in Figure 27A can be randomly generated for the four-dollar ticket. A playing combination 2420 can include the number-symbol combination {41, Yellow}. An associated prize with the playing combination 2420 can be ten thousand hundred dollars. Therefore, if the ticket includes a matching winning combination of {41, Yellow}, the ticket holder can win the prize of ten thousand dollars. Winning combination 2412 includes the number-symbol combination {41, Yellow}. Accordingly, the four-dollar ticket holder can win ten thousand dollars.

Figure 28 illustrates the prize distributions for an instant online lottery game in combination with a separate instant game offered online. The instant online lottery game described in reference to Figures 5-11 can be provided in conjunction with the instant game. In one embodiment, the instant game can be provided as a free addition to the instant online lottery game for the same price. In another embodiment, the instant game can be available as an option to players who can choose to pay an additional price for playing the instant game.

The prize distributions 2804 for the instant game can be separate from those attributable to the previously described instant online lottery game referenced in Figures 5-11. In the instant online lottery game, a lottery number is

provided to the player and compared to a set of game-play combinations. The prize a player can win can depend on the ticket price selected by the player and whether there was a complete or a partial match of the set of numbers with one of the game-play combinations.

On the other hand, the prize distributions 2806 for the instant game can be awarded as described above in reference to Figures 24-27. As such, the prize distributions 2804 and 2806 can be based on different odds.

In one embodiment, the price categories of the instant online lottery game correspond directly with the price categories of the instant game. In one example, the first price category for the instant online lottery game can correspond directly to the first price category of the instant game. Thus, a two-dollar player, for example, can play an instant online lottery game with a prize distribution of five hundred thousand dollars for a complete match. Further, secondary prizes of one hundred dollars, ten dollars, and two dollars can be available for partial matches. The same two-dollar player can also play the instant game with potential prizes of one thousand dollars, one hundred dollars, twenty dollars, ten dollars five dollars and a free ticket.

In another embodiment, where the instant game is provided at an extra cost, an instant online lottery game can be provided with a set of price categories, and an optional add-on instant game can be provided with a different set of price categories. The price categories for the instant game can be the add-on prices.

Figure 29 illustrates a three-dollar ticket for an instant online lottery game in combination with an instant game offered online. The instant online lottery game and the instant game can be combined together in a single ticket 2900. In one embodiment, the playing combinations for the instant game can be seeded to reflect a fixed allocation of prizes representing a pre-determined percentage of ticket sales revenues and allocated among the squares in a grid or matrix used for the instant online lottery game. In one example, the ticket price 2902 can be three dollars. An instant online lottery number 2904 can be provided for playing

the instant online lottery game. Further, a set of winning combinations 2906 can also be provided for playing the instant game. Finally, a player's game board 2908 can be a seven-by-seven matrix with numbers one to forty-nine randomly placed on the player's game board 2908.

In one example, the fourth column of the player's game board 2908 can include four of the seven numbers in the instant online lottery number 2904. If column four is designated as a playline that includes a winning subset of the lottery numbers, the ticket 2900 can win a prize for matching four numbers. For example, the instant online lottery number {2, 35, 13, 7, 9, 17, 31} matches the numbers {2, 13, 7, 31} in the game-play combination. If the prize distribution illustrated in Figure 28 is used, the three-dollar ticket holder can win two dollars.

In another example, the same three-dollar ticket holder can play the instant game. Only playing combination 2910 matches the winning number-symbol combination. Playing combination 2910 includes the combination {24, Blue}. One of the winning combinations has the combination {24, Blue}. As a result, the three-dollar ticket holder can win the amount indicated in the playing combination 2910, two hundred and fifty dollars.

Figure 30 illustrates a four-dollar ticket for an instant online lottery game in combination with an instant game. The instant online lottery game and the instant game can be combined together in a single ticket 3000 such that the playing combinations can be seeded in the instant online lottery game matrix. In one example, the ticket price 3002 can be four dollars. Like the three-dollar ticket illustrated in Figure 31, the four-dollar ticket can include the instant online lottery game as well as the instant game. However, the playing combinations seeded on the player's game board can include higher prizes, and/or present a greater chance of winning a prize as discussed with reference to Figure 28.

In one example, the fourth column of the player's game board 3008 can include four of the seven numbers in the instant online lottery number 3004. If column four is designated as a playline that includes one of the game-play combinations, the ticket 2900 can win a prize for matching four numbers.

Namely, the instant online lottery number {2, 35, 13, 7, 9, 17, 31} matches the numbers {2, 13, 7, 31} in the game-play combination. If the prize distribution illustrated in Figure 28 is used, the four-dollar ticket holder can win three dollars.

In another example, the same four-dollar ticket holder can play the instant game. Only playing combination 2910 matches the number-symbol combination. Playing combination 3010 includes the combination {24, Blue}. One of the winning combinations has the combination {24, Blue}. As a result, the four-dollar ticket holder can win the amount indicated in the playing combination 3010, five hundred dollars.

THIRD-PARTY GUARANTEE

Figure 31 illustrates a probabilistic instant online lottery game system 3100. The instant online lottery game system with a progressive jackpot 2300 can be used in conjunction with the probabilistic lottery system 3100. In one embodiment, a jackpot guarantor 3102 can assume the risk that would normally not exist in a pure pari-mutuel lottery game. In another embodiment, the risk can be assumed in whole or in part by the lottery operator 3120, or by the sponsoring jurisdiction, government, or quasi-government body. In another embodiment, the jackpot guarantor 3102 can be a privately owned organization other than a jurisdiction. In another embodiment, the jackpot guarantor 3102 can be a publicly held company. In yet other embodiments, the jackpot guarantor 3102 can be an individual or a not-for-profit organization. In another embodiment, the obligation of the jackpot guarantor 3102 can be supported through the purchase and application of prize indemnity insurance provided by an insurance company or reinsurer. The jackpot guarantor 3102 can establish a pre-determined starting jackpot 3140. In one embodiment, the pre-determined starting jackpot 3140 can be a substantial prize that can entice ticket holders 108 that would not normally purchase a lottery ticket to do so. The lottery operator 3120 can advertise the pre-determined starting jackpot 3140 in order to stimulate and increase ticket sales. In one embodiment, the pre-determined starting jackpot 3140 is unfunded. Instead, the jackpot guarantor 3102 can set the pre-determined

starting jackpot 3140 at an amount that is large enough so that there is a probability that the allocable prize portion of ticket sales can equal or exceed the pre-determined starting jackpot 3140. If the allocable prize portion of ticket sales is less than the pre-determined starting jackpot 3140, the jackpot guarantor 3102 would assume the risk for paying the differential between the ticket sales, or the allocable portion thereof, and the jackpot 3130.

In one embodiment, the jackpot guarantor 3102 can provide a guarantee to the lottery operator 3120. In one embodiment, the guarantee can provide that the jackpot guarantor 3102 assumes the risk for paying the pre-determined starting jackpot 3140 if the allocable prize portion of ticket sales is not sufficient to cover the pre-determined starting jackpot 3140. In another embodiment, the guarantee can provide that the jackpot guarantor assumes the risk of paying the amount of any secondary prizes that are won, to the extent that the allocable prize portion of ticket sales is not sufficient.

In one embodiment, the jackpot guarantor 3102 can provide the guarantee in exchange for a stipulation. In one embodiment, the stipulation can include an obligation by the lottery operator 3120 to provide a percentage of revenue generated from future ticket sales in exchange for the guarantee. In another embodiment, the stipulation includes an obligation by the lottery operator 3120 to provide a fee in exchange for the guarantee.

The lottery operator 3120 can receive payments for ticket sales from the point of sale 106. Further, the lottery operator 3120 can receive instant online lottery numbers from the tickets sold to the ticket holders 108 from the point of sale 3106. The lottery operator can provide the instant online lottery numbers to the winning number selector 3110 to determine which tickets are the winning tickets.

In one embodiment, the jackpot guarantor 3102 can allocate the funds to the pre-determined starting jackpot 3140 pool. In one embodiment, the entity can set aside the large prize in a protected account to provide for payment. Therefore, the lottery operator can advertise a large prize because another entity

actually has set aside the large prize. In another embodiment, the starting jackpot amount is not set aside but payment of the jackpot is assured through prize indemnity insurance, a performance bond or another form of financial insurance or protection which can be provided by a financially secure insurance company through a policy naming the lottery as a beneficiary. In another embodiment, the financial condition of the jackpot guarantor 3102 can be sufficient to provide necessary financial assurance without the need for any bond or other form financial protection.

Figure 32 illustrates a probabilistic software configuration 3200 that can be used with the probabilistic lottery system in conjunction with the multiple-pricing shared-jackpot system 1800. As can be seen from Figure 32, the probabilistic software configuration 3200 can include software for establishing a guarantee for a pre-determined lottery prize 3140. A guarantee transmission module 3204 can transmit the guarantee through a network 3208. The network 3208 can be a wide-area network, a local area network, the network, a wireless network, or any other network known to one of ordinary skill in the art. The guarantee transmission module 3204 can transmit the guarantee in exchange for a stipulation. In one embodiment, the stipulation can be an obligation for a percentage of future ticket sales. A stipulation reception module 3206 can receive the stipulation through the network 3208. In one embodiment, after the stipulation reception module 3206 receives the stipulation, the stipulation reception module 3206 can transmit a confirmation that the stipulation was received to the guarantee transmission module 3204.

A guarantee reception module 3210 can receive the guarantee from the network 3208. In one embodiment, upon receiving the guarantee, the guarantee reception module 3210 can provide an instruction to a stipulation transmission module 3212. The stipulation transmission module 3212 can then send the stipulation through the network 3208. As discussed above, the stipulation reception module 3206 can receive the stipulation and send the confirmation to the guarantee transmission module 3204 that the guarantee has been sent and

that the stipulation, in exchange for which the guarantee was sent, has been received.

Although certain illustrative embodiments and methods have been disclosed herein, it will be apparent form the foregoing disclosure to those skilled in the art that variations and modifications of such embodiments and methods can be made without departing from the true spirit and scope of the art disclosed. Many other examples of the art disclosed exist, each differing from others in matters of detail only. For instance, various variations of matrices can be utilized, such as a four-by-four matrix, a five-by-five matrix, a six-by-six matrix, a nine-by-nine matrix, etc. Further, different prize distributions, price categories, and the various features of the instant online lottery game and the instant game can be combined into discrete lottery schemes.

Finally, it will also be apparent to one skilled in the art that other indicia can be printed on a lottery ticket such as advertising, media, news, coupons, passes to events, etc. Accordingly, it is intended that the art disclosed shall be limited only to the extent required by the appended claims and the rules and principles of applicable law.

CLAIMS

1. A lottery game unit comprising

a price selection input that receives a selection of a lottery ticket price at which a lottery ticket corresponding to a lottery game is to be purchased, the lottery ticket price being selected from a plurality of lottery ticket prices, each of the lottery ticket prices corresponding to a distinct known percentage of a progressive jackpot which increases in size based on a portion of ticket sales revenue and that can be won with a full match of one of a plurality of game-play combinations;

a random number generator that randomly selects a set of lottery numbers for the player; and

a lottery ticket printer that prints a lottery ticket with the set of lottery numbers such that a player can determine if a match occurs between the set of lottery numbers and one of a plurality of game-play combinations, the plurality of game-play combinations being randomly generated in a matrix subsequent to the lottery ticket being printed, the matrix having at least two rows and two columns.

2. The lottery game unit of claim 1, wherein the match is a full match.

3. The lottery game unit of any of the preceding claims, wherein payment of the progressive jackpot is guaranteed by a third party.

4. The lottery game unit of any of the preceding claims, wherein each of the lottery ticket prices further corresponds to a distinct known secondary prize that can be won with a partial match of one of the plurality of game-play combinations.

5. The lottery game unit of any of the preceding claims, wherein payment of the distinct known secondary prize is guaranteed by a third party.

6. The lottery game unit of any of the preceding claims, wherein a row of the matrix provides a set of numbers that define one of the plurality of game-play combinations.

7. The lottery game unit of any of the preceding claims, wherein a column of the matrix provides a set of numbers that define one of the plurality of game-play combinations.

8. The lottery game unit of any of the preceding claims, wherein a diagonal of the matrix provides a set of numbers that define one of the plurality of game-play combinations.

9. The lottery game unit of any of the preceding claims, wherein a row of the matrix provides a set of numbers that define one of the plurality of game-play combinations and a column of the matrix provides a set of numbers that define one of the plurality of game-play combinations.

10. The lottery game unit of any of the preceding claims, wherein a row of the matrix provides a set of numbers that define one of the plurality of game-play combinations and a diagonal of the matrix provides a set of numbers that define one of the plurality of game-play combinations.

11. The lottery game unit of any of the preceding claims, wherein a column of the matrix provides a set of numbers that define one of the plurality of game-play combinations and a diagonal of the matrix provides a set of numbers that define one of the plurality of game-play combinations.

12. The lottery game unit of any of the preceding claims, wherein an instant game is provided together with the lottery game.

13. The lottery game unit of any of the preceding claims, wherein payment of an instant game prize associated with the instant game is guaranteed by a third party.

14. A lottery game unit comprising:

a price selection input that receives a selection of a lottery ticket price at which a lottery ticket corresponding to a lottery game is to be purchased, the lottery ticket

price being selected from a plurality of lottery ticket prices, each of the lottery ticket prices corresponding to a distinct known percentage of a progressive jackpot which increases in size based on a portion of ticket sales revenue and that can be won with a full match of one of a plurality of game-play combinations;

a user input device that receives a selection of a set of lottery numbers for the player; and

a lottery ticket printer that prints a lottery ticket with the set of lottery numbers such that a player can determine if a match occurs between the set of lottery numbers and one of a plurality of game-play combinations, the plurality of game-play combinations being randomly generated in a matrix subsequent to the lottery ticket being printed, the matrix having at least two rows and two columns.

15. The lottery game unit of claim 14, wherein the match is a full match.

16. The lottery game unit of claim 14 or 15, wherein payment of the progressive jackpot is guaranteed by a third party.

17. The lottery game unit of any one of claims 14 to 16, wherein each of the lottery ticket prices further corresponds to a distinct known secondary prize that can be won with a partial match of one of the plurality of game-play combinations.

18. The lottery game unit of claim 17, wherein payment of the distinct known secondary prize is guaranteed by a third party.

19. The lottery game unit of any one of claims 14 to 18, wherein a row of the matrix provides a set of numbers that define one of the plurality of game-play combinations.

20. The lottery game unit of any one of claims 14 to 19, wherein a column of the matrix provides a set of numbers that define one of the plurality of game-play combinations.

21. The lottery game unit of any one of claims 14 to 20, wherein a diagonal of the matrix provides a set of numbers that define one of the plurality of game-play combinations.

22. The lottery game unit of any one of claims 14 to 21, wherein a row of the matrix provides a set of numbers that define one of the plurality of game-play combinations and a column of the matrix provides a set of numbers that define one of the plurality of game-play combinations.

23. The lottery game unit of any one of claims 14 to 22, wherein a row of the matrix provides a set of numbers that define one of the plurality of game-play combinations and a diagonal of the matrix provides a set of numbers that define one of the plurality of game-play combinations.

24. The lottery game unit of any one of claims 14 to 23, wherein a column of the matrix provides a set of numbers that define one of the plurality of game-play combinations and a diagonal of the matrix provides a set of numbers that define one of the plurality of game-play combinations.

25. The lottery game unit of any one of claims 14 to 24, wherein an instant game is provided together with the lottery game.

26. The lottery game unit of any one of claims 14 to 25, wherein payment of an instant game prize associated with the instant game is guaranteed by a third party.

27. A method comprising:

receiving a selection of a lottery ticket price at which a lottery ticket corresponding to a lottery game is to be purchased, the lottery ticket price being selected from a plurality of lottery ticket prices, each of the lottery ticket prices corresponding to a distinct known percentage of a progressive jackpot which increases in size based on a portion of ticket sales revenue and that can be won with a full match of one of a plurality of game-play combinations;

randomly select, with a random number generator, a set of lottery numbers for the player; and

printing, with a lottery ticket printer, a lottery ticket with the set of lottery numbers such that a player can determine if a match occurs between the set of lottery numbers and one of a plurality of game-play combinations, the plurality of game-play combinations being randomly generated in a matrix subsequent to the lottery ticket being printed, the matrix having at least two rows and two columns.

28. A method comprising:

receiving a selection of a lottery ticket price at which a lottery ticket corresponding to a lottery game is to be purchased, the lottery ticket price being selected from a plurality of lottery ticket prices, each of the lottery ticket prices corresponding to a distinct known percentage of a progressive jackpot which increases in size based on a portion of ticket sales revenue and that can be won with a full match of one of a plurality of game-play combinations;

receiving, with a user input device, a selection of a set of lottery numbers for the player; and

printing, with a lottery ticket printer, a lottery ticket with the set of lottery numbers such that a player can determine if a match occurs between the set of lottery numbers and one of a plurality of game-play combinations, the plurality of game-play combinations being randomly generated in a matrix subsequent to the lottery ticket being printed, the matrix having at least two rows and two columns.

29. A lottery game unit comprising:

a price selection input that receives a selection of a lottery ticket price at which a lottery ticket corresponding to a lottery game is to be purchased, the lottery ticket price being selected from a plurality of lottery ticket prices, each of the lottery ticket prices corresponding to a distinct known percentage of a prize that can be won with a full match of one of a plurality of game-play combinations;

a random number generator that randomly selects a set of lottery numbers for the player; and

a lottery ticket printer that prints a lottery ticket with the set of lottery numbers such that a player can determine if a match occurs between the set of lottery numbers and one of a plurality of game-play combinations, the plurality of game-play combinations being randomly generated in a matrix subsequent to the lottery ticket being printed, the matrix having at least two rows and two columns.

30. A lottery game unit comprising:

a price selection input that receives a selection of a lottery ticket price at which a lottery ticket corresponding to a lottery game is to be purchased, the lottery ticket price being selected from a plurality of lottery ticket prices, each of the lottery ticket prices corresponding to a distinct known percentage of a prize that can be won with a full match of one of a plurality of game-play combinations;

a user input device that receives a selection of a set of lottery numbers for the player; and

a lottery ticket printer that prints a lottery ticket with the set of lottery numbers such that a player can determine if a match occurs between the set of lottery numbers and one of a plurality of game-play combinations, the plurality of game-play combinations being randomly generated in a matrix subsequent to the lottery ticket being printed, the matrix having at least two rows and two columns.