



BLADES OF STEEL

This may sound like some kind of slash 'em up Swords 'n' Sorcery type game, but beneath the slightly ambiguous title lies a Nintendo version of the classic game of mindless, rink-bound violence - Ice Hockey.

The object is simple. At each end of the rink lies a goal and the objective is to hit the puck into the opposition's goal. Not surprisingly, the opposing team want to do exactly the same thing, so expect plenty of midfield malarkey before the serious goal-scoring begins. There are three rounds of ten minutes before the final whistle is called.

Before you even hit the ice, a number of game options have to be sorted out. You can enter your team into either a complete league or just a single exhibition match. Then it's off to choose which skill level you wish to play at (junior, college, or professional) and what team you actually wish to play as.

After that, it's down to your five on-screen hockey heroes and your joypad skills to save the day!



▲ Ice rink hilarity as the team puck off!

JOLLY HOCKEY STICKS!

Control of your players couldn't be easier. The joypad controls the player closest to the puck while the buttons are used to control the type of shot. Two types are on offer. A simple passing shot using button B sends the puck along to the nearest player, whilst button A attempts a shot at the opposing goal - wherever you are on the field!



▲ Edmonton trounce Toronto by a massive fifteen points!



▼ An open goal if ever there was one!



COMMENT



MATT

Blades of Steel is fun, fun, fun! Control of your on-screen team is simple and effective and complicated strings of hockey moves can be handled with ease! The action is fast and

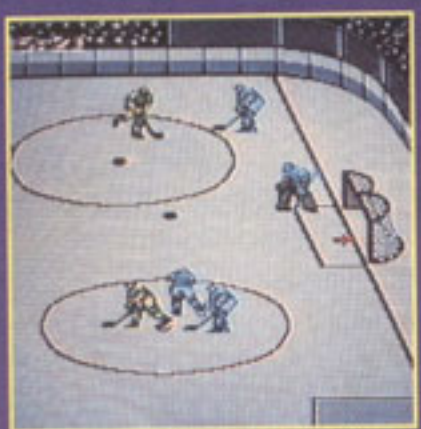
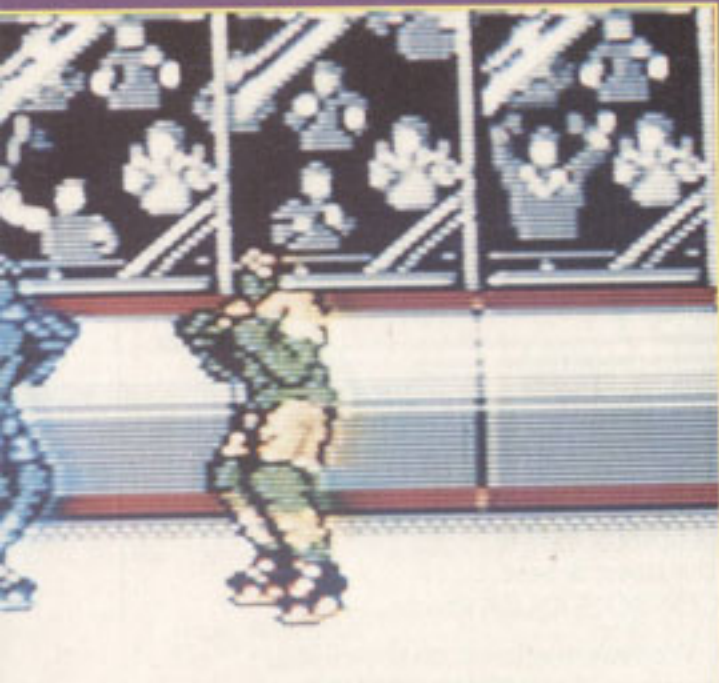
incredibly furious (with a beat 'em up element thrown in for good measure!) and the graphics, although a bit flickery at times are for the most part well-detailed with decent animation. Lastability is perhaps questionable, but with the terrific two-player mode there's no excuse not to puck off - now!



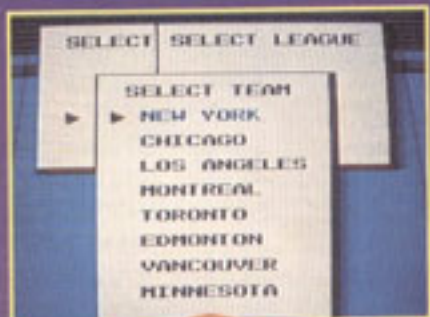


BEAT 'EM UP TACTICS

A fair amount of violence is involved in normal hockey - but in Blades of Steel gratuitous and unprovoked attack is necessary for victory! When you attempt to pinch the puck from the opposition the action cuts to a one-on-one beat 'em up section. Possession of the puck is secured by beating the seven shades out of your opponent!



▲ Can you "Spot the Puck"?



OFF-RINK OPTIONS

The actual gameplay in Blades of Steel is pretty limited, so it's a good thing that Konami has thrown in so many different options and settings to keep you occupied. As well as choosing which team you actually wish to play as, in the exhibition matches you can even choose your opposition. Eight top teams are featured in Blades of Steel namely: New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Montreal, Toronto, Edmonton, Vancouver and Minnesota. There's also a two-player mode included so you can face up to your best friend on the rink!

COMMENT



JULIAN

Ah! The swish of skates against ice. The thwack of stick against puck. The thump of fist against head! This certainly is ice hockey! As with all sports simulations, the action is best appreciated with two-players (just make sure the violence happens on the screen and not off it), but that's not to say Blades of Steel is dull one-player game! With its multiple skill levels and different options, there's plenty of variety to keep a lonesome player happy. Ice hockey doesn't sound like really rivetting subject matter for a console game, but this is a thoroughly enjoyable sports simulation which will keep you coming back to your Nintendo time and time again.



BY: KONAMI
PRICE: £34.99
 RELEASE DATE: DEC
 GAME DIFFICULTY: EASY/MED
 LIVES: N/A
 CONTINUES: N/A
 SKILL LEVELS: 3
 RESPONSIVENESS: SMOOTH



PRESENTATION 82%

Plenty of attractive presentation screens to keep you interested.

GRAPHICS 78%

Nice, speedy scrolling with detailed sprites and decent animation.

SOUND 71%

Not bad at all, with a variety of suitable spot effects.

PLAYABILITY 84%

Playing ice hockey has never been so much fun! Control of the team is simple and effective.

LASTABILITY 76%

The simple nature of the game may prove to be its downfall, but the two-player mode will have you digging out the cart months from now!

OVERALL 79%

A fine ice hockey simulation that's well worth checking out.