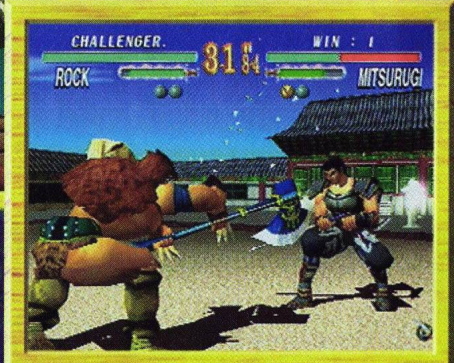


Tekken Meets Weapon Lord





- **Size:** 1 CD-ROM
- **Style:** 1 or 2-Player Head-To-Head Tournament Fighter
- **Special Features:** Practice, Survival, and Edge Master Mode, Ring Outs, 10 Playable Characters (Plus Five Hidden Characters), Up to Eight Weapons for Each Character, Special Move Meter, Juggle and String Combos, Memory Card Save
- **Created by:** Namco
- **Available:** Now for Sony PlayStation

Virtually untouched and immediately exiled is the surprising fate that Namco's second arcade fighter, Soul Edge, endured in its amazingly short arcade life. Their first fighter, Tekken, is still flourishing in the arcades and even more so on the home consoles. The differences between the two games are remarkably small on the surface, but to the eyes of a gamer, they are like night and day.

Tekken and its sequel Tekken 2 drew an audience for several reasons. It was one of the first games to feature as many hidden characters as there were playable, and its controls were precise, mainly because the buttons corresponded to certain limbs. On the other hand, Soul Edge looked and moved just as nicely as Tekken, except instead of limb combat, Namco incorporated weapon combat, thus changing the control to two weapon attacks, a kick, and a block button. Plus, Soul Edge has very few playable characters and practically none were hidden. So basically, the luster of

solid control and game longevity was missing in the arcade version of Soul Edge.

Well, give a game a year to port over to the consoles and usually you'll see some drastic changes between versions. That's exactly what happened with the newly named Soul Blade PS-X port. First and foremost, Namco didn't change the name to make people think that this is not the arcade game. In actuality, they ran into a copyright problem with another product. So rather than fight, Namco decided to rename the game Soul Blade.

Soul Blade is right at home with both Tekken and Tekken 2. The options within the game (Practice and Survival Mode) give it the feel and flavor it needed in the arcades. There are hidden characters, just not as many as in either Tekken game. Instead, you'll encounter a few hidden characters, but most notably, hidden weapons. Soul Blade features a great new mode called the Edge Master Mode, which is a one-player game that is heavily story based. Through this mode you'll be required to accomplish certain tasks in order to win. Sometimes you'll need to take down four characters in a row, other times only throw or juggle an opponent, or maybe just break their weapon. Victories in this mode are followed up with more story development and sometimes a new weapon. Each character can obtain up to eight different weapons which can be switched freely before each battle. All the weapons have pros and cons, meaning some are slower and longer, heavier with more durability,

short and fast, or just plain deadly.

The look and complexity of Soul Blade is exactly the same as its arcade counterpart. The character list features 10 playable characters, Ring Out victories still exist, and the sweet lighting effects are forever present. Soul Blade has made a giant step between ports, and no fans of fighting games should miss this unique experience.

Blades of Knowledge

You've mastered the control of Tekken, but now you'll need to learn how to fight with a weapon. All the characters in Soul Blade carry a deadly blade of some kind. The weapons range from Samurai swords to mammoth axes. The characters who carry them are masters, and you'll need to gain their knowledge before becoming one yourself.

To survive the test you'll first want to travel to the Practice Mode in order to learn a character's complete move list and attack range. In the Practice menu you'll find a complete moves list (except for the Critical Edge moves). Most of the moves are fairly easy to perform but hard to land since a precise distance is needed for each move. This is the same with combos and Critical Edge moves. You'll need to fully understand each of these before becoming a master.

Now that you have an understanding, you should fare well in combat. There are plenty of directions you can take. You can challenge the



Continued on page 21



Legend:

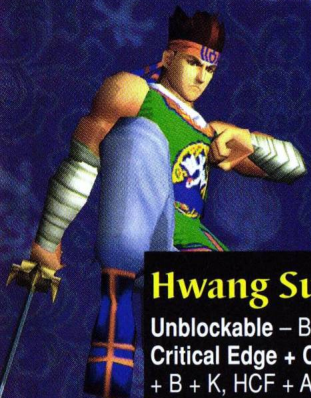
- F – Forward
- Ba – Back
- D – Down
- U – Up
- QCF – Quarter Circle Forward

- QCBa – Quarter Circle Back
- HCF – Half Circle Forward
- HCBa – Half Circle Back
- A – Slash Attack
- B – Fierce Attack
- K – Kick

Hidden Characters

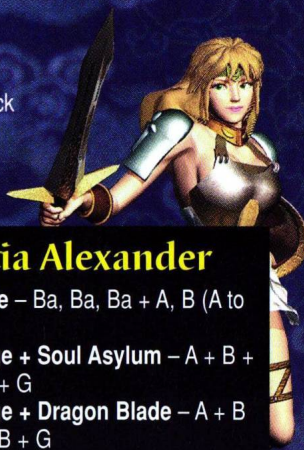
SoulEdge – To unlock this fiend simply beat the Arcade Mode with every character.

Unlocking Four Characters – Find seven of the weapons in Edge Master Mode with these characters: Sophitia, Siegfried, and Hwang. Then, return to any one of your previous battles. Namco stated that going back four or five battles works best for this. The eighth sword you are looking for is hidden randomly throughout any one of these battles. You'll need to fight the same battle over and over again until you unlock the new weapon and hidden character.



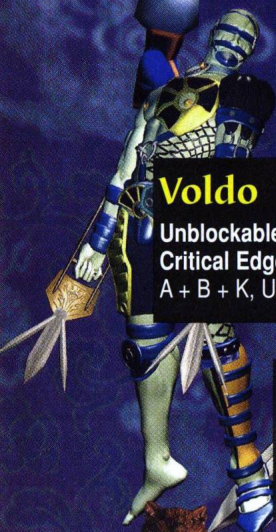
Hwang Sung Kyung

- Unblockable – Ba + B + K
- Critical Edge + Cross The Styx – A + B + K, HCF + A + B
- Critical Edge + Rising Uppercut – A + B + K, HCF + B + K



Sophitia Alexander

- Unblockable – Ba, Ba, Ba + A, B (A to B quickly)
- Critical Edge + Soul Asylum – A + B + K, QCF + A + G
- Critical Edge + Dragon Blade – A + B + K, HCF + B + G



Voldo

- Unblockable – QCF + A
- Critical Edge + House of Pain – A + B + K, U, D + A + B



Cervantes De Leon

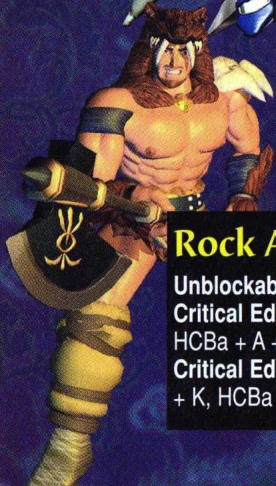
- Unblockable – DBa + A + B
- Critical Edge + Soul Power – A + B + K, F, D, DF + A + K

Siegfried Schtauffen

- Unblockable – QCF + B
- Critical Edge + Command of the Blade – A + B + K, F, D, DF + B + K

Taki

- Unblockable – HCBa + B
- Critical Edge + Burning Thunder – A + B + K, D, U + B + K



Rock Adams

- Unblockable – QCF + B + K
- Critical Edge + Devastator – A + B + K, HCBa + A + G
- Critical Edge + Rising Uppercut – A + B + K, HCBa + B + G

Seung Mina

- Unblockable – UF + A + B
- Critical Edge + Crystal Cyclone – A + B + K, Ba, Ba + A + B

Heishiro Mitsurugi

- Unblockable – F, DF, D, DBa, Ba + B
- Critical Edge + Cross The Styx – A + B + K, QCF + B + K
- Critical Edge + Rising Uppercut – A + B + K, QCF + A + K

Li Long

- Unblockable – DBa + B + K
- Critical Edge + Fire & Brimstone – A + B + K, F, F + A + B



Continued from page 19



Edge Master Mode

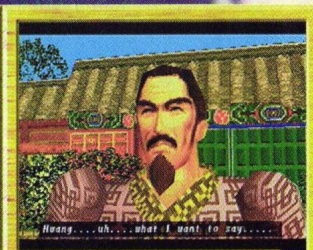
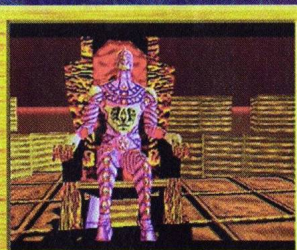
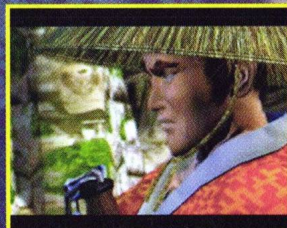
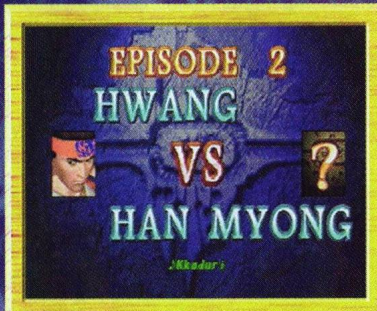
This is where all the Soul Blade action is. This is one of the biggest one-player modes ever to be incorporated into a fighter, and the rewards you'll pull out here are well worth the hours upon hours of gameplay. Similar to the regular Arcade Mode, the Edge Master Mode is intertwined within a huge story. Each character has a different story and ending, but the true rewards are scattered throughout the battles.

When entering this Mode you'll first be confronted by a map and a menu holding these commands: Move, which allows you to travel to different destinations and battles; Book, which tells the story; Battle, which obviously brings you to your next confrontation; and Weapon Select, which will allow you to change and view weapons you've obtained.

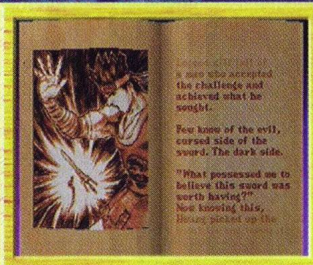
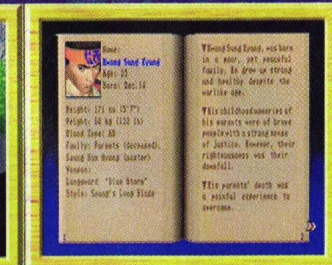
The big differences between this Mode and the Arcade are mainly based on battle objectives and weapon changing. By reading the Book you find key information on how to defeat enemies in your next battle. Sometimes you'll need to break their weapon, ring them out, defeat five opponents in a row, juggle them in the air, or simply destroy them cleanly and thoroughly. After these victories you will more than likely be rewarded with a new weapon. Each character can obtain up to eight different weapons. All these weapons feature different abilities, distances, and features. Obviously, some are better than others. Plus, once you obtain these weapons you can use them in any other mode found in the game. A grand reward for victory indeed.

Critical Edge

A Critical Edge is an automatic four hit combo that each and every fighter can perform by hitting A + B + K. This powerful attack drains power from the Special Critical Meter next to the life bar. Each character also has several Critical Edge extension movements that are performed directly after the first is initiated.



The endings in Soul Blade are unique, mainly because they are interactive. If you hit a certain button at the right time you'll alter the ending. All the characters can do this.



Arcade, Team Battle, Time Attack, Survival, or Edge Master Mode for a one-player game. Two players can compete in Versus or Team Battle Mode. There's a lot to worry about when in combat since you can lose your weapon if you don't watch your meter, get knocked off the edge for a Ring Out if you are not watching the arena, or simply be annihilated if you don't watch the opposition closely.

You may not realize it at first, since the weapons are extremely lethal, but true enough, Soul Blade is a game about blocking. This button will become your best friend after a few bouts. Plus, Namco has added thrust blocks (a parry if you will), that enables you to stop any attack. The guard button is also used for several attacks, namely the grab and throw moves. Using block with either the A or B button will do a different throw for each character.

Many matches against the computer are tough ones, and you'll surely need to know how to perform combos and Critical Edge moves (listed on page 10) in order to win.

REINER, THE RAGING GAMER

Concept: 9.25 "I never thought that a fighter could be even remotely as entertaining as Tekken 2, but Soul Blade pulls through with this task, and with honors I might add. All the Tekkens lack in one-player excitement, and I'm glad that Namco conquered this feat by adding the Edge Master Mode to Soul Blade. The only minor demerit this title receives is for the lack of characters (15 total), but other than that, it has a great overall design—most notably the animation and graphics. Wait until you see the effects on the combos! Wow! Pick this title up and you too might encounter the popular quote: Brain... frying... on... Soul Blade... need... help!"

OVERALL:
9

ANDY, THE GAME HOMBRE

Concept: 9 "Namco's fighters always amaze me. They are always so incredibly smooth, and Soul Blade is no exception. The animation in this game is crisp, with the best lighting effects and explosions I've seen in any PlayStation game. I especially like the swordplay; the clangs and pangs of battle just ring out of the PlayStation's sound chip. In the end, this game doesn't impress me as much as Tekken 2, but the change of pace this game offers fight fans more than makes up for its tiny flaws. And the 1-player mode is one of the best there is."

OVERALL:
9

PAUL, THE GAME PROFESSOR

Concept: 9 "Normally, playing a fighting game one-player gets old quickly. Soul Blade is different. I really like that they've extended the one-player game into the Edge Master Mode. It adds immensely to the entertainment value of the game. Just like Namco's past arcade translations, this one gives you near arcade quality graphics and plenty more in the features department. The play doesn't seem as deep as Tekken 2, yet with the various weapons and interactive endings there's plenty more to this game than meets the eye. This is another quality fighter from Namco that will definitely impress fans of Toshinden and Star Gladiators."

OVERALL:
9

▶ THE BOTTOM LINE **9**