

# Ashita no Joe FAQ

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## Introduction

### About the game

This is the third and final *Ashita no Joe* game for the 90s, once again called Success Joe internally. Wave Corp, a little-known company, made all three games. Just a week later they released their only other game, Mystery Circle, also on Super Famicom. After coming off of the awkward Punch-Out derivative Taito published and infamously terrible beat-em-up on Neo Geo, you might end up surprised how decent this game turned out to be. You don't need to be great at fighting games to beat it (at least on normal), but fundamentals really do help. The goal of this guide is to not only help you beat the game but to learn the ins and outs. I'll also sprinkle some boxing trivia I learned for a speedrun of this I did for Licensathon 2020. I'll also try my best to break down fighting game knowledge for players unfamiliar in order to help them understand basic fundamentals, given that they really do help here.

This guide will not spoil anything outside the fights for those new to the series. In case you are curious about what's going on in the game, I'll have a dedicated lore section after each fight that explains all relevant parts to the best of my knowledge.

## Update History

### Version 1.0

- Initial release. Laid out groundwork for most of the guide and covered just about everything.

### Version 1.1

- This was supposed to be a minor update, but I got motivated:
  - Sections were revised. some more pics, frame data, FAQ, glossary, and links added.
  - I can't believe I forgot to point out that Rikiishi's Uppercut has the same range as jabs/crosses. They're really good.

### Version 1.1a

- A real minor update. After another glance, it hit me that I didn't do much for proofreading.
  - Added text to images (at least tried to)
  - Improved grammar and fixed broken sentences
  - General revisions and additions, as well as consistency fixes

What to expect in the future:

- Possible revisions to the tier list if I find more people to play with
- Anything I missed or overlooked

Don't expect much for updates now unless I get people to play with.

## FAQ

### Who are you?

I used to be a member here a long time ago. I got in trouble and banned from contributing something that happened on the message board. I wasn't exactly told what my punishment was even though I was told what I did wrong. Being the honest kid I was I thought holding myself accountable would be less punishment than denying it. I don't remember my credentials, and this is the name I have stuck with on the Internet here for a good while now. I'd also rather not risk being auto-rejected when I am putting in so much work here.

I am an analytical person. As I break open games from the outside-in my background in programming helps me explain to others why things work the way they do. One of my friends says it borders on QA work, not that I'd actually go testing things in every little situation. I do try my best for a scientific approach, however. I have little care for being the best but enjoy helping others improve through my knowledge.

As for other games I have looked into, such include: *Little Fighter 2*, *Hero Fighter*, *TMNT: Tournament Fighters* (mainly SNES, but MD too), *Unholy Night* (yes, that recent SNES fighter), *Super Sonic Knockout*, and *River City Ransom: Underground*,

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### Why are you writing a guide on such an obscure game?

Because I want to. For a more serious answer, someone on YouTube asked after I dropped so much knowledge. It's taken about a month's work, even though I was without power for a week thanks to a hurricane. I enjoy labbing games and breaking them down, especially when they are games nobody

really plays. Exploring uncharted territory is fun to me. I don't know how big the retro community is on here nowadays, but I have all this information and I want to write it all down in case someone actually finds this by chance.

As for why I broke down this game, that's because of the license. Also, games like these are guilty pleasures. It's been ages since I ever thought to write something so expansive and organized. I just dropped my notes in Notepad++ and made posts on Discord. The HTML format is really nice and I want to make use of it, so I admit I'm not living up to my nostalgia here. Not that I could compete with the likes of CyricZ and Kao Megura.

### What is *Ashita no Joe*?

*Ashita no Joe* is a manga series that ran from 1968 to 1973, first serialized weekly in the *Shounen* magazine and later released over 20 volumes. Developed during Japan's economic boom, it served as inspiration for many with the working class seeing Joe as one of them. It grew so popular that a terrorist attack was done in its name and a real funeral was held for one of the characters! It was also adapted into two anime series that ran from 1970 to 1971 and 1980 to 1981. The first show stops before the final major arc, while the second (aptly named *Ashita no Joe 2*) starts *on* the arc the first ended on and covers the rest. There is a bit of overlap between the two. The first is slow-paced, but does TOTAL justice for its source material. Some say the second isn't as good as the first, though I don't mind it. There's also a little less filler since it was released after the manga finished. If you want fewer episodes to watch, there is a movie out there that summarizes everything to lead into the second series. I have heard that it isn't that good though. There are differences like every adaptation though.

### Should I look into this series?

If you like action, sports, or getting your heart ripped out, then of course! However, **be your own judge as to how you should experience this legendary franchise**. I cannot stress it enough. This was THE anime that helped shape just about everything we know and love today from Japanese entertainment. Power levels, technique explanation, still shots of dudes punching each other in the face, and much more. Hundreds of anime have made reference to it.

With its age and lack of localization, you can't easily support the official release like many other franchises. The movie I mentioned earlier can be bought outside of Japan, however. You'll have to look around yourself. Sorry.

### Why is this similar to *Hajime no Ippo* and *Megalobox*?

I really want to cut this answer short in that they're all about boxing, but I have a bit to say about this.

I haven't looked too much into *Ippo*, but there are a few boxers that seem to parallel characters in *Ashita no Joe*. You can clearly see that there was influence from it even though they appear to be quite different.

As for *Megalobox*, that's because it specifically was made as a tribute to AnJ. You should probably know that already, but this is just to be thorough.

There is also *Futari no Joe (Joe vs Joe)*, another tribute anime which was dubbed by 4Kids. Shocking, I know. You get to hear Yugi Mutou curse! They didn't bother to redraw anything or even translate the episode titles though. I found this enjoyable even though it doesn't take too much from *Ashita no Joe*.

### Are there other people who play this or talk about the series?

The SNES Fighters Discord server would be the best place for the game. It covers other retro consoles too. If you want to meet up with other fans of Joe or *Megalobox*, I can also point you to dedicated servers. Check them out **in the section where I credit others**.

### Why is this game so hard?

There are some things that are just annoying to deal with, and if you're not versed in fighting games, you'll certainly notice a few difficulty spikes. You could try lowering the difficulty, but I cannot assure you that my strategies will work since I never played on Easy.

### How accurate is this to the source material?

Even though the game is barebones, it is more accurate than the first two games. It is not perfect itself though. I will not detail anything in this section though.

# Overview

On the menu you have three options: 1P, 2P, and Options. That's it.

## Options

I never just jump straight into the game. I always look at the options first in a game to see what features are available. Balance audio, tweak video settings, see what I can change up in the game, etc. There is a difficulty select with three options and a music test, but what's worth talking here about is the controls.

By default, you press **B** to guard and **A** to attack. Certain boxers can press both buttons to do specials. If you prefer modern or more convenient controls, **I highly recommend you change them**. You could switch attack over to **Y**. That way your thumb easily rests over both buttons for better reactions. If you prefer the top row, **X** and **A** work fine too. You could also set guard to **R** and put attack on whatever button you prefer. Your thumb only needs to focus on one button this way, and it kinda feels like *Mega Man X*. I prefer the former, but the latter might be better for certain players. As any expert will tell you, it's all up to preference as muscle memory is what really needs to be developed. This is especially true for the controller you use. Regardless, **I genuinely believe the default layout is not the best way to play this. Unless you have wide thumbs, you will not have access to both buttons easily. Change the button layout.**

## 1P Mode

In the singleplayer mode, you have to face eight opponents that (mostly) represent the major arcs in the story. You are required to beat the opponent before the round ends except in one case. If the match goes the full time in this mode, *you automatically lose*. You have only three chances, or two continues. ALL of your health is restored after each fight, unlike the Neo Geo game. I'll cover how to beat each opponent in their respective section. **Click here for more information.**

## 2P Mode

Versus is just a 1-on-1 battle against another human. Certain moves cannot be done here. The same rules apply with one difference: whoever has more health wins if time runs out. A lot of my knowledge stemmed from playing this mode. **Check out the dedicated section** for more info and a **tier list**.

## Controls

Except for specials, everybody has access to these moves. Note: these inputs assume you are facing towards the right.

Index: U/D/L/R- D-pad

A- Attack

B-Defend

## Movement

<b>Advance (R)</b>	This is the term I'll use from here on out to refer to forward movement.
<b>Retreat (L)</b>	Like advance, but in the opposite direction. Also self-explanatory.
<b>Jumping (U/U+L/R)</b>	You thought it wasn't a true fighting game? Well, only Harimau can do this and no jump attacks exist. He can leap from one side to the other. You cannot hit him while airborne, but he is open before and after he jumps.
<b>Dash (RR)</b>	Tapping forward twice as Joe or Carlos shifts you forward in a ducking state hence why I call it a dash. It dodges jabs, crosses, and hooks, while body blows and uppercuts come out instantly with little recovery. A bug lets you store the dash property by holding guard until you properly return to neutral. You can simplify the motion for faster inputs in two ways: hold up or down while tapping forward twice (U/D+R, U/D, U/D+R), or tap forward then up/forward or down/forward (R, U/D+R). If you look at your numpad the inputs would be 989/323 or 659/653. <b>Note: rely on the second method if you are on P2.</b>

## Attacks

<b>Jab (A)</b>	A quick punch with your lead hand. Your fastest, but weakest attack. This along with the Cross have the most range out of your attacks. Landing two jabs in a row will force a cross on the third, which forms the 112 combo. If you want to keep your distance, this is your best option.
<b>Cross (R+A)</b>	Also called a <b>straight</b> with its similarities. Supposed to be a devastating punch. It's a hybrid of the two as far as I can tell, being a semi-fast punch using your rear hand. It's slower than a jab but does more damage. It's risky to throw out as part of a 112 combo constantly despite being integral in real boxing. Great for punishes. Mix it up from jabs if your opponent is blocking to deal extra damage.
<b>Body Blow (D/DF+A)</b>	Even though it has the shortest range, it can't be dodged. This essentially makes it as important as your crouching kicks as far as a high/low system is concerned. If you're playing as one of the latter four opponents (the fast punchers), you should be careful throwing this out as it leaves you open for a long time if it doesn't hit.
<b>Uppercut (U/UF+A)</b>	A rising punch that hits level to you, contrary to what's seen in other games. As your second-longest ranged attack (unless you're Rikiishi), it takes a little bit to come out, though it hits the hardest. It can be used to hit ducking opponents too. The lore says it's the slowest punch and will exhaust you if constantly used.
<b>Hook (L+A)</b>	A side punch that relies on the rotation for force. These are usually done with the lead hand although both are used in this. I don't find it useful as Joe or a fast puncher. It is outclassed by uppercuts in damage, range, and sometimes speed. Moving back also makes it possible to whiff if spaced out. It has more reach than a body blow at least.



Jab



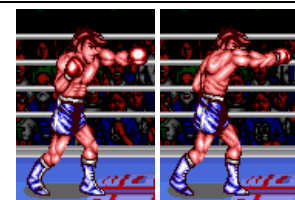
Cross



Body Blow









Uppercut




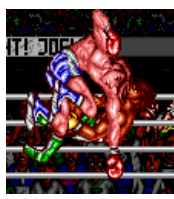
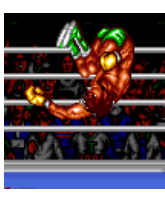



Hook

## Defense

<b>Guard (B/U+B)</b>	Put your arms together to protect yourself. There are various ways to guard to cover different areas. All damage is reduced by 75%, and you can follow up with a counter. Despite what the visuals suggest, you do not stick yourself out. The <i>only</i> difference between high and mid is that you're open to body blows when you cover higher. Stick to mid-block to protect from all attacks. Remember that you cannot block every attack. <b>Tech:</b> Press attack to buffer a punch. When you let go of guard, the punch you put in will come out immediately based on the direction you're holding. This doesn't work with special moves.					
<b>Sway (L+B)</b>	You shift your weight to the back leg to avoid hits. It's only for a moment, but you stay until the attack is finished if a punch comes in contact. This means you can't punish, but you take no damage. It's the only way to dodge unblockables. Body blows counter this, however.					
<b>No-Guard Stance (D+B)</b>	An impractical stance that relies on body movement for defense while seemingly freeing your arms to punch better. Even though this popularized it, I've only seen it used in a real match to showboat. Joe always does this before his Cross Counter. It looks like you're exhausted. It only has one use here as far as I can tell, where your sway turns into leanback. You move quite slowly while in this stance. <b>Note:</b> This is not required to perform a Cross Counter.					
<b>Leanback (NG L+B)</b>	This variant of the sway lets you hold it as long as the button is held. As useful as this sounds, you can still get hit if you react late. You're still left open to body blows. This would be really useful if No-Guard didn't reduce your speed.					
<b>Duck (HOLD L+B vs Harimau)</b>	The intended way to avoid Rope Lunge, and the only way for anybody not Joe or Carlos to get under. Only possible while Harimau is performing the move. This is used to avoid high punches while moving in position for body attacks. You are not allowed to duck below the opponent's waist. I don't remember how to stay ducking, but I recall it being useless anyway.					
						
	<b>Mid-Guard</b>	<b>High-Guard</b>	<b>Sway</b>	<b>No-Guard</b>	<b>Leanback</b>	<b>Dash/Duck</b>

## Specials

<b>Cross Counter (timed A)</b>	Despite the name, in this, you counter a jab by throwing out <b>one of your own</b> instead of a cross. Because the graphics are mirrored, the person on the right is technically assuming a southpaw stance (dominant left hand) compared to the left's orthodox stance. The damage is reduced against Wolf and Tiger.					
<b>Triple Cross Counter (CC F+A)</b>	After your punch gets deflected, you throw a straight before they land their blow on you. This is used to counter the Double Cross Counter. The timing is supposed to be tricky, but in this it's lenient. This skips the cool Double Cross Counter animation sadly. Inagaki and Tiger will never counter you.					
<b>NOTE: The above two techniques can only be used against the computer!</b>						
<b>Elbow Joe/Carlos (A+B)</b>	I believe this is meant to represent how Carlos's speedy punches sneak in elbows, but I won't spoil here why Joe has it. The attack has less reach than it seems, matching a body blow. While that may seem awful, it's still useful since it hits hard, and cannot be blocked or dashed under. Also worth noting is that it's the only move that can be done while holding any direction.					
<b>Chom-Chom Kim (Opp. Corner A+B)</b>	A brutal barrage of punches against the ropes arranged to never let the opponent fall. It's four guaranteed hits for 40% but stops Kim from attacking for two seconds (three in-game). You have to be within jab-range while your opponent is in the corner. Don't be scared to use it if the opportunity comes: it's so situational you may lose your chance later!					
<b>Jump Punch Joe (A+B vs Hari)</b>	This attack is weird. At a glance it does nothing, but it is the only move that can counter Harimau's Spin Uppercut. While faster, its speed still makes it a little hard to use on reaction. You might want to rely on anticipation so you don't end up getting countered yourself.					
<b>Spin Uppercut Harimau (A+B+U)</b>	The most broken move in the game. This is a well-animated attack that is unblockable, and the second, more damaging hit is impossible to defend. Harimau is invulnerable unless facing Joe (see above). It's possible to dodge with good movement, but hard to punish. In the corner you are pretty much dead. Hold both buttons then quickly tap up so you don't jump on accident. You'll know you did it right if nothing happens when the buttons are held.					
<b>Flying Punch Harimau (corner A+B)</b>	Harimau will jump on top of the ropes and fly to the other side of the screen. It is rather easy to see coming from the slow speed and startup, but cannot be blocked. Joe and Carlos can easily dash under, but if you aren't them then you need to utilize the duck.					
<b>Corkscrew Punches Joe/Jose (N/U/L/R+A+B)</b>	A technique invented over a century ago, but many know it from <i>Street Fighter III</i> . Its name is given because of the wrist-twisting motion. How they benefit Joe and Jose differ: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CS variation of uppercut and hook have better recovery than Jose's normal versions.</li> <li>• Joe's Dash uppercut is faster than the CS version, but CS jab and cross are faster for him.</li> </ul> Note: There is no Corkscrew version of the body blow.					
						
	<b>Cross-Counter</b>	<b>Elbow</b>	<b>Chom-Chom</b>	<b>Jump Punch</b>	<b>Spin-Upper</b>	<b>Rope Lunge</b>

## AI-only Moves

**Double Cross Counter (CC ???)**- If the AI gets Cross Countered, it can retaliate with the Double CC if you don't react in time. The cross being thrown is quickly pulled back to deflect the jab, and a left is thrown while the opponent is open. It's really cool to watch! Since you can't CC in VS mode, this is automatically AI-only. It is still worth mentioning as far as thoroughness goes. **Turtle Guard (???)**- While Inagaki and Wolf are essentially clones, Inagaki can put himself into a defensive stance where his knees bend while covering the face. This is a technique to protect the whole body, but it leaves you in no position for offense. Unfortunately, he does not

dodge high attacks. I have no idea why he has this: neither the anime nor manga show him doing this. It's useless sadly, but if it becomes possible then he has one more thing over Wolf. **Chom-Chom Single** (???) - An alternate version of Chom-Chom where it hits a single time, but can be done repeatedly without cooldown. I have managed to get five hits with Chom-Chom at maximum range, though the AI has better control over this.

**Quick Sway** (???) - Kim Yong-Bi can sway for much shorter periods of time. While this doesn't sound like much, it means you have less time to Body Blow him on reaction.

## Gameplay

This is more or less a fighting game. An unusual, watered-down fighting game that few people seemed to really care enough to figure out all the way. but at its core draws from the genre. Two characters on a two-dimensional plane possess various ways to attack and defend with the goal to bring down their opponent's health. It lacks some notable mechanics such as crouching, throws, combos, and jumps (complete with all that brings). Okay, there is jumping, but it's exclusive to one character and doesn't provide much.

Ashita no Joe heavily emphasizes an aspect known **footsies**. Positioning is vital since you cannot jump. **Counters** are a major mechanic where you hit your opponent during their attack. In boxing, striking your off-balanced opponent during their attack gives you a better chance of a knockdown. In this, **counterhits deal 1.5x the damage normally done**. **Both boxers take extra if they hit each other**, also called *trading hits*. The graphics freak out for some reason too.

Matches in this game follow the rules of boxing for the most part. To better fit a fighting game though, tweaks were made. The timer goes to three minutes like a typical round, but it's actually two minutes barring lag. Only a single timed round is fought instead of multiple like in real boxing. Getting knocked down three times in a round is known as a technical knockout (TKO), which is the only way to win a match here other than decision (time). The "ten-count" from a knockdown isn't properly utilized. The person still standing backs away (going to a neutral corner before the count starts). You don't need to mash to get up; after two counts your boxer automatically gets up. It's essentially like *Killer Instinct* except it's 3/5 and the timer doesn't stall once started.

While only five boxers can get past guards, **turtling** is not a viable strategy since blocking any hit drains your health like in *Mortal Kombat*. Throws don't exist, so there is no **RPS Triangle** found in most other games. I found where the balance really lies after realizing the two best boxers have **50/50 options**. This game falls back to a layered system where each option has a response:

- **Guarding** loses to **unblockable** attacks
- **Unblockable** attacks can be dodged by **swaying**
- **Swaying** leaves you open to **body blows**
- **Body blows** need to be **guarded**

**Summary: Unblockable -> Guard -> Body Blow -> Sway -> Unblockable**

Note: Normal punches can be both swayed or guarded.

This basic concept is found in many fighting games. While this usually involves reading what your opponent is going to do, it is not always necessary. Optimal play at its simplest form involves trying to mix up your options to not be so predictable, but using an option constantly that won't punish you will help your opponent get conditioned for when you use something else and catch them off-guard.

There is much more to it though. Movement would normally be a useful tool to get out of the way of attacks, but with how fast punches are it's not always feasible. If one were to actually get acclimated to the speed loss from no-guard or get good at switching to it, leanback could be used to punish unblockables.

Five boxers have an unblockable attack (six with a specific matchup), and two of them have such *impossible* to sway. Said boxers aren't even the top two anyway! As a result, some boxers are inherently weaker and resort to what is called **honest play**, or fundamentals over gimmicks. Yes, even 50/50s are considered gimmicky if too abundant. *Mortal Kombat X* was largely criticized for that.

## Boxers

Here, I will cover what you need to know about each boxer. Their story, overall statistics, how to use them in VS, and AI strategies for the story mode. Even though this game is full of headswaps, you'd be surprised that each boxer has unique properties. However, two of them can be seen as clones: Wolf and Tiger. Wolf is just Inagaki with half the damage, while Tiger is a bit more unique from his counterpart Rikiishi yet still overall weaker.

Let me explain the stats here:

• **Speed** is movement speed. It starts off at 5 because of Joe's properties. Those who move super slow get knocked off 2 points per direction, those slightly slower lose one point each, while having perks from no-guard adds half a point per direction. I take a little off of one boxer for lacking one thing Joe had. • **Damage** gauges how hard a boxer hit. Considering that most of the attacks are normal punches, specials don't factor so much into this. Notably, only two boxers fit the extremes. Everyone else stays around average. • **Punch** rates a boxer's overall moveset. How good their basic punches are as well as their special moves are considered. If the fast power punches didn't have such long recovery, I wouldn't be so conservative with rating everyone.

I wanted to use a small scale given that there are only nine boxers, but I realized some in-betweens were found to make decimals necessary to better reflect differences.

### Boxer List

1. **Joe Yabuki**
2. **Shohei Inagaki**
3. **Wolf Kanagushi**
4. **Toru Rikiishi**
5. **Tiger Ozaki**
6. **Carlos Rivera**
7. **Kim Yong-bi**
8. **Harimau**
9. **José Mendoza**

## Joe Yabuki

### Joe Yabuki



**Stats**  
**Move 5/5 Damage 3/5 Punch 3/5**

**Bio**

The main character of *Ashita no Joe*. A teenager from the slums who is arrogant and reckless, yet filled to the brim with potential. His natural skill in brawling inspires Danpei Tange, a middle-aged, washed up coach, to try teaching him as their ticket to fame, which Joe declines. His refusal to apologize for scamming a very charitable lady lands him in serious trouble. The way Joe's natural skills were outclassed by boxing nudges him to actually learn it himself. After Joe gets released from reformatory, he and Danpei begin a journey that would shake not only their country, but the whole world.

**Note:** Joe ages throughout the manga, but his appearance is overall consistent for each anime series. The younger Joe (seen in part 1) has short hair and a rounder head. When Joe matures (seen in part 2) he has longer hair and a sharp chin.

**Attributes**

Joe is unique in that he changes based on his opponent. That's a double-edged blade I'll cover properly where it applies for each boxer. Overall, he's more or less an average Joe on the surface, but his perks make him solid enough. While his punches are slow, he has the best movement in the game. His speed is rivaled only by the final opponent alongside his dash. His uppercut is unique in that it is not as slow as the first two opponents, but not as fast as the others. Joe is also the only boxer that takes reduced damage on his final bar of health. As a comeback feature, it's really strong.

**Joe Perks**

Well, umm... You cannot fight yourself, not that you're supposed to. If you're really curious, check out the VS section.

**Strategy**

You can't fight yourself, so I'll just give some advice. Dash. Dash a LOT! I really don't know why they decided to make the two important, most useful punches come out frame 1 with really good recovery, but it's there, so take advantage of it! Because of his slow punches you will not get the most out of him if you don't utilize this move. By holding guard during a dash, you can store the state. You have a small window after letting go where you can do a fast uppercut or body blow. With this, you can punish any blockable attack in the game. The reduced damage on your final bar lets you take more block damage as well, so you can counter more often from blocking.

**Shohei Inagaki**



**Shohei Inagaki**  
**Stats**  
**Move 1/5 Damage 5/5 Punch 1/5**

**Bio**

Inagaki meets Joe during an entrance exam fresh out of high school as the top boxer in his division. After showing Joe the importance of defense, they get chosen to spar against each other as part of the exam.

**Note:** Some call him Ernie for his round facial features. It's a surprise he was added over someone like Takeo Murase, who was Joe's first pro fight; probably because of the previous game. He's not a major character at all, and a few I played with didn't remember him.



**Attributes**

He hits the hardest in the game, even harder than the Jose! Sadly that is the ONLY strength he has. He can only move as fast as Joe's advance in no-guard stance, which is really awful. What really stops him from being any decent is his Uppercut. Even though it deals massive damage (33%, 50% on counter), it just takes too long to come out. It does recover fast though. He is the only character I suggest using hooks for because of that. There's also a squat stance I don't know how to do. It's not really useful anyway. Despite lowering his head he still gets hit by high punches.

**Joe Perks**

Joe copies Inagaki damage for this fight. The hardest hitter in the game becomes quite ridiculous when faster.

**Strategies**

I really want to say that the high damage could be a double-edged sword, but this fight isn't hard at all, even on hard. Joe is superior in every way to Inagaki. Use the time to get used to the controls. The popular strategy is to cross counter him, but spoilers: Joe never used it against him. If you want to speedrun this fight you can just keep doing dash uppercuts to drain a bar in 2-3 hits.

**Post-fight explanation**

Joe was desperate to pass the exam. Even after knocking him out of the ring he still continued to beat him without restraint. Boxing and brawling are two different arts. I don't know what actually happened to Inagaki; what is said about his fate is conflicting. As for what Joe is doing offscreen, I'm pretty sure it's just him doing the 1-1-2 combo.

**Wolf Kanagushi**



**Wolf Kanagushi (Translated as V. Kanagushi)**  
**Stats**  
**Move 1/5 Damage 1/5 Punch 1/5**

**Bio**

A technical boxer quickly rising up to become the national bantamweight champion. Joe meets up with him in the locker room only to pick a fight. The publicity created was the catalyst for Joe's career. He was the one to develop a counter to the famed Cross Counter for their real match. Despite being kept under wraps, he boldly tells Joe that he *will* throw out a cross for Joe.

**Note:** I believe V was supposed to be U. ウルフ (*Urufu*) is the transliteration for Wolf. *Ashita no Joe Densetsu* has a continuity error where you fight Wolf in the locker room: this actually takes place before he fights Inagaki.



**Attributes**

**WARNING: WORST BOXER IN THE GAME!** Wolf was never known for his strength. Thankfully, he isn't fragile. I just wish he was moved and punched faster. He's identical to Inagaki with the only difference being he does **half the damage**. While only slightly below normal, you go from the hardest hitter to the *weakest*. The only punch not weaker than the others is jab. If I had a matchup spread, the best matchup would be against himself (even). He'd be slightly disadvantaged against Joe and Inagaki who are faster and stronger than him respectively. The rest unfavorable as he'd be completely outclassed. I cannot stress enough that he's the worst in the game. Whatever you figure out will work better with Inagaki no matter what, but feel free to rub salt in your opponent's wounds if you beat them in a serious match.

### Joe's Perks

Like Inagaki, Joe also copies his opponent's damage for this fight. This time it's lower.

### Strategy

Wolf is more aggressive than Inagaki, which combined with the lower damage makes this fight more challenging. You are still superior, however. Those playing blind might get destroyed by the Double Cross Counter, but there is a way to counter it. It's not that hard to figure out, but seeing that it's a spoiler in the lore I'm going to spoil the solutions to these fights from here on out (even though I already stated it in another section).

The TRIPLE Cross Counter is done by pressing R+A before the flash. This is the best way to do damage in this fight. I do suggest you at least watch the Double CC animation once because it looks cool. The Triple CC cuts out the Double CC even though that's not supposed to happen.

### Post-Fight explanation

Joe was knocked down many times by this new technique. He almost lost the fight because of this. Victory was achieved when he managed to figure out the timing to counter him. Apparently Wolf's lack of strength was what stopped him from getting the KO.

## Toru Rikiishi



### Tooru Rikiishi

#### Stats

**Move 4.5/5 Damage 3/5 Punch 3.5/5**

#### Bio

A rookie featherweight boxer sent to reformatory after beating up a better in the crowd, who claimed the match he won was rigged. His otherwise calm composure is a foil to Joe's fiery friskiness. In fact, he even stops Joe from breaking out. When he leaves, they promise to fight in the real ring. He began preparing around the time Joe passed his exam, and officially challenged Joe after his match with Wolf. Settling his rivalry with Joe was the final obstacle before taking on the world.

**Note:** *Ashita no Joe Densetsu* stated that Rikiishi wanted to obstruct Joe's career instead.



### Attributes

Joe says he was known for his ability to break open guards from his punches and the one-two-hook combo, but at this point Rikiishi had developed a new method following the weight loss: conditioning his opponent with uppercuts. While they don't have extra damage, they are unblockable and come out faster than Joe's. They also outreach yours. It's really good, but that's the only special thing about him. Outside of that, his advance is slowed to match his retreat, and while in no-guard stance he retains his advance speed. I usually don't advise going into no-guard because you move slow, but Rikiishi is one of two exceptions. As a result I strongly discourage being P2 as him. He is a great boxer, but leaves more to be desired.

### Joe Perks

Nothing unique in this fight really. While his damage is identical to the opponent here as well, it's the standard damage for everyone.

### Strategy

This is the first real roadblock of the game. The fights were so simple before, but now you need a little strategy. This fight will teach you one of the fundamental aspects for playing this game. You should find that the uppercuts he keeps throwing out are unblockable and can outreach yours. Unless you're the master of shimmying (which I don't recommend without a lot of practice), the only way to dodge them is to sway. His tactics change up with each bar by creating openings and later exploiting your own. With that, I'll leave the rest of the fight to you. If you're struggling, especially on hard, read the next part.

On normal, you only need to sway once before you can counter him, but on hard, sway two or three times before countering. Do not bother throwing jabs or crosses. Once he loses a bar he'll mix it up. He'll throw hooks in the mix now, so if you want to be risky you could punish him by guarding. On his last bar he becomes passive: only attacking after you land a hit. Sway preemptively and he'll punish you with a body blow. It's possible to get him to not retaliate at all if you sway at the right time. Just remember one thing: DO NOT RUN THE MATCH TO TIME! It is an instant loss if you do!

### Post-fight explanation (HEAVY SPOILERS)

Rikiishi doesn't attack in the final part because he was ready to counter Joe with his own technique. He is the only other character in the manga that utilizes the stance (though someone in the second anime uses it to dodge). I really wish he could give you a taste of your own medicine in this but sadly he can't. Joe gets the chance to perform the Triple CC but managed to counter that with a trick of his own! Joe loses this fight, but this is where his character really shines. Despite losing he is not mad at all, and their rivalry is finally settled. What is really impressive is that Rikiishi went down two weight classes just to fight him. Unfortunately, he collapses after the fight. What happened? What caused that? CHECK OUT *Ashita no Joe* AND FIND OUT FOR YOURSELF!

## Tiger Ozaki



### Tiger Ozaki

#### Stats

**Move 4/5 Damage 3/5 Punch 2.5/5**

#### Bio

The Japanese bantamweight boxing champion. Joe took a break after his fight with Rikiishi, only to come back strong by racking up wins. His new methods have caused problems in the league though. In an effort to stop him, the coaches conspire to bring his momentum to a sudden halt by sending in the champion himself. He is legitimately talented as a boxer, but stooped to some dirty tactics to obtain the knowledge needed to ensure his victory.

**Note:** If you like Good Faces™ then check him out in *Ashita no Joe Densetsu*. I must say though that fight doesn't even compare to this one when it comes to the lore.



## Attributes

I really don't have much to say here. Tiger really isn't anything special. He's okay at best competitively. While based on Rikiishi, he lacks the fast no-guard advance and unblockable uppercuts. A fast hook helps to set him apart a little. He's really only designed to be fought against Joe, being otherwise a slightly-worse version of Rikiishi. His uppercut animations are unique at least.

## Joe Perks

This is a spoiler in the story and how to beat the fight, so I'll just cover it up. Jabs and crosses become far weaker, and strong punches will leave Joe open. Body blows are the only attack effective against him, made stronger to compensate for this weakness.

Read the next section for something a bit less spoilery.

## Strategy

You may quickly notice that your attacks don't work. Hitting him in the head seems to be ineffective, and sometimes you throw up afterward! It leaves you open to attacks. If you know the story, then this really shouldn't be hard. I'll put the real solution in spoilers below if you want to play this blind.

You cannot hit his head. At all. Not even Cross Counters work. Body blows do extra damage in here as compensation. This fight is still a bit tricky even with dashes to speed up your primary attack. Remember to block every so often. If you insist on using other attacks, save them for when he's at low health so you don't throw up.

## Post-Battle Explanation

When Joe came back from a break he became known as the boxer with a killer body blow. The towel you see thrown in is from Joe's side. Danpei realized that continuing was pointless. All Tiger needed to do was protect his lower half since Joe never really hit the head; every time he tried he pulled the punch. Joe, livid that Danpei stopped the fight, insists he could have won the fight, but what Danpei reveals shocks Joe.

## Carlos Rivera



### Carlos Rivera (Translated as C. Ribera)

**Stats**  
**Move 3/5 Damage 3/5 Punch 5/5**

#### Bio

Joe's second major rival is the #6 bantamweight boxer in the world hailing from the slums of Venezuela. Not only is he talented, but he's quite enthusiastic too. Spanish people in this world speak English, but Carlos happens to be fluent in Japanese. They first meet during Joe's fight against Koji Nangou, where he mistakes Joe for the higher-ranked boxer. Once they spar together they become quite attracted to each other. His punches are so fast that he can sneak in an elbow without getting caught. After his third match in Japan,

Carlos personally issues a challenge to Joe before leaving to take on the world champion.

**Note:** Because of the similarities with L/R and B/V, his name was translated to Libera in official media. This game tried to correct it. He loses the pompadour and has a lighter skin tone in the anime. He's so dark in the games because the manga describes his skin along the lines of "black as the night". It is possible that he may be Afro-Venezuelan, but that's headcanon territory; native Hispanics in South America usually lean towards tan.

## Attributes

I may have some bias because he is my favorite character (and my main), but I honestly think he top 2, if not the best in the game. Carlos can get around the long recovery of his power punches with dashing like Joe. He also has an unblockable attack with both buttons. Its range isn't as good as it looks, matching a body blow. Up close this gives him the ability to play far more aggressively by adding in mixups between Elbow and Dash BB. Elbows also hit ducking opponents for some reason. What holds him back is his awful retreat, which means he cannot create space whatsoever. His best option is to close the space. If you can get your opponent close to the corner, throw in a lot of elbows to force sways so you can get away with body blows. While Carlos may not be the fastest mover, he is the most aggressive boxer which makes him perfect for rushdown.

## Joe Perks

Joe can use the elbow attack like Carlos. It is unblockable, but has the range of a body blow. It's really important for how this fight plays out.

## Strategy

He's the first boxer you face with all fast punches. From here on the normal power blows all have long recovery, so if you happen to block one you can throw out an uppercut without dashing. This is a tricky fight that relies heavily on momentum. You might not think the Elbow is useful since Carlos will dodge it, but that's to tell you how to avoid it yourself. Like Rikiishi, if you fight him straight up you will most likely lose. He will become more aggressive as the fight goes on. There is a trick to this fight though. The next part will clear things up even though I already dropped a hint.

Every so often Carlos will stop fighting to go on defense. Simply react accordingly and the fight will go smoothly. If you screw up, he'll do the proper attack on you instead. This will stop if that happens too many times, making the fight just about impossible. As long as you keep capitalizing on this you will win.

## Post-Fight Explanation

With all the heated passion and intensity between the two, they decide to disregard the rules and simply beat each other up. Both Joe and Carlos throw elbows at each other, and the funny kick you see is based on a panel from the manga where Joe trips Carlos. While a win for you, it's a no-contest as the crowd cheers happily.

## Kim Yong-Bi



### Kim Yong-bi (Translated as R. Kin)

**Stats**  
**Move 4/5 Damage 3/5 Punch 3.5/5**

#### Bio

A victim of the Korean War, the traumatic events shaped him to become the boxer he is now. His stomach grew smaller from starvation and he became emotionally detached after realizing he killed his own father over the food he was going to get anyway.

He prefers to not be aggressive and let his opponents tire out before unleashing his aggression. Another contrast to Joe, fitting for the nickname "Human Computer" (Cold Computer in *Densetsu*). He hates the sight of blood, and will excessively wash his hands after he fights.





Despite plans to take on the world champion, Joe manages to challenge the Oriental-Pacific Champion for the right to do so himself.

**Note:** Surnames are first in Korean like Japanese. Kim of *Fatal Fury* fame has two sons named Kim Dong Hwan and Kim Jae Hoon. Ryuhi Kin is a Japanese translation. Yong and Ryu both mean dragon, but I don't know if Yong-bi means "flying dragon" or "heaven dragon". You also see this in Ashita no Joe Densetsu.

### Attributes

Yong-bi is the worst fast fighter, weird both in gameplay and AI. He is a half-baked, aggressive boxer whose gimmick is to get the opponent to get in the corner. His good advance and fast punches reinforce that at least. He's not quite as fast retreating, but he shouldn't be doing so anyway. Patience and careful play are key, which makes sense for Yong-bi. Chom-Chom only works when the opponent is cornered and cannot be avoided whatsoever. Use it whatever opportunity you can. It is possible for the opponent to mash out of it for a trade. For some reason, you can get an attack out on frame 1, but I don't know how it works. Getting countered four times will make you lose 20% more health, so I don't advise trying this unless you are desperate or want to be bold. If anybody figures out a consistent method, please let me know. The AI can do some unique tricks that really make him much harder such as fast sways and repeatedly spamming Chom-Chom. I have managed to get a five-hit Chom-Chom at maximum distance a few times. Quickly alternating punches is not as feasible for a human to do, but it's something any of the final four could theoretically perform.

### Joe Perks

Absolutely nothing, which really sucks for fighting him.

### Strategy

Despite what I said about him, this is the hardest fight in the game for me. Once you take out his first bar he becomes more aggressive. The ideal strategy would be to never lose your first bar, but that is far easier said than done. Once you lose it, he goes into a frenzy spamming jab and cross. I assume this references how he gets triggered (unironic; he has PTSD) from seeing blood, even though this game has none. I really don't know how to get around this, at least normally, because he recovers quick enough to close the gap if you back away before you can do anything. If you keep backing away, he'll do Chom-Chom. It is possible to dash before he starts punching you to hit him with an uppercut, but he's just so fast and this game doesn't control the tightest. You're just going to need to be lucky at this point. I can't really tell you how I managed to beat it outside of being patient and winging it. Your only real chance is if you manage to get him to stop. If you get too frustrated, read the following paragraph to simplify this fight in a manner unintended.

While labbing the game in practice for a marathon, I found something extremely broken that the developers tried to fix. On one hand, this made the speedrun more interesting. On the other hand, it's another crack for competitive play. There's a small window after letting go of guard where you're still guarding, yet still able to move. By alternating taps between forward and guard you are allowed to advance while defending. Pressing guard as you advance does nothing, which suggests they knew about this. This is the only way I know to actually deal with this pressure consistently. By backing him into a corner, he is more likely to stop and return to normal fighting without losing too much health. **Please refrain from using this technique in a real match.** While you have to worry about unblockables against certain characters, it is broken against those who lack them. The reason I don't find the stored dash problematic is that once stored you can't advance until the dash state is gone; it's impossible to use these two together.

### Post-fight explanation

Near the end of the fight, Kim goes into a frenzy and starts fouling Joe. Lots of illegal hits and persistence even after being told to stop. Joe manages to get a good hit and send him out of the ring, which would give him the victory.

## Harimau



### Harimau (Translated as Harimao)

#### Stats

Move 4/5 Damage 3/5 Punch 4/5

#### Bio

A feral human from Malaysia. Animalistic from his upbringing outside society, but at the same time physically formidable.

Aggressive and unpredictable, he is borderline dangerous as he easily gets strung up over seemingly trivial matters. The only thing that can calm him down is chocolate. Joe needed to defend his championship belt to finally take on the world champion, and thus Harimau was chosen to face Joe.

**Note:** Harimau means Tiger in his native language. He has no surname.



### Attributes

Harimau is another fast boxer and somewhat relies on being close to be effective. Both his advance and retreat are reduced slightly. He could also just troll his opponent by hopping like a maniac because he's invulnerable while in the air. His Rope Lunge is hard to punish but easy to dodge. His other special, a well-animated uppercut, is where most of his brokenness comes from. It does two hits and cannot be blocked; swaying only avoids the first hit. This wouldn't be a big deal if the second hit didn't deal the bulk of its damage. I mean, avoiding the damaging hit should be a reward in itself, but this is what happens in a game without proper design for combos. To do it more consistently, hold both buttons before pressing up. You'll know you did it right if nothing happens. Only Joe can counter it with his unique special for fighting him. It starts up faster but is not invulnerable: Joe will get hurt instead if he does it too late. It is not hard for your opponent to keep their distance from it with its short reach, only as much as a body blow.

You are better off staying in no-guard as him. He is scripted automatically to do so after losing his first bar. He has no movement penalty whatsoever in it, **which lets him take full advantage of the leanback.** On his final bar, his normal idle turns into a panic state where he can dodge or block depending on what sprite he's in. Don't rely on it unless you're some maniac. Just go back to no-guard.

### Joe Perks

Joe can use a special attack to counter Harimau's Spin Uppercut. While faster, it is not invulnerable. You cannot beat him every time simply by doing the move. His jab will do only one damage to Harimau. I do not know why this is the case.

### Strategy

This fight is annoying, but not really as hard as the last fight. Jabs are useless here so your pressure options are limited. Harimau will fly towards you if he finds himself in the corner. On the second bar, Harimau will use his Flying Uppercut. Harimau will also refuse to approach you at times. If you go to him he'll jump to the other side. If it weren't for your good speed this fight would be far more annoying.

If you're lucky, Harimau will jump back and Lunge at the start. Simply do a dash and time the uppercut when he's above you for easy counter damage. Unless he hits you, RNG may have him keep doing this for an easy first bar. On the second bar, he will throw out his uppercut attack which you need to anticipate with your own aerial counter. This is where the fight becomes really challenging. Learn to react to its unique sound, or just try anticipating it if that proves too hard.

### Post-fight explanation

This one is rather self-explanatory. Harimau uses his signature techniques only for Joe to tap into his own unconventional side, taking him down for the victory. He bounces up from the punch's impact. It's quite faithful to the source.

## José Mendoza



### José Mendoza (Translated as Hose Mendoza)

#### Stats

Move 4.9/5 Damage 4/5 Punch 4.5/5

#### Bio

The World Bantamweight Champion himself, Hose Mendose from Mexico. He is perfection in every way. Good-looking, speedy, strong, and also talented outside of boxing. He even has the best doctor to keep him in shape to box. Undefeated since his youth, he has never been knocked down even once. His composure and confidence speak for him. On top of all this, José has a wife and children. Who can compare to a man such as Hose Mendose? **Note:** I misspelled his name intentionally.



#### Attributes

He has all the fast punches, but he has access to even faster punches thanks to his signature Corkscrew Blows. Well, the jab and cross don't actually make *him* faster, but hook and uppercut are faster. With movement that matches Joe's, he's the fastest boxer you'll fight. He also has extra damage on his hook and body blow. While he does have 50/50 mixups too, they need to be done from a distance. Pressing attack during a sway will cause José to teleport to his opponent and deliver a devastating blow. Holding down will do a body blow, but anything else does a hook that hits even harder and cannot be blocked. If you're unfortunate to get hit by it on counter, you can kiss 70% of your health goodbye. The problem is that while the button ends the current sway time, he stays swaying for a half-second before he attacks. It's risky up close as he can get baited and countered with jabs; even Inagaki can counter it with a jab-uppercut sequence if you time it perfectly. On the upside, it's possible, yet hard, to tell which version José is going to use by studying his arms right before he teleports up to the opponent. The sway you see him stay in before teleporting is fixed: he will not immediately start the move if an attack made contact with him. He has to wait the full half-second before he attacks. Keep in mind that a body blow here will count as a counter.

If you want a really solid boxer, but prefer more methodical play or less reliance on the D-pad, then José is the best choice.

#### Joe's Perks

The same punches José can use are possible with Joe, although it requires certain conditions to be met. For some reason, your Uppercut is weaker in this fight.

#### Strategy

Be prepared to lose your health bar in two hits. You're in for it now! At least... that's what I really want to say. Despite being the final opponent and an incredibly solid boxer, this fight really isn't as hard as it should be. You might lose on your first try, but he's not too hard to figure out. It's disappointing honestly. Dash body blows are your main tool in this fight between your uppercut being weaker and his tendency to sway frequently. His Corkscrew jabs are impossible to CC. He will keep some distance but will fight you. Always be on guard when he starts moving away. Most of the time this is when he'll do a Teleport Hook. He'll mix it up sometimes with a body blow instead, though on Hard he truly becomes random. You may notice that you don't start off with the Corkscrew Blows in this fight. There is a way to get them, but to say the least it's not useful for this fight: both of you need to be in red health.

If you play on hard, this'll definitely be more challenging. It still doesn't feel like a real fight though since he likes to back away unless you approach him.

The real challenge in this fight comes from the true ending. If you want to figure out how to do it yourself, don't read on. You have to let the match run to time. It doesn't matter who has more health. If you want to figure out how to do this yourself, stop here.

The easiest way to do this is to simply go into no-guard and lean back. He is too random to do rely on this for Hard, so good luck if you bump up the difficulty. Even I haven't achieved this yet without cheating, not that it changes anything.

#### Post-Fight Explanation (MAJOR SPOILERS)

Beating him normally only has Joe raise his arm in victory. It then shows a montage and hints that there are other punches Joe can do: the Elbow from Carlos, and the punches you see José do. If you've been reading through this FAQ then that is rather moot. I can't hide everything without obscuring most of the guide. It then reveals that another ending exists after the credits finish. The True Ending is below.

You cannot change the outcome even if you had more health.

This fight truly tested both boxers, and it was really close. José is declared the winner by judgment and turns into Ted Turner (gets Marie Antoinette Syndrome) as a result of the fight, while Joe gives his gloves away to Yoko. His eyes then close. Danpei would soon notice that something is off after not reacting to his heartfelt praise. It's strongly implied he's dead in the anime while the manga simply ends with the very image you see here. After experts said it would prove difficult to stay upright if dead, the artist backtracked later by stating Joe may still be alive. If you plan on checking the series out for yourself, PLEASE do not read the spoiler below.

Extra spoiler: The line Joe says is the very last line in the anime, said multiple times throughout by Joe. It translates to "I've burned my fire until there's nothing left. All that remains is pure white ash."

## VS Mode

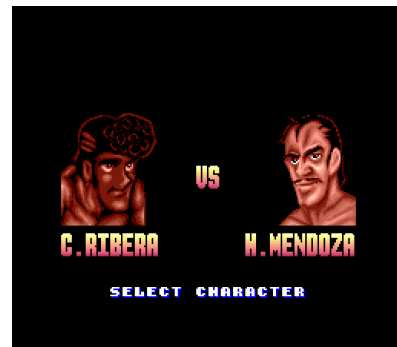
A one-on-one mode where you face another human. It can offer an hour or two of entertainment so long as you have others to play with. Simply press up or down to choose your boxer and push any button to lock your choice. There is no indication for confirming other than being locked. All nine boxers are playable in this, complete with most of the quirks.

While it's cool that you can do just about everything in VS mode, the main exception is Cross Counters (probably for the better as far as fairness goes). If you want more information about what can't be done check **the bottom section of controls**. Also, the health requirement to unlock CS Blows against José is removed!

I want to say now that issues exist that stop this from being a game worth holding anything seriously for. I would love to have a tournament for this, but port asymmetry really holds the game back. Assuming you have read pretty much everything else, here's a list of everything I know that's detrimental to competitive play:

- Using diagonals will stop movement as player 2. Controllers with sensitive diagonals greatly suffer. Rikiishi relies on this to seamlessly move back and forth with no-guard. It's also possible to do advancing uppercuts and body blows. The only way to fix this in-game is for Harimau to jump to the other side. It doesn't matter who uses him.
- **Funny bit:** when sides are swapped, the right boxer will force the left to walk backwards when pushing into them. This does not affect gameplay.
- Overall character balance is skewed because of the way punches were designed:

- Left/Right hooks, uppercuts, and body blows are **not** symmetrical. You would think with the way the game randomizes which arm you use that they would be identical, but outer punches reverse the animation instead of pulling back as lead punches do. Reversing the animation takes longer. This is easily seen with Dash body blows and uppercuts. This isn't the case for fast uppercuts and body blows.
- Fast jabs and crosses (as well as Joe's uppercuts) are objectively better than their slow versions. On top of that, all the fast power punches are identical in frame data (left hook recovers faster). Startup as fast as a cross, but awful recovery. I initially thought only body blows had long recovery, yet that proved untrue. Hooks really are worse than uppercuts. If both hooks had better recovery, there may be some use but they'd probably still be bad. At least body blows have a purpose despite their poor range. I get this was likely all for balancing against the AI, but it shows how little thought was put into the latter half of the game outside of special moves.
- Guarding is powerful against most of the characters because they don't have a practical way to get around it. On top of that, there's a way to advance while guarding.
- The game is laggy. Not only does the game slow down, but inputs get dropped. Generally speaking, every time a boxer animates the game lags a frame. It also lags when the ropes shift while moving to a corner. The game is poorly programmed, but it's not also the worst since the lag mostly gets removed if you overclock the CPU just a little bit. If one player holds guard, lag is greatly reduced to one frame every time the sprites change during an attack.
- Input reading alternate ports every frame regardless of how many people are playing. If you are aware of the *Dragster* dispute, you might already know that game also alternates player input each frame; *Power Rangers* and *X-Men 2* on Genesis also do this, the latter *only* when a second player is present, While not a big issue by itself, two extra frames of input delay may become one more. This was commonly used to stop games from being too intensive on CPUs back then. If you think that's bad, some reserve a frame for each player's input *and* output, multiplying the number of frames in a cycle.
  - Yes, this game has three frames of input delay on top of the lag whereas ideally, it'd process on the next frame. I think the game processes your output, *then* takes your input, thus waiting for the next cycle for output. Swapping the process order should reduce delay if such is really the case. They may have done this in their effort to reduce lag, but it's worth looking into.
- **Input buffering** is finicky in this, ultimately being inconsistent:
  - Upon pressing attack while guarding, you indefinitely store a punch for when you let go. The attack done depends on the direction held upon letting go. Stay in neutral if you did it on accident for a jab.
  - You have a four-frame window for specials in neutral. This is *useless*. The only way to see this is by holding down as José (or Joe, facing him), followed by both buttons, and then release down soon after.
    - Meanwhile, the window to buffer input from an unactionable state (stun, attack, jump) is only *two frames*.
  - Harimau has 25 frames when you hold both buttons before pressing up or moving to a corner does nothing. Likely intentional for his overlapping inputs. If only there was an easier way to uppercut instead of jumping on accident.
- Mirror matches are not supported. With external codes to allow it, two problem matches come up: Joe and Harimau. The rest do not have issues.
  - Joe is missing proper data against himself and the results are hilarious. Jabs and crosses do twice a normal bar of health, leading to one or two hits causing a knockdown. Body blows and hooks have extra damage too, but nowhere as much. And if that wasn't silly enough, uppercuts hit for nothing until red health. There is no music; only a bunch of sounds and then silence. It's possible to glitch the audio by getting a knockdown before the cheers die, which seems to crash the game after the fight. This matchup should not be taken seriously if it's not banned.
  - Harimau is immune to his own specials. My best guess is that it may have to do with the fact that *Harimau* is invincible during these attacks. The key here is italicized: Harimau, instead of *who is using him*. If both play as Harimau, then both are invincible when the game says to enable it for him. No alternate colors exist so this matchup may get confusing to watch at times.
- A bit of tedium exists because the game boots you to the main menu after every fight, and only P1 has control of the menu. It's nice that you aren't forced to reset the game to get out of VS mode, but at the same time, the lack of features makes it pointless. It'd be better if there was a menu that let you either rematch or quit. It is what it is though: clearly a game without much budget by a company that seemingly went out of business shortly afterward.



The following sections detail a more technical analysis of the game: **the metagame I managed to figure out** and also **a chart for damage**. I would include frame data, but given that the game lags a lot it won't be accurate to what you see. Still, I suppose it could be useful if you really want to figure out how to punish attacks. If I update the guide with frame data, I'll count the frames without lag for consistency.

**Update: Check out the frame data here!**

## Damage Chart

Everything in this also applies to singleplayer. Seeing that this really isn't needed to beat the game, I felt it was better off for those who want to get more into this. Boxers have 288 health, split evenly into 3 bars for 96. Despite health being totaled, each multiple of 96 is a threshold to prevent any extra damage upon reaching 192 and 96. As stated before, blocking reduces damage to 25% (divided by 4) while hitting someone in the middle of an attack increases the damage by 50% (multiplied by 3/2). Joe takes 50% damage in all situations once he reaches 96 health. Counters will only do 75% while guarding reduces damage to one-eighth.

### Default Damage

Attack	HP
Jab	4
Cross	10
Uppercut	20
Hook	16
Body Blow	16

Use this for everyone unless the same attack is listed in a boxer's section.

### Joe Yabuki

Attack	HP
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Jab	0(TO) 1(H)
Cross	4(TO)
Uppercut	10(TO) 16(JM)
Hook	10(TO)
Body Blow	20(TO)
Jump Punch	20

The initials refer to who Joe fights. Joe copies his opponent's damages for the following two boxers. I didn't include his other special moves seeing that they are identical to those he gets them from. Worth noting is that Joe *does not* copy José's extra damage when using the CS Punches. Jump Punch will always deal 30 since it only works to counter Harimau's attack.

### Shohei Inagaki

Attack	HP
Jab	8
Cross	16
Uppercut	32
Hook	24
Body Blow	24

Joe refers to this when facing Inagaki.

### Wolf Kanagushi

Attack	HP
Cross	8
Uppercut	16
Hook	12
Body Blow	12

Joe refers to this while fighting Wolf.

### Toru Rikiishi

(Nothing unique)

### Tiger Oozaki

(Nothing unique)

### Carlos Rivera

Attack	HP
Elbow	20

### Kim Yong-bi

Attack	HP
Chom-Chom	10*4

The number of hits Chom-Chom does may vary depending on where it's done, but it is usually four

### Harimau

Attack	HP
Rope Lunge	20
Fly Uppercut	8+20

### José Mendoza

Attack	HP
Hook	20
Gut	24
T. Hook	36

Corkscrew Punches do not deal extra damage. As such, Joe's CS Hook will only deal 16.

## Tier List

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### Tiers??

I know some people hate the idea of tier lists because it shows a game's imbalances, and they don't like the idea of that. The reasons vary though: maybe they think characters are balanced from having weaknesses, or they are simply easy or hard to use. Neither is true but remember: tiers are *subjective*. Despite how objective I try to be this is still my opinion. Do not live by the tier list; they are simply a reference. **If you want to learn more about the concept of tiers...**

With this being a simple game I didn't need to look too deep for my overall impression. Usually, tiers are based on tournament results and/or matchup spread. I did play VS with a few friends, and they agreed with me on the tier list for the most part. It's mostly accurate to the lore too. The only real point of debate is over Carlos and José as the best. I initially thought it was José for obvious reasons, but after messing with Carlos more I realized that he also has a lot of potential. I may not have tournament data, but I can use matchups at least; it's necessary since Joe changes based on his opponent. The groups are also a bit loose as the game only has nine characters. A fifth tier may be added if necessary, but I honestly don't want to break characters down into groups of two.

The game was really designed as a single-player experience, so some of their decisions proved awful for balance. **Most of them are covered in the section about why VS mode has issues.** Before you say everyone can be good in the right hands, please look at Wolf in this game, and click the link in the prior paragraph if you're *still* not convinced. I am not downplaying him when I say Wolf has *no strengths whatsoever*.

While I don't think the gaps *between* tiers is enough for a clear advantage, an A-tier character would certainly win against someone in C.

**Tier List Update Dec/20** Kim and Rikiishi have been swapped. Kim used to be higher but has been falling after I found out Chom-Chom could randomly get interrupted. I omitted it from the guide until now because I couldn't replicate it again until recently.

In lower-level play he's good, but I just don't see him doing well when he has to play hard to earn the corner. Rikiishi, on the other hand, never got the credit he deserves with his uppercuts, so I'm bumping him up with his unique defensive potential. He does have some similarities to Harimau though now that I think about it...

### A-tier

• Carlos Rivera • José Mendoza

Obviously the best in the game. They also feel quite complete as far as gameplay goes. I really can't say who's better between the two though (if I had to choose, Carlos). Both utilize 50/50 mixups in different ways, and can get around the long recovery of their normal punches

Carlos is the fastest puncher overall and can utilize mixups up close. His aggressive gameplay is unmatched. He can apply pressure from any range and easily close the gap whilst evading high attacks. With an unblockable coming out as fast as his other punches, his opponent is forced to guess constantly when he gets momentum rolling his way. The only thing hindering him is his awful retreat speed, which stops any defensive movement.

José has movement on par with Joe along with beefed-up hooks and body blows, and the latter being his hardest normal punch. His CS Punches are harder to punish with their better recovery. Every time he drains a bar he can follow up for a nice chunk of damage with his Teleport punch. While hard to see which version he'll use, it's easy to counter up close. He has great perks to put him above the rest despite his lack of aggression.

### B-tier

• Joe Yabuki • Harimau • Toru Rikiishi

This is the most volatile group. The battle for number 3 is between three characters. These characters have what it takes to be solid, but ultimately end up lacking against Los Reyes.

Joe's dash is the main reason he's solid. Without it he goes down a tier. While he copies A-tier, he is still at a disadvantage. Carlos outclasses him, while he has a bit more even footing against José. His reduced damage on the final bar greatly helps him steal victories through careful play. His poking game is slow though.

Harimau has S-tier potential in theory but likely won't be so dominant in high-level play. Spin Uppercut is broken with its only drawback being poor range. A pocket Joe can put him in his place, but I'm sure some counterplay can be developed for other boxers as the meta grows. While you should practice consistency to not jump when you don't want to, learning good use of leanback fundamentally gets you further.

Rikiishi is a defensive fighter of sorts. Spamming uppercuts lets him keep people out while also useful for conditioning. It's annoying to deal with long-ranged uppercuts you can't block, being safe without using leanback or shimmying. He can use leanback efficiently even though he needs to switch back to escape. I find his moveset unique, but also a bit gimmicky. Without specials he leaves more to be desired as such a major character.

### C-tier

These characters have yet to be fully explored but definitely are on the lacking side. I'm not sure whether to call them bad, but as far as the tiers go they are undeniably on the lower end.

Kim is the most balanced worst of the fasts. With no way to get around the long recovery of his power punches, he has to earn the right to dominate, which holds him back a little as other boxers can use their techniques without a condition. While his special does guaranteed damage, it's possible to interrupt it by mashing an attack. I haven't fully figured out how that works yet. Most of the time you'll get extra damage but if they trade with you it could cost you a fair chunk of your own health.

Tiger limits Joe, but that being his sole gimmick makes him Rikiishi with nothing good. His faster hook is useless as the uppercut has the exact speed but better damage and range. If the right hook also had less recovery than I could see some merit in switching between the two punches, but not much. He's not awful on paper, but lacks anything special to make help stand out.

Using Inagaki... well, powerhouses that are overall slow never fare well in a game about speed. It always happens. I'm a little lenient by putting him in C-tier since it's not impossible to win. It's still an uphill battle to say the least. The slow startup on most of the punches is at least offset by decent recovery, but he is still held back by poor movement and that hideous uppercut startup. You can't use him the same way as anyone else.

**F-tier**

- Wolf Kanagushi

You think I'm joking about imbalance? You think game developers have some magic formula to perfectly balance everyone? I hate to burst someone's bubble here, but there is no D-tier for a reason: he is that bad. Usually such blunt examples like this don't come around unless they are joke characters. Even those usually have something positive.

That smug grin you see on Wolf has NOTHING to back it up. Doing 50% of Inagaki's damage makes him the weakest puncher, and that's on top of Inagaki's already-poor attributes. He's not fast whatsoever. He only has a decent chance against two characters, as everyone else does what he can better. I don't think he deserves it; explaining why is outside the game and that means spoilers I refuse to cover on this guide.

**Frame Data**

I only recommend reading this section if you want to get into this game for competitive purposes, be it speedrunning or against another player. I didn't take any lag into account for the most accurate numbers possible. Feel free to skip right to the chart if you're already familiar, but I suggest **you read over what frame data is otherwise**.

*This chart assumes startup less than or equal to the advantage will work.*

**The Chart**

As stated earlier, boxers recover at the same time on hit and sway. this chart is best used to learn punish options. Look at the advantage, and compare it to the startup of the move. If the startup less than or equal to the advantage then you can use it as a punish on guard. Any move with a U for advantage cannot be blocked.

Frame Data									
Group					Slow Punches				
Name	Str	Actv	Rec	Adv	Name	Str	Actv	Rec	Adv
Jab	6	2	3	-3	Cross	12	4	7	-9
Uppercut L	24	2	9	-13	Uppercut R	23	2	11	-15
Hook L	14	2	16	-20	Hook R	14	2	16	-20
Body Blow L	14	2	5	-4	Body Blow R	12	2	11	-10

Group					Joe's Punches				
Name	Str	Actv	Rec	Adv	Name	Str	Actv	Rec	Adv
Uppercut L	14	2	5	-9	Uppercut R	12	2	11	-15
Jump Punch	16	4	29	N/A					

Group					Dash Punches				
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Name	Str	Actv	Rec	Adv	Name	Str	Actv	Rec	Adv
Uppercut L	0	2	5	-9	Uppercut R	0	2	11	-15
Body Blow L	0	2	5	-9	Body Blow R	0	2	9	-13

Group	Fast Punches								
Name	Str	Actv	Rec	Adv	Name	Str	Actv	Rec	Adv
Jab	2	2	3	-3	Cross	6	2	5	-5
Uppercut L	6	2	21	-25	Uppercut R	6	2	21	-25
Hook L	6	2	17	-21	Hook R	6	2	21	-25
Body Blow L	6	2	21	-25	Body Blow R	6	2	21	-25

Group	Other Specials								
Name	Str	Actv	Rec	Adv	Name	Str	Actv	Rec	Adv
Elbow Strike	6	6	17	U	Chom-Chom	2	2[8]4	8	U
Spin Upper	20	4[8]4	13	U	Flying Punch	36	∞	35	U
Tele-Hook	54	2	11	U	Tele-BB	55	2	11	-15

Group	Corkscrew Punches								
Name	Str	Actv	Rec	Adv	Name	Str	Actv	Rec	Adv
CS Jab	2	2	3	-3	CS Cross	6	2	5	-5
CS Upper L	6	2	9	-13	CS Upper R	6	2	9	-13
CS Hook L	6	2	14	-18	CS Hook R	6	2	19	-23

## Notes

- I'm gonna be honest here. I knew this game was a mess. It wasn't until I took the time to figure out the exact numbers that I realized just *how much* of a mess it is.
- More to the point, I knew fast body blows had awful recovery. I didn't think all of the fast's power punches were IDENTICAL though. This insight will change a **lot** of the meta. They are unsafe if blocked, making them much riskier to throw out. The gap between the Latin boxers and the xeno-Asians widens as well. It seems at this point Wave wanted to reward good defense amidst the unblockables.
- I knew fast long-range attacks were good, but it surprised me that crosses have the same startup as the other power punches. I'm just glad they still recover faster, even if it's only slightly compared to the slow version.
- The reason fast left hook recovers faster is because a frame gets removed, fixing an animation error seen in its slow version.
- José stays in his pre-attack sway for 34 frames before starting his teleport punches as opposed to the normal 32. He will remain swaying even if he would dodge a punch.
- Advantage is calculated as follows: [Recovery+Active+Stun-4] I have to add the recovery and how long an attack lasts *after* the first frame. Then I add the stun it applies to stall the hit sprite (see below), and three frames are removed due to input delay. This should give you a *realistic* idea of what should work when you play.

Attack	Stun
Light	2
Heavy	6

## Glossary

I originally had detailed many fighting game terms where I talked about them, but for the sake of removing clutter and getting to the point, I'm putting these more technical aspects into their own section so those that don't care about fighting games as much won't need to worry. You should have gotten here from another page in this guide, but if you just directly went to this section then you now know my intent.

### Footsies

Named after the method commonly used by sticking out kicks, it emphasizes strong usage of certain attacks to poke in ways that stop your opponent from getting in. While useful in fighting games that don't rely on long combos, those that lack more complex mechanics rely more on this for its depth by focusing on area control, patience, and timing.

### RPS Triangle

Fighting games generally follow a system of Rock-Paper-Scissors that helps balance the overall game. Attacks beat Grabs, Grabs beat Guard, and Guard beats Attack. Of course, this doesn't always work out: sometimes you can't punish an attack you guarded, you may get thrown when trying to hit them, or maybe you weren't crouching when they swept you. *Dead or Alive* emphasizes this triangle with holds instead of guarding and winning interactions within the triangle rewards you with extra damage.

The core concept of a well-designed fighting game should refer to a system like this, where the options you use can both win or lose interactions depending on how

it's utilized. If a move only wins or only loses, then it is unbalanced. Usually, situations offer a way to counter an option and a counter to that counter. The way to counter *that* counter should be what was used in the first place. Some games like this have four options before coming full circle, however, simply because it lacks some key mechanics and has interactions that result in nothing happening.

## Turtling

Highly-defensive gameplay. The term itself was formed largely because of Guile. Most know him for the way he can hold down-back in preparation for a projectile hard to punish or a special move that counters jumpers. Anyone can possibly turtle, but those better-equipped for defense can do so more efficiently. Most fighting games discourage this by making special moves do a little damage if blocked. If someone won't let you get in, throwing a projectile (if you have one) is usually a good idea to help cover your approach or force your opponent to jump and become more vulnerable. Some games like this and *Mortal Kombat* will simply reduce damage if guarded to outright reward offense over defense, or maybe simply compensate for having a dedicated button that protects you better than other games. Turtling most commonly happens if the player has more health and time is about to run out.

The usual response to constantly guarding would be to just walk up and throw them believe it or not. It happens more than you think in high-level play, even though modern fighters let you escape from throws if you know one is coming.

## Countering

Counters are done by hitting the opponent in the middle of their attack. These usually reward the player with extra damage or frame advantage, and most fighters usually will give a sound or visual indication to let you know. There is a distinction between *counters* and *punishes*, however. If you manage to hit the opponent *before* they would hit you (its startup), it is a **counter**. Typically if you block or dodge an attack, it is a **punish** as you capitalize on your opponent's mistake by hitting them during the recovery of an attack. In the case both players hit each other at the same time, this is known as **trading hits**. It can be good or bad, depending on your health and how much you take. If you have the health to spare you can afford to be a little reckless.

## 50/50 options

A 50/50 is where you put your opponent in a situation where they have to guess between one of two options or else get hurt. The most common form is where your opponent has to guess whether to block standing or crouching, but other scenarios exist.

## Input Buffering

How long a button or combination of buttons gets stored. Often confused for the *window* for which each input in a combination can be done. While most games offer a fair bit of leeway to reduce the precision needed for complex motions (something *Street Fighter 1* intentionally made notoriously difficult to balance how powerful its special moves were), the amount of time these inputs were *stored* was much shorter. The gist is that after you finish a motion, the attack gets stored for a brief period of time. Do that when your character is in an actionable state within the time frame and it will come out on the first possible frame. This is to help players whose timing is slightly off and to help players make sure they are frame-perfect, but it also may create mistakes if the window is too big.

Also worth noting is that certain games allow input regardless of timing once in an actionable state. In most fighters, this pertains to movement, but some games like *Super Smash Bros.* and *Mortal Kombat* which use a dedicated input allow you to defend yourself as soon as possible.

## Frame data

Tracking the precise speed of attacks by counting the frames. Most fighting games run at 60 FPS. An attack is divided into three parts: **Startup**, or the time before an attack hits; **Active**, being the duration it stays out; and **Recovery**, how long after until you act again. By adding together the active frames minus the first, the recovery of the attack, and how long you stay in stun, then subtract it from how long the stun it leaves the opponent in, you get what is known as **advantage**. If it's positive, then the attacker can up an attack after with startup less than or equal to it, forming a type of combo called **linking**. If it's negative, an opponent using an attack within the window is called a **punish**. If it's 0, then it's **even**, where both recover at the same time.

The advantage is different between hit and block to properly balance the reward for offense and defense. It is possible for an attack to leave you below zero, but not enough for the opponent to punish outside of throws. This is known as being **safe**. Sometimes an attack can be safe if the distance created is far enough out to not close the gap. Attacks should generally be safe on hit, but not always when blocked. Moves that are safe on-block are usually designed to be good for pressure or baiting an attack, but are not safe enough to be used back-to-back; the gap in between should allow for the opponent to act. Unsafe moves normally have some great reward should they hit like a knockdown or a lot of damage. A character with options mostly unsafe will always fare poorly even if the reward for them is high.

Not applicable here, but a good example of how advantage can fluctuate is jump attacks. *When* it hits changes how much time you have to follow up when you land. The later you hit in your jump, the more time you have to combo.

## Tier list

A theoretical breakdown that groups how good characters are at the highest level of play based on the knowledge of one or more players. A higher-tier character will more likely win if both players are around the same skill-level, though exceptions can happen. A lower-tier character may fare well against someone above them, or sometimes enough happens to where they'll win a few matches (a 7-3 matchup only means they should win 70% of the time). It all depends on how well a game is balanced; a big enough gap in tiers may prove impossible for lower tiers to be viable for tournaments. Sometimes it is possible to tell if a character is good or bad by simply trying them out, but they are usually determined by how well they do overall between matchups and tournament results.

Strengths and weaknesses are vital to balance, but one person's strengths may capitalize on another's weaknesses, or their strengths are so good that their weaknesses are a non-issue. While it is true a lower-tier character faces more challenges to win in general, not everyone in the top tier is "easy to use". Among the various archetypes, some by design make characters hard to use. Balanced bosses can have poor defensive options or survivability so they retain their powerful tools, while some characters are simply complex, who have resources to manage, a myriad of options (Hiryu in *Survival Arts*) often paired with lower damage, completely unconventional gameplay (Phoenix Wright in *Ultimate Marvel vs Capcom 3*), or reliance on constant inputs/heavy execution (Fox in *Super Smash Bros. Melee* or Carl Clover in *BlazBlue*).

The truth is simple. It's not exactly possible for a designer to perfectly balance a competitive game where several different characters are equally as good. One character's strengths may capitalize on another's weaknesses. Zoner vs grappler is the most common trope where the slow big guy has a lot of issues trying to get in against the projectile master. It's possible to win if they do get in, but it's never an even fight. The only way to make true equality happen is to have absolutely zero differences between characters. With feedback and insight, it's possible to get close.

There are also characters that are outright better than others. I'm not talking about after strengths and weaknesses are weighed. Even though Lucina is a more popular choice in Smash, the debate between Marth's spacing and Lucina's consistency boils down to the risk-factor. Some games have clones that can do more, are faster, or hit harder than another without any other differences. This game has Wolf and Inagaki, where the only difference is damage. Human Smoke and Scorpion from *Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3* is a famous example where despite having identical frame data and damage, Smoke moves faster and has more combo strings. Those strings allow him to do more, creating combos that Scorpion can't do. It lets him do more damage than Scorpion in every situation. Another example is found in *Joy Mech Fight* where the boss versions of the main eight characters have better damage and speed. A few do get a different special, but most of them have a lower dizzy threshold. The issue is that for some it isn't much so while it's a smidge easier, it's almost negligible.



It's possible that the better character loses because a player doesn't often fight lower-tier characters. That alone isn't enough to say the character is good or the game is balanced though. It does demonstrate how good they are when pushed to their limits and, more importantly, a reminder that picking a top-tier character won't automatically make you win. Skill can *sometimes* overcome tiers. Depending on the player's consistency with them they could go up on the list a little, but one player's results being an outlier isn't always the best idea to determine how balanced a character really is (even though their feedback would be invaluable); even they will tell you their character has issues. If new strategies or techniques get discovered or multiple people do well, then they'll definitely go up. Likewise, a character initially seen as good can go down as time passes as players figure them out.

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## Review

As someone who only got into the series back in 2018, I still have a good bit to learn. It's barely been documented in English. Stumbling upon this game was a surprise for me. It took me a bit for the game to click, but I was already thinking in my head how this game could have been better. In fact, I learned a lot just from writing this guide. I like fighting games.

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### Controls

The first glaring issue is that it's a two-button game. I get that in 1992 two-button games were common for Sega, but SNES had six buttons by default. I know Mario had two-button games on SNES, but *All-Stars* was essentially remade NES games. Given how little this game utilizes the hardware it could have been easily put on the Famicom with minimal graphical cuts. Left/right attacks could be separated since they aren't identical. That would open up room for a new attack using forward. Specials could also have a dedicated button. With that, you have four buttons, which works well enough.

The game has some response issues too. I already covered that in the previous section, so I'll just summarize: lag, input delay, and poor buffering. It will respond in most situations but a lot is going on in the background you can't exactly see without some help.

Rating: 4.5/10

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### Graphics/Presentation

Graphically, it's decent. Nothing spectacular. People bring up how boxers look bulkier than they should, though that is partially from the system's resolution stretching to fit a 4:3 TV. They still could have looked a little better though seeing how the Neo Geo game got their proportions better at least. With nine boxers everyone is graphically a headswap, which is slightly disappointing. Seeing that most of you should be playing this on a TV, I have to judge the graphics based on how they were meant to be seen, so I have to dock points.

It really doesn't help that despite it seeming like sprites were reused, they really weren't. Over 13,000 tiles totaled between all nine boxers according to the tile data! The bulk of them is each boxer's attacks from the waist up. 9 versions for each frame of each punch. Some tiles are different around the head, but the arms especially are duplicate tiles. With all that wasted space perhaps the game could have had extra moves and maybe even be less about headswaps with differences in height or reach.

My biggest gripe though is that you fight in the **same arena** for EVERY MATCH. I would love to see a people around the ring for Inagaki, or a different logo to properly reflect when Joe was in Japan. A little variance would have been nice.

The presentation is rather lackluster. The intro shows Joe's first three fights and cut-ins from the manga. You see the Triple Cross Counter, but you don't see any of Joe's other tricks. Replacing Inagaki with Joe doing the Elbow against a guarding Carlos in the demonstration would have revealed the hidden quirks much sooner. I wish the UI for VS mode was a bit more detailed too. It's far too barebones and quiet. That is another issue. Silence on the menu feels really weird. It works since the UI is so basic, but it's still slightly eerie.

All in all, it's not amazing, but it's not awful. There are lacking aspects so this gets a rather low score.

Rating: 5/10

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### Audio

I admit I am not the best judge here. As far as the sound goes, I think it's fine. Compared to other licensed fighters like *Sailor Moon Super S*, each impact and swing sounds like a semi-realistic punch fitting or a video game.

I enjoy the music. It's all original sadly and doesn't feel much like anything from the anime. While each song is on the short side, matches are only supposed to last around two minutes so it's not a big deal. The voiceovers in the cutscenes are definitely bit-crunched, even though it sounds directly taken from the anime.

Overall, it's fine. Can't expect more unless you were expecting sounds from the anime itself, which might have been possible seeing how much was taken directly from it.

Rating: 7/10

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### Gameplay/Experience

The gameplay is its strongest point for me. I'd probably be writing this guide anyway even if I hadn't grown so fond of it. Unconventional, obscure competitive games have always been my specialty (and a guilty pleasure at times). Fans of the series should be able to figure out the quirks with a bit of effort (even though I documented them all here).

Many fighters today have tons of depth, but this game isn't as shallow as it seems. That said, it could still be improved. The inability for everyone to bypass guards really makes guarding stronger than it should be, especially when the main character himself can't do much against it. I have two possible solutions for this: give everyone an unblockable move or a punch that can only be high-guarded. Granted, the game would become a bit more reliant on guessing, but bypassing your opponent's guard is fundamental for fighting games and should be universal.

This game's biggest drawback is the lack of content. I sincerely do not believe that loads of content automatically adds to a game's quality. Modes, sure. Characters and stages, not always. *Marvel vs Capcom 2* and *DBZ Budokai Tenkaichi 3* both had a huge roster to choose from, yet only 10-20 at most were used due to imbalance and redundancy. Even though they are both good games the large roster really wasn't the biggest draw like people claim. In this game's case, for how simple the game was designed, it failed to make full use of what it had. Headswapped boxers with the same base moveset means it should be easy to make everyone stand out through tweaks and special moves. I get that only eight boxers are fought for brevity, but there was plenty of space for extra moves to help make everyone stand out more. The game is mostly balanced around the lore, though shaking up a few things to give the game challenge deserving of the 16-bit era would have been fine. I'm grateful it's not as ridiculous as *Ashita no Joe Densetsu*.

This game gives such a barebones experience. Singleplayer is linear and has a little replayability only thanks to its difficulty and hidden ending. Most people stop playing this once they beat José for the first time. I would not be shocked if this game didn't sell well because it only offers a few hours of entertainment at most. For a 1992 game, I hope that it was sold for about ¥1,000-1,500 cheaper seeing that there were many other fighting games on the market on the SFC that would offer a much better experience.

I know how awful it is to have a singleplayer mode that drags on (like *Rise of the Robots 2*). With that in mind, the best way to properly add more content would possibly be extra stories. Splitting Joe's story into two halves as well as the ability to play through as Rikiishi, Carlos, and José would have been awesome, complete with new boxers for everyone to face. To have more boxers playable in VS mode would increase the amount of time spent in that mode too. Maybe make the joke character someone more deserving than Wolf as well.

The VS mode would be fine if the controls weren't different between players. It also has balance issues, but that is expected of a game not really designed with balance so much in mind. I highly appreciate that it was added though. It's the saving grace for me. I love testing out these weird games that have a VS mode. It's almost obligatory for me unless it's a handheld game.

Rating: 7.5/10

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The game isn't amazing by any means. Compared to the two games on arcade before it, it's actually alright though. Despite all the quirks, the foundation for something good is present. It really deserves to be an 8/10 from the license alone, but it just lacks content, substance, and polish.

Final rating: Objectively speaking, I'd give this a 6/10. Feel free to raise or lower it a point if you were already a fan of *Ashita no Joe* based on how you enjoyed it.

## Closing

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If you've gotten THIS far, then thank you for reading my guide. I really hope this helps or has interested you.

To think about all those cheats and text guides I saved/printed/written down back in the day makes me feel a little nostalgic. I didn't have much access to the Internet back then, and my mother hated this site, so it was a luxury for me. Games are radically different then from how they are now, to say the least. I don't have a problem with games being easier, but I can see how the average player skill may have dropped over the years. It also didn't help that the Internet expanded over the years. Online play and video recording changed how games were played and shared. Between the lack of cheats and the fact that videos made walkthroughs easier, I can see why sites like this have taken the back seat. At least, that's part of what happened with me.

This is a real niche game that understandably gets overlooked with how little information there is on it. The YouTube videos fail to show off everything the game offers. One in particular who likes to stretch the screen (a crime, if you ask me) used save states, particularly jab spamming against Wolf without a single CC (he likely didn't know how to Triple CC). There are some that can figure it out CC at least.

The most common complaints in the comments are that the boxers are too muscular, and the game seems underwhelming. Both are fair assessments. I was going in with moderately low expectations myself as I simply wanted to make a tier list for the fun of it. It wasn't until I accidentally pressed both buttons in Joe vs Jose that the catalyst to dissect this game truly sparked.

I'm sure I could probably figure out how to optimize this game for speedruns, but I don't think it's worth it right now. It's not a long game at all though, a no-continue run clocks between 12-15 minutes for me on average for the true ending. Sub-10 is possible for any%, but it needs some luck.

Some people to thank: • The SNES Fighters Discord Community- Had I never found them, I probably wouldn't be analyzing fighters like I used to. Their appreciation of my efforts has encouraged me to keep breaking down the games nobody really touched. A few of them have also played this with me. Don't worry, I gave them the P1 port. ;) Join us at <https://discord.io/SNESFGC> • Chuboh and LordBBH- These streamers exposed me to this legendary series, but Chuboh played through the various games and figured out the easy way to achieve the true ending. If you like retro gaming, these two are part of a growing retro community on Twitch! • Rusty (fka BMF54123)- They figured out how to do mirror matches. • Mollyfreakynasty on YouTube- Expressed a wish for information to be more readily available after I dropped so much on YouTube comments, so I decided to write this up! • Asao Takamori & Tetsuya Chiba- the creators of *Ashita no Joe* • Wave Corp.- For making this game

If you're looking for places to discuss the franchise you can join the *Ashita no Joe* server or the *Megalobox* server.

(blah blah I reserve any rights for this, personal use is fine, don't claim as your own) Email me at [beauworth94@gmail.com](mailto:beauworth94@gmail.com) if you have questions. My Discord ID is Streetwize (Beau)#3007. The space is important. Be sure to message me as you send a request too so in case I forget I put it out in public.

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