



REVIEW

Snow and ice evoke different reactions from people. While some people tend to shiver, wheeze and slip over a lot in these unfavourable conditions, others strap on special equipment or climb aboard sled-like contrivances and participate in snow-based sporting activities.

Not surprisingly, The Games concentrates on the sporting aspects of cold weather and casts the player and his pals if they want to participate in multi-player excitement as athletic hopefuls hoping to scoop the gold medals in the eight-event Winter Challenge. The overall aim is to win enough medals in each event to be declared the overall winner of the challenge, and thus bask in glory ever-lasting (or something).

But no-one expects your first outings on the Winter Challenge course to be completely glorious. That's why the programmers of the game have included a special practise option which enables you to test out each event before the competition begins, and maybe even hone a few skills in preparation for the main events!

SPEED SKATING



Compared to the other events, Speed Skating is definitely the simplest. Just tap the seven shades out of your joypad buttons to increase your skater's speed and watch out for the walls on each turn. Easy! Just complete three laps of the circuit and you're home and dry (well, home any way).

DOWNHILL



Grab your skis and sticks and ready yourself for some intense action! Avoid the sides of the valley and keep your skier speeding between the gates to get plenty of lovely points. The winner is the skier with the fastest time.

LUGE



Jump atop a tiny snow sled and speed around a course of dug-out ice tunnels as quickly as possible. Use the outside of the tunnels to build up the highest possible top speed - but be careful that you don't lose control!



The inconsistent quality of the graphics and dreadful music don't give this instant appeal, but the more you play it, the more you get into the snow-bound action. The

JULIAN events are varied and fun to play, and while some might complain that they're easy to finish, the real challenge is beating your own personal records. The multi-player mode is where the game is best appreciated, and I like the replay option which comes in handy both as a tool for assessing your own gameplay style as well as a Beadle-esque laff-a-minute device for displaying your fellow player's major foul-ups in super slow motion! If you're after some enjoyable sporting action **The Games: Winter Challenge** comes highly recommended.

GAMES: CHALLENGE



GIANT SLALOM



This is much the same as the Downhill event, but plenty of swerving skills are required to successfully negotiate each gate. The course is also longer (hence the "giant" of the title).

BIATHLON



Biathlon is a mixture of Cross Country and shooting. Just ski to each of the five targets around the course and let rip with your rifle. Inaccurate shooting leads to penalty seconds being added to your time. The winner is the contestant with the lowest time.

CROSS COUNTRY

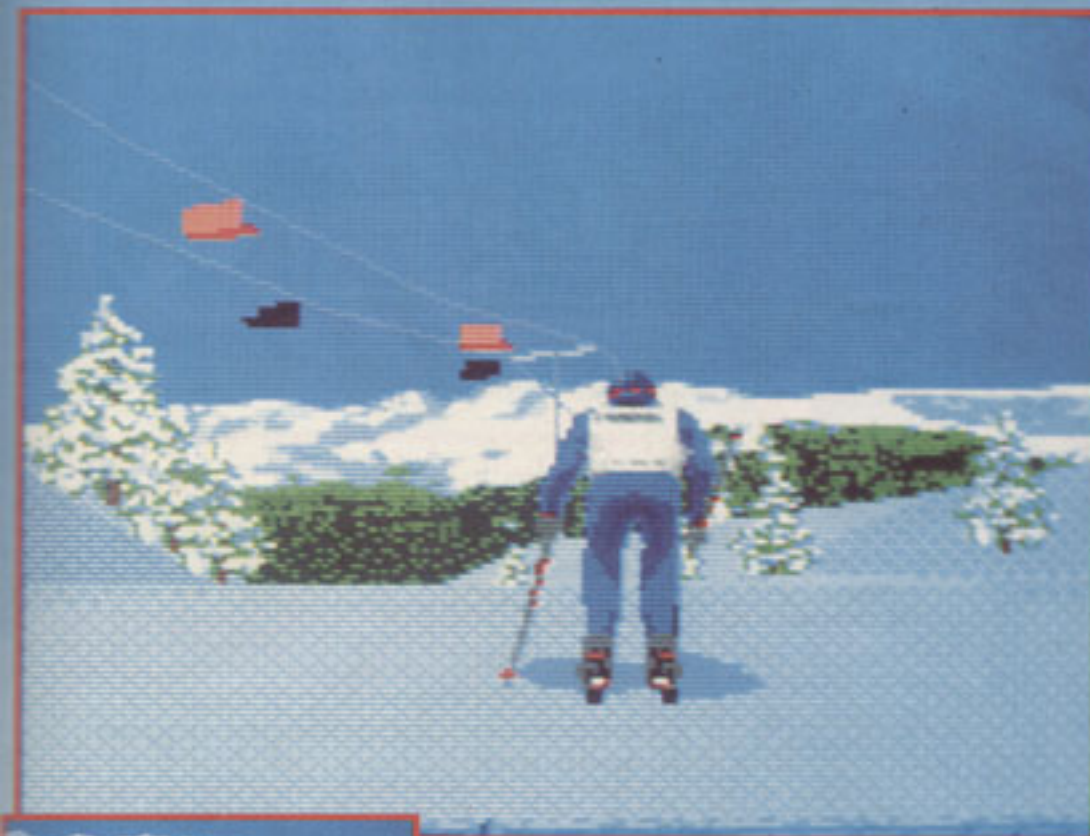


Endurance is the key to mastering this gruelling event. Match your skiing strokes with the energy meter at the bottom of the screen to stay at the optimum speed. Only then have you a sporting chance of finishing this energy-draining long distance event.

BOBSLED



This event is almost exactly the same as the Luge, but the Bobsled is a tad more difficult to control (owing to its bulkier size). The Bobsled ice tunnel course is also a lot longer and twistier than the Luge's, so keep your wits about you!



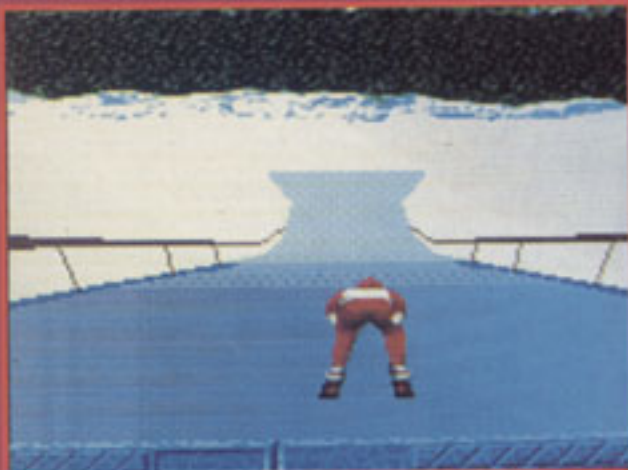
▲ The fab opening ceremony.



▲ Taking to the air in the Ski Jump!



SKI JUMP



Clip on your skis and shoot off the end of an ice-covered ramp in this potentially lethal event. Minimise your wind resistance while in the air and successfully land to finish the event. The winner is the contestant who achieves the longest jump.

COMMENT



RICH

This is reminiscent of the computer Epyx Games series in name and presentation only. Rather than produce polished sprites and backdrops for each event, the programmers have opted for fast-moving filled-in 3D graphics with sprites overlaid. This works extremely well for just about every event, although the update slows down when there's plenty of on-screen action. The sound is a mixed bag, with some great samples and truly diabolical music. Gameplay-wise, there's no denying that The Games: Winter Challenge is varied and engrossing. Although each event is pretty easy to complete, actually mastering each to an expert degree should make for a long-lasting game. Add in the multi-player angle and you've got a great competitive experience as well. Although not exactly a classic, The Games: Winter Challenge will appeal to anyone after a decent sports game - a genre rather lacking on the Megadrive at the moment.

▼ Here's some of the competition lined up for you in the actual tournament!



IT'LL BE ALRIGHT ON THE NIGHT

Every time you finish an event, The Games: Winter Challenge allows you to survey your performance step-by-step, by using the Instant Replay option. The VCR-like controls make it simple to study every aspect of your performance - including the bits where you completely cock it up!



▲ The Bobsled event begins!



▲ The first difficult corner is handled with ease.



▲ Coming up to the bridge!



▲ The sharpest corner of all...
▼ And they've spooned it! What a wipe-out!



BY: BALLISTIC
PRICE: £39.99

RELEASE DATE: TBA
GAME DIFFICULTY: EASY
LIVES: 1
CONTINUES: N/A
SKILL LEVELS: 1
RESPONSIVENESS: SPEEDY

1-8 PLAYERS

PRESENTATION 88%

Well-presented on the whole, with training options and instant replay action.

GRAPHICS 81%

Pretty decent filled-in 3D graphics for the landscape, with main sprites that vary from okay to great.

SOUND 77%

Some extremely awful music, but there's great sampled effects.

PLAYABILITY 87%

Each event is good fun to play, if a little easy to complete.

LASTABILITY 84%

Completing each event is pretty easy, but mastering them to an expert degree should take some time.

OVERALL 85%

A great multi-event, ice-based extravaganza, highly recommended to sports fans.