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CHICAGO SUN-TIMES | N**WEEKEND** | 17**GAMING****IT gaming is headed to a casino near you****JOHN BROKOPP**

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The history of Chicago-based amusement-game manufacturers who transitioned into the development of gambling devices is legendary.

Ray Maloney started Bally Manufacturing here in 1932 and parlayed the success of his Ballyhoo pinball game into a company that once ruled the world in slot machine production and to this day still wields a dominant presence as Bally Technologies.

Harry Williams launched his pinball company in Chicago in 1943 and forever changed the way people play the game with the creation of the "tilt" mechanism. Williams Gaming broke into the slot machine market in the early '90s and today ranks as one of the industry leaders as WMS Gaming.

Enter Elaine Hodgson and Richard Ditton, who in 1985 opened Incredible Technologies. Based in Arlington Heights, the company began by designing operating systems and programming for pinball games. In 1989, IT rolled out Golden Tee Golf, which generated such worldwide acclaim that today Incredible Technologies is the leading designer and manufacturer of coin-operated video games and online tournament systems in the United States. Now in its fifth generation, Golden Tee Golf remains the company's flagship product and enjoys

a reputation as the most successful arcade title in history.

The company is now on the cusp of branching out onto casino floors in a big way with a line of electronic gaming devices. The artists, animators and engineers of Incredible Technologies adapted the company's patented Nexus Hardware System to a slot-machine format, produced a patented Breeze gaming cabinet featuring a 19-inch LCD with more than 16 million colors, and went on to create Magic Touch gaming software.

Although unwilling at this time to gamble with its "golden goose" franchise and morph Golden Tee Golf into a gaming device, the company has developed six unique products that it hopes will open the doors to untapped revenue flow and pave the way for more than just a novelty presence in the casino gaming industry. I got a chance to check out and play the slot titles it has created, which include "Cars," "Money," "Fish Store," "Fruit," "Magic Touch Poker" and "Magic Touch Keno."

Many of the concepts the company developed with its gambling products are of interest only to casino operators, but others, such as the ability to not only know but choose the game volatility via "The Prize Guy" component, accrue and save bonus credits in the "BonuSave" feature, and experience unique "Angle Pays" and patent-pending "Sidewinder" horizontal spinning wheels will be of great interest to players.

Look for my review of the games in a future column.

John Brokopp is a local free-lance writer.