ZEPHYR™

MANUAL



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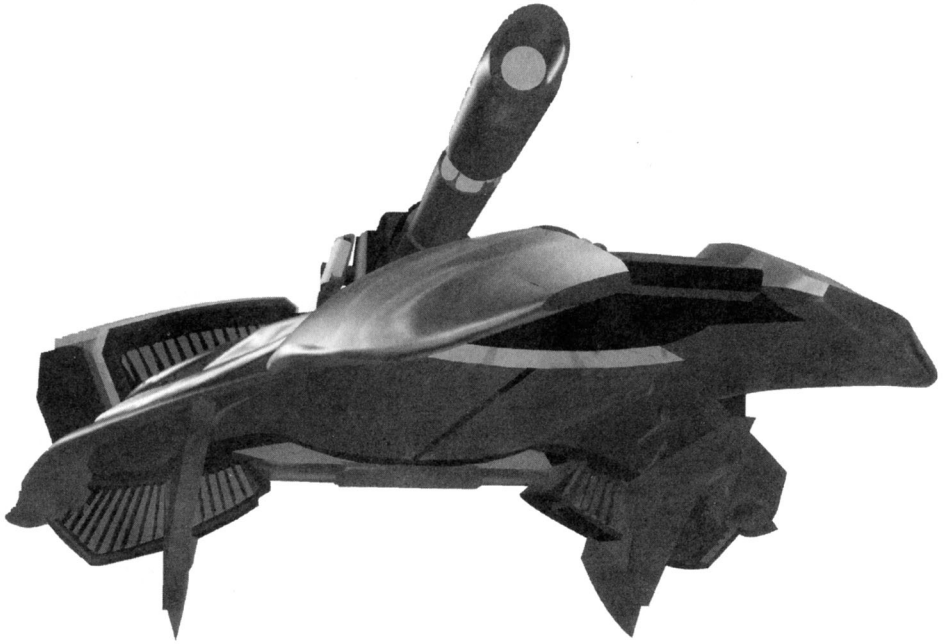

MANUAL

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Designed and Directed by Jon Van Caneghem

Producer Mark Caldwell

Lead Programmer David Hathaway

Programmer Gary Brian Smith

Graphics/Design Jonathan P. Gwyn

Lead Writer Milton W. Bland

Music and Sound by Rob King

The Rest of the Zephyr Team

Absolute Production
Bill Fawcett
Brian Stubbings
Catherine Battistone
Dave Marllow
Dave Vella
Deane Rettig
Don Pierce
Gary Vick
George Ruof
Jeff Winkless
Kerrigan Mahan
Lani Minella
Manny Lomas
Mario Escamilla
Melodee Spevack
Mike Reynolds
Michael McConnohie
Peter Ryu
Scott McDaniel
Simon Prescott
Tom Wyner
William R. Forstcher

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Technical Support 0121 625 6418, 9AM-5PM

U. S. Gold Ltd., Units 2/3 Holford Way, Holford, Birmingham B6 7AX.

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INTRODUCTION

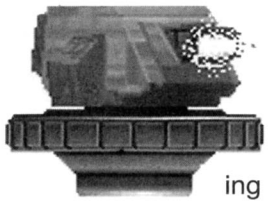
Towards the end of the 21st century, in an attempt to conserve the Earth's dwindling natural resources, the United Earth Government formed the Planetary Battle Circuit (P.B.C.). The concept behind the P.B.C. was to pit the Earth's top six companies against each other in different forms of combat. The winning company would receive the rights to the Earth's natural resources for one year. The P.B.C. was an instant success and became a yearly event. With breakthroughs in space travel, the P.B.C. left the confines of the Earth and evolved into its current configuration of the Interplanetary Battle Circuit (I.B.C.), bringing the games even more popularity and the Megacorps more power. As the 23rd century drew to a close, the Megacorps of the universe grew beyond the control of their ruling governments, thanks to the I.B.C. In a last ditch attempt to regain the power they once had, the governments of the universe formed the United Planetary Coalition. The attempt was unsuccessful, and the U.P.C. was, and still is, viewed as merely a ceremonial body.

The year is now 2365 and the Megacorps have unveiled their latest challenger for the I.B.C. A hover battle-craft that has been called the greatest fighting machine ever created. A craft known as Zephyr.

Welcome to the 24th century. Welcome to Zephyr!

ZEPHYR: THE ROOKIE

As he stepped out of the corridor into the main waiting area Joss Logan wasn't sure if he had arrived at the place of his dreams, or a nightmare. The lights were harsh, reflecting the ultraviolet blue sunlight here on Vandezande's World. The roar of the crowd was worse, louder than the scream of loudest combat racer Joss had ever driven. The spaceport was a writhing sea of humanity, all of them shouting, screaming and charging straight at him. It took the young racer a few seconds to realize someone was calling his name.



He looked back over his shoulder, as if expecting help, but the corridor back into the shuttle was empty.

"Logan, hey Logan, over here!"

The shouting mob of reporters swarmed in around him, thrusting cameras into his face, elbowing each other, some of them even using their microphones as clubs to beat their rivals back. A few resorted to grabbing hold of opponents, wrestling them to the ground and then climbing over their fallen rivals.

"Gonna win Logan? What do you think of what Harrison said about burning you in the opening minute? How much is New World paying?"

The questions overlapped into a mad cacophony, a thunderous roar, and Joss Logan stood there, wooden, unable to speak, let alone think of anything intelligent to say.

"Logan!"

One voice, perhaps the best known in all the galaxy, caught Joss' attention. It was Max Yolinder of GSN, Galactic Sports Network. Yolinder edged his way through the mob, helped by his legion of half a dozen bodyguards The bodyguards were impressive in a primal way, like over-trained gorillas. Several of the reporters retreated out of the fray with bloody noses. Mumbled curses were lost in the noise as the others gave way for the star commentator.

Joss looked at Yolinder with gape mouthed amazement. A year ago he was just another contender on the MOMRA circuit fairly sure that racing the six tracks in their small cluster was the best he would do, dreaming, but never really believing that one day he would actually make the Interplanetary Battle Circuit. But here he was, and now Max Yolinder was here to interview him, microphone in hand.

"How you doing kid?" Yolinder asked. The caster's voice was so melodious as to almost be soothing. Joss wondered how he spoke so softly, but could still be heard.

"Ah, I guess I'm all right."

The crowd of reporters broke into sarcastic laughter.

Yolinder looked back over his shoulder.

"All right, let's film this."

One of his gorillas pulled out a comb and made sure Yolinder's hair was parted straight, another put a light touch of makeup on his nose, while an assistant hoisted his holographic camera onto a shoulder.

Yolinder looked over to see his camera man was in position then turned back to Joss, his face creased with a bemused smile. Joss looked at the camera and realized that the red light next to the lens was blinking.

I'm going out on live feed across the galaxy, Joss suddenly realized, his knees turning to jelly. Half a trillion beings are watching this. There had been exactly four hundred and eighteen people living in his home outpost when he had left to join the circuit.

Yolinder looked over at the camera and smiled.





"Well folks. Tomorrow's the big day, the start of this year's long awaited I.B.C. Finals," Yolinder began in his trademark opening style, as if he was just having a friendly chat with neighbors.

"Of course we here at GSN will bring every thrill, every crash, every act of mayhem and destruction right into your living room. I'm at the Pliax Spaceport on Vandezande's World, the first track in the ten planet combat-racing series. With me is the only rookie in this year's fun and madness, Joss Logan driving for New World."

Yolinder turned back to Logan, his features creased with his famous toothy smile.

"How you doing Joss?"

The cameraman turned slightly and Joss realized that the holo camera was aimed straight at him.

"Ah, OK, I guess."

"OK I guess," Yolinder mimicked, laughing softly.

"How does it feel to be in the big league, racing Zephyrs on the main circuit?"

"OK."

Yolinder laughed, the crowd around him joining in.

Yolinder moved in front of the camera.

"Sports fans, Joss Logan is the unknown this year, the big question mark upon which billions will ride. He came out of the MOMRA circuit, a surprise by New World after the death of their last driver. That was Jimmy "The Loser" Franklin, in what was claimed to be an accidental fall from his fiftieth floor penthouse. Logan's record last year was thirty three firsts and only two failures to finish."

Yolinder turned back to Joss.

"But this isn't the B circuit Logan. You're going up against "Killer" Harrison driving for Warp Speed, Blake "The Snake" Corano for Positronix, and "Butcher" Bill Baen for Vertix. Those drivers eat boys like you for breakfast. Whadaya think of that?"

"Ah, I guess I'll do all right."

"He guesses he'll do all right," Yolinder announced with more than a touch of sarcasm. "Joss, I just saw the latest official odds, which are running fifty to one against you and two to one that you're going to get yourself killed. Any comments?"

Yolinder was in his element now and Joss looked at him, unable to reply. Yolinder, smiling, moved in for the kill.

"Son, a lot of folks are saying you are out of your league and your best bet is to go home while you still got all your body parts attached to where they're suppose to be. Frankly, if I was you, I'd take the advice."

"The boy ain't stupid enough for you to be like him."

Joss looked over his shoulder and breathed a sigh of relief. It was his pit boss, Kevin Malady.

Malady, using his expansive stomach as a weapon, shoved his way between Joss and Yolinder.

"The boy's gonna do GREAT Yolinder."

"Sure he is. This here is Joss' pit boss Kevin Malady. A pit boss runs the show from the side, and evidently baby-sits the driver."

"So just back off and give him some breathing space. He's gotta race tomorrow. I don't want him getting sick breathing that perfume you's wearing."

The other reporters laughed at Yolinder's discomfort, especially since it was true regarding the overuse of cologne.

"Hey, it's The Snake!"

The cry echoed from the other side of the terminal. Like a stampede of thirsty cattle on the scene of a water hole, the reporters turned and charged down the corridor. Joss was almost tempted to go along with them. After all The Snake was one of his heroes. He caught a brief glimpse of the man, grinning, waving, laughing at the attention, surrounded by his trainers, baggage carriers, and of course his usual entourage of female admirers.

"Listen kid," Malady snapped, "next time wait on the transport until after I get out of the bathroom. Never wander out alone where those guys can get at you. They'll try and make a monkey out of you every time. And another thing. You're in the big league now, the I.B.C., the whole ball of wax. You're driving in the biggest sporting event in the universe. Do you know how much money is riding on you?"

"I think so."

"Well keep that in mind. There might be fans waiting."

"Fans for me?"

"Not yet kid. But fans of the other drivers, and some of them might just have the urge to try and break your arm, or maybe your neck, or ventilate you with a laser gun."

Malady looked past Joss and nodded as half a dozen men, wearing the dark blue uniforms of New World's security team came up. They were even bigger than the reporter's bodyguards.



"Where were you guys?" Malady snapped.

"You were both suppose to wait on the shuttle for us," one of them replied coolly.

"Anyhow, everything's under control here," Malady replied, "no thanks to you."

The leader of the security team looked down at Joss.

"Mr. Caldwell is waiting to see you sir."Joss took a deep breath as he stepped into the office of Quentin Vanderhaven Caldwell, President and CEO of New World. The walls of the office seemed to shimmer with light, an effect, Joss realized, created by the stasis field which provided security from eavesdroppers and also protection from anything short of a blast from a ten gigawatt laser cannon. There was some sort of music in the background, but every time Joss concentrated on it, the sound faded. The office was gigantic by the young driver's standards. Enough to make him realize that any standards he had ever understood didn't apply here. As the body guards peeled off and he and Malady finished the trek to where the computer magnate sat he realized that might be exactly the impression this office was intended to give. Caldwell stood up from behind his gold inlaid desk and came forward, hand extended. He was a tall man with a shock of unruly brown hair that contrasted with the immaculately tailored jumpsuit he wore.

"Logan, good to see you boy. Your flight out here was comfortable I hope."

"Ah, yes sir. Kind of strange to have a whole transport just for the two of us."

"Well you're a valuable asset to us here at New World." Caldwell replied with a laugh. "Son, it's only the beginning of the perks you'll have if you come through for us."

Caldwell draped his hand over Joss' shoulder and led him over to where a battery of holo screens wiggled with columns of numbers flashing across them.

"Son, what you're looking at is the pulse of the galaxy. Finance son, finance. New World's holdings stretch to every inhabited world and thousands of outposts. At the moment we control," he paused and looked at one of the screens intently, "seven point three two eight percent of the entire galactic economy. Do you know how many tens of trillions of dollars that comes to?"



Joss started to answer but Caldwell continued on with his monologue.

"Son, for most people out there such numbers become meaningless and that's where you come in. We're talking corporate recognition here, product identity. And that means the Zephyr."

Caldwell pointed at one of the holo display fields.

"Screen three, Zephyr display."



The image of a Zephyr appeared as if floating in space. Joss admired the sleek, aerodynamic lines of the fuselage, and the implied firepower of the turret cannon. The racer just screamed power. It was a far cry from the war surplus units they'd raced before the Zephyrs were introduced last year. Or from the half sized and quarter powered units he'd been driving until a few months ago.

"That's what people understand. That machine is power, its dreams of glory, of speed and conquest. When I say New World that's what people think of," and Caldwell pointed at the holo, "the Zephyr we put out on the field with you inside it. Not billions of boxes they buy without thinking. That you become the dream of every citizen. They'll ride with you thanks to the holo camera inside the cockpit, they'll see what you see and feel what you feel."

There was a long pause. Joss found that he had accomplished something he had thought impossible and was even more uncomfortable than he had been.

"Do you understand me son?" Caldwell's voice was harder.

"Yes sir," Joss replied eagerly.

"When you win, they'll cheer you as their hero and then you know what happens?"

Joss looked up at Caldwell, realizing an answer was not expected.

"The next time they go down to the store with their credit card, it will be New World products they'll buy. Vertix and Positronix goods will be forgotten. Who wants to buy a product from a loser?"

Joss nodded. He hadn't thought about it very much. You really didn't do much shopping on the small purses he had been earning.

"We're all multi-planet corporations Joss. My company started back in the 20th century producing software, but now we're diversified. We still even have a games divisions, but we also make everything from fleet battle cruisers to lady's underwear. And when we win on the track, we win in the market. Generals and ladies are both impulse buyers. The generals are probably worse. And you know what else happens when we win?"

Joss remained silent as Caldwell pointed over to the stock market boards.

"When we win we sell more and then our stock goes up. Now when our stock goes up, our shareholders are happy. And son, when our shareholders are happy, I am very, very happy."

Caldwell looked down at Joss.

"Believe me Joss. When I'm happy, you'll be very happy."

Caldwell's friendly smile beamed down at Joss and then in an instant it went glacial.

"But, if you lose Joss, I won't be happy. Because sales will drop and stock holders will become angry which will make me very angry indeed."

Caldwell sighed and let his hand drop from Joss' shoulder.

"Too bad about our last driver, Jimmy Franklin," Caldwell said softly. "Such a tragic accident falling out of that fifty story window. Too bad."

Caldwell looked straight into Joss' eyes.

"You're in the big leagues now son. Do we understand each other?"

Caldwell turned away from Joss as if he no longer existed.

"Malady."

"Yes sir."

"Give him a final check out on the new Zephyr design; and Malady."

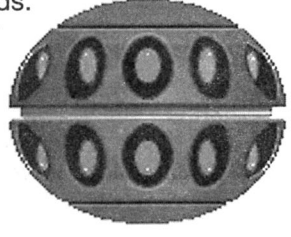
"Sir?"

"Don't fail me. You were the one who picked this boy and I'm trusting your judgment. Depending on it against the advice of others. I think you know what happens when an employee makes a wrong choice at this level." The Pit boss said nothing, he just waited until Caldwell broke into another icy smile and hurried the rookie out of the office.

As the door to the hanger slid open Joss forgot about the nameless dread the meeting with Caldwell had inspired. Sitting in the middle of the hanger was New World's Zephyr, it's gleaming hull polished to a mirror like sheen.

"That's it kid, your Zephyr with our latest upgrade," Malady announced proudly, "go ahead and climb in."

Joss went up to the machine, doing a quick walk around as if giving the Zephyr a final preflight visual check. The business ends of the dual pulse cannons were covered in their protective shrouds. Crouching down and looking under the hull he saw that the GCM8B missiles were already mounted but the arming pins were yet to be pulled.



Joss waited until the palm recognition circuit on the combat racer's side activated the canopy switch and the poly-carboned glass canopy slid open. As the racer climbed in, he felt himself grinning from ear-to-ear; he was relieved to see Malady's grin was just as big. The seat inflated to fit his body contours and reaching over his shoulder he pulled down the safety straps and snapped them in place.

Malady came up to stand beside him.

"I know you've flown the simulators and have a couple thousand hours in the old B class flyers, but I wish we had a couple of months to run you through on this." he hesitated, "Hell, three months ago it was Jimmy in that seat."

Joss looked over at Malady.

"I won't let you down sir. You've given me the break, I'll come through."

"You better son, for both our sakes. Anyhow, don't let Caldwell scare you too much for starters, he just wants to make sure you come through for the stock holders. Just survive the first couple of races intact and get the feel of things. We can push for the big win later on, right now I just want you to get through it. A rookie finishing at all will get New World all the positive press they need. Now power on your heads up display."

Joss reached over to the control panel and punched in the command and a holo floated in front of him. New World's software was good. In his old car the screen took seconds to form.

"Now a quick run through, tell me what you're looking at."

"Time left for the race is on top at twelve o'clock. Projected on the lower left is my shield strength. From left to right across the bottom I have my secondary weapons display, next to that is a read out of my ship's battery and in the middle is my forward/reverse indicator."

Joss ran his hands over the controls. They felt good, smooth and anxious to please. Everything was contoured to his hand and the feel of it was almost sensual. The young driver became aware that he had been silent for several seconds, but his pit boss waiting, still smiling.

"To the right of that," Joss hurried to continue, "is my gun energy level and finally on the lower right side is my radar."

"That's important," Malady interjected, "it's the edge we've got on this new baby. When you switch your radar into zoom mode it will give you a full visual display of all objects out there in the race, both stationary and moving, none of the other Zephyr's have that. It's a closely guarded secret which only the New World machine carries."

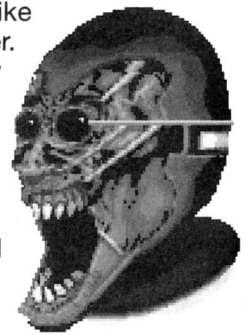
"What about the others?"

"No, we're sure we've maintained security on this one."

Joss, as did every driver, knew the basic Zephyr design had been pirated from Genericorp almost before they had finished a prototype. What worried him wasn't if the other racers had what he had, but what they had that he didn't. When he expressed his worries it was apparent Malady shared his concern.



"We're not sure, our intelligence teams are trying to get last minute information, but it looks like Unlimited Power's machine has a new battery system that recharges faster and holds power longer. That will be more of a problem further along the circuit. Now Positronix, they're just plain nasty mean. Look out for him in a fight. Their pulse cannons are rigged straight into the power core and can fire nearly half again as fast. The cannons, however, suck up the energy like mad so that's a drawback. Also we just got word that they might have some new sort of missile."



A door opened and then closed abruptly nearby and both turned to look. The door was already closed again and Joss turned back to his pit boss and waited.

"Now as for Vertix, they've got the latest in shield design, you can slam away at him all day and he'll hold together so don't try to do a head on duel, he'll wear you down first. You've gotta out drive that racer. Warp Speed Drives, we think those guys have somehow jacked up the speed. If he gets on your tail you better be able to fly tighter otherwise he'll run you down, that is if he doesn't blow you away first. Finally there's Genericorp, we haven't heard of any upgrades but you never know."

Joss nodded, taking in the information Malady was providing, wondering what strategies he could use against each of the other driver's edges. He wondered if they were getting similar lectures from their pit bosses.

Malady leaned against the side of the Zephyr, pushing up his cap off his forehead. He looked a little uncomfortable. The strain of all the walking on his cybernetic legs was beginning to show.

"How'd you feel the night before your first race?" Joss asked.

Malady smiled.

"How about if I lie and say I wasn't worried to the point of panic, would that make you feel better?"

Joss tried to force a smile in reply.

"Come on kid, let's get some sleep."

As Joss walked over to the starting line he thought he'd go deaf from the insane roaring of the mob. It seemed as if the entire city of Pliax had gone mad. Looking up at the high office towers that lined the street, he saw every window was packed, people leaning out, shouting and screaming. Max Yolinder was out on the starting line, interviewing The Snake who was leaning against his machine grinning.

Joss walked past and The Snake looked over, grinned and pointed at him.

"Your skin is mine!" The Snake shouted and Max looked over smiling sarcastically. Joss ignored them and went up to his Zephyr where Malady was waiting by the open cockpit.

Joss climbed in and Malady leaned over to help him strap in and do a final check on the instruments.

"She's tuned and ready to rock and roll Joss. Now remember, go easy on your missile load, fire off only when you have a sure kill. Keep in mind each car's special add-ons and play them to your advantage. They're new to this season and I'm betting the other drivers won't be able to resist using 'em right away. Most of all, you got the best radar on the field. Use that zoom capability, you'll be able to see things your opponents won't have a clue about. Use it to get there, get them, or get away. That's your ace in the hole."

"And finally kid. . ." Malady's voice trailed off and Joss looked over at him.

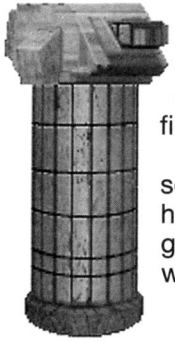
"Don't screw up. This is your big chance. Come out half way decent and you've got a job. Blow it and the both of us gotta face Caldwell."

Joss nodded, unable to speak.

Malady patted him on the shoulder, stepped back and the canopy locked down in place. Joss settled down into the cockpit, scanning his instruments and then a voice was loud in his headset.

"Gentlemen, start your engines!"

Joss punched the start button and the PC101 turbo engine snapped to life with a high pitched whine, the gauges flickered and then held steady at ten percent output.



"Go to hover!"

Joss edged the hover control into the on position, and then pulled back slightly on his control stick. The Zephyr rose half a dozen feet into the air. He looked to his left, the other five craft rising up and matching his position. He snapped his helmet visor down and once his eyes adjusted, the racer ran a final check of holo instruments. All were green.

The car felt good and the smooth tingle in his feet promised the power it was ready to deliver. For a second it made Joss confident. He'd have wiped MOMRA out with half this car. Then sunlight glinted to his right and the rookie saw the Warp Speed Zephyr hovering a few paces away. They all had cars as good, or better than this one, he realized. Reflexively he double checked the auto eject system. Nothing would ruin a day quicker than having an ejection failure, if his shielding went down.

"Joss. You read me?"

It was Malady.

"Just fine sir."

Malady paused for a second.

"Son, there's a message on your check out screen coming in from Corporate headquarters."

Joss looked down and saw the message flash in.

"Attention! Vertix has refused to sell us its adamnatium production facilities on Garthos. They must be shown we mean business. One thousand bonus points to your account for all hits on the Green Tank."

Joss smiled, "A thousand bonus points! On the B circuit I'd be lucky to earn that in ten races." Not to mention that a bonus point was literally that, a bigger share of the prize money and the profits New World made betting on their own machine.

"Joss, you got that?" Malady asked quietly.

"Yes sir."

"Well don't let it get to your head. Remember there's four other Zephyrs out there ready to nail you as well.

"All right kid. Remember, you're going for kills. This first run isn't really a race, it's a killing match, last survivor takes all. Keep a sharp lookout for obstacles. In this run it's the walkways and pipes running between buildings. Look out for people on the streets as well, they mess up your windshield and slow you down. Once it starts I'm cut off the line and you're on your own. Just remember your training, don't worry about all the rest of the garbage, just focus on the fight and forget about everything else."

"Got it."

"Good luck kid."

"Countdown Gentlemen at ten, nine. . ."

Joss grabbed hold of his control stick and throttle. He looked up at the banner stretched across the starting line . . ."Faster , Rougher, Deadlier until the thrill of the race overwhelms the fear of death!"

"Three, two, one. . .go!"

Joss slammed his throttle forward and pulled his stick straight back into his gut. His Zephyr soared up, the buildings to either side of him flashing by. He leveled out, his speed increasing, and looked down at his radar. Two of his opponents had collided straight out of the starting line. The other three had raced forward and then banked into climbs.

A flurry of pulse cannon rounds stitched past him, several impacting on his right shield. He swung his gun around,

lining up on the Genericorp machine hitting him and laced it with half a dozen rounds back. His opponent pivoted and ducked up a side street and then turned around. Joss streaked past.

Down below, two Zephyr's were circling each other, guns blazing, their shields sparkling. A third Zephyr, the Positronix machine flown by The Snake came roaring in, unloading a salvo of its new TX1138 missiles which detonated across the rear of the Unlimited Power's machine. The other two Zephyr's joined the brawl as well, picking out Unlimited as an easy kill, like wolves circling what was now the weakest of their pack. There was a flash of light and from out of the exploding fireball Joss saw the pilot ejecting. In some races he could start over, but in this one he was out. The rookie felt a slight surge of relief that he wasn't, this time, going to be the first driver eliminated.

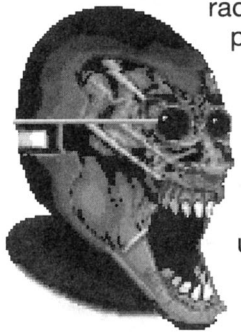
Joss banked over, going for a line up on The Snake and dumped out a missile. The Snake twisted his machine out of the way, his turret pivoting to flare off a shot which slammed into Joss' forward shield. Joss' own missile slipped past its intended target and ripped into the side of a building, blowing it apart at ground level. Spectators poured out of the ruins, fleeing in every direction. More than a few were down and several of those who had panicked were cut down by stray rounds from the three cars skirmishing on the far side of the square.



It was an aspect of the game Joss thought was absolutely insane. People paid money to get as close to the action as possible, even though a fair number of spectators "got wiped" before the fun was over. It reminded him of folks back on Earth who would go to Spain each year just for the fun of running ahead of a herd of stampeding bulls. To get injured watching a Zephyr battle was considered the ultimate thrill, and for those that got killed, they were famous, held up as heroes. The delighted families of the fallen received royalties for home movies of their loved ones doing product endorsement commercials.

Even though a fair part of downtown Pliax might get leveled before it was over, the local government knew it'd get a profit. Bits of wreckage autographed by the driver who caused the destruction was a high profit business. With over a trillion human viewers alone, they could never meet the demand for the grisly souvenirs. Even as he wondered at human folly the rookie zipped round an alley and through a gap in the corner of a building left by another Zephyr's missile. The Snake, while still chasing Joss, leveled a couple of shots into an office building and Joss realized he was creating ruins to help sell later on. There had been something in the contract about his getting a cut of those sales, but at the time the provision hadn't meant anything to him.

He was cruising almost at the top of the multi-hued buildings and The Snake had disappeared, even from his enhanced



radar. Joss pushed his craft straight down into a dive and then leveled off, skimming across the plaza, dodging past the Genericorp machine which came zipping out of a side alley with guns blazing.

He pulled into a side street, the Genericorp machine blazing past. Pulling up high Joss looked down at his radar screen, which revealed all the other machines. He waited for his moment and then swung around and came back out, locking in behind the Zephyr which was now engaged with Genericorp. It was the Green Vertix machine!

He opened up, pouring in rounds, realizing that in a matter of seconds he had made more bonus units than in all of last year's flying. The Vertix machine just kept taking the punishment. Joss held the trigger down as he followed the other Zephyr in a steep climb, firing off two more missiles and still the Vertix machine refused to blow.

Suddenly, a numbing blow shook through his Zephyr. It was The Snake!

Joss looked down at his energy.

"I've run it dry!" he exclaimed. He banked away, moving slow, waiting for his batteries to power back up. More shots laced him as the Positronix Zephyr hung on his tail, ripping his stern shielding apart until he was down to bare hull. Layers of hull pealed back and Joss stared at the shield screen, while twisting and weaving in a vain attempt to throw his opponent off.

He knew he was down to the last layer of hull and in another second the auto eject would activate and blow him clear. Suddenly, the Positronix machine broke off the attack, swinging its cannon around. The Vertix machine was on his tormentors tail!

Joss pushed his stick forward, dropping down and spinning, turning to run underneath the two. Straight ahead he saw the Genericorp machine turning in for a strike. Joss toggled off the rest of his missiles and one after the other they detonated across Genericorp's forward shield. The ship exploded.

With a triumphal shout Joss steered around the wreckage and raced across the square, letting his battery power build back up. As he watched his screen he saw the Vertix machine wink off. Turning around in a wide bank Joss tried to line up on the Positronix Zephyr as it flew straight through the wreckage of its latest kill. The Snake closed in on Joss, cannon blazing.

Joss realized he was cooked. Blake's guns were chewing up his own armor faster than he was inflicting damage

back. Just when he thought he would have to break off, The Snake's guns went dead.

"He's blown his energy finishing off the Vertix racer." Joss mumbled.

Joss bore in for the kill. The Snake turned to flee and Joss stayed on his tail. As quickly as The Snake got a bit of a charge up he fired off another pulse cannon volley, but the rapid fire of his gun was now a disadvantage, draining power off too quickly. Joss dodged the shots by keeping an eye on how his opponent's cannon was aimed and continued to slowly and deliberately chip away at The Snake's shielding. The rear shield went down and armor started to peel away.

One more shot, just one more. Joss kept his opponent lined up, taking several hits on his own forward shield which brought it down nearly to zero. But he had the advantage now. All his attention was focused on the kill. He squeezed off another round.

He saw The Snake eject clear as the Positronix Zephyr detonated. With a triumphal shout Joss pulled back on his stick and soared straight up, waving to The Snake who shook his fist in anger.

And then, without warning, a series of explosions slammed into Joss' machine. The force of the hits slammed the heavy machine sideways and the rookie figured he had been hit by a missile. The energy level was way down between the fight and his shield sucking up power to maintain itself.

Warp Speed's Zephyr, he realized. He had been so intent on the kill he'd forgotten to watch his radar screen.

He banked over hard and dropped like a falling leaf. The multicolored buildings spinning past his visual port almost made him sick! He had to concentrate on his radar display to keep from ruining his new flight suit. What it showed didn't make him feel much better. Directly behind him was his sole surviving opponent, closing rapidly on his tail. Joss realized that Warp Speed's pilot, "Killer" Harrison, had simply held back from the fighting, using his superior speed to stay out of the action, letting his opponents wear each other down before coming in for the mop up.

Joss tried to dodge out of the way, but Harrison stayed a little below and behind him in the blind spot he couldn't fire back into. A sharp impact warned New World's driver that his opponent was lining up a shot on his unprotected rear. A single burst and he'd be ejected. The rookie driver tried to dodge into a side street, slamming instead into the side of a building. This brought his speed down to zero. Harrison side-slipped past and continued to pour shots in, the building exploding around Joss, screaming spectators falling out of windows.



Joss pivoted his machine to face Harrison head on, but his forward shields had yet to recover from the duel with The Snake. He was naked front and back. And then Harrison unloaded two missiles which

he must have held in reserve throughout the fight. Joss yanked his stick back, climbing, watching his shielding click down and he realized what was about to come.

He felt his safety harness automatically cinch in tight around his shoulders, waist and thighs. The canopy blew back and with a vision blurring explosion, he blew free of his Zephyr a fraction of a second before the engine cooked off with an explosive roar.

Everything grayed out for a moment and then he felt the ejector seat thrusters kick on, gently lowering him to the ground.

The fight was over.

He sat in the chair, breathing hard and from across the square he saw the crash car come out and pull up by his side. A dozen security guards leaped out with weapons raised to keep the spectators back and then Malady climbed down and walked up to him. It was at this point Joss noticed that his boots and cuffs were singed and one was still smoking. His pit boss was talking at the rookie before he could get his helmet off to listen.

"... fell for the oldest trick in the book kid, the guy who simply hangs back and let's the other fools battle it out. Then he can come in for the kill. That's Harrison's favorite move. Let me guess, you got so hung up on blastin' Blake you forgot to keep one eye glued to that new radar.

"Something like that," Joss said quietly.

Malady knelt down by Joss' side and helped him unbuckle the safety straps. Feeling a bit shaky Joss stood up.

"Anyhow kid," and Malady nodded over towards the burning wreckage of the Zephyr he had been flying only seconds before, "you just blew twenty three million on that one."

Joss lowered his head.

"And son, you did great for a first fight. Two kills, forty seven hits on Vertix, the stock market already has New World going up nearly two points, Caldwell's thrilled."

Joss looked at Malady in open mouthed amazement.

"You were a rookie who darn near won in his first fight. I think you've got a future in these games once you get the hang of things. Too bad you didn't qualify for a bonus round. It's gonna be something this year, the subway tunnel chase is great, but at least you'll get some practice when you fly as the opposition."

Malady put his hand on Joss' shoulder and lead him over to the crash car. His voice was softer as he spoke again.

"You gotta love racin' when we can load you back into a new Zephyr after a blow out. Did I ever tell you how I lost five machines in one race back in '49... and won anyhow?"

Joss, still shaken, didn't reply.

"Then there's Atoll where we almost didn't have a winner. And when I spent half a race upside down on that cursed Ice World and there's Sikara where you fly down mine shafts. I still hold the record for that run," Malady said proudly as Joss collapsed into the crash car's passenger seat.

"You've got a great future ahead of you," Malady paused with a knowing smile, "once you start winning... and remember to always watch your tail!"

GETTING STARTED

QUICK AND DIRTY

After the introduction and title screen, you will be presented with Zephyr's main menu. Select **New Game** to begin. Follow the instructions of the pop-up menu; enter your name, choose a difficulty level, select a call sign and click **OK**.

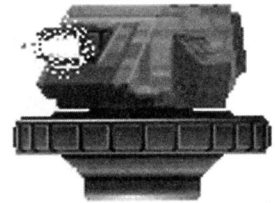
You will then go to U.B.N. central were you will be asked to choose your corporate sponsor. Choose one of the six Megacorps you wish to fly for and click on **ACCEPT.**

Once in the cockpit, your Zephyr will display a ready screen, giving you a last minute check of the ships oper ating systems and a list of objectives; follow them to score points during the battle. You may also receive last minute instructions from a corporate executive.

You are now ready to go into battle. You will have a limited time to score points and complete laps.

If you win the round and score a sufficient number of points, you will qualify for the bonus round. If not, you will advance to the next world and compete in another arena round.

If you have qualified for the bonus round, you will repeat the ready screen procedure and begin combat. The round is over when time expires, your ship is destroyed, or you exit the round.



Note: During the bonus round you will only score points if you find a maze exit before time expires. After the completion of any round, your game will be automatically saved and you will advance to the next round of competition.

Note: Pressing ESC at any time will bring up the main menu or skip an animated sequence.

STEP BY STEP

After the introduction and title screen, you will be presented with Zephyr's main menu which is divided into six sections.



NEW GAME:

By clicking on this section you may start a new game. Follow the instructions on the pop-up menu. Enter your name, up to eight characters, on the line that calls for it. Then select the difficulty level.

1. Easy - Recommended for beginners.
2. Normal - Average play
3. Hard - For the advanced player
4. Killer - It lives up to its name.

Finally choose one of the 40 call signs, so Zephyr can personalize its interaction with you.

Note: Zephyr allows you to save 10 games at a time. If you start a new game and all 10 saved game slots are filled, you will be asked to retire a pilot. To do so click on the pilot you wish to retire and click the **RETIRE** key.

LOAD GAME:

By choosing this section, you may load one of the last 10 saved games. The games are listed by player name, call sign, races run, high score, and difficulty level.

To choose a saved game, highlight your choice by clicking on it and then click on **OK**. You may now continue your game.

To delete a pilot, choose the pilot you wish to retire and highlight him/her by clicking on the slot, then click **RETIRE** and **OK**.

OPTIONS:

Sound effects and music levels can be adjusted to desired levels by clicking on them.

The detail features can affect the speed of the game. Experiment with these features to achieve the best game play for your taste and hardware.

CREDITS:

A brief list of those who dreamed and toiled to bring you Zephyr.

HIGH SCORES:

Allows you to view the top pilots of the I.B.C.

QUIT GAME:

Returns you to DOS

PLAYING THE GAME

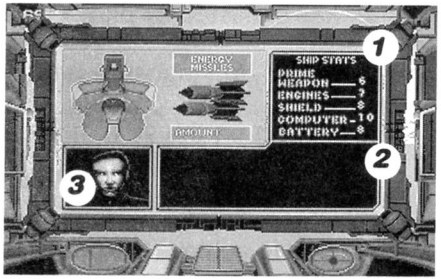
CHOOSING YOUR CORPORATE SPONSOR

After a brief planet introduction, you will be asked to choose your corporate sponsor. Though the tanks are based on the same design, each of the Megacorps have modified their tanks to represent their respective specialties. Pick the one that suits your tastes and needs. For more information on the companies and their tanks, highlight the desired Megacorp and click on **SPECS** or **INFO**.

Once you have decided which Megacorp you wish to fly for, highlight the company logo and click **ACCEPT**.

Note: The order in which you may choose a corporate sponsor is decided by the performance of all players during the previous battle. The player with the worst score chooses first, so there may be times when certain Megacorps will not be available for selection.

THE READY SCREEN



While strapping into your Zephyr, you will be given a few last minute instructions and advice.

1. Ship Stats: Shows you the ratings, from one to 10, of your ship s primary operating systems.

2. Objectives: This portion of the ready screen gives you brief hints on how to score points in this round of competition.

3. Message Monitor: The monitor is used by corporate executives to communicate with their pilots. From time to time, you will be asked to perform special assignments during the upcoming round of competition. If you can complete these assignments, you can rack up the credits.

IN THE COCKPIT

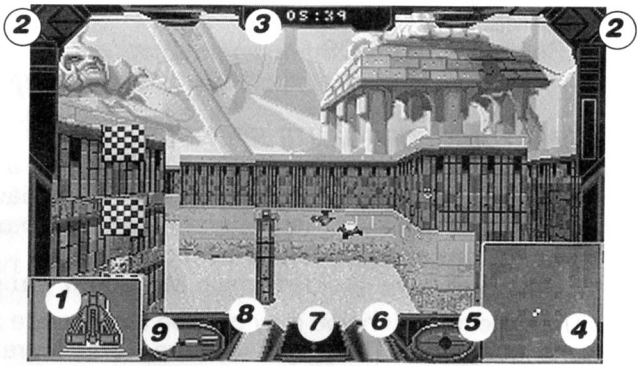
Once the ship has finished its diagnostic and the ready screen disappears, the battle begins. To be successful in combat, you should familiarize yourself with your craft s cockpit instrumentation.

1. Damage Screen: A schematic of the craft that is broken up into operating systems and shield layers. When the craft takes a hit, the damage is shown on the corresponding area of the screen.

2. Direction Signals: When the craft is turning left or right, or moving up and down, the proper signal illuminates.

3. Countdown Clock: The clock activates when competition begins, allowing you to see how much time remains. When you acquire additional weapons and recharges or complete a lap, they will be listed here (momentarily replacing the clock.)

4. Radar Screen: The radar screen displays a square area of the battle grid and shows the location of all tanks in competition. (The New World Computing tank s radar shows all objects on the grid area.) The tanks are represented by colors:



Black - Positronix, Blue - New World, Gold - Genericorp, Green - Vertix, Red - U.P.S. and White - Warp Speed.

Note: The map size may change during Bonus Rounds.

5. Compass: The red line shows the turret facing, while the black shows the tank facing.

6. Available Weapons Energy: As you fire your weapons, not missiles, it drains energy from the ships power core. This scale lets you know how much energy is available for your weapons at any time. When the allotted amount of energy is depleted the weapons will not fire and must be allowed to recharge before they will operate again.

7. Speedometer: The speedometer is divided into two sections, left and right. The left shows the throttle setting, from full reverse to full forward, while the right shows the craft s actual speed. At times you will find that the two settings are unequal. This occurs when the craft does not have enough battery power to sustain the given speed

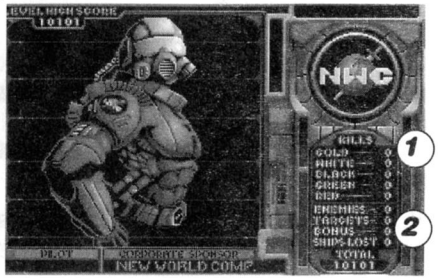
8. Available Movement Energy: The Zephyr crafts are powered by energy that is stored in a number of batteries within the tank. Like the weapons, the faster you move the more energy is required to maintain that speed.

9. Missile Counter: Displays the number of missiles available for use.

THE BATTLE ARENA

The first level of competition during any round of the I.B.C. is the Battle Arena. There you will have a limited time to make laps and score points as you compete against the other Megacorp pilots. To help even up the odds, you will find extra armaments and energy recharges scattered around the level.

If your craft suffers extensive damage, you will be forced to exit the craft via the ejection capsule. Though you have lost your craft, you may not have lost the round. You will be returned to competition in your backup craft, but penalized an amount equal to that of destroying an enemy tank. You may use as many ships as you need to finish the Battle Arena.



PILOT SCORE

Here you will be allowed to review your kills from the Battle Arena.

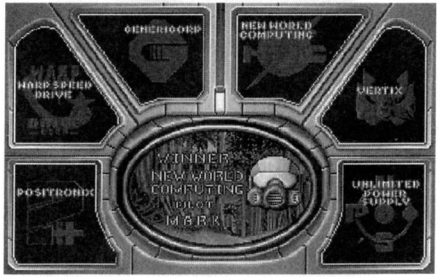
1. The number of enemy tanks you destroyed, and how many times.

Note: Tanks that are targeted for corporate bonus instructions are highlighted, and score double points value.

2. The number of enemies you destroyed; the number of targets you destroyed; the number of laps you completed; the number of

your ships that were destroyed; the total number of credits you will receive.

OVERALL SCORES



Now that you have reviewed your own score, you can compare it against the other competitors.

If you win the Battle Arena, your corporation will be awarded a planetary prize. Also, if you score enough points, you will qualify for the bonus round. If not, you will be sent to the next world. Remember, your game is automatically saved after each battle.

THE BONUS ROUND

Now that you have proven to be a talented pilot, this is your chance to score major credits. The Bonus Round is similar to the Battle Arena, in the sense that you will once again be competing against the other five Megacorp pilots and other assorted bad guys, but there are a few differences. Only the winner of the Battle Arena round is eligible to score points during the Bonus Round. You must find a maze exit to keep the bonus points you scored during the Bonus Round. Also, if you are forced to eject during the Bonus Round, the level is over and you lose all your bonus points. At this point the game is automatically saved and you are sent to the next world of competition.

SEASON'S END

After completing eight worlds, and potentially eight bonus rounds, the I.B.C. season ends. At this point, if you are the season champion your name and call sign will be entered into the High Scores list.

To continue play click the **LOAD GAME** or **NEW GAME** and follow the instructions in the pop-up menu.



Note: If you continue play with the same pilot, you will be eligible to see new arenas and bonus levels during the next season of the I.B.C.

APPENDIX A: GAME STATISTICS

THE WORLDS

ARGOS-GEOGLOBAL 6

Designated as a work world, this Earth type planet is owned and run by the Geoglobal company.

ATOLL

A remote ice world located on the fringes of the Wendlinger System that serves as a food storage facility for the King/Smith company.

EDEN

A tropical planet whose rain forests contain disease curing plants. The planet has no government, per se, but all inhabitants respect the decisions made by a woman known as Tyr.

KAOR

This planet's desert lands contain the remnants of an ancient culture. Intense heat makes excavation difficult, but an attempt was made to restore the city of Tishulalè to its once ancient splendor.

PANAMAR

This aquatic planet located in the Vega System is one of few worlds still ruled by a monarchy. Its current ruler, the High Lord Panamus, is the 11th generation descendent of the original High Lord.

SIKARA

An arid world with a dense population. The planet contains waterways, though not enough to support human life. To sustain its inhabitants, the planet must import the majority of its drinking water.

VANDEZANDE'S WORLD

A planet segregated by income. Those that can afford to, live inside the domed city of Pliax, pampered by the better things in life. The poor carry on their meager existence within the unshielded suburbs.

WORM HOLE 7AK

Formerly the planet Aeolus, the worm hole appeared when U.P.S. detonated an anti-matter implosion device on the planet s surface.

GENERICORP

Originally formed as a conglomerate of sea kelp farms, Genericorp quickly grew into a multifaceted corporation that abandoned traditional business practices of specialization in favor of diversification.

The company first gained prominence in 2285 after perfecting the stasis chamber. Viewed as the revelation of the 23rd century, the stasis chamber made extended space exploration a reality in the pre-warp drive era.

Although regarded as a finishing school for junior executives by other companies, do to its lack of specialization and low pay scale, Genericorp continues to be a leader in innovation and finances.

UNLIMITED POWER SUPPLY

Credited for ending the fossil fuel age, Unlimited Power Supply is the leader of the power acquisition and storage field. U.P.S. excels at manufacturing energy storage devices that produce high power output levels while only drawing minimal amounts of stored energy.

Originally established as an independent constructor of nuclear power plants in the late 20th century, U.P.S. has grown to become the premier supplier of power cells to the known galaxy. It is one of the Earth's oldest and most successful businesses.

NEW WORLD COMPUTING

Generally known in the United States as a designer and publisher of computer games, New World Computing came to the world's attention during the Missile Crisis of 2026.

While developing "Might and Magic VI," a New World programmer accidentally created what was to become the basis of Vector Tracking. Abandoning the computer game market, New World teamed with Intelitrack to create the Vector Tracking Radar System, the heart of the North American Defense Grid.

The orbital defense grid received its only test in 2026 when tensions finally flared against America. 18 ICBMs with nuclear payloads were launched towards the US. Each missile was tracked, targeted and destroyed before it could re-enter the Earth's atmosphere. Thus, ending any controversy about Vector Tracking's reliability, and beginning the United States, "Peace through superior protection" era.

POSITRONIX

A less than successful manufacturer of surgical lasers, Positronix found itself in a position to expand into the weapons market when an experimental eye surgery laser suffered a power surge and removed a patient's

cataracts: unfortunately it also removed his head.

Though using a laser as a weapon was not a new idea, Positronix was the first company to develop an afford able compact laser, the Pocket Protector (PP1). The demand for the PP1, and the fact that the weapon was not governed by any nation's laws, ushered in a new era for the company; it was now the lead ing supplier of armaments in the galaxy.

Not content to rest on its laurels, Positronix continues to produce the most powerful and accurate particle beam weapons in the industry!

WARP SPEED DRIVES

Upon the return of Voyager II to the Earth by the Andromidans, Warp Speed Drives' founder, Hansen Lararri, realized that the alien race held the key to space travel: warp drive. Knowing that the United Earth Federation's constitution forbade an alien race to profit from the sale of technology to the Earth, Lararri mar ried an Andromidan scientist who provided him the necessary specs. to create the first warp drive to be matted to an Earth Vessel.

While he was alive, it was rumored that Lararri would use any and all means that he had at his discretion, including espionage, bribery and murder, to keep the secret of warp power his own.

Though many of Warp Speed's critics may disagree about the way the company handles its business, they must admit that it is one of the galaxy's most profitable and creative.

VERTIX SHIELDING

After the creation of the PP1 by Positronix, Vertix Shielding found itself in the position of having to adapt to changing times in order to survive. Once the largest supplier of armor to the galaxy s armed forces, Vertix found that its shielding was ineffective against beam weapons. The company was force to cancel its contracts, beginning a long downward spiral.

A major restructuring and heavy emphasis on research and development have apparently ended the compa ny's plummet. For the first time in 11 years Vertix is showing a profit, thanks to the creation of Polar Star Shielding.

Vertix is using this year's I.B.C. as a showcase for the new shielding, and hopes that its performance will entice customers to take another look at Vertix Shielding.

CRAFT RATINGS

Systems comparison.

	Gen.	U.P.S.	NWC	Pos.	Ver.	Warp.
Weapons	8	8	6	10	8	6
Engine	8	7	7	8	6	10
Shield	8	8	8	8	10	7
Computer	8	6	10	6	7	8
Battery	8	10	8	7	8	8
Armor	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Double	Standard

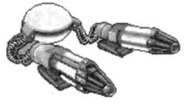
ARMAMENTS

In an attempt to keep competition at its highest level, the I.B.C. has randomly placed the following items in their Battle Arenas and Bonus Rounds:

MAXI GUN - A modified gatling gun that does heavier damage than the standard model.
(The Maxi Gun is the standard weapon of the Positronix craft.)

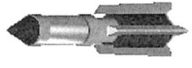


PULSE CANNONS - An energy weapon that runs off an internal battery that must be replaced with a reload when its charge runs out.

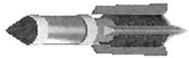


Standard (**Purple**) - An average military grade energy cannon.
Turn Around (**Yellow**) - An energy weapon that interferes with its target s guidance system causing it to change direction.
Power Leech (**Red**) - An energy weapon that leeches energy from its target s power core.
Freeze (**Blue**) - An energy weapon that disrupts the ion flow to its target s engines, causing it to become immobile for a limited time.

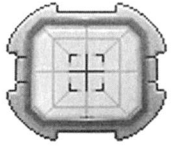
MISSILE - An energy torpedo that does heavy damage to its target.



NUKE MISSILE - An energy torpedo that does heavy damage to its target and surrounding area.



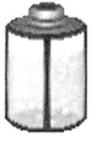
LOCK-ON UPGRADE - Upgrades your ships missiles into tracking torpedos.



SUPER GUN ACTIVATION CHIP - Allows your ship to fire its gatling gun and any pulse cannon you may have acquired simultaneously.



NITRO - Forces your ship to travel at maximum speed without depleting your battery, for a limited time.



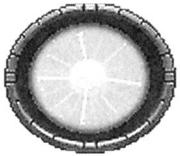
BATTERY RECHARGE - Recharges your ship's batteries.



SHIELD REPAIR - Repairs your craft's damaged shielding.



SUPER CHARGE - Repairs and recharges all systems aboard your ship.



APPENDIX B: INPUT DEVICES

KEYBOARD

- ← Turn tank left.
- → Turn tank right.
- ↑ + or Forward throttle control.
- ↓ - or Reverse throttle control.
- CTRL - Up.
- 0/INS - Down.
- SPACE BAR - Guns.
- ALT - Missiles
- A - Turn turret left.
- Z - Turn turret Right.

ESC - Return to main menu

CTRL Q - Quit

ENTER - Panic button. Centers turret, resets input device and sets speed to 0.

F1 - Full screen on/off.

F2 - Damage display on/off.

F3 - Radar display on/off.

F4 - Center turret.

F10 - Radar/ Shield damage background color.

MOUSE

↺ Turn tank left.
↻ Turn tank right.
↑ Up.
↓ Down.
Left button - Guns.
Right button - Missiles
(Use arrow keys or +/- for throttle)

JOYSTICK

↺ Turn tank left.
↻ Turn tank right.
↑ Up.
↓ Down.
Button 1 - Guns.
Button 2 - Missiles
(Use arrow keys or +/- for throttle)

NOTE: The keyboard commands are always active, and can be used with any input device.

NEED ANY HELP?

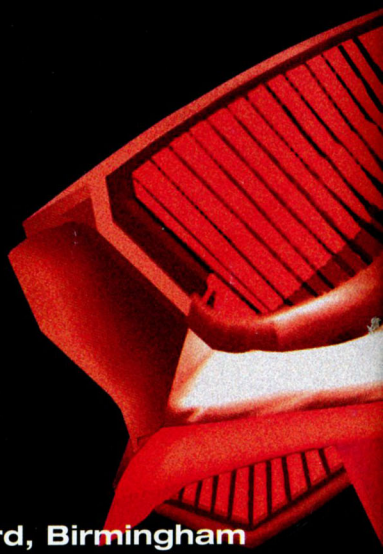
If you experience any difficulty loading or playing this game, simply give the U. S. Gold helpline

a call on:

0121 625 6418

Lines are open from 9.00am to 5.00 pm Monday to Friday.

Our Product Support Staff are waiting to take your call.



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B6 7Ax. Tel: 0121 625 3366