TITLE: APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR CONTROLLING PRIZE FUNDS WON BY A USER IN A GAMING SYSTEM

The present invention relates to a system and method for controlling prize funds won by a user in a gaming system. In particular, the invention relates to gaming apparatus, a method of providing a game, a gaming machine and a gaming network.

The invention has been developed primarily for use with a plurality of interlinked gaming machines in a gaming establishment and will be described with reference to this application. However, the invention is not limited to that particular field of use and is also suitable for use with online gaming, gaming machines that are distributed over a plurality of gaming establishments, lotto, pools, lotteries, art unions, bingo, raffles and other games involving one or more wagers being placed on an outcome having a finite probability of occurring.

BACKGROUND

The discussion of prior art within this specification is to assist the addressee to understand the invention and is not an admission to the extent of the common general knowledge in the field of the invention and is included without prejudice.

It is known to link gaming machines to provide a number of additional functionalities. This includes the ability to control the awarding of a prize, as the pool of funds is greater and the amount of funds available is known rather than having to be estimated. Another known purpose of interlinking gaming machines is to provide secondary gaming such as a linked jackpot. In such a system, a central display typically provides the players with a visual indication of a presently available jackpot prize which is increased incrementally as the players operate the interlinked gaming machines. It is known by the players that the prize will be awarded when it reaches a secret, randomly selected value that is less than a predetermined limit value. The limit value is often also visually indicated to the players by means of the display.

The use of such functionality is intended to attract players to play the machines in the hope of winning the jackpot. However, with the increased sophistication of players and their increased exposure to such systems, the systems' ability to maintain players' interest has diminished.

It is an object of the present invention to overcome, or at least substantially ameliorate, one or more of the disadvantages of the prior art or at least to provide a useful alternative.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A first aspect of the invention provides gaming apparatus including:

credit meter memory for storing data indicative of an amount of credit available to a user to be played on a primary game;

won funds memory for storing data indicative of the value of funds won by the user;

a prize message receiver for receiving a message indicative of the quantum of a prize won by the user; and

a processor responsive to the prize message receiver for modifying the data indicative of the value of funds won.

Preferably, the prize message receiver is adapted to receive a message from a secondary game controller.

Additionally or alternatively, the prize message receiver may be adapted to receive a message from a primary game controller.

The prize message receiver may still further additionally or alternatively be adapted to receive a message from a tertiary game controller.

The gaming apparatus preferably further includes:

a user input message receiver for receiving an indication of the user's desire to use at least a portion of the funds won as a stake for a tertiary game; and

a tertiary game interface responsive to the user input message receiver for communicating with a tertiary game controller.

Preferably, the credit meter memory is located in or adjacent a gaming machine operable by a user.

In one embodiment, the won funds memory is located in or adjacent the gaming machine.

In an alternative, the gaming apparatus preferably further includes a secondary game controller, for example remote from the gaming machine, and the won funds memory is located in or adjacent the secondary game controller.

Preferably, the gaming apparatus further includes in or adjacent the gaming machine a user input device in communication with the user input message receiver.

Preferably, the tertiary game interface is located in or adjacent the gaming machine.

The gaming apparatus preferably further includes a payout device in communication with the user input device and responsive thereto to payout all or a user-selected amount of the won funds.

A second aspect of the invention provides a method of providing a game including the steps of:

storing in a first memory location data indicative of an amount of credit available to a user to be played on the primary game;

storing in a second memory location data indicative of the value of funds won by the user;

when a prize is won by a user modifying the data in the second memory location to augment the value of funds won by the quantum of the prize won.

Preferably, the data is modified in response to a prize won in a secondary game.

Additionally or alternatively, the data is modified in response to a prize won in the primary game.

Further, the data may be modified in response to a prize won in a tertiary game.

The method preferably further includes:

receiving a tertiary game message indicative of the user's desire to use at least a portion of the funds won as a stake for a tertiary game; and

communicating with a tertiary game controller in response to the tertiary game message to cause the tertiary game controller to provide the tertiary game using the user selected stake.

The method preferably further includes receiving a user indication of a desire to pay out all or a user-selected amount of the won funds, and responding by paying out the won funds or the user-selected amount of won funds.

A third aspect of the invention provides a gaming machine including:

credit meter memory for storing data indicative of an amount of credit available to a user for play on a primary game provided by the gaming machine; and

won funds memory for storing data indicative of the value of funds won by the user.

Preferably, the won funds memory is located on a network interface card associated with the gaming machine.

A fourth aspect of the invention provides a gaming network including a plurality of gaming machines as set out above, and a centralised secondary game controller for providing a secondary game having a secondary game prize, the secondary game controller being adapted to determine which of the gaming machines has won the secondary game prize and to output a secondary game prize message to the winning gaming machine, indicating the quantum of the secondary game prize.

Preferably, each of the gaming machines is adapted to respond to a message from the secondary game controller indicating that it has won the secondary game by modifying the data indicative of the value of funds won.

The gaming network preferably further includes a tertiary game controller.

The tertiary game controller is preferably adapted to offer a tertiary game to the user of a gaming machine storing data indicative of a non-zero amount of funds won.

The tertiary game may be offered periodically, at random intervals, in response to the occurrence of predetermined events or at intervals determined in dependence upon the value of funds won.

Preferably, the gaming network includes a respective tertiary game controller associated with and adjacent to each gaming machine.

A fifth aspect of the invention provides a gaming network including:

a plurality of gaming machines each having an associated won funds memory for storing data indicative of the value of funds won by a respective player;

a secondary game controller in communication with said gaming machines for providing a secondary game having a secondary game prize, the secondary game controller being capable of determining a set of gaming machines and modifying the won funds memories of the gaming machines within the set so as to share the secondary game prize amongst the gaming machines within the set; and

a tertiary game controller for offering a tertiary game to the players of the gaming machines within said set.

In one preferred embodiment the set is a sub-set of said plurality of gaming machines. Preferably the sub-set is defined by the gaming machines that participated in the secondary game. In another embodiment the sub-set is defined by the currently active gaming machines at a time of the award of the secondary game prize.

Preferably the tertiary game includes an option allowing a player of a gaming machine within the set to offer a bet to players of other gaming machines. Preferably the other gaming machines are remaining gaming machines within the set. In a preferred embodiment a stake for the bet is provided by all or a portion of the funds indicated by the won funds memory. In another preferred embodiment a stake for the bet is provided by all or a portion of the secondary game prize.

A sixth aspect of the invention provides a gaming network including:

a plurality of gaming machines in communication with a secondary game controller for providing a secondary game having a secondary game prize, the secondary game controller being capable of sharing the secondary game prize amongst a set of gaming machines; and

a tertiary game controller for offering a tertiary game to the players of the gaming machines within the set, said tertiary game including an option allowing a player of a gaming machine within the set to offer a bet to players of other gaming machines.

Preferably a stake for the bet is provide by all or a portion of the secondary game prize.

A seventh aspect of the invention provides a gaming method including the steps of:

providing a plurality of gaming machines, each of said gaming machines being capable of executing a primary game, each of said gaming machines being communicatively connectable to a central controller for the provision of a secondary game;

using the central controller to determine a set of winning gaming machines and to share a secondary game prize amongst the gaming machines within said set; and

using the central controller to provide an option at each of the gaming machines within the set to participate in a tertiary game.

In one embodiment, the tertiary game consists of a bet offered by a player of a gaming machine within the set to other players of other gaming machines. In another embodiment the tertiary game consists of a bet offered by a player of a gaming machine within the set exclusively to other players of other gaming machines within the set.

Further aspects of the invention provide computer programs for causing a computer to implement a method as set out above, a data carrier carrying data representing such a computer program, a signal carrying data representing such a computer program, and a computer programmed to execute such a computer program.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Preferred embodiments of the invention will now be described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is a schematic view of a first gaming apparatus according to the invention;

Figure 2 is a schematic view of a second gaming apparatus according to the invention; and

Figure 3 is a flowchart illustrating a method of operating a gaming apparatus.

THE CLAIMS DEFINING THE INVENTION ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. An apparatus for controlling prize funds won by a user in a gaming system, including:

a credit meter memory for storing data indicative of an amount of credit available to a user to be played on a primary game;

a won funds meter for storing data indicative of a value of funds won by the user in playing a primary or secondary game;

a prize message receiver for receiving a message indicative of a quantum of a prize won by the user;

a processor responsive to the prize message receiver for modifying the stored data to augment the value of funds by quantum of the prize;

a user input message receiver for receiving a message indicative of the user's desire to use at least a portion of the funds won by the user as a stake for a tertiary game; and

a tertiary game interface for communicating with a tertiary game controller.

2. An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the prize message receiver is adapted to receive a message from a secondary game controller.

3. An apparatus according to claim 1 or claim 2, wherein the prize message receiver is adapted to receive a message from a primary game controller.

4. An apparatus according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the prize message receiver is adapted to receive a message from a tertiary game controller.

5. An apparatus according to any of the preceding claims, further including:

a user input message receiver for receiving an indication of the user's desire to use at least a portion of the funds won as a stake for a tertiary game; and

a tertiary game interface responsive to the user input message receiver for communicating with a tertiary game controller.

6. An apparatus according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the credit meter memory is located in or adjacent a gaming machine operable by a user.

7. An apparatus according to claim 6, wherein the won funds memory is located in or adjacent the gaming machine.

8. An apparatus according to claim 6 or claim 7, wherein the gaming apparatus further includes a secondary game controller, and the won funds memory is located in or adjacent the secondary game controller.

9. Apparatus according to claim 8, wherein the secondary game controller is remote from the gaming machine.

10. Apparatus according to any of claims 6 to 9, further including in or adjacent the gaming machine a user input device in communication with the user input message receiver.

11. Apparatus according to any of claims 6 to 10, wherein the tertiary game interface is located in or adjacent the gaming machine.

12. Apparatus according to any of the preceding claims, further including a payout device in communication with the user input device and responsive thereto to payout all or a user-selected amount of the won funds.

13. A method of providing a game including the steps of:

storing in a first memory location data indicative of an amount of credit available to a user to be played on the primary game;

storing in a second memory location data indicative of the value of funds won by the user;

when a prize is won by a user modifying the data in the second memory location to augment the value of funds won by the quantum of the prize won.

14. A method according to claim 13, wherein the data is modified in response to a prize won in a secondary game.

15. A method according to claim 13 or claim 14, wherein the data is modified in response to a prize won in the primary game.

16. A method according to any of claims 13 to 15, including the step of offering a tertiary game periodically, at random intervals, in response to the occurrence of predetermined events or at intervals determined in dependence upon the value of funds won.

17. A method according to any one of claim 16, wherein the data is modified in response to a prize won in a tertiary game.

18. A method according to claim 16 or claim 17, further including:

receiving a tertiary game message indicative of the user's desire to use at least a portion of the funds won as a stake for a tertiary game; and

communicating with a tertiary game controller in response to the tertiary game message to cause the tertiary game controller to provide the tertiary game using the user selected stake.

19. A method according to any of claims 13 to 18 further including receiving a user indication of a desire to pay out all or a user-selected amount of the won funds, and responding by paying out the won funds or the user-selected amount of won funds.

20. A gaming machine including:

credit meter memory for storing data indicative of an amount of credit available to a user for play on a primary game provided by the gaming machine; and

won funds memory for storing data indicative of the value of funds won by the user.

21. A gaming machine according to claim 20, wherein the won funds memory is located on a network interface card associated with the gaming machine.

22. A gaming network including a plurality of gaming machines as claimed in claim 20 or claim 21, and a centralised secondary game controller for providing a secondary game having a secondary game prize, the secondary game controller being adapted to determine which of the gaming machines has won the secondary game prize and to output a secondary game prize message to the winning gaming machine, indicating the quantum of the secondary game prize.

23. A gaming network according to claim 22, wherein each of the gaming machines is adapted to respond to a message from the secondary game controller indicating that it has won the secondary game by modifying the data indicative of the value of funds won.

24. A gaming network according to claim 22 or claim 23, further including a tertiary game controller.

25. A gaming network according to claim 24, wherein the tertiary game controller is adapted to offer a tertiary game to the user of a gaming machine storing data indicative of a non-zero amount of funds won.

26. A gaming network according to claim 22 or claim 23, including a respective tertiary game controller associated with and adjacent to each gaming machine.

27. A gaming network including:

a plurality of gaming machines each having an associated won funds memory for storing data indicative of the value of funds won by a respective player;

a secondary game controller in communication with said gaming machines for providing a secondary game having a secondary game prize, the secondary game controller being capable of determining a set of gaming machines and modifying the won funds memories of the gaming machines within the set so as to share the secondary game prize amongst the gaming machines within the set; and

a tertiary game controller for offering a tertiary game to the players of the gaming machines within said set.

28. A gaming network according to claim 27, wherein the secondary game controller is adapted to determine the set of gaming machines as a sub-set of the plurality of gaming machines.

29. A gaming network according to claim 28, wherein the secondary game controller is adapted to determine the sub-set as the gaming machines that participated in the secondary game.

30. A gaming network according to claim 28, wherein the secondary game controller is adapted to determine the sub-set as the currently active gaming machines at a time of the award of the secondary game prize.

31. A gaming network according to any of claims 27 to 30, wherein the tertiary game includes an option allowing a player of a gaming machine within the set to offer a bet to players of other gaming machines.

32. A gaming network according to claim 31, wherein the other gaming machines are remaining gaming machines within the set.

33. A gaming network according to claim 31 or claim 32, wherein a stake for the bet is provided by all or a portion of the funds indicated by the won funds memory.

34. A gaming network according to claim 31 or claim 32, wherein a stake for the bet is provided by all or a portion of the secondary game prize.

35. A gaming network including:

a plurality of gaming machines in communication with a secondary game controller for providing a secondary game having a secondary game prize, the secondary game controller being capable of sharing the secondary game prize amongst a set of gaming machines; and

a tertiary game controller for offering a tertiary game to the players of the gaming machines within the set, said tertiary game including an option allowing a player of a gaming machine within the set to offer a bet to players of other gaming machines.

36. A gaming network according to claim 35, wherein a stake for the bet is provide by all or a portion of the secondary game prize.

37. A gaming method including the steps of:

providing a plurality of gaming machines, each of said gaming machines being capable of executing a primary game, each of said gaming machines being communicatively connectable to a central controller for the provision of a secondary game;

using the central controller to determine a set of winning gaming machines and to share a secondary game prize amongst the gaming machines within said set; and

using the central controller to provide an option at each of the gaming machines within the set to participate in a tertiary game.

38. A method according to claim 37, wherein the tertiary game includes allowing a player of a gaming machine within the set to offer a bet to players of other gaming machines.

39. A method according to claim 37, wherein the tertiary game includes allowing a player of a gaming machine within the set to offer a bet to players of other gaming machines within the set.

40. A computer program for causing a computer to implement a method as claimed in any of claims 13 to 19, or 37 to 39.

41. A data carrier carrying data representing a computer program as claimed in claim 40.

42. A signal carrying data representing a computer program as claimed in claim 40.

43. A computer programmed to execute a computer program as claimed in claim 40.

TITLE: APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR CONTROLLING PRIZE FUNDS WON BY A USER IN A GAMING SYSTEM

The present invention relates to a system and method for controlling prize funds won by a user in a gaming system. In particular, the invention relates to gaming apparatus, a method of providing a game, a gaming machine and a gaming network.

The invention has been developed primarily for use with a plurality of interlinked gaming machines in a gaming establishment and will be described with reference to this application. However, the invention is not limited to that particular field of use and is also suitable for use with online gaming, gaming machines that are distributed over a plurality of gaming establishments, lotto, pools, lotteries, art unions, bingo, raffles and other games involving one or more wagers being placed on an outcome having a finite probability of occurring.

BACKGROUND

The discussion of prior art within this specification is to assist the addressee to understand the invention and is not an admission to the extent of the common general knowledge in the field of the invention and is included without prejudice.

It is known to link gaming machines to provide a number of additional functionalities. This includes the ability to control the awarding of a prize, as the pool of funds is greater and the amount of funds available is known rather than having to be estimated. Another known purpose of interlinking gaming machines is to provide secondary gaming such as a linked jackpot. In such a system, a central display typically provides the players with a visual indication of a presently available jackpot prize which is increased incrementally as the players operate the interlinked gaming machines. It is known by the players that the prize will be awarded when it reaches a secret, randomly selected value that is less than a predetermined limit value. The limit value is often also visually indicated to the players by means of the display.

The use of such functionality is intended to attract players to play the machines in the hope of winning the jackpot. However, with the increased sophistication of players and their increased exposure to such systems, the systems' ability to maintain players' interest has diminished.

Implementation of the techniques disclosed herein may overcome, or at least substantially ameliorate, one or more of the disadvantages of the prior art or at least to provide a useful alternative.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The invention is defined in the independent claims. Some optional features of the invention are defined in the dependent claims.

In an exemplary technique, there is provided a gaming apparatus including:

credit meter memory for storing data indicative of an amount of credit available to a user to be played on a primary game;

won funds memory for storing data indicative of the value of funds won by the user;

a prize message receiver for receiving a message indicative of the quantum of a prize won by the user; and

a processor responsive to the prize message receiver for modifying the data indicative of the value of funds won.

Preferably, the prize message receiver is adapted to receive a message from a secondary game controller.

Additionally or alternatively, the prize message receiver may be adapted to receive a message from a primary game controller.

The prize message receiver may still further additionally or alternatively be adapted to receive a message from a tertiary game controller.

The gaming apparatus preferably further includes:

a user input message receiver for receiving an indication of the user's desire to use at least a portion of the funds won as a stake for a tertiary game; and

a tertiary game interface responsive to the user input message receiver for communicating with a tertiary game controller.

Preferably, the credit meter memory is located in or adjacent a gaming machine operable by a user.

In one exemplary technique, the won funds memory is located in or adjacent the gaming machine.

In an alternative, the gaming apparatus preferably further includes a secondary game controller, for example remote from the gaming machine, and the won funds memory is located in or adjacent the secondary game controller.

Preferably, the gaming apparatus further includes in or adjacent the gaming machine a user input device in communication with the user input message receiver.

Preferably, the tertiary game interface is located in or adjacent the gaming machine.

The gaming apparatus preferably further includes a payout device in communication with the user input device and responsive thereto to payout all or a user-selected amount of the won funds.

In another exemplary technique, there is provided a method of providing a game including the steps of:

storing in a first memory location data indicative of an amount of credit available to a user to be played on the primary game;

storing in a second memory location data indicative of the value of funds won by the user;

when a prize is won by a user modifying the data in the second memory location to augment the value of funds won by the quantum of the prize won.

Preferably, the data is modified in response to a prize won in a secondary game.

Additionally or alternatively, the data is modified in response to a prize won in the primary game.

Further, the data may be modified in response to a prize won in a tertiary game.

The method preferably further includes:

receiving a tertiary game message indicative of the user's desire to use at least a portion of the funds won as a stake for a tertiary game; and

communicating with a tertiary game controller in response to the tertiary game message to cause the tertiary game controller to provide the tertiary game using the user selected stake.

The method preferably further includes receiving a user indication of a desire to pay out all or a user-selected amount of the won funds, and responding by paying out the won funds or the user-selected amount of won funds.

In another exemplary technique, there is provided a gaming machine including:

credit meter memory for storing data indicative of an amount of credit available to a user for play on a primary game provided by the gaming machine; and

won funds memory for storing data indicative of the value of funds won by the user.

Preferably, the won funds memory is located on a network interface card associated with the gaming machine.

In another exemplary technique, there is provided a gaming network including a plurality of gaming machines as set out above, and a centralised secondary game controller for providing a secondary game having a secondary game prize, the secondary game controller being adapted to determine which of the gaming machines has won the secondary game prize and to output a

secondary game prize message to the winning gaming machine, indicating the quantum of the secondary game prize.

Preferably, each of the gaming machines is adapted to respond to a message from the secondary game controller indicating that it has won the secondary game by modifying the data indicative of the value of funds won.

The gaming network preferably further includes a tertiary game controller.

The tertiary game controller is preferably adapted to offer a tertiary game to the user of a gaming machine storing data indicative of a non-zero amount of funds won.

The tertiary game may be offered periodically, at random intervals, in response to the occurrence of predetermined events or at intervals determined in dependence upon the value of funds won.

Preferably, the gaming network includes a respective tertiary game controller associated with and adjacent to each gaming machine.

In another exemplary technique, there is provided a gaming network including:

a plurality of gaming machines each having an associated won funds memory for storing data indicative of the value of funds won by a respective player;

a secondary game controller in communication with said gaming machines for providing a secondary game having a secondary game prize, the secondary game controller being capable of determining a set of gaming machines and modifying the won funds memories of the gaming machines within the set so as to share the secondary game prize amongst the gaming machines within the set; and

a tertiary game controller for offering a tertiary game to the players of the gaming machines within said set.

In one preferred exemplary technique, the set is a sub-set of said plurality of gaming machines. Preferably the sub-set is defined by the gaming machines that participated in the secondary game. In another exemplary technique, the sub-set is defined by the currently active gaming machines at a time of the award of the secondary game prize.

Preferably the tertiary game includes an option allowing a player of a gaming machine within the set to offer a bet to players of other gaming machines. Preferably the other gaming machines are remaining gaming machines within the set. In a preferred exemplary technique, a stake for the bet is provided by all or a portion of the funds indicated by the won funds memory. In another preferred exemplary technique, a stake for the bet is provided by all or a portion of the secondary game prize.

In another exemplary technique, there is provided a gaming network including:

a plurality of gaming machines in communication with a secondary game controller for providing a secondary game having a secondary game prize, the secondary game controller being capable of sharing the secondary game prize amongst a set of gaming machines; and

a tertiary game controller for offering a tertiary game to the players of the gaming machines within the set, said tertiary game including an option allowing a player of a gaming machine within the set to offer a bet to players of other gaming machines.

Preferably a stake for the bet is provide by all or a portion of the secondary game prize.

In another exemplary technique, there is provided a gaming method including the steps of:

providing a plurality of gaming machines, each of said gaming machines being capable of executing a primary game, each of said gaming machines being communicatively connectable to a central controller for the provision of a secondary game;

using the central controller to determine a set of winning gaming machines and to share a secondary game prize amongst the gaming machines within said set; and

using the central controller to provide an option at each of the gaming machines within the set to participate in a tertiary game.

In one exemplary technique, the tertiary game consists of a bet offered by a player of a gaming machine within the set to other players of other gaming machines. In another exemplary technique, the tertiary game consists of a bet offered by a player of a gaming machine within the set exclusively to other players of other gaming machines within the set.

Further aspects of the invention provide computer programs for causing a computer to implement a method as set out above, a data carrier carrying data representing such a computer program, a signal carrying data representing such a computer program, and a computer programmed to execute such a computer program.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Preferred embodiments of the invention will now be described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is a schematic view of a first gaming apparatus according to the invention;

Figure 2 is a schematic view of a second gaming apparatus according to the invention; and

Figure 3 is a flowchart illustrating a method of operating a gaming apparatus.

THE CLAIMS DEFINING THE INVENTION ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. An apparatus for controlling prize funds won by a user in a gaming system wherein a player is enabled to participate in a local game provided by a primary logic of the apparatus, a linked jackpot game provided by a linked jackpot controller, and a stake-based game provided by a stake-based game controller, the apparatus including:

a credit meter for storing data indicative of an amount of credit available to a user to be played on the local game;

a prize message receiver adapted to receive a message from the primary logic, the linked jackpot controller, or the stage-based game controller when it is determined that the user has won a prize in the local game, the linked jackpot game, or the stake-based game respectively;

a won funds meter configured to store data indicative of a value of funds won by the user in playing the local game, the linked jackpot game, or the stake-based game;

wherein the prize message receiver is configured to extract from the received message data indicative of the quantum of the prize won by the player, and a processor is configured to modify the data stored in the won funds meter to effect addition of the prize won to a previously stored value, such that the won funds meter represents funds which have been won by the user, rather than funds which have been added to the gaming machine credit meter;

a user input message receiver for receiving a message indicative of the user's desire to use at least a portion of the funds won by the user as a stake for the stake-based game, the stake-based game being distinct from the local game and the linked jackpot game; and

a stake-based game interface configured to communicate with the stake-based game controller, thereby to allow the portion of the funds won by the user to be used as a stake in the stake-based game.

2. An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the prize message receiver is adapted to receive a message from a linked jackpot game controller.

3. An apparatus according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the prize message receiver is adapted to receive a message from a local game controller.

4. An apparatus according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the prize message receiver is adapted to receive a message from a stake-based game controller.

5. An apparatus according to any of the preceding claims, further including:

a user input message receiver for receiving an indication of the user's desire to use at least a portion of the funds won as a stake for a stake-based game; and

a stake-based game interface responsive to the user input message receiver for communicating with a stake-based game controller.

6. An apparatus according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the credit meter is located in or adjacent a gaming machine operable by a user.

7. An apparatus according to claim 6, wherein the won funds meter is located in or adjacent the gaming machine.

8. An apparatus according to claim 6 or claim 7, wherein the gaming apparatus further includes a linked jackpot game controller, and the won funds memory is located in or adjacent the linked jackpot game controller.

9. Apparatus according to claim 8, wherein the linked jackpot game controller is remote from the gaming machine.

10. Apparatus according to any of claims 6 to 9, further including in or adjacent the gaming machine a user input device in communication with the user input message receiver.

11. Apparatus according to any of claims 6 to 10, wherein the stake-based game interface is located in or adjacent the gaming machine.

12. Apparatus according to any of the preceding claims, further including a payout device in communication with the user input device and responsive thereto to payout all or a user-selected amount of the won funds.

13. A computer-implemented method of providing a game in a gaming system wherein a player is enabled to participate in a local game provided by a primary logic of a local gaming

machine, a linked jackpot game provided by a linked jackpot controller, and a stake-based game provided by a stake-based game controller, the method including:

storing in a first computer memory location data indicative of an amount of credit available to a user to be played on the local game;

operating a prize message receiver adapted to receive a message from the primary logic, the linked jackpot controller, or the stage-based game controller when it is determined that the user has won a prize in the local game, the linked jackpot game, or the stake-based game respectively;

storing in a second computer memory location data indicative of the value of funds won by the user;

wherein the prize message receiver is configured to extract from the received message data indicative of the quantum of the prize won by the player, and a processor is configured to modify the data stored in the second computer memory location thereby to effect addition of the prize won to a previously stored value, such that the second computer memory location represents funds which have been won by the user, rather than data indicative of an amount of credit available to a user to be played on the local game;

when a prize is won by a user, operating a processor thereby to modify the data in the second computer memory location to augment the value of funds won by the quantum of the prize won;

wherein the funds stored in the second computer memory location are available as a stake in a stake-based game.

14. A gaming machine operable in a gaming system wherein a player is enabled to participate in a local game provided by a primary logic of the gaming machine, a linked jackpot game provided by a linked jackpot controller, and a stake-based game provided by a stake-based game controller, the gaming machine including:

a credit meter for storing data indicative of an amount of credit available to a user for play on a local game provided by the gaming machine;

a prize message receiver adapted to receive a message from the primary logic, the linked jackpot controller, or the stage-based game controller when it is determined that the user has won a prize in the local game, the linked jackpot game, or the stake-based game respectively;

a won funds meter for storing data indicative of the value of funds won by the user;

wherein the prize message receiver is configured to extract from the received message data indicative of the quantum of the prize won by the player, and a processor is configured to modify the data stored in the won funds meter to effect addition of the prize won to a previously stored value, such that the won funds meter represents funds which have been won by the user, rather than funds which have been added to the gaming machine credit meter; wherein the funds for which indicative data is stored in the won funds memory are available as a stake in a stake-based game.

15. A gaming network including:

a plurality of gaming machines, each gaming machine enabling a player to participate in a local game provided by the gaming machine, a linked jackpot game provided by a linked jackpot controller, and a stake-based game provided by a stake-based game controller, each gaming machine having:

a credit meter for storing data indicative of an amount of credit available to a user to be played on the local game, wherein prizes won on the primary game are added to the credit meter;

a won funds meter configured to store data indicative of a value of funds communicated to the gaming machine by the linked jackpot controller;

a linked jackpot game controller in communication with said gaming machines for providing a linked jackpot game having a linked jackpot game prize, the linked jackpot game controller being capable of determining a set of gaming machines and modifying the won funds memories of the gaming machines within the set so as to share the linked jackpot game prize amongst the gaming machines within the set; and

a stake-based game controller for offering a stake-based game to the players of the gaming machines within said set, wherein the stake-based game is played using a stake derived from the won funds memory.

16. A method including the steps of:

providing a plurality of gaming machines, each gaming machine enabling a player to participate in a local game provided by the gaming machine, a linked jackpot game provided by

a linked jackpot controller, and a stake-based game provided by a stake-based game controller, each gaming machine having:

a credit meter for storing data indicative of an amount of credit available to a user to be played on the local game, wherein prizes won on the primary game are added to the credit meter;

a won funds meter configured to store data indicative of a value of funds communicated to the gaming machine by the linked jackpot controller;

wherein each of said machines is communicatively connectable to a central controller for the provision of a linked jackpot game;

operating the central controller to determine a set of winning gaming machines and to share a linked jackpot game prize amongst the gaming machines within said set, such that each gaming machine within the set receives a share of the linked jackpot prize; and

operating the central controller to provide an option at each of the gaming machines within the set to participate in a stake-based game using their share of the linked jackpot game prize as a stake.

17. A method according to claim 16, wherein the stake-based game includes allowing a player of a gaming machine within the set to offer a bet to players of other gaming machines.

18. A method according to claim 16, wherein the stake-based game includes allowing a player of a gaming machine within the set to offer a bet to players of other gaming machines within the set.