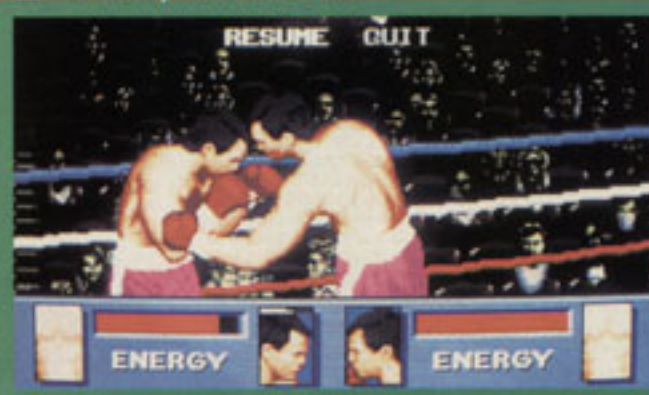


Ladies and gentleman, it's time for the main event of the evening! In the red corner, a man with biceps the size of Bournemouth, and in the blue corner a man with muscles in places most men don't have places! The intention of these two meatheads is to beat each other into unconsciousness!

This is the mad sport they call boxing, and while most people are boxing fans, few envy those two souls in the ring, doing their utmost to give their opponent a dusting. But Megadrive owners now have the chance to wallow in the thrill of the sport, but avoid the pain of it. Evander Holyfield's "Real Deal" Boxing casts the player as one of the contenders for the world's number one. Players choose to play as a boxer who has already established a ranking, or kick off a new boxing career by creating their own player. There are 29 opponents to choose and each of them has their strengths and weaknesses. To prove a formidable opponent, a player has to develop impenetrable blocking, a strong left and right hook, and a powerful uppercut. The number of rounds is a matter of choice, but only experienced fighters are able to go the distance. The ultimate challenge is beating Evander Holyfield himself. Until then, eat six raw eggs and a 14oz steak for breakfast, grab that frozen chicken from the freezer, hang it on a rope and punch away! Seconds out, round one!



▲ A family feud face-off.



▲ Go on son, into him!

DUCKING AND A DIVING

If a player wants a crack at the title he's going to need plenty of practice in the ring. Becoming dangerous in attack and impenetrable in defence takes time to master. The left and right hooks to the head and body needs timing well if a player is to catch his opponent off guard. Using the upper cut works most effectively when a player is in a ducking position. Blocking an opponent's furious assaults relies on anticipating his moves and preparing early. Total concentration is necessary to avoid hitting the deck.

RISING UP

If you don't like the look of any of the boxers in the exhibition mode, it is possible to create your own by choosing to start a new career. On the fashion front, this option gives you the chance to choose the colour of your boxers trunks, skin and hair. More important decisions involve whether or not to be left or right handed (this determines which arm is stronger), and what abilities (stamina, speed, power and defence) deserve the most attention.



▲ Boxer building baboonery.



EVANDER HOLYFIELD'S "REAL DEAL"

BOXING





▲ Fierce A button pressing revives him.

IT'S A KNOCKOUT!

If things take a turn for the worse, and energy levels are falling fast, a punch to the head leaves a player dazed on the floor. But knockouts don't have to mean defeat. If a player presses the A button fast enough he restores energy, and this gives him the chance to carry on. If his button bashing isn't fast enough though, the fight is over, and he is left with tweeting birds circling his head.

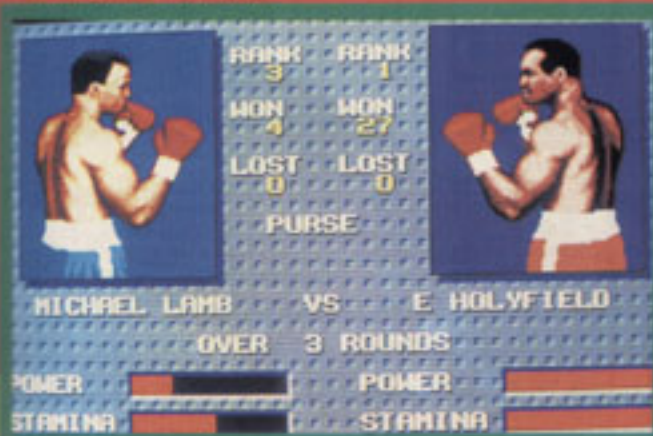


ENERGY

The on screen stats display the boxer's energy levels. Every time he sustains a hit it is reduced, but spending time effectively blocking causes it to rise again. Also displayed is an indicator showing the extent of injury to head and body. If an opponent's indicator shows signs of extensive head damage it is worth hitting him there because he is more vulnerable. Watch your own indicators though to make sure you don't end up with the cauliflower ears!



▲ A tooth-loosening left jab. Ooyah!



▲ The Iceman puncheth!



▲ Dynamite Don's stats of doom.

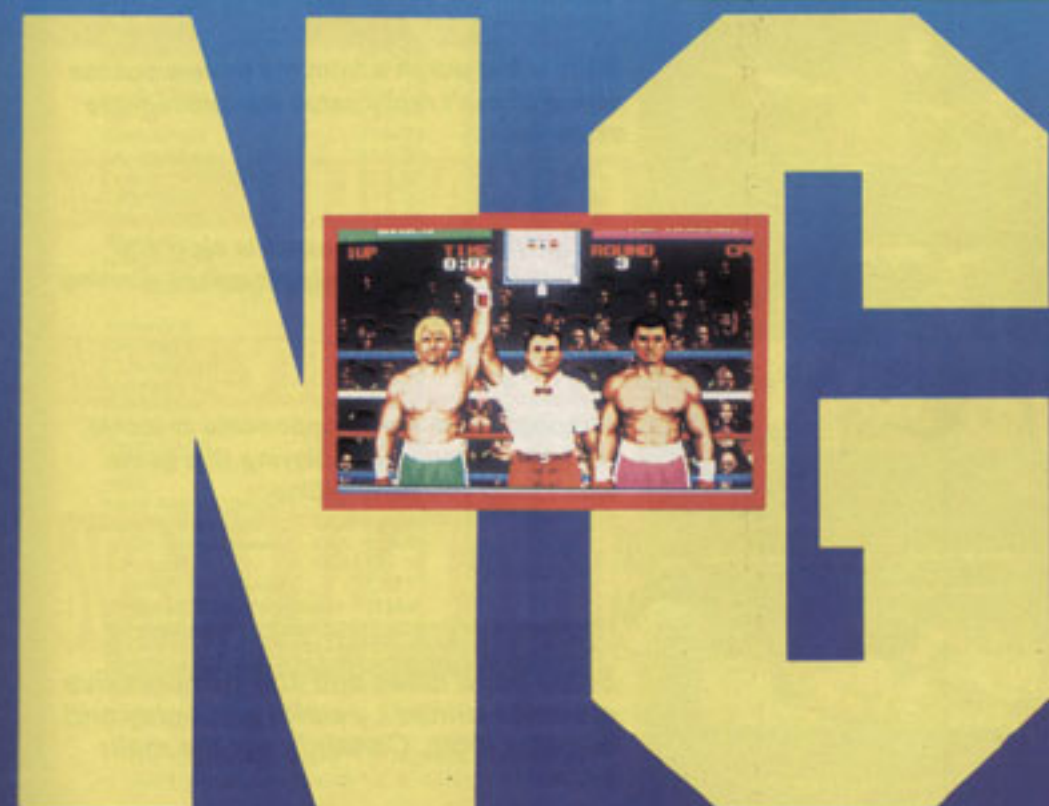


COMMENT



ROB

The screen shots make this look like a very impressive boxing sim, Unfortunately only the graphics fulfill their potential. The animation is very poor, and the stuttering punches make these boxers look more like characters out of a Madness video! There is no sense of flow whatsoever, which defeats any sense of realism created by the graphics. The action is so slow, I started wondering whether the fighters had been drugged! It's more like they're contemplating chess moves rather than laying punches! Much of the fault for this can be blamed on the lack of responsiveness in the joystick. This causes immense frustration when you've got an opponent on the ropes with the intention of finishing him off, but the inability to pull off fast punches prevents you from doing so. There are also some problems with the game logic, which means continuously applying a certain routine always floors your opponent. Thus the two-player option, which is usually a source of amusement, fails to satisfy. What this game has got in its favour is an excellent range of options, especially the idea of creating a player and building up his various skills. But that's why I found the poor standard of playability such a disappointment. Boxing it might be, but a knockout it certainly isn't!





▲ The slaphead gets a good slapping!



COMMENT

If the gameplay matched the same standards of the graphics, this would be a winner. Sadly, though, the most impressive thing about this is the still screenshots. The animation of the boxers is poor (they look more like they're fawning over each other than punching), the joyypad response is treacle slow and the game logic leaves the computer boxers with glass jaws - a few sessions is all you need to come up with a winning move that's guaranteed to beat each boxer every time. The presentation may be stunning, but my advice to boxing fans is to wait and see what George Foreman's and Mohammed Ali's boxing games are like before even thinking about buying this.

JULIAN



▲ Ray wipes the smile off Stavros' face.



DEDICATION

Every rookie to the ring needs dedication if they are to make a worthy challenger for the title. If a boxer wants to improve his stamina, speed, power and defence he has got to go about his training in the right way. Before a fight, players are able to choose three items from a possible eight. Each item chosen improves one or more aspects of their abilities. To improve stamina it is worth picking the jump rope or running shoes. The protein diet is beneficial all round, and sparring sharpens up defensive reflexes. Excellence in all aspects of boxing makes for the most accomplished performer.



▲ The Iceman resteth.



BY: SEGA

PRICE: £49.99

RELEASE DATE: AUGUST

GAME DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM

LIVES: N/A

CONTINUES: N/A

SKILL LEVELS: 1

RESPONSIVENESS: POOR



PRESENTATION 90%

An excellent range of options, including a save option for home-made boxers. There's a two-player mode too.

GRAPHICS 78%

Superbly drawn sprites and backdrops let down greatly by the poor animation.

SOUND 72%

Ooph's and uugh's from the boxers but the sound doesn't really catch the atmosphere of the sport.

PLAYABILITY 53%

The movement of the boxers is slow and awkward, and the game logic makes winning a matter of routine.

LASTABILITY 49%

Although there are 29 opponents to tackle, the lack of pleasure in playing this game won't keep you pummeling.

OVERALL 52%

Some good ideas and some impressive graphics ruined by awful gameplay and in-game logic. Certainly not the main event!