IT's All About Having Fun

Norrix and Central's Improv Troupes Face Off in Unprecedented Event

Emily Rooney
Editor-in-Chief

It was an improv event of epic proportions as Loy Norrix's improv troupe "IT" faced off against Kalamazoo Centrals improv group "Mind Fracture."

Never before had the improv talent of "IT" been put to the test and anticipation was high as the audience waited for the show to start. Suddenly smoke cascaded across the stage, colorful lights flashed, and loud music blasted to announce the entrance of the members of "IT" and "Mind Fracture."

Performers from each team sprinted out onto the stage at the sound of their name, many jumping in the air enthusiastically as they made their grand entrance.

"The battle of improv brought a lot of hype to the situation. I felt like I was in the middle of a wrestling rink and I got to be the announcer," KC's theatre director Topher Barrett exclaimed in an excited tone.

EMILY ROONEY / KNIGHT LIFE

Annie Farner and Dylan Rustenholtz act improv a scene in a game called "freeze." In this game a new person will come into the scene and take over the position of the frozen person. They then have to change the meaning of the scene.

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The teams competed in a series of different improv games that were judged by LN English teacher Anne Bowser, LN Guidance Counselor Lisa Bailey, and Pam Henshaw from KC. Even though LN and KC are cross town rivals, the overall atmosphere of the contest was one of friendly rivalry. After defeating "Mind Fracture" with a score of 285 to 205, senior Annie Farner expressed the confidence that "IT" went into the show with.

"We knew we could take 'em, because we're superior in funniness and all other things comedic," Farner said with a laugh.

Even though the members of "Mind Fracture" have only been working together for a few months, they put up a good fight against the members of "IT" who have been performing together for over a year. Senior Jon James from KC expressed that the whole experience was just a fun time for both teams.

"It was fun, that was the whole point. If we do it again we will bring more people out to support us and laugh at our jokes," said James.

LN drama teacher Cece Weeks also felt that having the two improv teams face off brought a new and interesting element to the table. Weeks expressed how impressed she was with "Mind Fracture's" performance, considering they are fairly new to the improv genre.

"I think they surprised us. We went in thinking, 'uh-oh, they're new,' but they had a lot of talent… They really rose to the challenge," Weeks said of "Mind Fracture's" performance.

Even though the overall atmosphere was one of fun, naturally there was some underlying rivalry between the two teams. Rumors of a rematch at KC have already begun to circulate. Weeks commented on the advantages of performing in your own school.

"We had the home court advantage, and with the audience being that supportive it picks up the energy level and confidence [of the performers]," Weeks stressed.

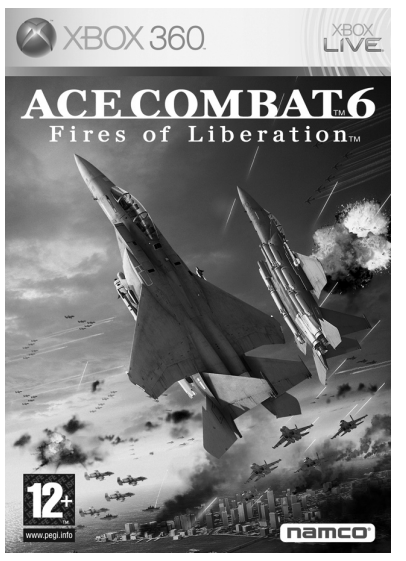
Barrett jokingly claimed that "IT's" victory was mainly a result of having the home court advantage.

"I think the home court advantage is what swept the title from us, that and only that!" Barrett joked.

Both teams look forward to a rematch, possibly to occur this fall. Stay tuned for another improv team face off, it's bound to be a fun time.

"Ace Combat 6: Fires of Liberation" Flies to a Console Near You

Jack Stankewicz
Copy Editor



Namco-Bandai's successful flight series returns once again with "Ace Combat 6: Fires of Liberation". In this offering, the player takes the role of a pilot in the Garuda squadron of the fictional nation of Emmeria. Like other games in the series, "Ace Combat 6" loosens the rules of the flight simulator genre to make the game more exciting for the player.

The game starts out well enough, with the Emmerian Air Force being deployed into a full-scale battle to fight off a swarm of unknown invaders over the capital city of Gracemeria. However, after this awe inducing first mission, the game goes through a few tedious missions before roaring back to a satisfying ending.

The story, while fairly bland, is interesting enough to keep the game moving and conveys the idea that the player is fighting for more than political principles.

The actual combat, however, is as fun as the story is bland. Gorgeous visuals give the game an air of reality, and spectacular explosions abound. Aerial combat is also improved by an increased missile range and the new Electronic Support Measures (ESM) system. Both sides take advantage of this ESM technology, which increases the accuracy of allied missiles and hinders enemy fire. Disabling enemy ground and air ESM installments also adds an interesting strategic factor to the game. Also welcome are the Allied Support options, in which the player can tell allied fighters to attack targets or call for assistance. Calling for aid brings impressive visuals and sound, as allies zoom past and radio chatter spikes.

As expected from an Ace Combat game, the flight model itself is excellent, with sharp responsive controls. The game is further improved by a wide range of special weapons, which include everything from long range missiles to destructive cluster bombs. Graphically, "Ace Combat 6" is a triumph. The rendering of the planes is superb, and every missile and plane in the battlefield leaves a vapor trail across the sky. The draw distance is also amazing, with distant objects rendered more sharply than was previously possible. Best of all, despite these graphical flourishes, the game almost never experiences low frame rates or slowdowns. The only downside to the graphics is the relatively low quality of the ground maps, but in a flying game, this is forgivable.

The game does not fail to meet expectations in the sound department either, from the cinematic soundtrack to the tinkling sound of debris on the canopy as the player flies through a cloud of recently vaporized jet. While dialogue in the story and briefing portions of the game is mediocre, radio chatter in the actual missions is fresh, informative, and occasionally funny. The voice acting in the missions themselves adds an interesting dimension to allied pilots and ground forces.

Unfortunately, the voices in cutscenes are not synchronized with the character's mouth animations, which are obviously synched to the game's original Japanese. This ruins the immersion of otherwise proficient cutscenes.

While it does have its flaws, "Ace Combat 6" is, overall, an excellent addition to the "Ace Combat" series. The somewhat weak story and low number of unlockable planes are minor issues when compared to the extraordinary graphics, excellent sound, and fun gameplay. Recommended to those who like planes, blowing stuff up, or fun games in general. Weak points include weak story and poor cutscenes, and fewer planes than previous games. The game earns bonuses for spectacular graphics, sound, and controls, and proficient online play, a first in the series. Eight and a half out of ten

Third Generation Gaming

Great Games You May Have Missed

Evan Wenger
Comics Editor

The third generation of gaming, spanning from 1990-1996, is considered by many gamers to be the best era of gaming. It features two timeless consoles, the Super Nintendo Entertainment System (SNES), and the Sega Genesis, each with their own mascot. Nintendo sticks to their humble hero, Mario, while Sega brought Sonic the Hedgehog to the table, the freakishly fast, cool new image of the video game industry. Unfortunately, in the midst of the war between Mario and Sonic, many great games were overlooked.

"Kirby Superstar" is a high quality 16 bit game that is definitely worth checking out. This game was probably overlooked because of its late release in 1996, only months before the Nintendo 64 was released. This game is an excellent example of classic platforming gameplay. The game stars Kirby, a Nintendo character who really established himself during this era. This small, pink, and cute protagonist has the ability to inhale and swallow many of his enemies, copying their fighting abilities for himself. Such powers include that of the sword, fire, ice, plasma, beam, jet, wing, and many more. On top of that, he can inflate himself to fly short distances. Kirby utilizes these abilities to explore vast caverns, climb tall mountains, and defeat massive beasts.

Also, "Kirby Superstar" has been a major influence for the "Super Smash Brothers" game series (developed by the same team that developed "Kirby Superstar," HAL Laboratories). Super Smash Bros.' All Star mode is derived from "Kirby Superstar," and the co-op adventure mode (featured in "Super Smash Bros. Brawl") uses the same formula as "Kirby Superstar".

"Kirby Superstar's" excellent platforming/action gameplay is presented in a handful of separate adventures, which vary in difficulty. The level design is simple, fun, and unique. You'll find yourself in a shocking amount of different environments, and fighting many types of creative enemies. With fun, simple gameplay, and so much content, this is an excellent game that truly cannot be ignored. If you can find an SNES copy of this game, it will be money well spent. Otherwise, it's expected to be released on the Nintendo Wii's virtual console (available for download) sometime soon.

The next must-play game is a classic role-playing-game (RPG), "Chrono Trigger". It was developed in 1995 by famous game developer Squaresoft (now called Square Enix), which is known for the Final Fantasy game series. It is considered by many to be the greatest role-playing-game (RPG) of all time. This game is different from other RPGs of its time because it is responsible for many major innovations in the RPG genre.

First of all, it introduced many plot-related sidequests, which are optional, but introduces the backstories of many characters and shows character development. In most RPGs of that time, the combat was linear and based upon random encounters. In "Chrono Trigger", there are no random encounters, you see your enemies and can charge at them, or attempt to avoid them. The combat system is unique and fast-paced and incredibly functional, but keeps you on your toes. "Chrono Trigger" also had some of the best graphics on the SNES. On the Playstation remake of "Chrono Trigger", it features cut-scenes brilliantly animated by Akira Toriyama (the animation mastermind behind anime like Dragonball Z).

An excellent soundtrack, composed by the famous Nobuo Uematsu, is in both the SNES and Playstation versions of the game. The best feature of this game is most likely the story, which is long and enticing. There were even twelve different endings depending on the choices you make. "Chrono Trigger" can be found as an SNES cartridge or on a remake (which includes additional Square Soft games) for Playstation.

Both "Kirby Superstar" and "Chrono Trigger" are incredibly fun and will ensure that your summer will be entertaining and with minimal outdoor activity. I strongly encourage picking up one or both of these masterpieces, you certainly won't regret it!

Mateo Hernandez
Staff Writer

"Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare" is the fourth installment in a line of decent World War II games. But "Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare" does not take place in World War II like its predecessors. Instead it takes place in the near future.

"COD4" ("Call of Duty 4") is for the Xbox 360 and the PC. The single player mode involves you playing as a United States Marine for some missions, and a British SAS soldier for other missions. What most people love about "COD4" is the online multiplayer feature. The local multiplayer is fun but you can only play with four people. The online multiplayer allows you to customize classes, plus you get to play against real people over Xbox live. For example, you can choose to have an M16 rifle with a silencer and give yourself "stopping power" to make it stronger, and "martyrdom" so when you die you drop a grenade.

In the multiplayer mode you start off as a rank 1 private with just some basic weapons at your disposal. In order to unlock more weapons and abilities you have to either kill another player (for 10 points), get a kill assist (for 2 points), or complete a challenge (which can range from 100-2000 points). The highest rank is a rank 55 general. The ranks are pretty consistent with the real Marine ranks.

On the Xbox 360 version of the game, once you reach rank 55, you can continue in "prestige mode" which allows you to start off again from rank 1 with nothing again and work your way up to rank 55 again, but with a little symbol next to your Xbox Live Gamertag showing that you are playing in "prestige mode." This basically makes it so that you can keep working for something after you get to rank 55. On the PC version there is no "prestige mode" but you can just make a new character if you want to get to rank 55 again.

There is not much people do not like about "COD4." Gamespot gave "COD4" for the Xbox 360 a 9 out of 10, and critics gave it a 9.3 out of 10. Gamepro gave it a 5 out of 5, and 68% of people who voted in a poll on the Gamepro site preferred "COD4" over "Halo 3." With all of its great ratings and its great game play it is hard not to love such a well done First Person Shooter such as "Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare."