10 games you should not play alone
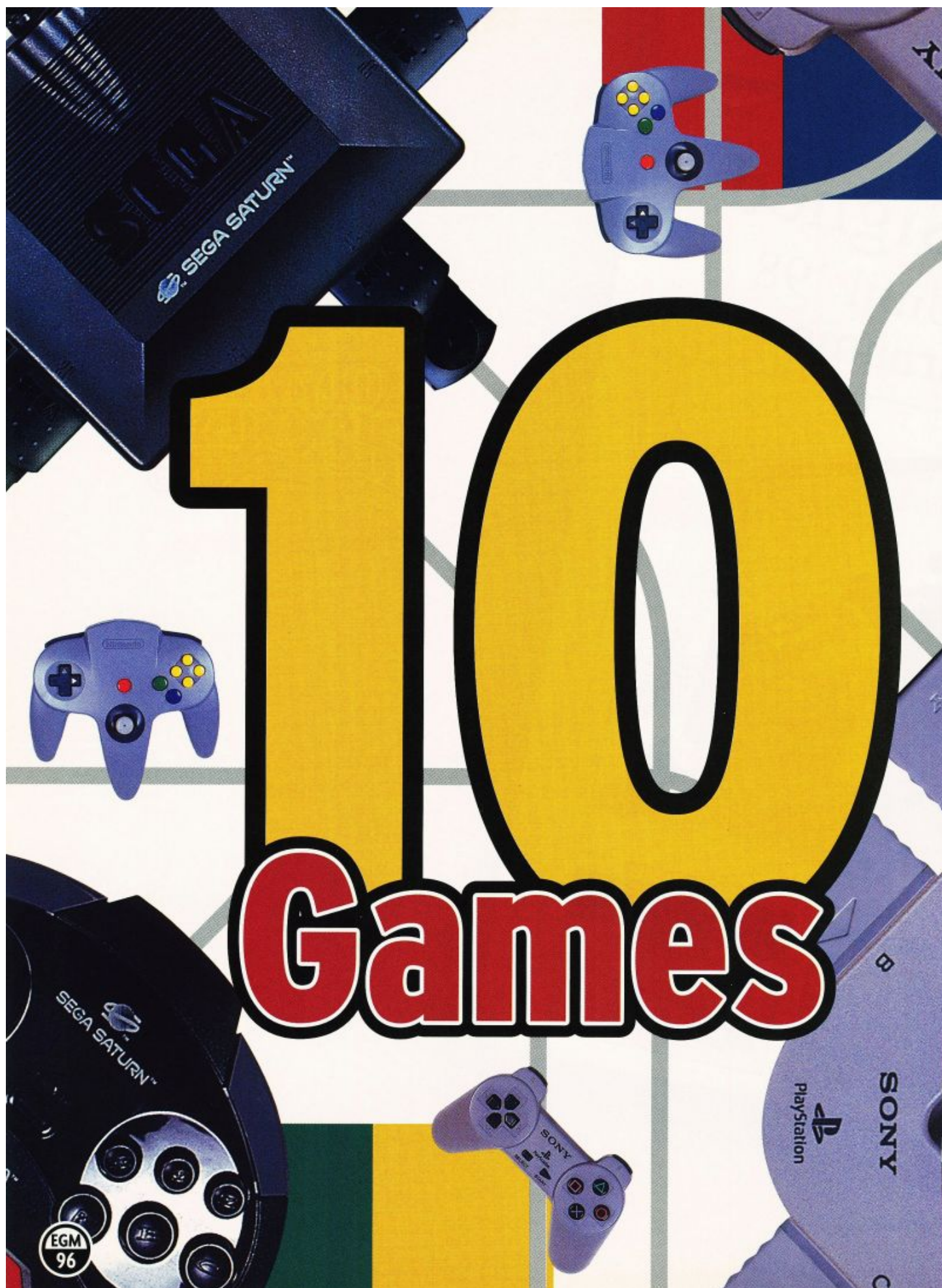
W hile the Internet has become a popular conduit for multiplayer PC games, there's no substitute for being able to sit around the television set and play games in your living room with a bunch of friends. This "social" gaming is one of the biggest strengths of console systems and responsible for their popularity today.

Nowadays, just about every game has a Multiplayer Mode of some sort, but only a few are really designed with multiplayer action in mind. Great multiplayer titles incorporate gameplay elements that keep them fresh and replayable. They also usually support more than two players, although there are the outstanding exceptions. Think about some of the great multiplayer games that continue to captivate their players sequel after sequel: Bomberman, Street Fighter, Madden and NBA Live. All possess that special element that keeps gamers coming back for more—even if the sequels aren't much different from the ones before it.

Multiplayer games are such a large part of our gaming diet that we decided to list 10 of the best ones that really shine. They are titles that won't get stale, and for the most part, more than two players can get in on the action at once. Some of these games are so skewed toward competitive gameplay that they really aren't even much fun to play by yourself. So gather your multitaps, extra controllers and plug your console into a large TV. These are the 10 best multiplayer games you can find on the next-generation systems.

10. International SuperStar Soccer 64
(Nintendo 64)

The Game:
Oh, it's only the best soccer game ever—number 24 on *EGM*'s Top 100 List, for those keeping score at home.

Why You Shouldn't Play It Alone:
Soccer games are much more exciting in multiplayer because great goals demand great teamwork. There's no better play than when your teammate passes you the ball, and you finish the job with a sweet goal.

How We Like To Play:
ISS 64 doesn't have many modes of play, and frankly, just using all four of the N64 controller ports is good enough.
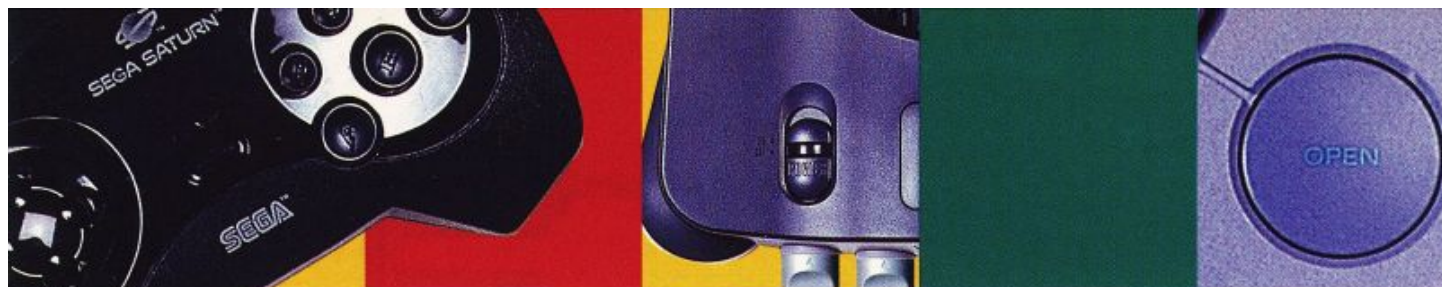
Best Excuse For Giving Up a Goal:
Shoddy goalie A.I. It's never your fault—it's the poor goalie's. They make great scapegoats for sore losers.

You Should Not Play Alone

by Kraig Kujawa

EGM 97

The Next Step in Multiplayer Gaming

The future of multiplayer gaming—and we're talking beyond when Diablo hits the PlayStation—is becoming more clear as console manufacturers start to provide some clues into what we'll be playing in years to come. One common denominator that we know about each new console system is that they will most likely embrace multiplayer gaming over the Internet. Sega's new system is embracing PC architecture and, probably, its connectivity. Nintendo's forthcoming 64DD has been confirmed to have a modem, and what little has leaked about Sony's PlayStation 2 suggests that they plan on taking a similar route.

While any further speculation on the future consoles is just that, it is safe to surmise that companies know that multiplayer gaming over phone lines will be a "killer app." Presumably, they intend on exploiting it in the next, next generation of gaming consoles.

9. Worms
(PlayStation/Saturn)
The Game:
Worms is one of the most underrated multiplayer games, but it has a strong cult following. You control a well-armed team of worms who position themselves along a large, 2-D landscape. Killing the other team involves strategy and understanding the subtleties of your weapon's physics, not twitch gameplay.

Why You Shouldn't Play It Alone:
Worms is a perfect example of an average one-player game that also delivers an excellent multiplayer contest. The game is much more interesting when you outwit your buddy by skillfully bouncing a grenade in his worm's cubbyhole and blow him to bits.

How We Like To Play:
Having a lot of different teams can really encourage backstabbing. The player with the most remaining worms at the end of the game usually winds up with everyone else teaming against him—at least until his troops are worn down to their level.

Did You Know?:
Sony tried to stop the release of Worms because it was 2-D. Back when the PlayStation was still young, Sony was adamant that games on their system looked "next-generation," which to them meant 3-D. Thankfully, Worms finally crawled onto the PlayStation.

8. Twisted Metal 2
(PlayStation)
The Game:
Just about everyone loved wrecking their Hot Wheels when they were a kid, and Twisted Metal 2 allows you to revisit and indulge those childish urges in this wonderful, carnage-filled sequel.

Why You Shouldn't Play It Alone:
When you play the Single-player Mode, it's a lot of dumb vehicles versus you. The action is much more intense in a one-on-one battle where your combatant is smarter than the computer (he/she is smarter, right?).

How We Like To Play:
Cruisin' around Paris and destroying the Eiffel Tower is good multiplayer fun. Even better, when it falls, it forms a bridge. That way, destroying the Eiffel Tower doesn't make you look like such a bad guy. The only other level nearly as entertaining is Hong Kong, complete with subways.

Cheap Way To Play:
Use the car Spectre. Keep away from your opponent and pepper him with the homing missiles that go through walls. That's really annoying—and deadly.

7. Street Fighter Collection
(PlayStation/Saturn)
The Game:
Super Street Fighter II, Super Street Fighter II Turbo, Street Fighter Alpha 2 Gold—three great 2-D fighting games, one inexpensive compilation that will satisfy any fighting game fan.

Why You Shouldn't Play It Alone:

One-on-one fighting games capture the true competitive spirit in all gamers. Nothing is more satisfying than mercilessly beating your friends into a bloody pulp...in a Street Fighter game, that is.

How We Like To Play:

EGM Street Fighter rules are simple: handicaps off, the winner can continue playing and don't reconfigure the buttons. Cheese wins, ticks (throwing someone when they're blocking) and tap-throws are grounds for a real-life beating by the staff. Heck, we just look for excuses to give staff members a real-life thrashing.

Why Didn't Capcom...:

...include the original Street Fighter II? Or Championship Edition? Or our office favorite, Hyper Fighting? The compilation, although excellent, doesn't feel complete.

6. Point Blank
### (PlayStation)
The Game:

Point Blank is a simple and colorful potpourri of dozens of light-gun minigames.

Why You Shouldn't Play It Alone:

If you have two Guncons, a few friends and Point Blank, then you have a party. All types of gamers love Point Blank: young or old, male or female. Two can play at one time, both competitively (trying to outscore each other) and cooperatively (trying to reach a common goal). Even eight people can compete on two teams of four. With the variety Point Blank offers in gameplay, you can't help-but have fun.

How We Like To Play:

For some reason, Crispin and Shoe invented the "Quick Draw" technique to keep them entertained between Point Blank
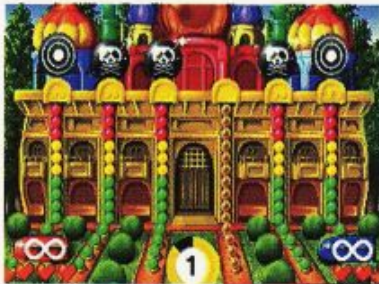
minigames. When it comes time to pick the next level, the two players must draw and shoot at their desired stage. This way, the faster hand gets to pick the next minigame.

But That Sounds Kinda Lame...:

It is, but the game itself isn't. Don't forget, Crispin and Shoe are easily entertained (and they invented this idea over a couple of brewskis at Dave & Buster's).

5. Madden NFL 98
(PlayStation)
The Game:

This is by far the most realistic football game on the market. It also happens to have the widest variety of Play Modes and Multiplayer Options found in a football game.

Why You Shouldn't Play It Alone:

While Madden's AI may be really good, nothing substitutes for the chess game that ensues between two veteran human players. Coming through in pressure situations, making big plays and doing awesome jukes is what multiplayer Madden is all about. And don't forget the art of taunting and talking smack during the game.

How We Like To Play:

A few weeks ago, we had a Madden tournament where we drafted our own teams then battled it out. It was great fun, and led to a lot of broken joypads and bruised egos. Also, playing two teams of two players is interesting because it really changes the way the game is played. The biggest challenge is getting both players on the team on the same page when it comes to playcalling. It gets so serious that sometimes you make signals to your teammate when you're calling a play so he knows what you're running.

### Biggest Upsets In Our Madden Tournament:

Upsets happen, and as they say, "That's why they play the games." John Ricciardi

Broken Links

Hardware advances in multiplayer gaming haven't come easily. Sony created the inexpensive Link Cable, but third-party support for it waned. Companies thought it was too unrealistic to expect gamers to bring two television sets, PlayStations and copies of the same game in a room to play. For the most part, they are right. Too bad, because Link Cable games are a blast.

Sega took the most risky and ambitious route with the NetLink. The idea was sound, but unfortunately there simply weren't enough Saturns sold to boost sales of this Internet device. Although software support is decent, killer multiplayer games such as Quake don't support the troubled Link.
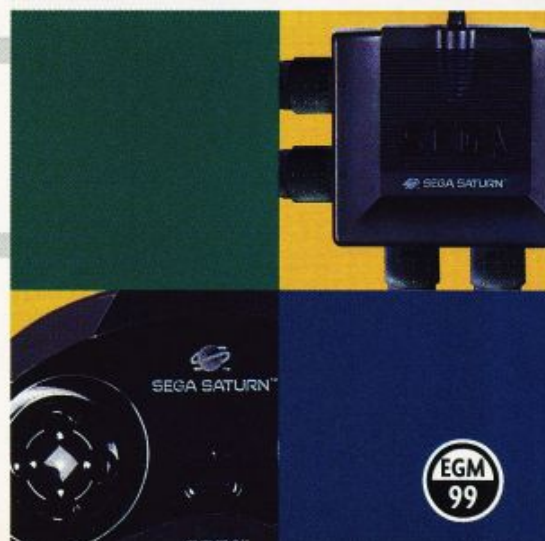
Party Games

There are multiplayer games, and then there are party games. Of course, party games are multiplayer games, but they generally consist of games that are easy to play. This insures that no one is left out of the action. For example, you might not want to play Twisted: The Game Show with your college buddies, but such a game might go down better in a party-like atmosphere. Here's some other party faves:

Jeopardy! (N64)
Monopoly (PlayStation)
PaRappa the Rapper (PlayStation)
Twisted: The Game Show (3DO)
Wheel of Fortune (N64)

notched his first win against art monkey Mike Stassus in the critical elimination round. Editor in chief Joe Funk, favored early to make it to the finals, bowed out in the first round due to a cheap call.

4. NBA Live 98
(PlayStation)

The Game:
This is the best PlayStation basketball game, by far. Live combines realistic hoops with intuitive control and fun gameplay.

Why You Shouldn't Play It Alone:
However good Live is, the computer opponent is just too easy to beat to a pulp (even on the hardest difficulty setting). Thus, to get some good competition, you really need to turn to humanoid help.
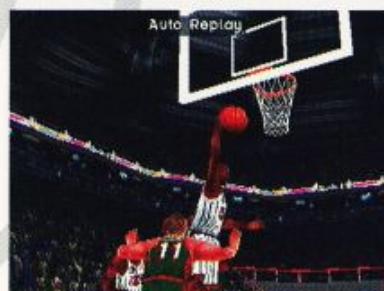
How We Like To Play:
Playing two teams of about three people each works really well. If it goes any higher, offenses get a little too unorganized and illegal. Finding six people to play isn't too hard a task, because rookies tend to learn the basics of Live quite quickly. If things get hairy, just turn down the fouls and realism. We're actually just starting to gear up for our NBA Live tournament, which will probably happen after the holidays. If you want to make a really in-depth tournament, you can undergo the time-consuming task of putting together teams with all-time great players (with the player creation feature). Then, you can save them to a memory card and use these custom players in a tournament.

Overlooked Part Of This Game:
The 3-Point Shootout taken from the NBA All-Star game is a really good but underrated part of Live 98. It's also easy for casual gamers to pick up and be competitive at.

3. Mario Kart 64
### (Nintendo 64)

The Game:
Take a few of the most popular Mario characters, throw them in a bunch of souped-up go-karts and you have a totally unrealistic, yet awesome racing game.

Why You Shouldn't Play It Alone:
There's nothing like playing Mario Kart 64 with four players at a time (well, OK, Diddy Kong Racing is *something* like it, but we prefer Mario Kart 64 for multiplayer games). Racing is fun and frantic; very few games out there let you shrink, shoot or squish your friends on the race track. You can also forego the racing factor and simply battle it out with three friends, head-to-head-to-head-to-head. Last kart standing wins.

How We Like To Play:
Cheap with no-holds-barred. No *EGM* editor feels an ounce of guilt releasing the lightning bolt at the perfect moment to screw up another racer's well-timed jump. Did that cheap little nudge knock you off a cliff? Heh...tough luck, sonny. You can also be really crafty and hang around second or third place until the last lap. This way, you can get the better power-up and speed past the leaders who get the crappy green shells because they're in first.
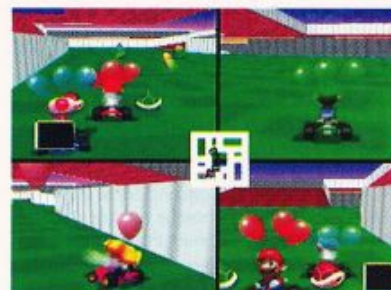
Why Mario Kart 64 Beat Diddy Kong Racing:
It was a close call, but Diddy Kong Racing wins in the one-player department, and Mario Kart 64 wins in the multiplayer department (some even like the Super NES Mario Kart more). Why? Kart 64 is simply more exciting. The levels and power-ups were designed to keep races close and hectic (see above strategy). Everyone is always close to the action, and almost always, it's anybody's game.

2. GoldenEye 007
(Nintendo 64)

The Game:
As you've probably heard, this 3-D first-person game is one of the few that does its movie license justice.

Why You Shouldn't Play It Alone:
GoldenEye is the first and best four-player Doom-type game on a console system, period. The multiplayer competition in this game is as groundbreaking as it is intense. Endless hours of fun can be had with all of the different modes, some of which are unlocked by progressing through the game's One-player Mode. There's nothing better than filling your favorite Bond movie character up with lead—especially that short guy named "Oddjob."

How We Like To Play:
There are a few modes we prefer, although we love 'em all. Try playing two-on-two teams with the Golden Gun. That's about as intense as it gets. One shot, and you're dead. And it feels oh-so-good to get those one-shot kills. It's also amusing to see everyone running around the level like mad trying to find Golden Guns so that they have a fighting chance. If you're wondering about which weapons to use, keep in mind that Rocket Launchers and Grenade Launchers are nice, but using Power Weapons and Automatics is more entertaining because it lends itself to long gun battles.

Most Embarrassing Way To Die:
If you're killed by the weak little Klobb gun (named after Nintendo Guru Ken Lobb) in multiplayer competition, that's reason to be ashamed. And whoever kills someone with a Klobb should probably get two points instead of one.

1. Saturn Bomberman
(Saturn)

The Game:
One of the grandfathers of multiplayer gaming, the latest in the series adds subtle improvements to a proven game.

Why You Shouldn't Play It Alone:
Bomberman has never been known as a one-player game (although the N64 version tries its darndest to be one). If you bought Bomberman for solo action, you bought it for the wrong reason.

How We Like To Play:
Naturally, getting as many players as possible into a game is a good idea. There's plenty of room in the Hi-res Mode on the Saturn to allow 10 players to play at once. Unfortunately, the 10-player level is a very plain one (nothing but bricks), and we play on the more interesting, smaller levels. The soccer level is one of our favorites—how can you beat fire coming out of soccer goal nets? That's something special, indeed.

Dumbest Way To Lose Momentum:
Sega held a Bomberman competition a few months ago in the *EGM* offices. The participants in the finals match were Kraig and Shawn. Kraig was up 2-1 in a best of five. Game Three started, and oddly enough, one of the Bombermen died immediately. Apparently Kraig wasn't paying attention and didn't notice that his starting spot on the map changed, and it resulted in bombing himself out of game four in less than five seconds. Shawn took advantage of this embarrassing mistake and won game five to become the office's new Bomberman champion. Let that be a lesson to all you Bomberman players out there. Learn from Kraig's mistake—pay attention to your starting position. ✪