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GAMESPOT PRESENTS

THE GREATEST GAMES OF ALL TIME

PUNCH-OUT!!

Where's the NHK TV camera? Hello, Tokyo!
Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!!
Platform: NES | Genre: Sports
Publisher: Nintendo | Developer: Nintendo | Released: 1987

Not All Punch-Out!!s Are Created Equal

In 1990, Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!! became decidedly Tysonless. After Tyson was sent to prison for the crime of rape, Nintendo terminated its contract with the former champion and recalled what few copies of the Tyson version of Punch-Out!! remained on store shelves. Then, a new version of the game was released, simply titled Punch-Out!!, and it featured new box art, as well as a new final boss: Mr. Dream. Mr. Dream was pretty much the same sprite as Mike Tyson, but now he was white and had slightly different hair (and was missing Tyson's trademark gap-toothed smile). Incidentally, he fought exactly the same as Tyson. While the game itself was fundamentally the same, this new, Tyson-devoid version of Punch-Out!! wasn't quite the same; it was as though a piece of the system's innocence had been lost.

Speaking of strategic moves in the name of common decency on the part of Nintendo, did you know that in the Japanese version of Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!!, Soda Popinski was named Vodka Drunkinski? This was obviously changed for the US release. That's comedy right there, folks.

When you think about the all-time great boxing games for console platforms, the first game that will pop into your mind, without fail, is Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!! for the Nintendo Entertainment System. That's because it's not only the most memorable boxing game ever made, but also one of the most memorable games in the NES's long, storied history. Released during the peak of cover-athlete Mike Tyson's popularity in 1987, Punch-Out!! took the system by storm, bringing to the table a highly addictive style of gameplay, excellent visuals, and one of the most amazing casts of characters ever put into a game.

Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!! told one of the great underdog stories in boxing-game history. You played as Little Mac, a hopelessly pint-sized pugilist thrown into the world of professional boxing. With the help of your trainer, Doc, you took on a series of boxing circuits, each with four fights. The gameplay wasn't overly complicated, but its method of twitch-action play was perfect for the sport of boxing. Much of the game required you to keep a close eye on your opponents and their techniques. Each would give off a sort of sign that let you know what kind of punch might be coming up, and they all dealt damage in specific patterns. The bouts were quickly paced and a whole lot of fun, especially when you were dealing that always-satisfying knockout blow to your opponent.

What really stood out about Punch-Out!!, however, was the game's incredible list of opponent boxers. Some of the greatest names in video game boxing, like the chrome-domed Bald Bull, the immovable object King Hippo, and the worst fighter in French history, Glass Joe, came from Punch-Out!! Every single character had a unique look and exuded plenty of personality, despite there not being much dialogue in the game. Little bits of in-between-round chatter were all you got, but that was all you needed. Then, of course, there were all the crazy special moves and patterns you had to figure out. Bald Bull had the legendary bull charge, Super Macho Man had his tornado punch, and good old King Hippo had that weak spot on his belly. Figuring out all the boxers' tricks and moves was half the fun in the game, and beating them was the other half.

Oh, and in case you didn't notice, Mike Tyson's name was on this game for a reason. The NES representation of Mike Tyson may go down in history as one of the world's most unbeatable bosses. Fitting, perhaps, since Tyson himself was on such a ridiculous roll at that point in time. Beating Mike Tyson was like the equivalent of the Holy Grail to NES players. It seemed such a horribly impossible task—but with a lot of practice, and a lot of frustrating losses under your belt, it could be done; and boy, what a feeling when you did it.

Boxing games have evolved by leaps and bounds in recent years, with the Fight Night series recently achieving the highest level of quality. But even though that game's take on the sport is more realistic than what Punch-Out!! was going for, you can't help but feel like it, and every other video game boxing franchise out there, owes a little something to Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!! Without it, video game boxing would not be what it is today.

- Alex Navarro

How many times did Tyson slap you around before you finally beat him? Talk about it on our [forum!](#)

Soda Popinski, not Vodka Drunkinski!

Finding and exploiting each fighter's weakness was a huge part of the fun.



One punch is all Tyson needed to knock you down.

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