

# Retrogaming Times Monthly

Issue #3 - August 2004

*"Beware of smiley faces; they may really be ruthless killers!"*

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## Press Fire to Start

*by Adam King*

Greetings, gamers, and welcome to RetroGaming Times Montly *numero tres*. This month with the Summer Olympics only a few weeks away, we resume our focus on Olympic and Summer sports games. We have some reviews of various sports games across many different systms, including the NES and Sega. Plus we look at games from outside the US, including a German arcade machine.

With this issue I'm working on some new stuff for future editions. First of all I'm going to start each issue with a little video-game related quote. Try to figure out which game I'm talking about. Plus I decided that with this issue I may try to expand the coverage of the Nintendo and Sega systems. Not only will I have the 8-bit Face Off, I am also doing a column where I review games of a certain genre on both systems. We also have more arcade ports for the Radio Shack Color Computer, some games for the Vic 20, and other columns as well (I don't want to say everything here). So get ready, the games are about to resume.

## The Many Faces of . . . Summer Games I & II

*by Alan Hewston*

We continue our tribute to the Summer Olympic Games, with a 1984 home computer release by Epyx, Summer Games. Summer Games was a step up in the evolution that had its roots with the Atari 2600 decathlon type game "Sweat" by Starpath. Starpath was just about to branch out from the 2600 when it found itself heading out of the industry. With some investors in common, funding was found and Starpath merged with Epyx, a company with roots in the 8 bit computers. Combining their programming talents and experience, plus with 1984 being a Summer Olympics year as well, they had great success with Summer Games, eventually selling around a million copies. They followed it up with a very popular "Games" series on multiple systems.

Much of my research was found on 2 sites, the first one has a brief history of Epyx with an interview with the lead programmer for Summer Games, Stephen H. Landrum. This site by Tobias Weihmann

can be found at [www.fomalhaut.de/c64.shtml](http://www.fomalhaut.de/c64.shtml)

## Summer Games

This month your joysticks get a break (pun intended) from the punishment you may have subjected them to last month if you played too much "Track & Field". Epyx, known for adding strategy and thinking to action games came through again. There are no special controllers needed, and almost no bashing of controllers. But you'd better find a copy of the instruction manual in order to understand what the athletes must do to achieve their best results. Practice, practice and more practice, and some experimentation will be needed to both see what works best, and then to perfect the timing of your actions in real competition. The practice mode skips all formalities & music and lets you practice over and over very quickly. These events are designed so that you will continue to improve for quite some time. Finally, there's the ultimate challenge as you can get a perfect score in 2 different events. But then the downsides is that once you nail those perfect scores, you may not be back as often to play - playing solo at least. A few events are frustrating on every version, hence the lower addictiveness scores. As party games go, this is fantastic, with 8 player competition.



CuttleCart2 not included.

**Arcade:** None

**Home systems:** all developed by Epyx - first version - C64.

*Commodore 64* '84 [Lead programmer Steven H. Landrum] [UK distributed by US Gold], *Apple II* '84 [Chuck Sommerville & Kevin McClard], *Atari 2600* '84 [Randy Glover and either Tod Frye or Steve Baker], *Atari 8 bit* '84 [Landrum, Glover, Leupp, McGhie, Mudry, Nelson & graphics by Murphy], *Atari 7800* '87 [distributed by Atari], *Sinclair Spectrum* '88 [coded by CHOICE for US Gold]

**Rumor Mill:** Colecovision version started. Also released on Amiga, PC Booter & Atari ST.

**Sequels:** Summer Games II, Winter Games, World Games, The Games - Summer Edition, The Games -Winter Edition, California Games & California Games II.

**Home Version Similarities:** Except those in <> all home versions have: a brief opening ceremony that you can watch again any time, or skip on past it to the menu; menu is navigated by joystick or numeric entry <2600, 7800>; a choice of 1 to 8 players who enter up to 10 alpha numeric digits <2600 only choose the country> which then are recorded onto disk if you tie or set a World Record <2600, 7800>; there are no skill or difficulty options; choose to practice or play any 1 event, or to play all 8 events in sequence <2600 has different events, 7800 missing 2>; choose from 18 countries and a brief version of their national anthem (actually one country is Epyx); abort the playing of the anthem by moving the joystick; a choice of 1 or 2 joysticks, where 2 allows simultaneous players on all running and swimming heats - if only 1 stick or 1 player then a computer opponent is provided; there's no pause button, but no event is very long and there is an infinite delay that awaits a click of your button before any action continues - most excellent!! ; continue the next game with the same set of players or start over; view the opening ceremonies or World Records; each event has a semi 3-D perspective; and you can abort any game and return to the main menu <Atari 8 bit always replays opening ceremonies>. And as a final note, there are false starts called, so no fair cheating - and this could ruin your overall score when playing with multiple players.

The following event descriptions are based upon the C64 version.

**Pole Vault** - Side view of the track, bar and pit with good color, depth perception and details are combined with some fair animation. Hear every foot step, the cheer of the crowd when you clear certain heights and finally the clanging of metal when you finally fail to clear a height. A plop is heard when you land on the pit. You can pass on a height up to 5.0 m, set your grip to either low, medium or high. The action is a little bit slower than in real life, to help your timing - when to lower the pole, kick

upwards, push up and over the bar, then release the pole - where it stands in the pit.

**Diving** - Each of your 4 dives is announced via text screen. You view the entire 10m platform, part of the pool and the crowd. There's good color, variety, details and nice animation. Dive, then tuck to make as many revolutions as possible but you must slow down to achieve a vertical entry. The sound effects are simple, but well done - as a belly flop sounds loud & bad, an average dive has a fair amount of noise, but a clean vertical finish will earn you a crisp & quiet "rip" upon entry.

**4X400 Relay** - Playing approx. twice real time speed, helps shorten the duration ~ 90 seconds. View the track from the side - nice color, some details, but not much animation. Only 2 lanes will have runners and the Starter will tell you to take your marks, get set, and go - then he fires the gun. A cloud of smoke emerges as the track begins to scroll. There are only 2 hash marks, so you'll have to keep track of the clock or internally know when to push to sprint faster. The runners speeds are inconsistent and not smooth moving - either choppy, stopping, or even moving backwards at times. Because they remain near the left edge (running L to R) a slowed runner can drift off the screen completely. View your energy bar to see how much you have left, but don't run out until you get to the baton passing zone. The unrealistic lack of contact during the baton pass will confuse you until you've practiced some. As you can guess, this is a frustrating event, plus you get no split times or hash marks to judge your improvements. A lot of frustrating practice may be required before you can see and know how to make significant improvements in your performance. The event is really quiet and almost boring and too bad it was not saved for last, ala the 10 K run in the Olympic marathon.

**100 m Dash** - D'oh! This event should have either come before the 4X400 or not be included at all. It does not fit in to the thinking game concept. It's a brute force/speed event, just wiggle that stick any direction - the faster the better. Unlike the relay, there is NO power/speed bar - when it is needed most. Why does this 10 second race last a brutal 25 seconds? I wonder what event they could have emulated in its place. Like in the relay, there's good color, variety and detail, but not much animation. There are no hash marks to help the scrolling effect, and if anyone slows down, they'll drift off-screen and feel "left" out. Why not display the runners on the right and make it scroll at a speed equal to the runner's max?

**Gymnastics** - We see a fair amount of details in this indoor arena, and some different colors (yellow & purple or dark blue) than seen outdoors. The light fixtures hang from the roof, high above the arena where you'll vault over the pommel horse. Although the action may appear a bit slow, it is well done, and slowed to help you to visualize and react to all that goes on so quickly in real-life. The gracefulness of the female athlete is observed in animated detail in many ways. First she makes her initial jog (should be a sprint), followed by her leap onto the springboard, a ½ twisting jump to the horse, where she rotates to vertical (upwards) and presses off hard with her hands, followed by a quick tuck into a pike which 3 rotations later opens back up into a vertical landing. If she doesn't stick the landing, she can quickly adjust left or right to catch her balance and still receive a warm ovation from the crowd. Whew! I'm exhausted just thinking about it. Factor in that chance to be precise at every move of the joystick and earn a perfect "10" and you'll love this event. The addictiveness factor should kick in and you'll play it again and again until you get those back to back 10's and lock in the high score on the disk.

**Freestyle Relay** - This is the longest and easily the most demanding event, and although played out at almost real time speed, it still only takes a couple minutes to play each heat. As in the running events, there are 4 lanes but only 2 are used. The scrolling action is good and steady with lots of crowd color and a fair amount of swimming animation by the maximum of 4 swimmers seen (1 waiting & 1 swimming for each lane). The audio effects are few, but pretty good as you can hear the constant thrusting of your arms in the water with every stroke. Need we mention that every version shows only a one-armed swimmer :-). If you miss-time your strokes, you'll hear and see a drop in stroke frequency, and in your speed too. Not too long after the starting side has scrolled off screen, you'll notice the warning buoys for the far side - where you turnaround at the 50 m point. If you time the reversal well, you'll stay underwater longer and continue a good pace. Repeat every 100 m with a fresh swimmer.

**100 m Freestyle** - The final aquatic event is an exact duplicate of the relay, but of course simpler as you swim out & back only once. Clearly this is not a unique event, and if any event should have been dropped, or preceded by others, the 100 m Freestyle is it. The 100 m dash was at least a different game than the 4X400 relay.

**Skeet Shoot** - A familiar hunting tune announces that the best (IMHO) event has been saved for last. This event is unlike the others and requires the most action, perfection, and hand eye coordination. You only need to be inside the sights to smash each clay pigeon into a million pieces (OK only like 22 pieces). Push the fire button to "pull" - release each volley of either 1 or 2 clay pigeons, then quickly line up your sight. There are 25 targets in all and you only get one shot for each target in each volley. You get one or two volleys of either one or two pigeons each at each of the 8 stations. Each competition, you follow the same sequence of stations & volleys, plus the starting point and path of each pigeon volley is unique, but the same for that pigeon, from game to game. Memorize and execute - pull, aim & shoot. But do not forget that your gun is heavy and it will droop. Your score will continue to improve and there's that desire to earn a perfect score of 25. You can even get all 25 targets in 24 shots - if you try. This event has the best sound effects, is the busiest and has the most detail, but limited animation.

### **Award's Ceremony**

After each event, medals are awarded, and for the overall grand championship, 5 pts for the Gold, 3 pts for the Silver and 1 point for the bronze. At the conclusion of the games, the Grand Champion is the top overall scorer. When playing solo, I always choose France, since their flag is near the starting point, and the anthem is among the shortest - keeping the action moving along quicker.

### **World Records**

World Records tied or broken during any competition are immediately entered to disk replacing the old ones. In practice mode there are no names entered, nor country chosen, nor any chance for a medal - just quickly practice the event over and over without any ceremonies or awards.

Ad scan of Summer Games: <http://home.arcor.de/cybergoth/adscans/sg.jpg>

### **Disqualified: Sinclair Spectrum (N/A)**

DQ is only because I do not have this system. The World of Spectrum has some screenshots and the online manual tells of only 4 players, but appears to have all events and no differences from other versions.

### **Have Nots: Apple II (37)**

My first reaction was that most events are too slow, and the audio effects are lacking in this version. Gameplay is awesome (10) and complete. No elements are missing from any event, but some are a bit more frustrating, and seem to play by themselves. This hurts the Addictiveness, but it is still decent (6). The biggest disappointment is this is solo play - with NO simultaneous races. The action is a bit slower, the disk access although the fastest is hurt by requiring 2 disk sides (flipping disks). Finally the controls and audio deficiencies make learning and playing more frustrating than other versions. The <Esc> key aborts any event quickly. Graphics are beautiful (8) but could be improved with more color, variety and animation. Sound is OK (6), mostly hurt by the internal speakers. All the musical scores are well done and complete for each country, but several key sound effects are either: missing (no crowd cheers for Gymnastics & Pole Vault), lifeless (running), or just plain bad (no difference between a belly flop & a rip in diving). The swimming sound is annoying and does not change pace to match the speed, so you cannot tell how you are doing. Controls are at best, only very good (7), where the analog joystick kills any chances in most event, especially Skeet Shooting. The keyboard works OK, but never as good as a joystick (and still impossible for Skeet Shooting. There's a startup option for a mouse, but I do not have one so your mileage may be better. As always - only on disk.

### **Have Nots: Atari 2600 (41)**

My first reaction is what game is this? Summer Games 1.5? With the 1987 date, the programmers couldn't help but steal 1 event that showed up in Summer Games 2. And . . . why not create new ones as well. It is somewhat different than the C64 original, but actually well done for the 2600, and even enters the medal race. Does anyone know for sure who programmed this one? Randy Glover is probably correct as the lead programmer. But I've also seen credits for both Fry and Baker assisting. Gameplay is outstanding (9), with pretty much a full menu, save for typing in your name, ceremonies

and & World Records. Instead, each player picks 1 of 8 listed countries. You can choose to play any one event, or start from the beginning and play them all. The sequence of events has been changed and there are only 7 events where 3 are new events - Hurdles, Pommel Horse (Gymnastics) and Rowing. Gymnastics is the biggest change, where the very fun vault is replaced by a complicated, time consuming and tedious session on the Pommel Horse. It is highly creative and intriguing, but not likely a 2600 fan favorite. Mount and dismount properly and in between, rotate as fast as possible, without falling. There's a side view of the action plus a unique top view of the hands on the horse. The Rowing event is good, but swiped directly from Summer Game 2 - cheaters. Stroke those oars Left and then Right in perfect rhythm. Finally, the Hurdle event is a completely new running concept where you hold the stick to the right to run at full speed, and then upwards to leap over each hurdle. Addictiveness is exciting (7). There are no high scores, but then no delays on disk meaning immediate gameplay and no delays from the action. But be careful, as the action can continue before you want it to (pressing fire) and your score might get wiped out before you see it. Graphics are outstanding (8) with a lot of color, Activision-like type detail & variety. The lack of 3-D perspective and scenery are more than made up for by the larger sprites - two are combined to make for lots more detail and fantastic animation. The split screens and scrolling in running and rowing events are sweet. The details are sparse, but function well - with nothing being misleading. Rowing even has a speed/power bar. No opening ceremonies, just music & a torch. No crowd to be seen or heard, but Sound is still pretty effective (7). Nearly all the anthems and music are adequate and present. The effects are different, and not as good as others, but on the good side, there is always something to be heard. Controls are perfect (10).

### Silver Medal: Atari 8 bit & Atari 7800 (44)

#### Atari 8 bit

My first reaction was excited to learn that there was a cart version as well. The original '84 version by Epyx was only on disk, but the '88 release for the XE by Atari was on cart. There's a new title screen but it's otherwise identical in every way except for disk access. So, if you want World Records then play it via disk. Otherwise, the cart version is much faster and will never wear on your disk drive. Gameplay is stupendous (10) with everything in place as on the original. Addictiveness is very good (7) but has some drawbacks. Like the Apple ][, 2 disk sides are required making for more delays. The disk access seems to be the slowest, (once the original game is loaded), and the first 2 events are on the back side, making for more disk flips right off the starting block. The cart has no loading delays, but this is cancelled by the lack of high scores. Unlike all others, the menu resets after each game, making for more delays and frustration, re-navigating every time. Finally, if you want to abort and start over, you must wait for the disk to re-load the opening ceremonies, play them out, and then load the menu again. No . . . you cannot abort the ceremony - this makes it re-load again. Graphics are outstanding (9), where a few events are the best - having better animation or detail - but always the lack of variety and/or odd colors detract. The small baton on the relay is almost missing completely. Sound is enjoyable (8), with some events better than the C64, but some effects are missing or poor. The Pole Vault lacks both footfalls and the crowd cheer. In Diving, the rip sound is good, but everything else sounds the same from an 8 to a 0. The diving bang we hear seems to better suited for the Skeet Shoot. Controls are perfect (10). Disk and cart versions are semi-rare.

#### Atari 7800

My first reaction was disappointment that they failed to include all 8 events. Unlike the 2600, which added back in some events, the gameplay here draws a penalty for simply deleting the Pole Vault and Skeet Shoot - costing it the gold medal. If one considers the relays to be the same game as the sprints, then this version really only has 4 unique events compared to 6 on the others. Overall, I feel the 7800 is the best at the most categories, and most events but cumulatively it is still not a point better than the Atari 8 bit. Gameplay is outstanding (9) as the full menu & options, with selecting names for each contestant, plus a new option to "play some events". The Addictiveness is outstanding (8), and although I've dropped the score due to the lack of World Records, it gains that back by having no (disk) delays. In fact this is the fastest version, with aborts available for every musical score &



ceremony by pressing fire. But be careful as you can also skip on to the next event missing your score/result. The Freestyle relay is extremely slow and boring and you cannot tell what you are doing. The swimmer ends up on the edge of the screen, and you're supposed to use his hands as a guide. Graphics are about the best, excellent (9), with plenty of detail color, animation and scrolling. The running is smoother here with no inconsistent or jerky movements in the action. Sound is very crisp (8), possibly the best of the lot. Controls are perfect (10) - but, as usual, I'd recommend using a 2600 stick over the 7800 style.

### **Gold Medal: Commodore 64 (45)**

My first reaction was how awesome it was for this type of game to keep track of the World Records on disk. Every time I found someone with this game, I'd have them load it and check and compare the records on their disk. I'd write down and compare all scores that I saw with my own. This always gave you something to shoot for - ie VG axiom #1 - "There is always someone better". Gameplay is the best, magnificent (10) and really makes for a complete package. Addictiveness is enjoyable (8), but as noted previously, a couple events make all versions worse. Graphics are wonderful (9), Sound is crisp (8), and Controls are perfect (10). Found only on disk.

Thanks - go out to Bertrand / Atari Frog at <http://www.atarimania.com/> who verified the differences between the Atari cart and disk versions. For those who are familiar with the databases found at Gamebase64 and the World of Spectrum, Bertrand and the folks at Atarimania hope to continue to build their database for all Atari computers and systems. Check it out and see if you can contribute to their efforts. Special thanks to Chad Schell and his Cuttle Cart 2, which made this review possible. I got mine to work on the first try, and I'd have to say that it's the greatest Atari 2600/7800 product of all-time - bar none. Finally have the equivalent of that elusive \$5, Summer Games 7800 cart on my CC2.

World Records on the original disks:

These are obviously the game's programmers with some relatively easy scores to beat.

Pole Vault - Randy G. 4.00 m; Diving - Stephen L. 50.0; 4X400 m Relay - Jon L. 3:45; 100 m Dash - Brian M. 10.5; Gymnastics - Stephen L. 5.6; Freestyle Relay - Erin M. 04:22.5; 100 m Freestyle - Scott M. 01:05.9; Skeet Shooting S Martin 10

## **Summer Games II**

OK, since I only have 2 of the 4 classic versions there will be no actual competition for this event (game). We'll still review the events but just practice (ie keep track of the scores). So there will be no world records set and no medals to be won here. The second web site I need to mention is the Epyx Shrine <http://home.arcor.de/cybergoth> with a fair number of screenshots for every Epyx game, plus most programming credits. For Summer Games II they say:

"As usual, the best overall performance is found on the C64 version, since this was the target platform the game was designed for. The Amiga and Atari ST versions have slightly improved graphics compared to the C64, but it was certainly not state of the art on these machines. Both the Amiga and the ST versions could've done way better. Worst looking version is the Spectrum, though it's almost offering the same gameplay as all other versions. The original CGA/DOS Booter version still runs on modern hardware, though the kayaking event is unplayable on nowadays ultra-fast machines. I'd recommend playing the C64 version."



Home systems: all developed by Epyx - first version - C64. C64 '85 [Epyx Scott Nelson, Jon Leupp, Chuck Summerville, Kevin Norman & Larry Clague, with graphics by Michael Kosaka] [UK distributed by US Gold & in Germany by Rushware] Apple II '85 [K-Byte, for Epyx, John Stouffer, Jeff Webb,

Doug Matson, Greg Broniak, Tim Grost, Matt Decker, Vera Petrusha, Ken Evans, Pat Findling, Dr. Keith Dreyer & Chris Oesterling] *Sinclair Spectrum* '88 [US Gold: Einstein & graphics by Steve Hawkes] *Amstrad* [US Gold: Einstein & Steve Hawkes]

Ad scan for Summer Games 2 <http://home.arcor.de/cybergoth/adscans/sg2.jpg>

### Commodore 64 (48)

My first reaction was how cool it is to play 8 new events, but at the same time have an option to include the 8 from the Summer Games I as well. With 16 events to play and up to 8 players - this can make quite a showing at a party. All the same Gameplay elements as before, plus the older 8 games is even better than awesome (11) oops (10). The Addictiveness jump a step to (9) fantastic because there are no repeats in this new set of 8 events, and nearly every event has more gameplay elements or strategy with no drawbacks of any kind. Granted, the game now comes on 2 disk sides, so you have a little more delays, but not much. The Graphics are better than before, with more awesome on screen action - pretty much a work of art (10). There's lots more variety, creativity, scrolling, animation and even more detail, with more objects in motion or animated than before. The flags of many nations are present all over the place. The eye candy is not over until the games come to a close - closing ceremony with a dramatic H.E.R.O. like backpack flyer who makes a few passes and waves to the crowd, followed by fireworks and a blimp with advertising. Sound is first class (9) with more and newer effects, and music before every event, and after most. Controls are perfect (10). Available only on disk.

### Apple II (41)

My first reaction was impressed that the original 8 events would also work here as well. Gameplay (10) remains magnificent, but has even better events. Graphics are superlative (9) with a bit more variety, color and lots more animation. Sound is more vibrant and exciting (7), with more music and effects. No flyby or music in the closing ceremonies. Controls are impressive (8) as the joystick action is much improved. Addictiveness easily gains a point with the increased number of games but no additional delays to make it even more fun to play (7). Only bad thing is that the abort <Esc> has been nullified, so you must be more patient.

Some brief notes based upon the C64 version of the new events.

**Triple Jump** - This is the simplest event, probably good to start off with, and already much better than the average event from the original. Watch the runner, get psyched, flex and bend, then start his pursuit of the hop, skip and a jump. But wait, watch that giant jumbotron in the stands, show a replay of your splash into the pit.

**Rowing** - As already seen on the 2600 port. The split screen action with nice scrolling, power bar, splashing water is refreshing and the skill albeit simplistic, is repetitive, and demanding - as is real life rowing. Effects of each stroke are nice and meter signs along with wave bounced buoys top off the animation.

**Javelin** - Similar to the Activision Decathlon or Track & Field event, rapid fire is needed, but also some nice footwork and timing to get the best throw. Unlike T&F, you have no angle to read. There are footfalls to help get your rhythm and the final cheer of the crowd to reward you. Equestrian - Great music abounds this very creative event. There is nice color and detail and scrolling with a little more duration and randomness than most. The sequence of obstacles and the nature of your horse must be learned with practice.

**High Jump** - Not as easy as you think. A lot of practice will be required to time that sprint and avoid the bar. Multiple skills at the same time make this the most frustrating event. The athlete's mannerisms are well animated.

**Fencing** - Now we're talking head to head competition, and a round robin tournament. What, no opponent? Epyx supplies a droid fencer. The AP2 version offers 4 skill levels (plus random) for the droid - what a hoot. There is so much action, effects, music, animation and possibly some AI processing by the droid to catch you off guard. This 3 minute test of mind and reflexes is really

creative. On the AP2, this one plays too slowly, and the stick is very poor.

**Cycling** - Almost a joystick breaker, but not quite as you must rotate the joystick in a circle, just staying ahead of matching the rotation of the bicycle wheels. The rhythm and gradual speed up are very critical - not a brute force assault on the stick. The spit screen, scrolling, meter markers, flags waving and cheers make this one quick, but fun.

**Kayaking** - Once again they put my favorite event at the end. If you like obstacle courses and games with lots of ways to keep making a little more progress each time, until you're ready to break your joystick in half, then this is an event for you to play solo. If competing versus a friend, you better play it cool, as once you loose it, time will eat up quickly. The rush of the rapids and variable roar makes this splendid country river setting delightful. The crowd is spread out along the river waving you one. There is nice animation, music and good gate effects. The final tally and penalties are added up on a separate screen showing a condensed version of the map. I'm still not sure how I ever scored a 1:17. We played this one so much in my college days as people would enjoy just watching others play the event. And . . . no race is ever the same. There's so much creativity and randomness here that you have to give it a few tries to see if you love it or hate it.

Survey Time :::: OK, you made it through this very long review - and it would have been longer if there were a 7800 or Atari 8 bit version of SG2 to compete. Now . . . if you love these games, please drop me an email me and tell me which event is your favorite for each game, and on what system. If enough people reply, then I'll post the results.

Come back next month, for a final Olympic tribute in the Many Faces of "Decathlon" on the Apple ][, Colecovision, C64, Atari 2600, Atari 5200 & 8 bit computers. Contact Alan Hewston at:

[Hewston95@NOSPAMstratos.net](mailto:Hewston95@NOSPAMstratos.net) or visit the Many Faces of site:

<http://my.stratos.net/~hewston95/RT/ManyFacesHome.htm>

## *The 8-Bit Summer Olympics*

*by Adam King*

Wanna compete in the Summer Olympics, but can't run a two-minute mile or bench press an elephant? No problem, simply look to your Nintendo and Sega systems. You can enjoy the thrills and chills of Olympic competiton by simply using your controller, and you don't have to travel to far off lands. Plus you can compete against your friends for bragging rights as well as medals. If you do poorly remember this: it's better to embarrass yourself in front of you friend, rather than embarrass yourself in front of the whole world.

So here's a look as some Olympic-type games for both 8-bit systems.

### **NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM**

#### **Track & Field (1987 Konami)**

This title is a port of the button-mashing arcade classic, with some new stuff thrown in. This game features eight events: five from the arcade game (100m Dash, Long Jump, 110m Hurdles, Javelin Throw and High Jump; the Hammer Throw is absent), as well as three new ones, Archery, Triple Jump, and Skeet Shooting. One player can play against the computer or two players can go head to head. Most of the games are played by mashing the buttons rapidly. Others, such as the Long Jump and Triple Jump, have you use the buttons to build up speed, then use the control pad to set your angle. Each event has a minimum qualifying score. You can keep going as long as you qualify for each event; if you fail to reach the qualifying score, the game ends.

This game is simplistic compared to the later track & field titles, but that doesn't mean it's not fun. The graphics show the game's age. The characters are a little on the small side, but they do resemble the arcade sprites. There's some decent tunes, like the intro music and the theme that plays at the start of each event, while the sound effects aren't very memorable. As I said the controls rely on button-



mashing, so the only real difference is how long both your hands and the control pad can hold out. Most of the events are simple, but some are complicated, like the hurdles since you have to mash the buttons and push Up to jump over the hurdles, while others such as the High Jump and Skeet Shooting are too difficult to pass. Still it's a blast to button-mash your way to victory, especially against a friend. Not quite a gold-medal winner, but certainly gets a silver.

### **Track & Field II (1988 Konami)**

A year after releasing the first title, Konami put out this sequel, which expands on the original. This title features 15 events, almost twice as much as the first game: Fencing, Taekwondo, Triple Tump, Pole Vault, Freestyle Swimming, Kayaking, High Dive, Archery, Clay Pigeon Shooting, Hurdles, Hammer Throw, and the Horizontal Bar Gymnastics. There are also three different game modes. Training mode lets you practice while Championship is the main competition. You can represent one of 10 countries and go through four days of three events each. Each of the events has different control methods. While some events still employ the button mashing method, others require several controller movements. Much like the first game, each event has a certain minimum score you must reach. You must qualify in all three events of the day to move on to the next day, otherwise your game ends. There's also the Versus mode, which features two player versions of Fencing, Taekwondo, and for some reason, Arm Wrestling.

This game succeeds in some places, but falls short in others. The graphics blow away the first game. All the characters are large and move very realistically. The sounds are also excellent, with numerous voice clips throughout the game. The controls vary from game to game, and some take a lot of practice to get down. The biggest concern is that the game is mainly a one-player affair, with little two-player action. The Versus mode doesn't offer much head-to-head action with only three events. Two players can also compete against each other in the Practice mode. At least the Championship mode offers a decent challenge for one person. Many of the events require several tries before you can reach the qualifying score to move on. Fortunately you get passwords after each day to save your progress. While *Track & Field II* does provide a decent Olympiad for solo play, those looking for two-player fun may want to go with the original.

### **Gold Medal Challenge '92 (1992 Capcom)**

This game brings the competition of the Barcelona Olympics to your NES, and the results are staggering. Up to eight players can compete, and they can choose from one of twelve countries to represent. This game features 18 events set in six different programs. There's several running events (100m Dash, 200m Dash, 400m Dash, 110m Hurdles, 4X100m Relay), swimming events (100m Backstroke, 100m Butterfly, 100m Freestyle, 100m Breaststroke, 200m Medley), field events (Long Jump, Shot Put, Triple Jump, Javelin Throw), as well as Weightlifting and the Vaulting Horse. Once again you make your runner compete by repeatedly mashing the buttons through most of the events, but some of the events require other skills as well, such as using the control pad to set your angle in the field events. The swimming events rely on rhythm rather than fast fingers. Also stamina comes into play during the running and swimming events. If you run too hard for too long, your runner gets tired and stops to catch his breath, so slow down when he gets tired. In swimming you have to remember to breathe every few strokes, or your swimmer will drown for a few seconds, and that could cost you the game. In each event you have to make the qualifying score to be eligible for a medal. Even if you get 1st place, if you didn't get the qualifying time, no medal for you. At the end of each program you take part in last event, the Marathon. Fortunately, this is a simulation-type deal. You look at a map of the terrain in each leg as well as your runner's stamina and set your runner's speed accordingly. Again you have to watch that stamina, or you'll finish the race dead last.

I must say Capcom did a great job on this sports game. The graphics are decent, with some good animations for the characters, especially when they fail to qualify (they cry their eyes out). The sound effects are good, while the background music ranges from okay to annoying. It may be easy to dismiss this game as just another button masher, but some of the events involve some strategy, especially where stamina is concerned. The computer opponents put up a decent challenge, but of

course the real fun is with two player head-to-head competition, and you'll find plenty of that here. If there's fewer than eight players, the computer picks countries to fill out the other spots. The game provides scores for the computer players, even ones you're not playing against, so sometimes even if you go all out, the computer may still get that gold you thought you won. Another great feature is the game pak includes a batter backup. After each event your progress is automatically save, so when you want to take a break from playing, you can resume your Olympics another time. Plus it also saves any world records that have been broken, and lets you enter your name for posterity. No doubt about it *Gold Medal Challenge* deserves that gold medal.

## SEGA MASTER SYSTEM

*(Note: both these games were not released in the US, but were released in Europe and Australia. They will work in American SMS units.)*

### Summer Games (1991 Sega/Epyx)

Before you ask, yes, this is a port of the classic Epyx title on the Commodore 64, though not all of it came to the Sega system. Up to four players can compete, and they can choose from eight countries to represent. Only five out of the eight events found in the Commodore 64 version: Pole Vault, 100m Springboard Diving, 100m Dash, Gymnastics, and the 100m Freestyle. Each event requires different skills with the controller, from plotting gymnastics moves to simply mashing the buttons for the 100m Dash. Winning gets you medals, which translate into points, and whoever has the most points at the end of the competition is the world champion.

The graphics are good, with some good details here and there. Each event has some background music that's actually more annoying than good, while the sound effects are barely audible. The controls work fine, and take some practice to get down. The main problem is the game is too short. With only five events, and none of them very long, these Olympic games are over much too quickly. Plus there's no head-to-head competition at all. The two events that could have pitted player 1 against player 2, the 100m Dash and the 100m Freestyle, don't do that; you have to race against the clock in swimming or a computer pacer in running. The Computer pacer doesn't even put up a challenge. I'm sorry to say that *Summer Games* on the Sega is not an Olympic-caliber cartridge.

### Olympic Gold (1992 US Gold)

This officially-licensed cart was released around the time of the '92 Summer Olympics in Barcelona, and was also released on the Sega Genesis and Game Gear in the US. Here up to four players can compete in seven events: the 100m Sprint, the Pole Vault, 110m Hurdles, Hammer Throw, Archery, 3m Springboard Diving, and 22m Swimming. Each event has several rounds, or heats, that you have to go through. At the end of each event if you get in the top three places you get presented with a medal, which gives you medal points. If you want to be champion of the world, you must have the most points at the end of the game.

The graphics are pretty good. The characters are a good size and have some decent animation, and the backgrounds are okay. Once again more bad audio from the Sega system. The background music is okay, but there's not much in the way of sound effects. The controls are easy to use. While most of the events come down to simple button-bashing, the rest require some strategy, which helps balance things, not to mention gives your hands a chance to relax. The 1-player mode is decent; the running and swimming events have computer pacers to keep things exciting. But the real fun comes from playing against your friends. Unfortunately, you can't compete head-to-head; you have to take turns. The challenge is a little uneven in some spots. Some events, like the Pole Vault and Hammer Throw, are a little frustrating, while the Archery is too easy against the computer. One more thing is this game seems a little too short. Overall *Olympic Gold* certainly puts up a medal-caliber performance. All you Sega die-hards looking for some Olympic competition will not be disappointed.



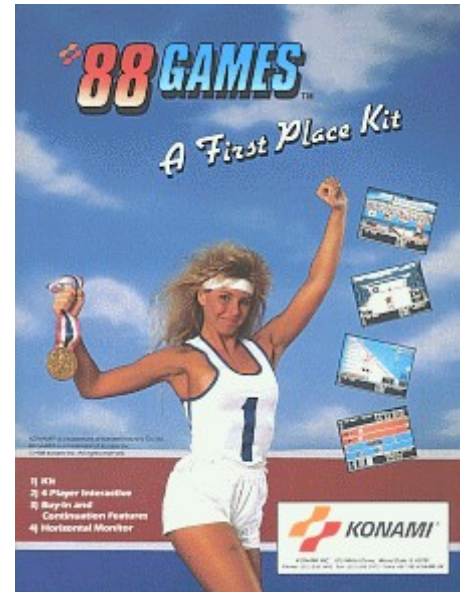
Time to do some more MAME reviews! This month, continuing the Olympic spirit, I will be reviewing Konami's '88 Games. I am also going to finish my review of the "free" games by reviewing *Poly Play*. You can find the ROM for this game legally and for free by searching on google or just going to this link where I found them (<http://www.mameworld.net/legal.html>). The first game I will review is '88 Games.

### '88 Games (copyright © 1988 Konami)

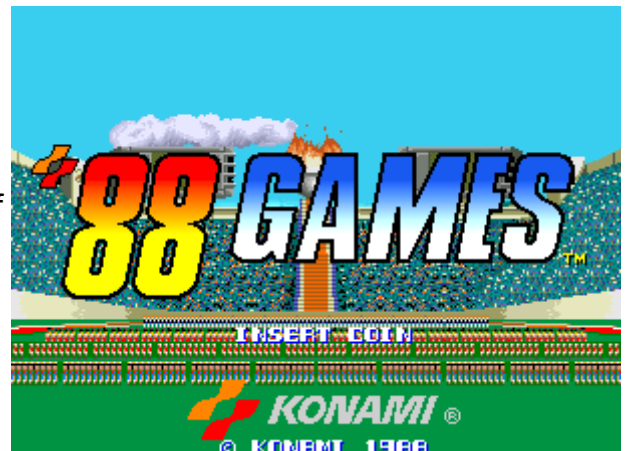
'88 Games is an Olympic "event" game following in the footsteps of the *Track & Field*, *Hyper Sports*, and *Summer Games*. In this game four players (two simultaneously) can compete in nine events for the Championship. The nine events are 100m Dash, Long Jump, 400m Relay (qualifying), Skeet Shooting, 110m Hurdles, Archery, Javelin Throw, High Jump, and 400m Relay (final). The controls are 2 buttons to "run" (hit them as fast as you can) and an action button (to jump or throw).

Basic controls for the events are as follows:

- 100m Dash: Bash the "run" buttons as fast as you can. You will run faster if they are alternating. Long jump: Bash the "run" buttons as fast as you can. As you approach the line, hit the "action" button. Try for a 45-degree angle for the best jump. I like how the game switches to a different camera angle for the actual jump. It gives it more graphics depth.
- 400m Relay (qualifying round): This is the most annoying of all the events. It all comes down to timing. Bash the "run" buttons as fast as you can. When you get to the relay area. Hit the action button to pass the baton. If you don't do it correctly, you will run into the next person in the relay and lose precious time. Practice is the key!
- Skeet Shooting: Use alternating buttons to aim left or right and press the action button to shoot when it's lined up with the skeet. This isn't too hard, but may take some practice to master. Only 2 skeets initially come out per "turn." One from the right then one from the left. Pay attention to the special orange skeets (500-1000).
- 110m Hurdles: Bash the "run" buttons as fast as you can. As you approach the hurdles, hit the "action" button.
- Archery: Use the action button to shoot. Aim for a 20-25 degree angle. Shoot based on the wind. If the wind is to the left, shoot sooner. If the wind is to the right, shoot later. You can score a 950 for a "perfect" bulls eye.
- Javelin: Bash the "run" buttons as fast as you can. As you approach the line, hit the "action" button. Try for a 35-45 degree angle for the best throw.
- High Jump: Bash the "run" buttons as fast as you can. When you approach the pole, hit the "action" button. Try for a 45-55 degree angle for the best jump.



*The original '88 Games arcade flyer*



*The title screen*

- 400m Relay (final round): This is exactly the same event as the qualifying round, but with a lower qualifying time.

I don't think this game is quite as fun as it's predecessors. I think the graphics are much better and the events are not as monotonous as Track & Field but the fact is Hyper Sports perfected it 4 years earlier. The background graphics are very nice. I especially like the "3-D" opening. The animation/cut scene for breaking a world record is also a nice touch. As usual, all four of the contestants look exactly the same other than hair, clothes, and skin color but they are much more detailed than the prequels (contestants can have beards now). The sounds are very good and the voice comes through very clear and well done. One special difference they made for this game was the ability to continue with a drop of a quarter or even for other players to jump in the game at any time. As with the other 2 games, use the "Run Like H\*\*\*\*" cheat in MAME to ease the difficulty level. Overall, I'd say it's a blast to play on it's own, but falls well short of it's predecessors. This game screams multiplayer as well. It only gets better with 2, 3, or 4 players.

**FINAL SCORE: 6.5/10**

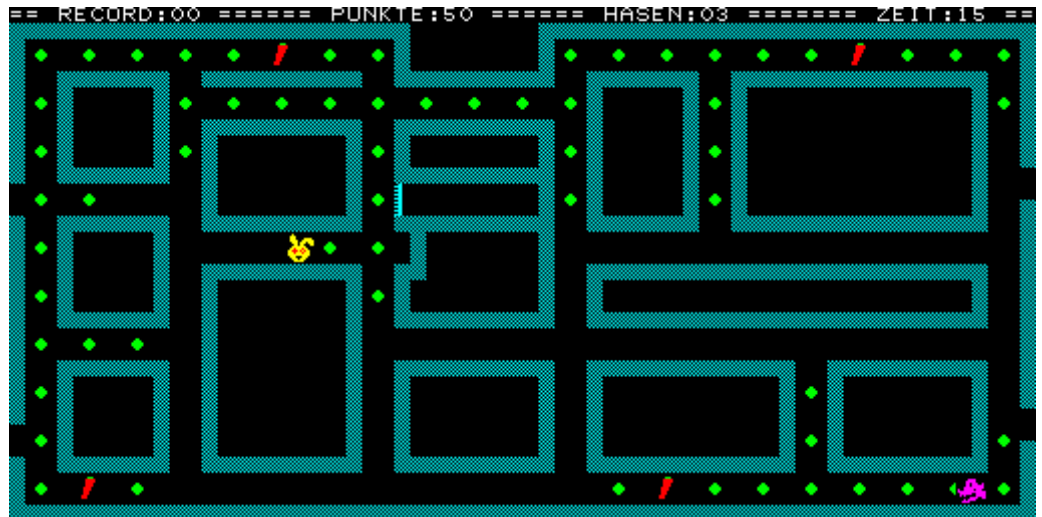
#### 88 Games Trivia:

This game also goes by the name *Konami '88*. Prequels to this game are *Track & Field* and *Hyper Sports* (both reviewed in last month's issue).

#### [Poly Play \(copyright © 1985 VEB Polytechnik\)](#)



The original Poly Play arcade cabinet



Pac Man or Lock 'n Chase?

*Poly Play* is an East German arcade machine with seven different games. It was really something unique considering the eastern standards back then. Playing this game makes me realize just how behind in technology they really were. There were eight games to play on the machine. Following is a list and small description of each of them.

- Hirschjagd (Deer Hunt) - Pretty simple. Just run around the screen "hunting" deer.
- Hase Und Wolf (Hare and Wolf) - See screen above. It's a lot like a Pac Man clone.
- Abfahrtslauf (Departure Run/Skiing) - It plays a lot like the Intellivision Skiing title by Mattel.
- Schmetterlinge (Butterflies) - Run around the screen capturing the butterflies.



- Schiessbude (Shoot Hut) - This is a Carnival Clone.
- Autorennen (Motor Race) - Race the computer in a race reminiscent of Atari's Indy 500.
- Merkspiel (Noticing Play) - This is a memory match game. Pretty simple to learn.
- Wasserrohrbruch (Water Pipe Break) - Catch the water in your bucket before it floods.

Wow. What can I say about this game? Eight games that are just clones of already popular arcade games that were out before this came out. The only difference is that the graphics look like a bad text graphic game on the TRS-80! I've heard better sound from my PC speaker, and all the instructions are in German! Other than the Carnival clone, this game has no replay value whatsoever. This game would've been great if it had been made around the time of Asteroids, but this is far below the radar for the mid-80s. Steer clear of this one unless you are really bored!

**FINAL SCORE: 3/10**

#### *Poly Play Trivia:*

This was the second and last arcade machine built in East Germany. Its predecessor was a Pong-like game with a standard home console in the inside. There were maybe only a few thousand of both built for the market behind the Iron Curtain.

Brett Burnell is an Applications Developer for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. In his free time he can be seen programming video games, being a referee for Twin Galaxies, going to Retrogaming shows, or just playing with his kids. His official website is at <http://www.smsforce.com/>. He can be reached at [smsforce@smsforce.com](mailto:smsforce@smsforce.com).



Last issue I looked at the 2 most popular classic systems, the Commodore 64 and the Atari 2600. Obviously these weren't the only two systems ever released in Australia. Many other consoles and home computers found their way into Australian homes. These were met with a mixed reception. Some did well while others were all but ignored. The following are my observations on how some of the classic systems fared in Australia.

### **AMSTRAD CPC SERIES**

The Amstrad CPC series of computers were arguably the second most popular 8-bit home computer in Australia. It came in three models, the disk based 664 (with 64k RAM) and the 128 (with 128k RAM), and the cassette based 464 (with 64k RAM). Each model came with its own dedicated monitor. Two choices of monitor were available, colour or green screen. Unlike most home computers at the time, the Amstrad CPC came with a built in disk drive or cassette player. The graphics on the CPC were very good, almost on par with the C64. Sound was okay, but let down by the tinny little speaker that was built into the computer. But the thing that really helped the CPC sell was the price. Considering you were getting a monitor and built in cassette deck, \$399 for a 464 was pretty good value considering the C64 was priced at a similar amount for just the computer.

Today the Amstrad CPC doesn't seem to have much of a following in Australia. The 128 is the most sought after model. The green screen monitors are only good for boat anchors. Perhaps the most collectable CPC item today are the 3inch disks used by the 128 and 664. They are very rare and a box of disks can fetch much more than the computer itself.

### **APPLE**

The Apple computers were mainly used in schools in Australia, and it was the very first computer I ever used. My High School had a big walk-a-thon to raise money to buy computers. We raised



thousands of dollars, just enough to buy about 10 computers. As soon as they were installed in the new Computer Room, I put my name down for the new computer class. How disappointed was I when I found out that computer class was learning how computers work and not just for playing games?

The Apple computers still have some following in Australia. The most desirable model is the portable 2c. The more common 2e can also get high prices from collectors, but they really have to be in near mint condition.

### **ATARI 8-BIT**

The Atari 8-bit series of computers were greeted with some early success, but they were simply too expensive. When the C64 was released, the Atari 8-bit seemed to just disappear. I never knew anyone who owned one. One funny memory I have of the Atari 8-bits was that a major electronics shop where I lived had an 800XL on display. A couple of times a week a friend and myself would go into the shop and write simple BASIC routines on this display computer. Some times we would simply do something like 10 PRINT "Tonks rules!!" 20 GOTO 10. Other times we would do something a little ruder. Eventually we got ourselves banned from the shop.

Today the Atari 8-bit computers are very much sought after by Australian collectors. A system in good condition with a disk drive and a good selection of games can easily fetch almost \$200 on ebay. Game cartridges also can fetch very good prices. I recently sold 10 carts on ebay for \$78.

### **COLECOVISION**

The Colecovision has always been a fairly rare console in Australia. Back in the day I didn't know of one single person who owned a Colecovision. In fact the first I had ever heard of one is when I discovered the internet back in about '96. Even in my very regular searches for items at garage sales or markets, I have only come across three or four Colecovisions and only a hand-full of games. Even on ebay the Colecovision doesn't appear very often. And for a long time, even when they did appear, they were almost ignored.

But over the last year or so things have begun to change. I have noticed a very sharp increase in what collectors are willing to pay for a Colecovision. I sold a boxed console and about 10 games about three years ago, and I only got about \$30 for the lot. Recently I have noticed a few similar lots sell for over \$100. So perhaps the collectors of Australia have finally discovered the Colecovision.

### **INTELLIVISION**

Like the Colecovision, the Intellivision has always been fairly rare. At my High School, only one person I knew owned an Intellivision, and boy did we tease him for it. They just weren't very desirable. Everyone wanted either an Atari 2600 or a Commodore 64. A friend of mine recently told me how as a kid he and his brother begged their Mum and Dad for an Atari. That Christmas Santa had left a big box under the tree. My friend said he rushed over and ripped the paper off, hoping to find the Atari he had longed for. But to his utter dismay it was an Intellivision. My friend said he just burst into tears and ran to his room and cried for over an hour.

These days an Intellivision is unlikely to drive a collector to tears, unless they are tears of joy for finding a boxed system and heaps of mint games. The rarity of the system is helping it reach high prices on ebay.

### **VECTREX**

When the Vectrex was first released in Australia it was by far the most desirable console ever. It just looked so cool, like something from Star Trek. But the price was much too high for most family's budget. One of my friend's was lucky enough to get one. Almost every night after school a heap of kids would go to his house for a few games of Mine Storm or Scramble. Eventually his Dad had to ban kids from going over just so my friend could do his home work.

Today the Vectrex continues to be one of the most desirable consoles to own. I have only ever found

three Vectrexes in the wild. I will probably never sell them. A boxed Vectrex can fetch around \$300 on ebay. One seller regularly puts "new" old stock of sealed games. These regularly sell for over \$50 each. Of all the systems that were generally released in Australia, the Vectrex would be the rarest and most difficult to find.

## VIC 20

I suppose for regular readers of RT it comes as no surprise that the Commodore Vic 20 is my personal favourite. This was the first computer / video game console that I owned, and I still love it very much right to this day. The low price certainly helped the Vic 20 get into many homes. In my school there were a large group of us who all owned Vic 20s. Many games were released both on tape and cartridge. Tape games were very cheap (as low as \$9.99) and so they sold very well. The Vic 20 was quite successful for a while, possibly becoming the most popular home computer in Australia. But the arrival of the Commodore 64 seemed to make the Vic 20 disappear over night.

Today the Vic 20 has a small but dedicated following. I have personally found quite a few in the wild at markets or yard sales. They also appear regularly on ebay. Prices are reasonably low, with boxed systems selling for around \$30 - \$40. Some of the rarer game cartridges can fetch good money, and recently I have also noticed some collections of tapes go for around \$50.

## ZX SPECTRUM

The Speccy just never seemed to really take off here in Australia. While it was incredibly successful in the UK, that success didn't seem to carry on elsewhere. This is perhaps surprising for Australia as our trends have nearly always followed the UK very closely. Perhaps Australians were turned off by the horrible rubber keyboard, or the fact that it looked so much like a toy, or simply because compared to the mighty Commodore 64, the Speccy just couldn't match it.

Today however the ZX Spectrum is highly sought after. They rarely appear on ebay, but when they do expect to see the price go sky high. I was bidding on a +2 model recently and was well and truly out bid when the auction ended at \$240.

Well this has been my observations of how various classic consoles and computers fared in Australia. I would love to hear from you regarding these observations, particularly if you disagree in any way. I am very open to covering this topic again with some changes if need be. Next issue I am looking at a few unique, re-badged systems that were sold in Australia. I would love some help with information regarding the Phillips G7000 Videopac. So please email me!!!!

## NEWSBYTES

Sources: [ClassicGaming.com](http://ClassicGaming.com), [Digital Press](http://Digital Press)

- Two gaming classics have been remade into newer versions, thanks to TameStorm Games. First they made two remakes of the Activision classic River Raid. There's **River Raider**, which retains the same 2D overhead shooting action but features updated graphics, 50 levels and lots of enemies. Then there's **River Raider II**, which brings the classic River Raid gameplay into the 3D world. You can choose from three different aircraft to take on 50 missions.

TameStorm Games have also created a remake of the Broderbund classic Lode Runner. Their version, **Stretch and Run**, features 2 levels sets, 150 levels, 2 sound schemes, and many other options, but still has the Lode Runner gameplay we remember from our Commodore 64s.

Head on over to the TameStorm webpage at (<http://www.tamestorm.com/>), where you can download trial versions and learn how to order thees fine remakes.

- All you Colecovision fans get ready to welcome a new release to the system. The dudes at Good

Deal Games are bringing out the Colecovision Game Pack #2, which feature 12 different puzzle and brain games, as well as a few other features as well. You can get the scoop at the Good Deal Games Website at (<http://www.gooddealgames.com/>).

## Retrogaming Commercial Vault

by Adam King

Welcome back to the 'Vault. Once again I don't have any sports commercials to fit the theme, so I took a look at another summer tradition: summer blockbuster movies. This year's big summer flick is *Spider-Man 2*, and the video games based on it have received their share of praise and criticisms. So I found a commercial for the first Spider-Man video game, released on the Atari 2600.

In this live-action ad the evil Green Goblin is making trouble for our favorite web-slinger by placing bombs on top of buildings. He takes a moment to taunt our hero, who's trying to fight the Goblin the only way he can: by playing the *Spider-Man* video game, of course. Here's a conversation between the two enemies:

**GG:** "I'll blow this town to smithereens -- time bombs! Try to get up there in time, Spider-Man -- HA HA HA!"

**SM:** "Watch me climb my web, Goblin!"

**GG:** "Watch yourself fall, Silk-Slinger!"

**SM:** "Got to stop the bombs in time!"

**GG:** "If I don't get you, my gang of nasties will!"

**SM:** "Holy Hannah!"

**GG:** "And you're running out of web-fluid! HA HA HA!"

**SM:** "Is this more action than even Spider-Man can handle?!"

PICTURES:



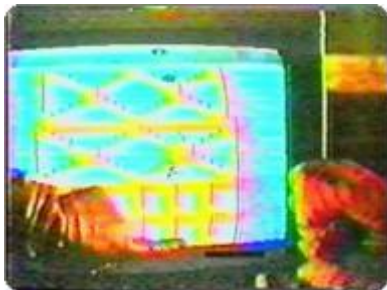
"Let's see what that web-head is up to."



"Do you mind, Goblin? I'm trying to beat this level."



"Just a reminder, I am holding this bomb here."



"You might want to check your web fluid."



"There's a bomb on top of my TV. Should I run for it?"

Not exactly an Oscar-winning performance, but still better than that live-action 70's Spider-Man show.

I'm still selling copies of the Retrogaming Commercial Vault CD-ROM. If you are still interested in

obtaining a copy, e-mail me at Hal\_3000@rocketmail.com for all the details.

## **Sports Games On The VIC-20**

*by [Tonks](#)*

In the last issue of RTM, I put out a bit of a challenge to other Vic 20 fans to see if they could dig out of their collections some sports games. Well I thought it would be interesting to report on the replies I received.

Firstly I received about 6 emails from other collectors, all stating how they have no sports games in their collections. Each of them commented on how this lack of sports games has never dawned on them before. Plenty of shoot-em-ups, plenty of platformers, plenty of text adventures, plenty of arcade games, but no sports games.

So then I dug a bit deeper. I was told about a Vic 20 forum called "Denial". I registered on the forum and posed the question again, "Does anyone know of any sports games that were released commercially on the Vic 20?"

Well, the response was great. The first few comments were of surprise and again people said that they had never noticed the lack of sports games. As fellow Vic 20 collectors searched through their collections, most came up empty handed.

One person replied to me regarding an ebay auction for a soccer management game. They said they didn't have a lot of info on the game, but that it was a text based management sim, and was very boring to play.

Then a great debate broke out regarding the game "Super Smash". Super Smash is a breakout clone, but on the box of the game is depicted a person with a racket looking very much like a tennis or squash player. Therefore a few people felt that Super Smash is a sports game, while others said it is a Breakout clone and not a sports game. It was fun to watch the debate unfold.

A few people begun to post replies about sports games they were discovering. Firstly one person said they had a golf game from Audiogenic. Again this was mainly text based. Another post mentioned a game called "Yleisurheilu" which is a track and field style game from Finland. The final post before writing this article mentioned a soccer game which I was able to download and check out on an emulator. Sadly the game is terrible with plain character graphics.

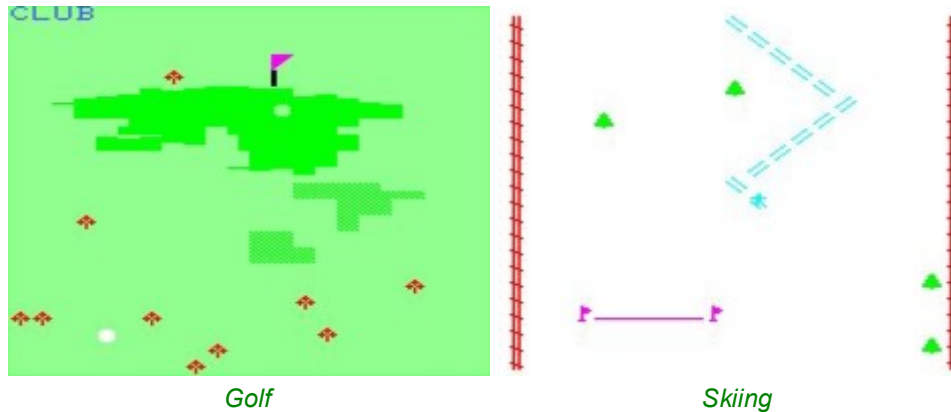
Perhaps the most interesting reply came from "carlsson" who went as far as putting together a mock up screen of a possible soccer game. I must admit that it looks pretty good and if it was ever programmed and plays as well as it looks, then the Vic 20 would be able to brag of having a great sports game.

As this was going on I was still busy searching through my huge collection of tapes, trying to find any sports games. And I am glad to say that I finally discovered a few. I found a few simple skiing games. Each of them were about the same, where your skier simply had to dodge obstacles such as trees and rocks as the screen scrolled up towards you. They were all a bit of fun, but each suffered from jerky scrolling and plain graphics.

Another game I found is simply a shocker. It is called "Marathon". In the game you need to place a bet on one of three runners. Each runner then runs (or to be more accurate, flicker and jerk) to the finish line. If your runner wins, you win money. Terrible game that seems like something that appeared in a magazine as a listing to type in yourself.

Finally I found a reasonably good game. It is a golf game, remarkably called "Golf". It is only written in

BASIC and features very simple graphics, but the gameplay is quite fun. You move your club around the screen, choose the direction and power of your shot, press space and hope for the best. Control is accurate and helps make this a fun game rather than a frustrating one.



All up, it was a fun and interesting challenge to try and find some sports games for the Vic 20. If you would like to check out the Vic 20 forum "Denial", then log on to... [sleepingelephant.com/denial/](http://sleepingelephant.com/denial/)

## *The Many Faces Of...The CoCo Part 2*

*by [Mark Sabbatini](#)*

(Author's note: This is a look at the relatively few officially licensed arcade and other games for the Radio Shack TRS-80 Color Computer, along with some thoughts on how they stack up against versions on competing computers and consoles. Because there were so few, a separate article will look at the best - and a few pitiful - "unlicensed" versions and how they stack up against the licensed competition. Perhaps that's a bit unfair since other platforms also had unlicensed games that clearly were better than the licensed versions, but what does anyone have to lose except time? And speaking of losing time, you can play many of the games mentioned here and other CoCo titles for free online at Brad Grier's Mocha site at <http://members.cox.net/javacoco/>).

### **One on One (C)**

Hey! The CoCo gets a version of one of the great sports games of the time! And it's written by CoCo whiz Steve Bjork, so it ought to be great! Oh, no! I'm wrong and it turns out the greatest feeling of excitement comes from from an overuse of exclamation points!

I first encountered this game on the Apple II and absolutely loved it. You choose to play Larry Bird or Dr. J., two of the biggest names in the NBA game at the time (today I guess it'd be Shaq, Garnett, Duncan or whoever squaring off since Michael is gone). Each has their strengths and weaknesses (Bird was much better) in things as such as three-point shooting, leaping ability, speed and so on. You pick one of four skill levels, the length of the game and a few other rules such as who gets the ball after a basket (remember in street ball the "make it, take it" rule is standard).

The game is half-court, with dunks, fouls, steals, a referee, free throws and even a backboard that shatters if you slam just right (happened maybe once every 10 games for me). The controls are simple, yet there is a lot to master, pretty much one of the essentials for any good game. Fatigue, hot streaks and other "intangibles" are part of your success or failure as well. For those used to the control-everything nature of today's sports games it's all pretty tame, but back then this was pretty great stuff.

Anyhow, most conversions of this are a lot of fun. But the CoCo version gets schooled. It's pokey, doesn't look all that great and - something that drove me nuts - allows no three-pointers at all to be made - I tried hundreds of times with both players and never made one. You just know this could have



been done better, but without many other options basketball fans either bought this one or took a seat on the CoCo video game bench. This is one of those times when I thought Steve might be getting tired of writing CoCo stuff and was just mailing it in on popular titles. Too bad, really, because he always was sort of a programming icon for me. But I'm sure he might also have plenty to say on the limitations of the CoCo and trying to program all those intangibles in there.

"Many Faces Of" rating: **Have Not** (in the mid 20s). The CoCo had the potential to compete, but the conversion is far short of what it ought to be.

### **Pitfall II (A-)**

A good conversion of one of the most outstanding games ever on an Atari 2600. This title was converted on a number of platforms, but frequently didn't advance things much beyond the 2600's capabilities, so any such shortcomings won't be docked here.

This game takes the original Pitfall concept much further, as you guide Harry through a large network of underground caverns instead of simply through a bunch of screens with vines, crocodiles and snakes. It feels a lot more like a true platform exploring game, with dozens of screens, and many more enemies and challenges. And a bonus (sort of) is you never die - every time you hit something "fatal" you're transported back to the last in a series of crosses you can touch as you progress. It can be a somewhat slow and annoying process, but it beats starting from scratch after losing three guys.

The CoCo version has decent, not spectacular, graphics and the typical minimal sound. The action is smooth and decently paced. The one major frustration I have with this - and I'm sure it's the case with other versions - is you can't save games. This is one of those games I played a bunch of times until I actually completed it, but completing the entire thing took several hours in one sitting (other more competent gamers can do it in less, I'm sure), and I don't know how many people have that much time to spare. An emulator with a "freeze state" option is definitely recommended. Still, tough not to recommend one of the few quality classics in gaming that got officially ported to the Color Computer.

"Many Faces Of" ranking: **Have Not**. The others aren't scored, so I won't offer a point total here. But with the Atari 5200, 2600 and Colecovision winning the medals, in that order, I can't say I consider the CoCo version better than any of them. It's a competent conversion, but the graphics are a bit more limited, it feels a bit pokey and the non-centering joysticks really aren't the best controls for this sort of title.

### **Pitstop II (B+)**

This is a game that does everything right except for one critical detail, to be revealed shortly (and for once it's not speed). It's a racing game in the Pole Position tradition with two great touches: You have to service your car during pit stops to account for all the wear and tear on the track (and the worse you drive, the more maintenance is needed) and you can compete head-to-head with a second player - a top/bottom split screen shows third-person perspectives of both cars. The computer controls one of these cars in single-player mode.

When it comes to presentation, everything about this game impresses: The graphics are top-notch; you get a choice of tracks, difficulty level and other race options such as number of laps to race for races; your scores are pitted against a roster of other drivers, carrying over cumulatively for several races if you're so inclined; and the speed and sound of everything is definitely a cut above average for a CoCo game.

The action is the pits is a great touch, even if all you do is hook a fuel hose up (make sure you disconnect before it overflows or you have to start over) and make a rather pokey crew change your tires.

So what's the problem? The actual track racing turns out to be the weakest part of the game, a rather undesirable thing to have as its greatest weakness. It's competent, but never exciting. The challenge

of steering and staying on the track is never all that great and the interaction with other cars is pretty sparse and tame - except for head-to-head matchups in two-player games. Still, it didn't stop me from keeping this near the front of my software collection and the other elements are strong enough that it remains a quality strategic racing title.

"Many Faces Of" rating: Bronze Medal (38). This was a surprise, but the decidedly lame Apple II conversion made this a fairly easy win. They're relatively even until it comes to control and gameplay, where the CoCo dominates thanks to its analog joystick control and far better programming.

### Pooyan (B)

Nice conversion by Steve Bjork of an obscure arcade game - this is one of those titles that got ported to a whole bunch of systems for reasons not completely clear. The one thing I remember him discussing about this game is how it has 30 objects moving smoothly at once - the most possible for a CoCo. His claim is mostly on: For the most part all that stuff moves smoothly and well, but it does bog down during some really busy periods. Even if the game isn't perfect, the programming certainly was well done.

You control a pig in a basket, who moves up and down of a tree fortress on the right side of the screen, shooting arrows and an occasional summer sausage (huh? more in a minute on this) at wolves who are out to get your chinny-chin-chin. This is what I loved about the '80s - people came up with some really weird ideas. There are three waves, each featuring a certain number of wolves who come out in groups and do their thing. In the first you shoot them as they descend by parachute from the top of the screen to the bottom - those that succeed climb into the tree where your shooter is and will try to push you out of your basket as you pass. It's not instant death, but it makes life pretty difficult. In the second wave you shoot wolves as they try to catch balloons to the top of a cliff, where a rock is waiting to be pushed over onto you. If seven wolves succeed, they have enough to accomplish their goal and this time it DOES mean instant death. This wave is also a bit more challenging because there are a lot of extra balloons, which get in the way of the ones the wolves have hitched a ride on.

By the way, I neglected to mention the wolves spend a lot of their time throwing rocks at you. Get hit, you die.

The third wave is a bonus stage, where you basically get to shoot fruits and veggies hurled at you by the wolves for points. Subsequent waves feature more wolves coming at you in more difficult attack patterns.

In addition to arrows, you get to fight with that occasional summer sausage, sort of the "smart bomb" of the food world I guess. They are available at the top of the screen every so often for the taking and allow one shot that is vastly more effective than your arrows. A well-timed one can take out an entire group of wolves if they are lined up right. Makes no sense when I describe it here, of course, but you'll figure it out 15 seconds after starting the game.

I'm not a huge fan of the pastel graphics Steve chose to use for this conversion, but I'm not sure any of the other choices available would have been better, so I kinda overlook this and eventually get so engrossed by the game I don't really notice it anymore. All in all, worth a few plays every now and then, but like the arcades there are simply other games that are more fun to play (hey, is that Robotron machine finally free?).

"Many Faces Of" rating: **Bronze Medal** (35). Another win thanks to a lack of good competition. The CoCo falls well short of the Atari 800 and Commodore 64 versions, but absolutely leaves the Atari 2600 version in the dust.

### Zaxxon (B+)

The official version of the rather popular 3-D space shooter, where you alternate between taking things out in a space fortress and in outer space. This adaptation was one of the more widely praised

games for the CoCo, no doubt in part to its easy availability through Radio Shack stores and Steve Bjork's programming reputation - this is probably his best-known title. Creative Computing magazine called it better than the Colecovision version, which was considered one of the best among what was available at the time.

I consider this an above-average game, but not quite up to the hype. Everything moves along smoothly and the graphics are unquotable top-notch. The sounds are very, very good for the CoCo, emulating the muffled explosions of space nicely. The main problem is the lack of diversity on the fortress fields - they basically remain the same level after level, with increased difficulty coming mostly through faster usage of fuel. Also, the fortresses seem a bit sparse on targets and action compared to other versions. Finally, the action suffers just a bit from the slow CoCo syndrome. I will say that the outer space shootouts are captured just about perfectly, which boosts the overall grade here a bit.

"Many Faces Of" ranking: **Silver Medal** (40). A breakthrough! The best is saved for last - but only because I have taken the liberty of knocking a few points off the Colecovision version (I knocked the gameplay from a "9" to a "7" and the control from a "10" to a "9" mostly because of the need for an alternate controller to really enjoy it). The Coleco version looks better than the CoCo at first glance, but lags behind it in pretty much every other way. On the scale used by the others here, I'd give the CoCo version the following scores: gameplay (8), controls (9), graphics (8), sound (8) addictiveness (7).

You can find more CoCo reviews at <http://www.icepeople.net/coco/index.html>.

## Game Over

Time to put the flame out on these Summer games (except for one article that Alan is doing next month). Thanks for continuing your support of RTM. Before we go we want to wish all the athletes competing in the Summer Olympics the best of luck in Athens.

See you next month and keep those game systems running.

- [Adam King](#), Chief Editor

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