

ONLINE COMPETITION SYSTEM, METHOD AND APPARATUS

BACKGROUND

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I. Field of Use

[001] The present application relates to the field of electronic leisure activities. More specifically, the present application relates to a system, method and apparatus for providing electronic, online competitions to players over a wide-area network such as the Internet.

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II. Description of the Related Art

[002] Online gambling is a huge, worldwide business. There are thousands, if not millions, of websites online today that allow people to create and fund accounts and place wagers on events such as horse racing, football games, or election outcomes, award show outcomes, etc. Other websites allow users to play casino games, using either “play” money or real money. Such websites typically utilize a computer system comprising an online server that processes user information such as account setup and funding, receipt of wagers, determining event outcomes, and providing payouts.

[003] Still other websites offer what is known as “pooled” wagering, which is a form of parimutuel wagering where gamblers pay a fixed price into a pool (from which a house “take” is removed), and then make a selection on an outcome, usually related to a sporting activity. The pool is then evenly divided between those that have made a correct selection. In some cases, such as horse racing, for example, odds may be assigned to potential outcomes and those who have made a correct selection split the pool, where each players’ payoff is based on the odds. Pooled wagering includes sports betting (i.e., “sports books”), horse racing, fantasy sports, office pools, lotteries, etc.

[004] Websites that offer either traditional or pooled wagering have several drawbacks. Primary among them is that neither type of wagering measures players’ predictive abilities over time. As such, there is no competitive component to inspire the players to participate in future wagering or pool events. Also, there is no way for players to truly compete against other players, because players who play for money are segregated from players who play for fun. Thus, such websites cannot determine which players overall are best at predicting

uncertain outcomes. Further, it is technically difficult to simultaneously generate and manage a large number of online competitions that relate to a wide variety of event types, such as sporting events, “real-life” events (such as elections or awards ceremonies), live or simulated casino games (such as blackjack, baccarat, baccarat+, poker, roulette, etc.).

5[005] It would be desirable, then, for a website to provide a variety of for-money as well as for-fun online competitions to determine who is best at predicting outcomes of uncertain events in order to incentivize players to enter such competitions, thereby generating more revenue for such online competition providers.

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SUMMARY

[006] The embodiments described herein relate to methods and apparatus for providing online competitions. In one embodiment, a competition server is described, comprising a communication interface, a memory for storing processor-executable instructions, a
15 processor coupled to the communication interface and the memory, for executing the processor-executable instructions that causes the competition server to generate, by the processor, one or more online competitions based on one or more future events, each of the one or more future events having one or more uncertain outcomes, each online competition for allowing the online competitors to compete against each other online to determine
20 which online competitors are best at predicting the one or more uncertain outcomes of the one or more future events, provide, by the processor via the communication interface, the one or more online competitions to the online competitors via a wide-area network, receive, by the processor via the communication interface, requests from a plurality of the online players to enter a first online competition of the one or more online competitions and one
25 or more predictions of the one or more uncertain outcomes, receive, by the processor via the communication interface, a first actual outcome of the one or more events, identify, by the processor, a first online competition of the one or more online competitions to apply the first actual outcome, rank, by the processor, the plurality of the online competitors based on each online competitor’s ability to successfully predict the first actual outcome
30 and provide, by the processor via the communication interface, the rank of at least some of

the online competitors to the online competitors via the wide-area network as the one or more future events occur.

[007] In another embodiment a method is described, performed by an online competition server, for providing online competitions to online competitors, the method comprising
5 generating one or more online competitions based on one or more future events, each of the one or more future events having one or more uncertain outcomes, each online competition for allowing the online competitors to compete against each other online to determine which online competitors are best at predicting the one or more uncertain outcomes of the one or more future events, providing the one or more online competitions
10 to the online competitors via a wide-area network, receiving requests from a plurality of the online players to enter a first online competition of the one or more online competitions and one or more predictions of the one or more uncertain outcomes, receiving a first actual outcome of the one or more events, identifying a first online competition of the one or more online competitions to apply the first actual outcome, ranking the plurality of the online
15 competitors based on each online competitor's ability to successfully predict the first actual outcome and providing the rank of at least some of the online competitors to the online competitors via the wide-area network as the one or more future events occur..

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

20 [008] The features, advantages, and objects of the present invention will become more apparent from the detailed description as set forth below, when taken in conjunction with the drawings in which like referenced characters identify correspondingly throughout, and wherein:

25 [009] FIG. 1 illustrates one embodiment of a system for providing online competitions each based upon one or more future events having one or more uncertain outcomes;

[010] FIG. 2 illustrates a functional block diagram of one embodiment of a competition sever used in the system of FIG. 1;

[011] FIGs. 3A-3C represent a flow diagram illustrating one embodiment of a method,
30 performed the competition server shown in FIGs. 1 and 2, for providing online competitions to online competitors;

[012] FIGs. 4A and 4B represent a flow diagram illustrating another embodiment of a method, performed the competition server shown in FIGs. 1 and 2, for providing online competitions to online competitors; and

[013] FIGs. 5A and 5B represent a flow diagram illustrating yet another embodiment of a method, performed by the competition server shown in FIGs. 1 and 2, for providing one or more “one-hand”, “one round” or, more generally, “singular”, competitions to potential online competitors.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

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[014] Embodiments of the present invention relate to a system, methods and apparatus for providing online competitions related to future events each having one or more uncertain outcomes. Online competitions are contests that determine which players are best at predicting one or more uncertain outcomes of one or more future events, but do not involve wagering on the event itself. For example, an online competition may be provided that determines who is best at predicting the winner of a series of horse races separately from another system that may allow direct wagering on which horses will win the races. Thus, online competitions as described herein operate wholly separately from direct wagering opportunities that may exist on events themselves. In one embodiment described herein, online competitions may be automatically provided by a competition server coupled to a wide-area network, such as the Internet, based on event data from an unrelated source, such as a third-party data provider server, a sports-betting data service, a casino, a racetrack, etc. An “online competition” may be referred to herein as a “competition engine” when referring to processor-executable instructions for conducting an online competition.

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[015] Embodiments of the present invention allow for simultaneously generating and managing a large number of online competitions that relate to a wide variety of event types, such as sporting events, “real-life” events (such as elections or awards ceremonies), live or simulated casino games (such as blackjack, baccarat, baccarat+, poker, roulette, etc.). In live or simulated events especially, embodiments of the present invention allow rapid, “singular” competitions to be created and managed based on rapid sub-events such as each hand of a card game, each spin of a roulette wheel, each play of a football game, etc.

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[016] FIG. 1 illustrates one embodiment of a system **100** for providing online competitions, each based upon one or more future events having one or more uncertain outcomes. Shown is competition server **102**, third-party data provider server **104**, event source(s) **106**, user device **108**, user device **110**, wide-area network **112** and online gaming
5 server **114**.

[017] An “event” may comprise one of a sporting event (such as one or more football games, soccer games, baseball games, either singular, multiple or an entire season of play), a spectator event (such as horse racing or dog racing), a tournament (such as a poker or slots tournament, a soccer tournament, etc.), an election, an awards show, a reality show, a
10 casino game (such as roulette, craps, slots, blackjack, baccarat, etc.), or any activity having at least one uncertain outcome. Events may comprise a singular activity, such as a single round of cards, a single horse race, a single at-bat in a baseball game, a “down” in a football game, or events may comprise multiple, singular activities, such as in the case of tournaments where multiple rounds of play occur (i.e., poker, blackjack, baccarat or other
15 card games, slots, sporting events, etc.), an entire season of play in any sport, an award show where multiple awards are given, etc.

[018] Competition server **102** comprises one or more cloud-based computer servers configured to provide online competitions to players via wide-area network **112**. In some embodiments, competition server **102** comprises a “serverless database” offered by well-
20 known cloud-based computational and data storage companies. For example, DynamoDB is a NoSQL cloud-native database, fully managed and supported by Amazon Web Services (AWS). Google offers the Google store cloud and the NoSQL option Firebase real-time database. Other serverless databases include FaunaDB, MongoDB's Atlas (Db-as-a-Service tool), and Aurora Serverless. A serverless database may be built based on the same
25 principles that a distributed system operates on. They avoid instances of single-point failures. Serverless databases exist in such a manner that if one operation in one region fails, the available region takes up operations. A core design of these databases is scalable availability, giving room for failure to occur. The databases are designed to scale on the demand of the workload. Throughout the remainder of this disclosure, reference to
30 competition server **102** shall comprise a single computer server, multiple computer servers and/or a distributed computing system as described above.

[019] Online competitions may be differentiated from traditional wagering in that online competitions pit two or more online competitors, or groups of competitors, against each other to determine prediction rates among the online competitors, i.e., who is best at predicting outcomes, rather than playing against a “house entity”, such as a casino or an online wagering service such as Unibet Interactive Inc. of New York, NY, in order to win money or points. For example, in a match between team A and team B, an online competition between two or more online competitors may determine which competitors are better at predicting the outcome of the match. On the other hand, in a match between team A and team B, an online casino may accept wagers from online competitors, each wager predicting that either team A or team B will win. Winners may receive a value payout, i.e., money or cryptocurrency from the casino, but generally, the casino does not track the predictive results of the players over time or compare the predictive results of each player against other players.

[020] In some embodiments, online competitions may comprise a series of related, future events over time, each future event having an uncertain outcome. Examples of this include an online competition to see which players are best at predicting the results of each NFL football game played on a particular day, an online competition to see which players are best at predicting a baseball team’s results over an entire season, an online competition to see which players are best at predicting a college basketball team’s results over an entire season, an online competition to see which players are best at predicting each round of a poker tournament, etc. Such online competitions can, again, be differentiated from traditional wagering in that such online competitions focus on a success rate over the course of the series of future events versus predicting which of a number of teams, for example, will win a seasonal competition, such as the World Series®, March Madness®, or the Super Bowl®.

[021] Online competitions may comprise a number of different competition types, such as “amusement” or “social” competitions that do not require anything of value, such as money, to enter, and “value” or “real money” competitions that require something of value, such as money or cryptocurrency, as an entrance fee to participate. In some embodiments, social competitions may offer competitors the ability to win a prize of value.

[022] Online competitions may comprise a contest style, such as:

- [023] 1) Beat $[n]$ - a competition with $[n]$ competitors. In order to win, a competitor must beat the other $[n]$ players. The number of competitors that the winner needs to beat may be configurable. For example, in a Beat 10 competition, a total of 11 competitors are allowed to enter, where the winner must best 10 competitors to win the competition.
- 5[024] 2) Head-to-Head (H2H) - a competition with 2 competitors and 1 winner. The competition may be single or multi-level. A competitor may comprise a group of competitors, i.e., all members of Team A fans vs. all members of Team B fans.
- [025] 3) Place in Top $[x]$ Percent - a competition where competitors that place in the top $[x]$ percent win. The percent may be configurable. For example, in a Pays Top 30%
10 competition, competitors in the top 30% split a prize pool.
- [026] 4) Place in Top $[x]$ - a competition where competitors that place in the top number of competitors win. The top number of competitors may be configurable. For example, in a Place in Top 10 competition, the top 10 players of the competition split a prize pool equal to all entry fees received from all competitors of the Top 10 competition, less a
15 management fee for offering the Top 10 competition.
- [027] Competitions may comprise either “single-level” competitions or “multi-level” competitions. In single-level competitions, a prize is typically awarded at the conclusion of a contest. Multi-level competitions comprise multiple achievement levels, where competitors may advance to a subsequent level by achieving a certain, minimum prediction
20 level or rate, and a prize may be awarded at the conclusion of a final, or top, achievement level. Players generally enter such multi-level competitions on a bottom level and try to win their way to the finals or, in some embodiments, may enter a multi-level competition on a higher level by paying an entry fee. In some embodiments, there may be no limit placed on the number of times a competitor may enter a particular achievement level, with
25 the exception of a final achievement level.
- [028] Some competitions may be time limited. For example, a social, head-to-head Baccarat+ competition may be offered to 2 players to see who is best at predicting the results of multiple rounds of a Baccarat+ game over a 30 minute timeframe, and the winner is awarded a token.
- 30[029] In some embodiments, each competition will have an entry cut-off time and the entry cut-off may vary based on each competition. When the cut-off time is reached,

competition server **102** generally does not allow any more competitors to enter a competition. Entry cut-off may occur when a predetermined maximum number of competition entrants has been reached, at a predetermined time before a competition begins (i.e., 10 seconds before a competition begins), or when it is no longer possible for new participants to achieve a particular outcome, such as to play a certain number of rounds within the remaining time left in the competition. For example, at 8:45 PM CT, a player wants to enter an Advantage Baccarat competition, requiring 24 hands played to be eligible for consideration in the payout, which ends at 9 PM CT. With there being 15 minutes remaining in the competition, the competition server **102** would not allow the player to enter because, 24 hands cannot be played in the time remaining until the end of the competition. In this embodiment, competition server **102** may perform running calculations as a contest progresses towards an end time or end result, calculating the maximum number of rounds of play left, based on actual or predetermined averages on how long each round of play takes.

15[030] Each participant in system **100** may be awarded an initial number of non-value contest points when they create an account with competition server **102**, when a participant enters a competition, or at some other point. Contest points may be used as in-game “currency” by participants to enter social competitions to place a stake on an outcome. The number of contest points awarded in any particular competition may vary based on the competition and may be configurable. Some competitions may require a fixed number of contest points to continue each round of a competition, such as 10 points per round in a competition based on a poker tournament. In some embodiments, contest points awarded for one particular contest may not be used in another contest, nor be shared among participants. Competition server **102** may track each participants’ contest points and may use the contest points to create and update leaderboards.

[031] Competition server **102** may rank participant performance based on the number of contest points and/or value won for each competition, and/or overall for all or a subset of competitions offered by competition server **102**. In another embodiment, competition server **102** may rank participants based on each participant’s “prediction score”, for example, in one embodiment, a “percent gain”. The percent gain is a calculation of a number of competition points, and/or value, won divided by competition points, and/or

value, played. To calculate a participant's percent gain for a given round of play or competition, competition server **102** multiplies a net amount of competition points won in a round or competition by 100 and divides that amount by the amount of the stake (i.e., the number of competition points and/or value needed to enter the round or competition):

5[032] *Percent gain = 100 * Net Points/Value Gain / Stake*

[033] A "Net Points/Value Gain" is the total amount of competition points and/or value won or lost minus the competition points and/or value needed to enter the round or competition:

[034] *Net Points/Value Gain = Points/Value Won or Lost - Stake*

10[035] The number of competition points and/or value won or lost in each round or competition may be dependent on odds associated with each round of play or competition:

[036] $\text{Win} = \text{Stake} * \text{Odds} * 1$

[037] $\text{Loss} = \text{Stake} * \text{Odds} * -1$

[038] So, the complete formula is:

15[039] *Percent Gain = 100 * (Points Won or Lost - Stake) / Stake*

[040] **Example 1:** A player wagers 100 points on a play with 1.5 odds and wins. His percent gain is 50% ($50/100 = 50\%$).

[041] *Full formula: $[100 * ((1.5 * 100 * 1) - 100)] / 100$*

[042] **Example 2:** Another player wagers 100 points on a play with 1.5 odds and loses.
20 His percent gain is -100%. ($-100/100 = -100\%$)

[043] *Full formula: $[100 * ((1.5 * 100 * -1) - 100)] / 100$*

[044] **Example 3:** The player in Example 2 wagers another 100 points on a bet with 1.5 odds and wins. His percent gain is now -25% ($(-100+50)/200 = -25\%$).

[045] Competition server **102** may provide information associated with each competition
25 to potential competitors online, i.e., by posting such information on a website or by making such information available via an app installed on potential competitors' mobile devices. Such information may comprise one or more of a number of achievement levels in each competition, entry fees if any, a minimum number of entrants, the actual number of entrants, date/time that a final achievement level will start, the time remaining to enter a
30 level or competition, a payout calculator, odds, etc.

[046] Competition server **102** may provide a participation status to each participant. For example, competition server may provide a “contest slip”, i.e., a listing of a participant’s status in a number of competitions, such as a listing of each competition that a participant is currently entered, other contests that a participant has chosen for possible participation
5 later (such potential competitions automatically removed from the list by competition server **102** if the participant has yet to enter such potential competitions by the cut-off time), a listing of competitions that have been entered by the participant but have not yet begun (each listing may comprise a hyperlink allowing the participant to actively participate in a competition), and a listing of resolved competitions that had been entered by the participant
10 and canceled and/or completed (each listing may comprise a hyperlink allowing the participant to view their play history and a final leaderboard for each completed competition).

[047] In one embodiment, online competitions may be automatically generated by competition server **102**. In this embodiment, competition server **102** may receive
15 indications of future events and associated event data, the event data comprising attributes of the future events. For example, competition server **102** may receive an initial event identifier from third-party data provider server **104** identifying a professional football game and event data comprising a date and time that the professional football game will begin, the names of the two teams competing in the game, and a point spread and/or odds
20 indicating which of the two teams are favored to win and by how much. Each event identifier may identify a particular future event, such as one or more pulls of a slot machine, one or more rounds of a card game, one or more horse races, one or more car races, one or more other sporting events such as one or more baseball games, rugby games, soccer games, etc., One or more “real-life” events, such as an election, a game show, a social
25 media event, a reality television show, etc., or one or more “entertainment” events, such as the Grammys[®], the Oscars[®], and the Emmys[®], and sub-events thereof, such as a category in an entertainment event, such as “best picture”, “best new artist”, “best comedy”, etc. In general, an event identifier may identify any future event or series of events each having an uncertain outcome.

30[048] In response to receiving an initial event identifier and the associated event data, competition server **102** may automatically generate one or more online competitions. For

example, if an initial event identifier comprises a soccer match between team A and team B occurring on a particular, future date, competition server **102** may automatically construct an online competition to see which online competitors are best at selecting the winner of the soccer match. For example, competition server **102** may automatically generate and post on a web page a notification that an online competition is available for players to participate in association with the soccer match between team A and team B. Online competitors may enter the online competition by submitting either a “entry fee” or an “amusement amount”, and a prediction of which team will win the soccer match. An “entry fee” comprises a monetary amount set by competition server **102** in order to participate in the online competition, such as a fixed amount of money, cryptocurrency, etc. An “amusement amount” comprises a number of points, credits, coupons, etc. that typically have no monetary value. Online competitions requiring entry fees may pool the entry fees and distribute the entry fees among top competitors. Other online competitions do not require an entry fee to participate, or require a particular number of non-value points, credits, coupons, etc. in order to participate, where online competitions are played for fun, rather than for financial gain. In these non-value competitions, competition server **102** may pool non-value credits, points, etc. and distribute the non-value credits, points, etc. among top competitors. In some embodiments, competition server **102** may offer online competitions that require either an entry fee or an amusement amount to enter (i.e., allows playing for value as well as for fun), as explained more fully later herein.

[049] Competition server **102** generally tracks the prediction results of online competitors for each competition, sometimes referred to herein as “prediction scores”, and in the case of a series of future events, over time. The results may be ranked in accordance with a predictive success rate of each player and the results are provided to the online competitors, or in accordance with each competitor’s percent gain. For example, competition server **102** may track the prediction results of 10 online competitors who have entered an online competition to determine which player is best at predicting final outcomes between multiple soccer games played in a particular soccer league over a particular time period, such as an entire season. The 10 online competitors enter the competition, in this example, without having to provide an entry fee. After each soccer game has been played, competition server **102** receives the results of each game, typically via third-party data

provider server **104**, determines which players successfully predicted each outcome, and ranks each of the 10 online competitors based on their prediction results. The rankings may be arranged into a “leaderboard”, listing players sequentially based on their predictive successes. For example, a player who correctly predicted 8 results of the first 10 games of the season would be ranked #1, followed by a player who correctly predicted 7 results of the first 10 games, etc. After the 11th game of the season has been played, competition server **102** receives the final result of the 11th game, determines which players correctly predicting the final result, and re-ranks the player standings accordingly.

[050] In general, leaderboards are a means for players to see how their predictive performance compares to others across multiple dimensions, such as by contest participation, by geographic location, by team affiliation (i.e., individuals as part of a team), etc. Multiple leaderboards may be generated and updated by competition server **102**. For example, competition server **102** may generate and update a leaderboard for each competition as each competition occurs. In addition, competition server **102** may additionally create and update leaderboards ranking leagues, teams, or other groups of participants in association with each other. In addition, competition server **102** may create and update leaderboards based on individual participant rankings overall (i.e., using all competitions entered by each competitor), or by parameters such as geographic location (i.e., neighborhood, town/city, state/province, country, continent, world, etc.), occupation, club affiliation, influencers followed, etc.) As players provide more information about themselves and their interests to competition server **102**, they may be added to relevant leaderboards. For example, an engineer who supports the Chelsea football team in the United Kingdom who went to Ohio State University and follows influencer David Beckham may be included in 20 or more leaderboards:

25[051] All players in his neighborhood, town/city, state/province, country, continent, and world

[052] Chelsea supporters in his neighborhood, town/city, state/province, country, continent, and world

[053] Engineers in his neighborhood, town/city, state/province, country, continent, and world
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[054] Ohio State University supporters in his neighborhood, town/city, state/province, country, continent, and world

[055] David Beckham followers in his neighborhood, town/city, state/province, country, continent, and world

5[056] Etc.

[057] In one embodiment, competition server **102** may only allow access to individual rankings to which a player belongs. For example, competition server **102** may not allow a player located in Liverpool, UK to see any London-based rankings.

[058] In one embodiment, players are grouped by competition server **102** into tiers and, 10 in some embodiment, sub-tiers based on, in one embodiment, each player's relevant percent gain. In one embodiment, five tiers are defined and their distributions, from top to bottom, are:

[059] Diamond: 6.7%

[060] Platinum: 24.2%

15[061] Gold: 38.2%

[062] Silver: 24.2%

[063] Bronze: 6.7%

[064] Sub-tiers are collections of up to a predefined number of players, for example **100** players, within each tier. In this example, competition server **102** places the top **100** players 20 in the first level, first sub-tier (e.g., Diamond 1) and the next **100** are placed in the next sub-tier (e.g., Diamond 2) and so on. Players move between tiers as their performance warrants.

[065] In addition to being used to determine the results of contests, competition server **102** may use the percent gain to also determine players' ranking among tiers and sub-tiers. 25 Competition server **102** typically updates each leaderboard as new results of competitions are processed.

[066] As mentioned previously, competition server **102** may create and update leaderboards based on team results. In one embodiment, for each team matchup, the team with the higher average percent gain of qualifying players wins. A "qualified player" is one 30 whose percent gain ranks above a predetermined threshold, such as 50%. Players may see

how their respective teams have fared in matchups compared to others by viewing the team results leaderboard.

[067] Via leaderboards, competition server **102** may provide additional information, such as ranking individual players against others on the same team, showing a previous week's results between a player's team and their opponent, ranking teams by where they currently stand within each division, and scores for the current or previous week(s) of all matchups between the various teams in each league.

[068] In some embodiments, competition server **102** may create and maintain a global leaderboard, sometimes referred to herein as an "All-Play Leaderboard", associated with a specific event or multiple events. This may include play from all social and value single-level competitions associated with an event or multiple events. In some embodiments, competition server **102** includes play from multi-level competitions that are associated with the event. Competition server **102** may additionally create and maintain leaderboards that include results of value competitions, and other leaderboards that include results of social competitions. Competitors may view their ranking in such a leaderboard by time (i.e., daily, weekly, monthly, yearly), by competition, etc.

[069] Competition server **102** may organize leagues to take advantage of existing rivalries and encourage competition between players. Players may be grouped by competition server **102** by their elective affiliations, such as by geographic location, by one or more sports or other clubs supported by each player, by occupation, by influencers/sports stars/media stars supported by each player, by a university or college attended by some players, by a company or corporation that each player works for, etc. When a player provides his or her affiliations during, for example, a registration process, competition server **102** may include the player as a member of each affiliation, where the player may choose to compete along with other members against supporters of other affiliations.

[070] "Club Supporter" competitions may be generated by competition server **102** in accordance with existing football league schedules, for example, i.e., when Liverpool plays Arsenal in the English Premier League, competition server **102** may generate a competition between any Liverpool and Arsenal Club supporters, inviting only players who belong to each club to participate. Competition server **102** may receive such club schedules via third-part data provider server **104** and/or online gaming server **114**. In one embodiment, in each

competition, the group with the higher weighted average percent gain of qualifying players wins. A "qualified player" may be defined as one who has 1) made a minimum number of plays or participated in a minimum number of hands and 2) whose percent gain ranks among a predefined, top percentage, such as 50%, in their elected affiliations. In some
5 embodiments, competition server **102** allows both value play and social play in club supporter competitions.

[071] Competition server **102** receives actual outcomes of the events as the events occur over time, i.e., during the course of a particular game, over the course of a day, week, month, sports season, etc., including any actual, final outcomes. The actual outcomes are
10 received by competition server **102** via wide-area network **112** from third-party data provider server **104** and/or online gaming server **114**. Competition server **102** typically continues to update the rankings based on the predictive successes of the players. Competition server **102** may provide updates of the rankings to the online competitors via, for example, a website, text messages, emails, an app running on competitors' mobile
15 devices, etc. At the end of the season, after a final game has been played, any entry fees that were received may be apportioned to one or more of the top-ranked players who placed an entry fee, typically minus a small percentage as a fee for operating competition server **102**. Either entry fees and/or amusement amounts may be apportioned. For example, if all
20 10 players provided an entry fee in order to participate in the competition, competition server **102** may split the total amount of value received from the entry fees amongst the top three players. In an example where the online competition accepted both entry fees and amusement amounts, 4 players entered the online competition with amusement amounts and 6 players entered by providing an entry fee, and the top 4 players comprised 3 who entered via an entry fees and one who entered via an amusement amount, competition
25 server **102** may apportion one third of the total value received from the 6 players who entered via entry fees to the top 3 players and provide a credit to the player who entered the competition via an amusement amount, in an amount equal to the amusement amount received from the 4 amusement players. In one embodiment, competition server **102** may track the results of online competitors who placed entry fees separately from online
30 competitors who placed amusement amounts.

[072] In general, competition server **102** may provide online competitions based on any underlying future event. In some embodiments, competition server **102** receives information pertaining to future events from third-party data provider server **104**, typically a server that is not associated with competition server **102**, i.e., third-party data provider server **104** is owned, operated, and/or maintained by an entity different than an entity that owns, operates, and/or maintains competition server **102**. In one embodiment, third-party data provider server **104** comprises a network-based computer server that provides event information, such as an identification of future events, odds or points spreads, and event outcomes, to competition server **102** via wide-area network **112**. Such a server may be operated by providers of raw sporting event information, such as betradar.com, which provides identifications of future sporting events, odds and/or point spreads, and game outcomes. In other embodiments, third-party data provider server **104** comprises a gaming server that manages online wagering for sporting events and/or online casino gaming, such as online poker, slots, blackjack, etc. An example of such servers are servers associated with casinos, such as MGM (<https://promo.nj.betmgm.com/en/promo/geolocator?orh=casino.betmgm.com>), Caesars online casino and sportsbook (<https://www.caesarscasino.com>), etc., or servers associated with particular gaming types, such as servers associated with, for example, PokerStars.com (for online poker). In the case where third-party data provider server **104** comprises a gaming server, competition server **102** provides online competitions “on top of” the wagering opportunities offered directly by such a gaming server. In other words, a gaming server may provide everything that is needed to conduct online wagering for a variety of events, including player account set up, player account management, gameplay, outcome determination, and payouts, and competition server **102** provides online competitions for the same, and/or different, people based on the results of such events, independent of the results of wagers placed with the gaming server.

[073] In some embodiments, event source(s) **106** provides event information such as sporting activity results, real-life event results, and/or entertainment event results, typically on a real-time or near-real-time basis, to third-party data provider server **104** via wide-area network **112** in order for third-party data provider server **104** to format the event information and provide the formatted event information to other entities, including

competition server **102** and one or more third-party online gaming servers **114** via wide-area network **112**. In other embodiments, competition server **102** may receive formatted event information from one or more third-party online gaming servers **114**. For example, the event information may comprise ongoing results of an in-person poker tournament being conducted at a particular casino. Online gaming server **114** may comprise a network-based computer server for hosting online wagering for sporting events and/or casino-type games, such as online blackjack, slots, poker, etc., and is well-known in the art. Event source(s) **106** may comprise a computer, a digital video camera, a smart phone, or any other device that can provide information pertaining to one or more events to third-party data provider server **104** via wide-area network **112**. In some embodiments, event source(s) **106** may provide event data directly to competition server **102** via wide-area network **112**.

[074] User devices **108** and **110** are used by online competitors to receive information pertaining to current and future online competitions, to enter one or more of the competitions using entry fees and/or amusement amounts, to view competition results, leaderboards and other functions related to online competitions. In some embodiments, user devices **108** and **110** execute a mobile software application or “app” that allows the aforementioned functionality. It should be understood that while only two user devices are shown in FIG. 1, in practice, many thousands, or even millions, of user devices may be used in system **100**. Examples of user devices **108** and **110** comprise smart phones, laptop or desktop computers, wearable devices such as smart watches, etc.

[075] FIG. 2 illustrates a functional block diagram of one embodiment of competition sever **102**. Specifically, FIG. 2 shows processor **200**, memory **202**, communication interface **204**, and optional user interface **206**. It should be understood that the functional blocks shown in FIG. 2 may be connected to one another in a variety of ways, and that not all functional blocks necessary for operation of competition server **102** are shown (such as a power supply) for purposes of clarity.

[076] Processor **200** comprises one or more computer processors for providing general operation of competition server **102** by executing processor-executable instructions stored in memory **202**, for example, executable code. Processor **200** is typically a general purpose processor, such as any one of a number of Pentium® class microprocessors manufactured by Intel Corporation of Santa Clara, California.

[077] Memory **202** is coupled to processor **200**, comprising one or more non-transitory information storage devices, such as RAM, ROM, EEPROM, UVPRM, flash memory, CD, DVD, Memory Stick, SD memory, XD memory, thumb drive, or virtually any other type of memory device. Memory **202** is used to store the processor-executable instructions
5 for operation of competition sever **102** as well as any information used by processor **200**, such as competition engines, player account information, competition results, leaderboards, entry fees, amusement amounts, etc.

[078] Communication interface **204** comprises circuitry necessary for processor **200** to communicate over one or more communication networks, such as data networks (such as
10 the Internet), television networks, satellite networks, cellular networks, etc. Such circuitry is well known in the art.

[079] Optional user interface **206** may be coupled to processor **200** that allows access to information stored in memory **202**, as well as to provide updates to this information and/or to the processor-executable instructions, and to load new competition engines into
15 competition sever **102**. User interface **206** may comprise one or more pushbuttons, switches, sensors, touchscreens, keypads, keyboards, ports, network interfaces, and/or microphones that generate electronic or voice signals for use by processor **200** upon initiation by a user. User interface **206** may additionally comprise one or more seven-segment displays, cathode ray tubes (CRT), liquid crystal displays (LCD), or any other type
20 of visual display for display of information to users. Of course, the aforementioned items could be used alone or in combination with each other and other devices may be alternatively, or additionally, used. User interface **206** may be used, for example, by an administrator to update competition engines, to load new competition engines, to manually manage user account information, or for any other reason.

25[080] FIG. **3** is a flow diagram illustrating one embodiment of a method, performed by competition server **102**, for providing online competitions to online competitors over network **112**. It should be understood that the steps described in this method could alternatively be performed in an order other than what is shown and discussed and that minor steps may have been omitted for purposes of clarity.

30[081] At block **300**, processor **200** may receive account creation information from a plurality of online, potential competitors via wide-area network **112** and communication

interface **204**, such as a name, address, email address, phone number, security credentials (such as a username and password, biometric information, etc.), payment information (such as a credit card number), as is well-known in the art. The account information may further comprise “affiliation information” such as one or more favorite sports teams, favorite sports figures, favorite social media influencers, favorite actors or actresses, an occupation of a potential competitor, a name of an employer of a potential competitor, a name of a college or university attended by a potential competitor, or some other personal information of a potential competitor. Processor **200**, in response to receiving the account creation information and affiliation information, may create an account for each potential competitor, storing the account information and any affiliation information for each potential competitor in memory **202**.

[082] At block **302**, processor **200** may assign potential competitors to one or more “teams” and/or “leagues”, based on the account information and/or the affiliation information provided by each potential competitor. Examples of teams or leagues include “location”, “sports/club”, “occupation”, “social influencer/sports stars/media stars”, “university/college”, “company”. For example, processor **200** may associate all potential competitors from the United States with a “location” league and a “team” of the United States (similarly, a town, city, state, province or other geographic location could be used). As another example, processor **200** may associate all potential competitors who are a fan of a baseball team, “Team A”, with a “Baseball” league and a “team” of Team A.

[083] At block **304**, competition server **102** may be programmed with one or more online competitions, each online competition comprising processor-executable instructions for processor **200** to offer a particular online competition related to a particular event or series of events having at least one uncertain outcome. Each online competition may be tailored to a particular event, such as an online competition related to a single “hand” or “round of play” of a card game, a slot pull, a roulette spin, or other table and/or casino game, a single event in a sporting event (such as the result of a baseball pitch (i.e., ball, strike, wild pitch, hit, single, double, triple, home run, etc., a play in football game (i.e., run, pass, touchdown, field goal, etc.), an online competition related to a particular basketball game, an online competition related to a season of baseball games, an online competition related to a particular awards ceremony, an online competition related to a particular poker tournament,

etc. An event may also comprise a sub-event of any of the foregoing, such as an inning of baseball, a quarter or half of a football game, one or more statistics of individual players during a game or cumulatively, etc. As an example, competition server **102** may be loaded with an online competition related to a World Series of Poker tournament held at Binion's
5 Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada on August 3, 2021, having 100 players listed as taking part of the tournament. The online competition is configured to determine who is best at predicting the overall winner of the tournament. In yet another example, an online competition may be configured to determine who is best at predicting an overall winner of an NFL football season or other sporting culmination.

10[084] In any case, processor **200** may associate one or more identifiers to each online competition created, so that when actual outcomes associated with an event are received via communication interface **204** and wide-area network **112** from online gaming server **114** or third-party data provider server **104**, the actual outcomes can be applied to the correct online competition(s). For example, processor **200** may create two online
15 competitions related to the same event, such as a first online competition to determine who is best at predicting the winner of a baseball game and a second online competition to determine which online competitors are best at predicting the total points scored in the baseball game. Processor **200** may assign a first identifier to both online competitions, identifying the particular baseball game, for example, by date/time and/or team names,
20 and/or or some other identifier, such as an alpha-numeric code provided by online gaming server **114** or third-party data provider server **104**.

[085] At block **306**, competition server **102** may be programmed with one or more competition engines (i.e., computer code), each for generating automated online competitions as a result of processor **200** receiving initial event identifiers and associated
25 event data of future events having at least one uncertain outcome. Each competition engine may be tailored to a particular event type, such as a first competition engine for automatically creating online competitions related to baseball games, a second competition engine for automatically creating online competitions related to football games, a third competition engine for automatically creating online competitions for poker tournaments,
30 a fourth competition engine for automatically creating online competitions for slot tournaments, a fifth competition engine for automatically creating online competitions

based on one or more “hands” or “rounds of play” of a card game, a slot pull, a roulette spin, or other table and/or casino game, etc. Each competition engine may be configured to request one or more predictions from online competitors based on the event type. For example, a competition engine configured for automatically creating online competitions

5 related to football games may be configured to request predictions from online competitors regarding how many points will be scored, how many touchdowns will be scored, and who will win the game. In another example, a competition engine configured for automatically creating online competitions related to baseball games may be configured to request predictions from online competitors regarding the number of balls, strikes, hits, runs,

10 errors, etc. that occur during a game of baseball. Other competition engines are executed by processor **200** to manage other online competitions related to other types of events, such as soccer games, basketball games, games of chance such as blackjack, roulette, poker, and/or real-life events such as awards shows, elections, etc. In each case, each competition engine is typically pre-configured with a plurality of prediction requests based on the event

15 type. For example, for a baseball game, a competition engine may be pre-programmed with 50 prediction requests, such as “who will win the game?”, “how many runs will be scored?”, “how many home runs will be hit?”, etc. In a poker game, a competition engine may be pre-programmed with 20 prediction requests, such as “who will win the game/tournament?”, “how many full houses will occur?”, etc. Processor **200** may select a

20 sub-set of prediction requests or provide all of them to potential competitors online via communication interface **204** and wide-area network **112**. In general, a single competition engine for automatically creating online competitions may create multiple competitions, each competition related to a particular event type.

[086] Generally, for each online competition created by processor **200**, processor **200**

25 may associate one or more identifiers to each online competition created, to apply actual outcomes associated with an event to one or more online competitions associated with the event, as explained earlier herein.

[087] When processor **200** receives an initial event identifier from online gaming server **114** or third-party data provider server **104** that identifies, for example, a particular baseball

30 game that will be played on a particular date in the future between team A and team B, processor **200** identifies the event as a baseball game from the initial event identifier and,

in response, automatically generates an online competition to determine who can best predict one or more outcomes of the particular baseball game, in some embodiments, based on the pre-programmed prediction requests.

[088] In some embodiments, processor **200** may automatically create a number of online competitions, each online competition related to the same event, but having different entry criteria. For example, upon receiving a new event identifier and associated event information related to an upcoming soccer game, processor **200** may create five online competitions, each online competition having a different entry criteria needed in order to participate, for example, \$1, \$5, \$10, \$20, and \$50 in the case of real-money competitions, or 5 credits, 10 credits, 25 credits, 50 credits and 100 credits in the case of competitions played for amusement purposes.

[089] Each online competition that is automatically generated allows online competitors to join a competition, either for financial gain, for amusement purposes or both, enter online competitors into a competition upon request, track each online competitors' prediction results during and/or after an event related to the online competition, view rankings of competitors based on their predictive abilities via one or more leaderboards and provide payouts or distributions to players who entered competitions for financial gain and/or for amusement purposes, respectively.

[090] At block **308**, either after an online competition has been loaded into competition server **102**, and/or after processor **200** has automatically created a new online competition as a result of receiving a new event identifier and associated event information, processor **200** may post an indication of availability of the online competition to potential online competitors, typically via a website that may be accessed by thousands or millions of potential online competitors, or by making such information available to an app running on competitors' mobile devices. Typically, such a website/app allows online competitors to create accounts and enter one or more online competitions, based on financial or amusement purposes, as described below. Each online competition may be listed and described in terms of an event type, team or individual names involved in each event, an entry fee or points/credits needed to enter the competition (or simply no entry fee or points/credits needed at all), and other information as provided by the event data. In some

embodiments, competition server **102** maintains a website for allowing account creation, participating in online competitions and viewing ranking results.

[091] At block **310**, processor **200** may begin to receive requests from online competitors to enter one or more particular online competitions via wide-area network **112** and communication interface **204** from user devices **108** who have chosen to participate in a particular online competition that requires an entry fee, i.e., an online competition that allows online competitors to compete against other online competitors for financial gain, i.e., monetary value such as money, cryptocurrency, etc. For example, an online player may enter an online competition for \$100, 1 Bitcoin, etc., with a prediction that Team A will win more games than Team B over the course of a season. If a player's prediction is correct, in this example, more than \$100, 1 Bitcoin, etc., will be returned to the online player who entered the online competition. If the prediction turns out to be incorrect, the online player loses the \$100, 1 Bitcoin, etc. Processor **200** may enter online competitors into online competitions that require an entry fee when players request entry to such an online competition along with an entry fee. In one embodiment, when a competitor enters an online competition requiring an entry fee, processor **200** automatically includes the competitor in a competition related to the same underlying event that does not require an entry fee, or otherwise tracks the competitor's predictive results against all competitors who participated in either a for-profit competition or for fun competition related to the same event. In this way, the competitor's predictive abilities may be ranked against all competitors, whether competing for money/value or for fun.

[092] At block **312**, processor **200** may begin to receive requests from online competitors via wide-area network **112** and communication interface **204** from user devices **108** to enter an online competition for amusement purposes, i.e., for fun, i.e., an online competition that does not require an entry fee in order to participate. In one embodiment, any online player may participate in such competitions merely by sending an entry request to processor **200** via their user device **108**, wide-area network **112** and communication interface **204**. In another embodiment, one or more non-value tokens, credits, points, etc., sometimes referred to as "amusement amounts" herein are required in order for an online player to enter an online competition. In some embodiments, processor **200** may provide online competitions that allow both online competitors who play for financial gain as well as

online competitors who play for amusement to compete against each other. Thus, some online competitions are restricted to only online competitors who compete against each other for financial gain, other online competitions restricted to only online competitors who compete against each other for fun, and still other online competitions allow both players
5 who compete for financial gain as well as players who compete for amusement purposes to compete against each other.

[093] At block **314**, processor **200** may reject requests from certain competitors to join online competitions. For example, a competitor may be rejected by processor **200** if the number of hands or rounds of play a potential competitor needs to participate in to qualify
10 for a payout or other award cannot be achieved. Generally, processor **200** makes this determination by estimating if the number of hands/plays needed to qualify for a payout or other award can occur in the remaining time for a particular competition. For example, if it is 8:15 PM CT and processor **200** receives a request from a potential competitor who wants to enter an already-in-progress Baccarat+ competition, requiring 24 hands played to
15 be eligible for consideration in a payout or other award. If the Baccarat+ competition ends at 9 PM CT, processor **200** determines that there are 45 minutes remaining in the competition, and that each round of Baccarat+ takes approximately 1 minute to play (as stored in memory **202**). In this case, processor **200** may allow the potential competitor to join the Baccarat+ competition, because it should take only approximately 24 minutes to
20 play the required 24 hands of Baccarat+. Conversely, if it is 8:45 PM CT, processor **200** may reject the potential competitor's request to join the Baccarat+ competition, because 24 hands cannot generally be played within the time remaining in the Baccarat+ competition.

[094] At block **316**, processor **200** may provide an update as to the status of the online competition to online competitors who entered the competition, and/or an update to any
25 potential online player, providing information pertaining to one or more online competitions. For example, processor **200** may update a particular online competition to indicate the number of online competitors who have entered each online competition, a number of competitors that predicted a first potential outcome of an event or series of events, a number of competitors who predicted a second potential outcome of the event or
30 series of events, a potential dollar or amusement payout for competitors who correctly predict one or more outcomes of the event or series of events, etc.

[095] At block **318**, processor **200** may receive one or more actual outcomes of one or more future events as the future events occur, sometimes in the form of pre-formatted updated event information relating to one or more future events, from third-party data provider server **104** or online gaming server **104** as one or more future events occur. For example, during a baseball game, processor **200** may receive actual outcomes throughout the duration of the baseball game, indicating various actions that occurred during the game, such as a result of each pitch thrown (i.e., whether the pitch was a ball or a strike, whether the ball was hit, whether the hit was a single, double, triple, or a home run, a name of the player who is at bat, etc.), the number of hits, runs, strikeouts, errors, etc. per inning or half-inning, and a final result of the game, including the score. In an election, processor **200** may receive updates as to how many votes were counted for each candidate, and a final outcome of the election. In a poker tournament, processor **200** may receive actual outcomes of each round of play that occurs, indicating which player won the hand as well as, for example, a value of each players' hand.

15[096] At block **320**, processor **200** identifies which online competition(s) to apply the actual outcome(s) received from online gaming server **114** or third-party data provider server **104**. As explained earlier herein, an actual outcome can be applied to more than one online competition. For example, in a football game between Team A and Team B on October 17, 2021, an actual outcome of the game may comprise an indication from online gaming server **114** or third-party data provider server **104** that the actual outcome is related to the football game between Team A and Team B on October 17, 2021, and that Team A won the game with a score of 28-14. Processor **200** may use the indication to identify a first online competition associated with the football game that asks competitors to predict which team would win the game, and to identify a second online competition associated with the football game that asks competitors to predict the total number of points scored in the football game.

[097] At block **322**, processor **200** applies the actual outcomes to each competition based on an event identifier that is typically included in each update from third-party data provider servers **104** or online gaming server **104**. In some embodiments, the actual outcomes are pre-formatted in accordance with each event type. For example, for any baseball game, the actual outcomes comprise an event identifier (i.e., an identification of

the particular baseball game being played), followed by an indication of the previous pitch (i.e., whether the previous pitch was a ball or a strike, followed by an action (such as a hit, strikeout, etc.), followed by a result (i.e., whether a hit was a single, double, triple, or a home run), followed by the current number of hits, runs and errors. For a football game, the actual outcomes comprise an event identifier (i.e., an identification of the particular football game being played), followed by an indication of the previous play (i.e., run, pass), followed by a result of the previous play (i.e., yards gained/lost), followed by the current number of touchdowns, field goals and the current score. As another example, a casino may own and operate online gaming server **114** and offer online poker games to online competitors for real money wagering. As poker games are played by online competitors, online gaming server **114** may provide the results of each hand of poker, including a name of the winner of each hand, to competition server **102** via wide-area network **112**. Other online competitors may choose to participate in an online competition involving the online poker games, and processor **200** manages the online competition to track the results of the poker games and determine which online competition players best predict the results of the poker hands. It should be further noted that in the case of competition server **102** receiving initial event information and actual outcomes from online gaming server **114**, competition server **102** and online gaming server **114** are typically completely independent of each other and are owned and operated by different entities. In other words, online competitions to events offered by competition server **102** are completely independent from any wagering activities that may be available based on the same event, offered by entities such as online gaming server **104**.

[098] At block **324**, processor **200** determines which online competitors correctly predicted outcomes of one or more events using a final outcome of each event as provided by third-party data provider server **104** and/or online gaming server **114**. As outcomes of events occur, processor **200** determines each online competitors' prediction results, sometimes referred to herein as a "prediction score", based on the outcomes, typically on an ongoing, or periodic, basis. Processor **200** may track the number of times and/or percentages that each online player correctly predicts an outcome and stores the results in memory **202** in association with each online player. In one embodiment, processor **200** maintains a "prediction score" that is updated based on each players' prediction results,

i.e., a player's prediction score generally increases when a player correctly predicts an outcome and decreases when the player incorrectly predicts an outcome. In one embodiment, the prediction score comprises a "percent gain", as described earlier herein.

[099] At block **326**, processor **200** may determine financial payouts for online
5 competitors who entered online competitions with entry fees and who correctly predicted the outcome of one or more events. For example, in an online competition that required \$10 to enter, processor **200** may have received a total of \$1 million from online competitors to participate in the online competition for financial gain. If the online competition was to see which online competitors could successfully predict the winner of the NCAA March
10 Madness® basketball tournament played each March, processor **200** would determine how many online competitors correctly predicted the eventual winner and divide the \$1 million among those online competitors. In another example, processor **200** may award the top 10 players who predicted the most outcomes of all of the games that were played in the tournament. Processor **200** may determine financial payments based on one or more of the
15 following payout types, among others:

[100] Winner Takes All - Only the top competitor in a competition receives a payout

[101] Pays Top Percent - A predetermined number or percentage of top competitors in a competition split a prize pool

[102] Everybody Wins - All competitors in a competition wins a portion of the prize pool,
20 in one embodiment, a minimum of each competitor's entry fee

[103] At block **328**, processor **200** may determine distributions for online competitors who entered online competitions for amusement purposes and who correctly predicted the outcomes of one or more events, or who was best at predicting results over a number of events. For example, in an online competition that required 10 non-value points, or credits,
25 to enter, processor **200** may have received a total of 10 million points or credits from online competitors to participate in the online competition. If the online competition was to see which online competitors could best predict winning teams in a series of soccer matches, processor **200** would determine, over the course of the matches, which online competitors had the most successful predictions and divide the 10 million points or credits amount those
30 online competitors or a sub-section of those players. In some embodiments, processor **200**

may credit one or more winners with a trophy, merchandise, game achievement awards, a gift card, or entry into a for-profit or for fun competition.

[104] At block 330, processor 200 maintains an electronic listing of player prediction results in memory 202, in some cases arranged as an electronic “leaderboard”. The
5 leaderboard typically lists competitors in an order based on each player’s prediction results so that online competitors can quickly determine which player or players are best at predicting event results. In one embodiment, the online competitors are ranked by their prediction score. In another embodiment, the online competitors are ranked by their percent gain, as described earlier herein. Processor 200 may maintain multiple
10 leaderboards, each leaderboard listing the player prediction results of a particular online competition. For example, a first leaderboard may be maintained by processor 200, listing online player names and their respective prediction results as an entire season of professional football is played over a time period of several months. The leaderboard may be updated by processor 200 as each game is played to accurately represent the predictive
15 ability of the online competitors who have entered this particular online competition. A second leaderboard may be maintained by processor 200, listing online competitor names and their respective prediction results during a particular baseball game as the baseball game is being played. For example, processor 200 may provide a plurality of questions to all of the online competitors in this particular online competition and track the results of
20 each online player in order to determine which player(s) correctly predicted the most outcomes. For example, processor 200 may ask all of the online competitors to predict each pitch during the game, i.e., whether each pitch will be a ball, a strike, or a hit, as well as to ask each online competitor which team will be leading after the conclusion of each inning. As the game progresses, processor 200 receives results via wide-area network 112
25 and communication interface 204 from third-party data provider server 104, determines which online competitors correctly predicted the results, tallies the results for each online player, ranks the online competitors in terms of their prediction results related to actual event outcomes, and updates the leaderboard(s) accordingly.

[105] In one embodiment, processor 200 maintains two different leaderboards for online
30 competitions that allow players to participate both for financial gain and for amusement purposes. A first leaderboard is maintained and stored in memory 202 that ranks prediction

results only from online competitors who entered the online competition for financial gain. A second leaderboard is maintained and stored in memory **202** that ranks prediction results only from other online competitors who entered the online competition for amusement purposes only. As an event occurs that an online competition is based on, processor **200** receives updated event data, i.e., actual outcomes, from third-party data provider server **104** and/or online gaming server **114** via wide-area network **112** and communication interface **204** and updates each leaderboard in accordance with the results of both sets of online competitors, i.e., those who have entered for financial gain and those who have entered for amusement purpose only. At the conclusion of the event, processor **200** posts a final leaderboard for each of the groups of online competitors, and awards value to the top online competitors who entered for financial gain and may award credits or points to the top online competitors who entered for amusement purposes only.

[106] In another embodiment, where processor **200** provides an online competition that accepts both online competitors who play for financial gain as well as other online competitors who play for amusement purposes only, processor **200** may maintain only a single leaderboard, and rank all of the online competitors who entered the online competition based on their prediction results, whether they entered the contest for financial gain or not. Thus, the leaderboard may list a top player who played for amusement purposes only, followed by, for example, two online competitors who entered the competition for financial gain, followed by another online player who played for amusement purposes only, each online player ranked in accordance with their respective prediction results during and/or after the event, or series of events, has occurred. At the conclusion of the online competition, processor **200** may apportion the total amount of entry fees received to the top several online competitors who entered the online competition for financial gain and apportion the total amount of points or credits received to the top several online competitors who enter the online competition for amusement purposes only.

[107] Processor **200** may maintain a leaderboard comprising rankings of all, or a sub-set of all, competitors who have entered at least one competition, no matter what type of event a competitor has entered. This allows competitors to know which competitors are best at predicting outcomes overall, no matter what type of event is involved. Other leaderboards

may be maintained by processor **200** that contains rankings of competitors based on event, league, location, occupation, team/player/artist/social influencer affiliation, etc.

[108] At block **332**, processor **200** may receive a request from any online player to provide certain statistical information regarding one or more online competitions, i.e., a custom leaderboard. For example, a first online player who has never entered any online competitions may send a request to processor **200** via the first player's device **108**, wide-area network **112** and communication interface **204** to view a custom leaderboard comprising the top online competitors for all completed competitions relating to football. In another example, an online player who is presently competing in a particular online competition may request a leaderboard listing the top online competitors of online competitions related to a particular event type, such as professional baseball, in a particular country, state or city, such as the top online competitors who have previously entered into a baseball competition who reside in Japan. A wide variety of requests could be received by processor **200**, each requesting that competition server **102** provide a custom leaderboard based on parameters provided by each online competitor.

[109] At block **334**, processor **200** retrieves information stored in memory **202** related to the online competitions currently and formerly provided to online competitors, the information related to the parameters provided in a received, custom leaderboard request. For example, processor **200** may retrieve the name and the city of any current and past competitors who have entered an online competition related to soccer and who reside in North America. Then, processor **200** ranks the any competitors who entered any soccer competitions who reside in North America based on their prediction results, arranging the names and cities in an order related to each competitor's prediction results, and provides a resulting, custom leaderboard to one or more online competitors, such as to a first online competitor who requested the custom leaderboard.

[110] At block **336**, an online competition ends when processor **200** receives an indication from third-party data provider server **104** or from online gaming server **114**, and processor **200** may indicate so by updating the website where the leaderboards were posted, or otherwise notifying participants via text message, email, app or some other form of communication.

[111] FIG. 4 is a flow diagram illustrating one embodiment of another method, performed by competition server **102**, for providing online competitions to competitors over network **112**. It should be understood that the steps described in this method could alternatively be performed in an order other than what is shown and discussed and that minor steps may have been omitted for purposes of clarity.

[112] At block **400**, processor **200** receives a “competition challenge” from a first online competitor or “challenger” via the first online competitor’s user device **108**, wide-area network **112** and communication interface **204**. A “competition challenge” is a challenge created by an online competitor via a user device **108**, challenging other online competitors to an online competition. The online competition may be based on one or more events identified in the competition challenge, or it may identify an online competition already posted online by competition server **102**. In the case where the competition challenge comprises an identification of one or more events, processor **200** may use the competition challenge to create a new online competition. Heretofore, “competition challenge” and “online competition” may be used interchangeably. In some embodiments, one team of competitors may challenge another team of competitors to an online competition. In this embodiment, one player from a team may challenge another team by sending a competition challenge to at least one member of an opposing team.

[113] In another embodiment, processor **200** may automatically generate a competition challenge and provide the challenge to certain competitors, based on the underlying event. For example, a competition challenge may be manually or automatically created, challenging competitors to predict the outcome of a game between Team A and Team B on a future date. In addition to providing an advertisement of the competition challenge to all potential competitors, processor **200** may additionally, or in the alternative, generate and send a competition challenge to potential competitors who are affiliated with Team A and Team B.

[114] The competition challenge may comprise a name of the challenge, an indication whether the challenge is for financial gain (i.e., requiring an entry fee to participate), an amusement challenge (i.e., no entry fee required), or both, a value, point or credit amount to enter the potential online competition (in the case of competitions requiring an entry fee or an amusement amount), and an identification of one or more events that the challenge is

based, including event data associated with the event(s). For example, a first online player may create a competition challenge potential online competition using a software application or “app” on user device **108**, which generates a competition challenge comprising a name of “The Oscars”, with an event date and time of February 24th, 2022 at 5 6pm, with an entry fee of \$10 to enter the competition, and amusement amounts accepted as well for 10 “credits”. In this example, the competition challenge comprises a series of questions asking online competitors to predict winners of one or more categories of awards presented at the Oscars, such who will win “best actor”, “best actress”, which movie will win “best movie”, etc. The competition challenge may additionally comprise the nominees 10 in each category. The competition challenge may additionally comprise identification information of family and/or friends of the first user to which the competition challenge should be presented by competition server **102**.

[115] A challenger may generate a competition challenge one or more ways. In one embodiment, processor **200** maintains a website that allows potential competitors to create 15 and send competition challenged to processor **200**. In another embodiment, a challenger may use an app on user device **108**, or the website maintained by processor **200**, to create a message comprising a hyperlink, and send the hyperlink to one or more potential competitors via email, one or more messaging services such as Facebook messenger, iMessage, WeChat, WhatsApp, QQ Messenger, SMS (text), or more social media 20 platforms such as Facebook, Signal, Slack, etc. The hyperlink may point to listing of an already-existing competition challenge previously posted by processor **200**. The message may comprise text or visual information identifying the challenger, a brief description of the challenge/competition, whether the challenge/competition requires an entry fee or not, an amount of fees or credits/points needed to accept the challenge and enter the 25 competition, and/or other information relevant to the challenge and/or the challenger.

[116] At block **402**, processor **200** stores the competition challenge in memory **202**.

[117] At block **404**, processor **200** may evaluate the competition challenge to ensure that it was created by a person already having an account set up with competition server **102** and may evaluate the competition challenge to ensure that it complies with any 30 requirements of online competitions offered by competition server **102**. For example, processor **200** may evaluate the competition challenge to ensure that the amount of the

entry fee does not exceed a predetermined cap, such as \$50, and/or that the event identified in the competition challenge actually exists or will take place in the future, and/or that competition server **102** is able to receive updated event information associated with the one or more events identified in the competition challenge from third-party data provider server

5 **104.**

[118] At block **406**, processor **200** may post an indication of the competition challenge and/or an availability of an online competition related to the competition challenge, to potential online competitors, typically via a website, as described above. In one embodiment, processor **200** provides the indication only to online competitors identified
10 by the first online player, such as by providing a text or email to these online competitors, or otherwise by preventing other online competitors from registering to play the online competition via the website. Text and/or email contact information may be received by processor **200** along with the competition challenge or this information may be pre-stored in memory **202** for use by processor **200** to alert certain online competitors of competition
15 challenges.

[119] The online competition related to the competition challenged may be listed and described in terms of the name given to the competition challenge by the first player and an indication of the type of wager permitted, i.e., entry fees and/or amusement amounts, and a wager amount and/or a point value or credit amount needed to participate. In some
20 embodiments, processor **200** additionally provides an identification of the first online player who created the competition challenge, such as the first player's name, emoji, and/or contact information. In this example, the indication comprises the name "The Oscars", with a description "Which player can best predict the results of the Oscars?", "\$10 or 10 credits to enter", "posted by Jane Smith of Columbus, Ohio".

25[120] At block **408**, processor **200** may begin to receive requests to enter the competition challenge from online competitors via wide-area network **112** via their user devices **108** to enter the online competition related to the challenge, for financial gain. Entry fees are received by processor **200** via communication interface **204** and stored in memory **202** in association with the online competitors who accepted the challenge, respectively.

30[121] At block **410**, processor **200** may begin to receive acceptances to the competition challenge from online competitors via wide-area network **112** and communication interface

204 via their user devices **108** to enter the online competition related to the challenge, for amusement purposes only. In some cases, amusement amounts are received by processor **200** via communication interface **204** and stored in memory **202** in association with the online competitors who accepted the challenge, respectively. In some embodiments, an
5 amusement amount is not required for online competitors to accept the challenge for fun.

[122] In the case of a team competition challenge, processor **200** may receive one or more acceptances from one or more members of a team that was challenged by another team. In one embodiment, when processor **200** receives at least one acceptance from one opposing team member, processor **200** determines that the team competition challenge has been
10 accepted. In another embodiment, more than one team member from an opposing team must accept the team competition challenge in order for processor **200** to determine that the team competition challenge has been accepted.

[123] At block **412**, processor **200** may provide an update to online competitors who accepted the competition challenge, either for financial gain and/or for amusement, and/or
15 an update to any potential online player, providing information pertaining to the competition challenge. For example, processor **200** may update the competition challenge to indicate the number of acceptances received, either based on financial gain or amusement, and a list of, for example, movies in contention for best picture along with a respective number of online competitors who have selected each movie to win.

20[124] At block **414**, processor **200** begins to receive actual outcomes, in this example, on February 24th, 2022, processor **200** begins to receive actual results of the Oscars from third-party data provider server **104** via wide-area network **112** and communication interface **204** as each award is presented, i.e., the winner of each category of awards.

[125] At block **416**, processor **200** determines which online competitors correctly
25 predicted the winner of each category of one or more awards presented at the Oscars using the actual outcomes received at block **414**. Processor **200** may increment a prediction score or percent gain of each online player based on the number of successful prediction results of each online player.

[126] At block **418**, processor **200** may update rankings of the competitors by updating
30 one or more leaderboards relating to the online challenge based on each online player's prediction results. A first leaderboard may list the online competitors who participated in

the online competition for financial gain, ranked against each other in accordance with how many Oscar category winners were predicted correctly. As the winner of each category of awards is announced, processor **200** may update the leaderboard. Similarly, a second leaderboard may list the online competitors who participated in the online competition for amusement purposes only, ranked against each other in accordance with how many Oscar category winners were predicted correctly. In another embodiment, a single leaderboard may be maintained by processor **200**, ranking all participants of the competition against each other based on each players' prediction results, whether or not each online player accepted the challenge for financial gain or for amusement purposes only..

10[127] At block **420**, processor **200** may post the leaderboard updates to the online competitors, for example, by updating a website presenting the leaderboards.

[128] At block **422**, at the conclusion of the Oscars, processor **200** may determine value payouts for online competitors who entered the online competition for financial gain and who best predicted the results of the Oscars, based on, for example, the number of
15 categories predicted correctly.

[129] At block **424**, processor **200** may determine payouts for players who entered the competition challenge for financial gain and/or determine distributions of credits for online competitors who entered the online competition for amusement purposes only. Processor **200** credits the accounts of winning players accordingly. Processor **200** may determine
20 financial payments based on Winner Takes All, Pays Top Percent, or Everybody Wins, as described earlier herein.

[130] At block **426**, the online competition ends, and processor **200** may indicate so by updating the website where the leaderboards were posted.

[131] FIG. **5** is a flow diagram illustrating one embodiment of another method, performed
25 by competition server **102**, for providing one or more "one-hand", "one round" or, more generally, "singular", competitions to potential online competitors over wide-area network **112**, such as one-hand competitions related to "poker, blackjack, baccarat or other card game, a single slot-pull result, a single award given during an awards show, a single sports plays (such as a pitch, an inning, or a "down" in football), etc. In some embodiments, a
30 series of singular competitions may be presented to potential competitors, for example, multiple rounds of a poker game. It should be understood that the steps described in this

method could alternatively be performed in an order other than what is shown and discussed and that minor steps may have been omitted for purposes of clarity.

[132] At block **500**, processor **200** may determine that an event will occur having one or more uncertain outcomes that may be conducive to one or more singular competitions, such as receiving initial event information and associated event data from online gaming server **114** or third-party data provider sever **104**, identifying a particular type of event that will occur at some time in the future having an uncertain outcome. For example, processor **200** may receive initial event information specifying that a live Texas Hold-Em poker tournament, held by Binion's Gambling Hall in Las Vegas, Nevada, will be starting in 24 hours, where competitors may predict which player will win a particular round of play, several rounds of play, or each round of play in the tournament. The associated event data may indicate, in this example, the names of 10 players who will be participating in the tournament. For the remainder of the discussion with respect to FIG. **5**, reference shall be made to this poker tournament. However, it should be understood that the inventive concepts described herein may be used in almost any other event that has at least one uncertain outcome.

[133] At block **502**, in response to receiving the event information and associated event data, processor **200** creates a singular online competition, inviting competitors to predict a first outcome of the tournament, i.e., a prediction of which of the 10 players will win the first hand in the tournament. In another embodiment, an online competition is created manually by storing a pre-defined competition in memory **202**. In either case, the competition indicates whether the singular online competition will require an entry fee or not, allow both value competitors and amusement competitors to compete against each other, and may determine other parameters of the singular online competition, such as a name of the singular competition, a start time/date, an end time/date, whether a maximum limit will be placed on the number of competitors allowed to participate the singular online competition, etc.

[134] At block **504**, processor **200** advertises the singular online competition to potential competitors via communication interface **204** and wide-area network **112**, for example, updating a webpage maintained by competition server **102**, sending an email or text

message to a plurality of previously-registered potential competitors, pushing a notification to an app running on a mobile device, etc.

[135] At block **506**, processor **200** receives a plurality of responses to the advertisement of the singular online competition via wide-area network **112** and communication interface **204**. Each response generally identifies a particular online competitor and an indication whether an entry fee was submitted or not. Processor **200** stores the identities of each competitor that enters the singular online competition in memory **202**.

[136] At block **508**, processor **200** determines that no further entries can be accepted by processor **200** for additional competitors to join the singular online competition. In one embodiment, processor **200** determines a “cut-off” that time may be pre-stored in memory **202**, i.e., 30 seconds, indicating that processor **200** shall not accept further entries to the singular online competition within 30 seconds of the start of the event. In one embodiment, a plurality of cut-off times may be stored in memory **202**, each cut-off time associated with a particular type of event. For example, a cut-off time of one hour may be associated with an event having an actual start time that may differ from a projected start time by as much as 30 minutes or more. Other cut-off times may be much shorter, such as 10 seconds, used, for example, in electronically-generated card games, such as blackjack or poker, where each new round of play is generated quite quickly, such as within one minute of the end of a previous round of play.

20[137] At block **510**, in determining that the cut-off time has arrived before the anticipated start of the event, processor **200** provides an indication to the online competitors who entered the singular online competition as well as other, potential online competitors who have not yet entered the singular online competition, that no further entries will be permitted. Processor **200** typically provides such an indication to the website managed by competition server **102**, or by sending text or emails to potential competitors, or by other means.

[138] At block **512**, processor **200** may provide an update to the website, indicating the number of online competitors who are actively participating in the singular online competition, each competitor’s prediction, and any entry fee paid, as well as, in some embodiments, additional information of each competitor, such as a geographic location of each competitor, and occupation of each competitor, etc.

[139] At block **514**, processor **200** receives an actual outcome of the singular event from third-party data provider server **104** or from online gaming server **114** via wide-area network **112** and communication interface **204**, such as a result of round of poker, a slot pull, a pitch, etc.

5[140] At block **516**, processor **200** determines which competitors in the singular online competition predicted the actual outcome of the event as provided by third-party data provider server **104** or from online gaming server **114**. Processor **200** updates each competitor's account to indicate whether or not each competitor successfully predicted the actual outcome of the singular event.

10[141] At block **518**, processor **200** notifies the competitors of the actual outcome of the event and an indication whether each competitor successfully predicted the actual outcome or not.

[142] At block **520**, processor **200** may determine which competitors are eligible to receive an award. The award may comprise either value, such as cash or crypto currency,
15 or non-value awards, such as a statue, points, credits, etc. The amount of each award may depend on things such as the total value received from for-profit competitors, a percentage cut for the "house", i.e., the operators of competition server **102**, a ranking of each competitor (i.e., only the top three competitors are given an award), etc. In some embodiments, competitors must win more than a predetermined number, or percentage, of
20 singular competitions in order to be given an award by processor **200**. In any case, when an award has been earned, processor **200** alerts the competitors of any such awards via the website maintained by competition server **102**, or by other means, such as by text or by email.

[143] At block **522**, processor **200** may generate and/or update rankings of the
25 competitors, for example via one or more leaderboards related to singular online competitions. For example, processor **200** may calculate a percent gain, as explained earlier herein, for each competitor participating in the singular online competition and rank each online competitor in the singular online competition in accordance with each competitor's percent gain, or some other metric of a competitor's predictive successes.
30 Multiple leader boards may be stored in memory **202**, each leaderboard associated with a particular event type. For example, one singular leaderboard may be stored in memory **202**

associated with the Texas Hold-em poker tournament being conducted at Binion's Gaming Hall in Las Vegas, while another singular leaderboard may be maintained in memory **202** associated with a game of blackjack being played electronically. Each leaderboard may rank each competitor based on their predictive abilities as well as other information
5 associated with each competitor, such as a geographic location, an occupation, a favorite team, player, entertainer, or social media influencer.

[144] At block **524**, processor **200** may receive an indication from third-party data provider server **104** or online gaming server **114** via wide-area network **112** and communication interface **204** that the singular event has concluded. In one embodiment,
10 the indication additionally identifies a time when a next singular event related to the current event will occur. For example, in the Texas Hold-'em tournament, online gaming server **114** may provide an indication to processor **200** via wide-area network **112** and communication interface **104** that a previous round of poker has ended, and that the next round of play will begin in 60 seconds. In other embodiments, the indication is not
15 provided by third-party data provider server **104** or online gaming server **114**. In these embodiments, processor **200** automatically determines that the event has concluded when third-party data provider server **104** or online gaming server **114** provides the actual result of the singular event.

[145] In one embodiment, where the indication does not identify when the next round of
20 play will occur, processor **200** may estimate the time when the next round of play will occur and calculate a cut-off time based on the start time estimate. In one embodiment, the estimate is based on a predetermined time stored in memory **202** in association with each type of singular event. For example, in horseracing, each race may be considered a singular event, and races are typically spaced apart from each other at least 30 minutes. In this
25 example, processor **200** may retrieve a predetermined time between events from memory **202** associated with horseracing as 30 minutes, and based on that, calculate a cut-off time of, for example, two minutes. As another example, each round of baccarat may last an average of one minute per round and an indication of stored in memory **202**. In this case, processor **200** determines a cut-off time of something less than one minute, for example,
30 10 seconds.

[146] In one embodiment, processor **200** determines an approximation of when the next round of play will occur, and an associated cut-off time, based on a history of singular events that have occurred in the past. In this embodiment, processor **200** tracks the time between the end of each round of play for similar events, such as Texas Hold ‘Em, draw
5 poker, slots, routetle, etc. and when a next round of play occurs. Processor **200** stores such results in memory **202**. Processor **200** may then estimate the next start time of the next round of play by evaluating the past results stored in memory **202**. For example, processor **200** may average the times stored in memory for Texas Hold’em games to arrive at an average delay time between rounds of 70 seconds, and use that time as an approximation
10 when the next round of play will occur, i.e., 70 seconds after each round of play. Processor **200** may adjust this estimate over time as more rounds of play occur. The cut-off time is determined by processor **200** based on the estimated delay time, i.e., a fixed time stored in memory **202**, dependent on event type. In this example, in a game of Texas Hold ‘em, processor **200** retrieves from memory **202** that the cut-off time should be 10 seconds prior
15 to the start of a next round of play, or 60 seconds from the end of the previous round.

[147] At block **526**, processor **200** creates new singular online competition for the Texas Hold-em tournament related to the next round of play, similar to the process described beginning at block **502**, advertising the new singular competition described above in block **504**, etc.

20[148] The previous description and the drawings describe various embodiments of a system, method and apparatus for providing online competitions to a wide number of events having uncertain outcomes. Thus, the previous description and the drawings are not intended to limit the inventive concepts to these specific implementations.

[149] Moreover, in the description above, certain aspects and embodiments of the
25 invention may be applied independently and some of them may be applied in combination as would be apparent to those of skill in the art. For the purposes of explanation, specific details are set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of embodiments of the invention.

[150] The above description provides exemplary embodiments only, and is not intended
30 to limit the scope, applicability, or configuration of the disclosure. Rather, the ensuing description of the exemplary embodiments will provide those skilled in the art with an

enabling description for implementing an exemplary embodiment. It should be understood that various changes may be made in the function and arrangement of elements without departing from the spirit and scope of the embodiments as set forth in the appended claims.

[151] Although specific details are given to provide a thorough understanding of at least

5 one embodiment, it will be understood by one of ordinary skill in the art that some of the embodiments may be practiced without disclosure of these specific details. For example, components, circuits, systems, networks, processes, and other components may be shown and/or described in general form in order not to obscure the embodiments in unnecessary detail. In other instances, well-known circuits, processes, algorithms, structures, and
10 techniques may be described and/or shown without unnecessary detail in order to avoid obscuring the embodiments.

[152] Further, it is noted that individual embodiments may be described as a method, a

process or an algorithm performed by a processor, which may be depicted as a flowchart, a flow diagram, a data flow diagram, a structure diagram, or a block diagram. Although a
15 flowchart may describe the operations as a sequential process, many of the operations can be performed in parallel or concurrently. In addition, the order of the operations may be re-arranged. A process is terminated when its operations are completed, but could have additional steps not included in a figure.

[153] The terms "computer-readable medium", "memory", "storage medium", and "data

20 storage device" includes, but is not limited to, portable or non-portable electronic data storage devices, optical storage devices, and various other mediums capable of storing, containing, or carrying instruction(s) and/or data. These terms each may include a non-transitory medium in which data can be stored and that does not include carrier waves and/or transitory electronic signals propagating wirelessly or over wired connections.
25 Examples of a non-transitory medium may include, but are not limited to a magnetic disk or tape, optical storage media such as compact disk (CD) or digital versatile disk (DVD), flash memory, RAM, ROM, solid state disk drives (SSD), etc. A computer-readable medium or the like may have stored thereon code and/or processor-executable instructions that may represent a method, algorithm, procedure, function, subprogram, program,
30 routine, subroutine, or any combination of instructions, data structures, or program statements.

[154] Furthermore, embodiments may be implemented by hardware, software, firmware, middleware, microcode, hardware description languages, or any combination thereof. When implemented in software, firmware, middleware or microcode, the program code, i.e., “processor-executable code”, or code symbols to perform the necessary tasks (e.g., a
5 computer-program product) may be stored in a computer-readable or machine-readable medium. A processor(s) may perform the necessary tasks.

CLAIMS

I claim:

- 5 1. A competition server for providing online competitions to a plurality of online competitors, comprising:
- a communication interface;
 - a memory for storing processor-executable instructions;
 - a processor coupled to the communication interface and the memory, for executing
- 10 the processor-executable instructions that causes the competition server to:
- generate, by the processor, one or more online competitions based on one or more future events, each of the one or more future events having one or more uncertain outcomes, each online competition for allowing the online competitors to compete against each other online to determine which online competitors are best
- 15 at predicting the one or more uncertain outcomes of the one or more future events;
- provide, by the processor via the communication interface, the one or more online competitions to the online competitors via a wide-area network;
 - receive, by the processor via the communication interface, requests from a plurality of the online players to enter a first online competition of the one or more
- 20 online competitions and one or more predictions of the one or more uncertain outcomes;
- receive, by the processor via the communication interface, a first actual outcome of the one or more events;
 - identify, by the processor, a first online competition of the one or more
- 25 online competitions to apply the first actual outcome;
- rank, by the processor, the plurality of the online competitors based on each online competitor's ability to successfully predict the first actual outcome; and
 - provide, by the processor via the communication interface, the rank of at least some of the online competitors to the online competitors via the wide-area
- 30 network as the one or more future events occur.

2. The competition server of claim 1, wherein the processor-executable instructions further comprise instructions that causes the competition server to:

receive, by the processor via the communication interface, an initial event identifier identifying a first future event and associated event data, the event data describing one or more attributes of the first future event;

wherein the one or more online competitions are generated automatically by the processor in response to the processor receiving the initial event identifier and the associated event data.

3. The competition server of claim 1, wherein at least some of the one or more future events comprise events that are wagered on by online players via a third-party online gaming server.

4. The competition server of claim 1, wherein the processor-executable instructions further comprise instructions that causes the competition server to:

receive, by the processor via the communication interface, requests from a second plurality of the online players to enter a second competition of the one or more online competitions and one or more second predictions of the one or more uncertain outcomes;

receive, by the processor via the communication interface, a second actual outcome of the one or more events;

identify, by the processor, a second online competition to apply the second actual outcome;

determine, by the processor, second prediction results of at least some of the second plurality of online competitors based on the second outcome; and

update by the processor, the rank of the online competitors based on the prediction results and the second prediction results.

5. The competition server of claim 1, wherein the processor-executable instructions further comprise instructions that causes the competition server to:

receive, by the processor via the communication interface, requests from a first plurality of online competitors to enter the first online competition for financial gain;

receive, by the processor via the communication interface, requests from a second plurality of online competitors to enter the first online competition for amusement; and

enter, by the processor, the first plurality of online competitors and the second plurality of online competitors into the first online competition to compete against each other.

6. The competition server of claim 5, wherein the processor-executable instructions further comprise instructions that causes the competition server to:

receive, by the processor, a series of outcomes over time related to the one or more future events;

determine, by the processor, first prediction results of the first plurality of online competitors based on the series of outcomes over time;

determine, by the processor, second prediction results of the second plurality of online competitors based on the series of outcomes over time; and

update, by the processor, the rank of the first plurality of online competitors based on the first prediction results and the rank of each of the second plurality of online competitors based on the second prediction results as each of the series of outcomes occurs.

7. The competition server of claim 2, wherein the initial event identifier and associated event data are associated with a casino game and the initial event identifier and event data are received by the processor via the communication interface from an online gaming server, the online gaming server configured to allow wagers to be placed on the first sporting event independent from the one or more online competitions generated by the processor.

8. The competition server of claim 5, wherein the processor-executable instructions further comprise instructions that causes the competition server to:

receive, by the processor via the communication interface, a series of outcomes related to the first online competition;

determine, by the processor, first prediction results of the first plurality of online competitors based on the series of outcomes;

determine, by the processor, second prediction results of the second plurality of online competitors based on the series of outcomes;

update, by the processor, a first leaderboard comprising the rank of each of the first plurality of online competitors based on the first prediction results; and

5 update, by the processor, a second leaderboard comprising the rank of each of the second plurality of online competitors based on the second prediction results.

9. The competition server of claim 1, wherein the processor-executable instructions further comprise instructions that causes the competition server to:

10 receive, by the processor via the communication interface, a competition challenge from a first online competitor, the competition challenge comprising an identification of a first online competition previously generated by the processor;

provide, by the processor via the communication interface, the competition challenge to at least some of the online competitors;

15 receive, by the processor via the communication interface, an acceptance of the competition challenge from a plurality of the online competitors;

determine, by the processor, a series of outcomes related to a first future event associated with the first online competition; and

20 update, by the processor, the rank of the first online competitor based on the first online competitor's prediction results of the series of outcomes and the rank of each of the plurality of online competitors based on prediction results of each of the plurality of online competitors.

10. The competition server of claim 6, wherein the series of outcomes comprises a series of results from each round of a plurality of poker games in a poker tournament.

11. The competition server of claim 1, wherein the processor-executable instructions further comprise instructions that causes the competition server to:

determine, by the processor, that a first round of play of a first event has concluded;

determine, by the processor, a cut-off time for the online competitors to enter a second round of play, the cut-off time determined at least in part by a pre-determined, estimated time stored in memory to complete each round of play;

5 provide, by the processor via the communication interface, the cut-off time to the online competitors; and

decline, by the processor, any request from any of the online competitors to enter a first online contest associated with the first event when any request is received after the cut-off time.

10 12. A method, performed by an online competition server, for providing online competitions to online competitors, comprising:

generating one or more online competitions based on one or more future events, each of the one or more future events having one or more uncertain outcomes, each online competition for allowing the online competitors to compete against each other online to
15 determine which online competitors are best at predicting the one or more uncertain outcomes of the one or more future events;

providing the one or more online competitions to the online competitors via a wide-area network;

receiving requests from a plurality of the online players to enter a first online
20 competition of the one or more online competitions and one or more predictions of the one or more uncertain outcomes;

receiving a first actual outcome of the one or more events;

identifying a first online competition of the one or more online competitions to apply the first actual outcome;

25 ranking the plurality of the online competitors based on each online competitor's ability to successfully predict the first actual outcome; and

providing the rank of at least some of the online competitors to the online competitors via the wide-area network as the one or more future events occur.

30 13. The method of claim 12, further comprising:

receiving an initial event identifier identifying a first future event and associated event data, the event data describing one or more attributes of the first future event;

wherein the one or more online competitions are generated automatically by the processor in response to the processor receiving the initial event identifier and the
5 associated event data.

14. The method of claim 12, wherein at least some of the one or more future events comprise events that are wagered on by online players via a third-party online gaming server.

10

15. The method of claim 12, further comprising:

receiving requests from a second plurality of the online players to enter a second competition of the one or more online competitions and one or more second predictions of the one or more uncertain outcomes;

15

receiving a second actual outcome of the one or more events;

identifying a second online competition to apply the second actual outcome;

determining second prediction results of at least some of the second plurality of online competitors based on the second outcome; and

20

updating the rank of the online competitors based on the prediction results and the second prediction results.

16. The method of claim 12, further comprising:

receiving requests from a first plurality of online competitors to enter the first online competition for financial gain;

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receiving requests from a second plurality of online competitors to enter the first online competition for amusement; and

entering the first plurality of online competitors and the second plurality of online competitors into the first online competition to compete against each other.

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17. The method of claim 16, further comprising:

receiving a series of outcomes over time related to the one or more future events;

determining first prediction results of the first plurality of online competitors based on the series of outcomes over time;

determining second prediction results of the second plurality of online competitors based on the series of outcomes over time; and

5 updating the rank of the first plurality of online competitors based on the first prediction results and the rank of each of the second plurality of online competitors based on the second prediction results as each of the series of outcomes occurs.

18. The method of claim 13, wherein the initial event identifier and associated event
10 data are associated with a casino game and the initial event identifier and event data are received by the processor via the communication interface from an online gaming server, the online gaming server configured to allow wagers to be placed on the first sporting event independent from the one or more online competitions generated by the processor.

15 19. The method of claim 16, further comprising:
 receiving a series of outcomes related to the first online competition;
 determining first prediction results of the first plurality of online competitors based on the series of outcomes;
 determining second prediction results of the second plurality of online competitors
20 based on the series of outcomes;
 updating a first leaderboard comprising the rank of each of the first plurality of online competitors based on the first prediction results; and
 updating a second leaderboard comprising the rank of each of the second plurality of online competitors based on the second prediction results.

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20. The method of claim 12, further comprising:
 receiving a competition challenge from a first online competitor, the competition challenge comprising identification of a first online competition previously provided by the processor;

30 providing the competition challenge to at least some of the online competitors;

receiving an acceptance of the competition challenge from a plurality of the online competitors;

determining a series of outcomes related to a first future event associated with the first online competition; and

5 updating a rank of the first online competitor based on the first online competitor's prediction results of the series of outcomes and each of the plurality of online competitors based on prediction results of each of the plurality of online competitors.

21. The method of claim 17, wherein the series of outcomes comprises a series of results from each round of a plurality of poker games in a poker tournament.

22. The method of claim 12, further comprising:

determining that a first round of play of a first event has concluded;

15 determining a cut-off time for the online competitors to enter a second round of play, the cut-off time determined at least in part by a pre-determined, estimated time stored in memory to complete each round of play;

providing the cut-off time to the online competitors; and

declining any request from any of the online competitors to enter a first online contest associated with the first event when any request is received after the cut-off time.

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