JOUST PONG

INTRODUCTION

September 21, 1998: "The future of gaming can be summed up in two words -- Pong and Joust." ...with these prophetic words in the Usenet group rec.games.video.classic, "Otter" planted the seeds for the game you have before you now. Two of the greatest names in the history of video games have been brought together at last on your Atari 2600...**JoustPong** is an old school round of Pong (the original deathmatch!) combined with the famous "Flap" button of Joust. Pterry the Pterodactyl is here to keep things lively, and even the wall from the Atari classic 'Warlords' makes a cameo appearance.

HOW TO PLAY

"PRESS BUTTON TO FLAP. AVOID MISSING BALL FOR HIGH SCORE."

Each player controls a JoustPong knight...a classic rectangular Pong paddle with angelic ostrich wings stretching out of its back. Player 1 controls the left knight with a joystick plugged into the 2600's left controller jack. The right knight is controlled by the computer, or by Player 2 using a joystick plugged into the right controller jack.

The game program starts with a title screen. Here the game variation can be selected with the GAME SELECT switch or by pressing the left joystick (right/up to select the next variation, left/down to select the previous variation).

The GAME RESET switch or the left joystick firebutton starts the game, a countdown appears, and then the ball is launched in a random direction.

During gameplay, only the joystick's firebutton is used. Pressing the button flaps the knight's wings, giving an upward push against the constant pull of gravity.

When the ball hits a knight, it is deflected and heads back towards the other knight. If the ball makes it past a knight (and the knight's castle wall in the "Poorlords" game variant) the other player scores a point. The first player to score 10 points (or 3, in the case of "Poorlords") is declared the victor and the game is over.
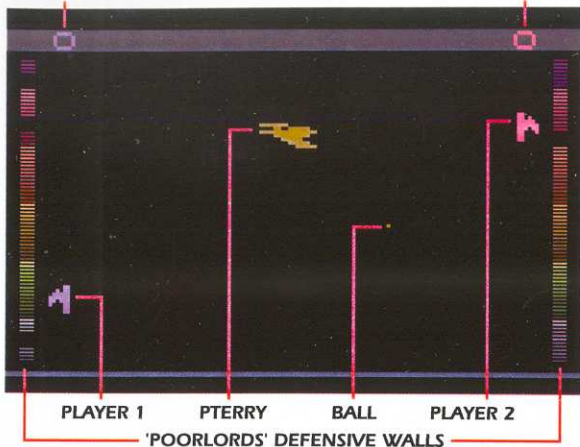
When hit by a knight, the ball takes on some of that knight's vertical speed, so a collision with a fast moving knight will result in a faster moving ball.

Pterry the Pterodactyl flies across the center of the screen. If the ball hits Pterry, it will be deflected. Also, if Pterry hits a knight the knight will be thrown down to the ground and Pterry will squawk in glee.
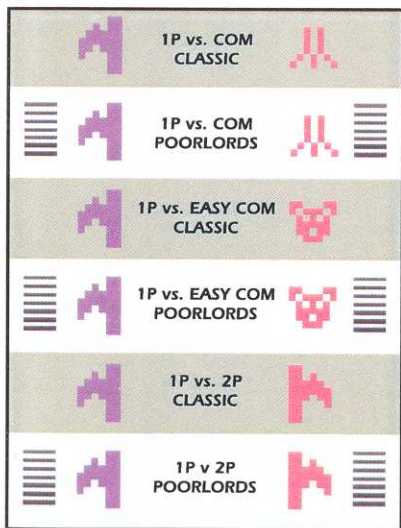
At any time, GAME SELECT will return to the title screen and GAME RESET will start a new game.

PLAYER 1 SCORE   PLAYER 2 SCORE

PLAYER 1   PTERRY   BALL   PLAYER 2

'POORLORDS' DEFENSIVE WALLS

GAME VARIATIONS

	1P vs. COM CLASSIC	
	1P vs. COM POORLORDS	
	1P vs. EASY COM CLASSIC	
	1P vs. EASY COM POORLORDS	
	1P vs. 2P CLASSIC	
	1P v 2P POORLORDS	

There are 6 game variations. Cycle through them with the left joystick or the GAME SELECT switch on the title screen.

"Classic" JoustPong is a first-to-10-points death match. "Poorlords" gives each player a defensive wall, and the first player to get 3 points wins. (The "Poorlords" variant takes its cue from the Atari classic Warlords...alas, these poor knights can only afford a single layer of wall to guard against intrusion, unlike Warlords' mightier fortresses.)

The left DIFFICULTY switch can be used to adjust the horizontal speed of the ball:

a (expert) - FAST

b (novice) - SLOW
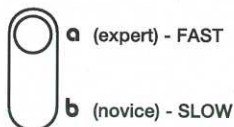
The right DIFFICULTY switch is not used in JoustPong.

ABOUT THE GAME

The idea for JoustPong came from a 1998 Usenet thread in rec.games.video.classic entitled "Gaming 2001–The Future of Gaming!". A group called "Fairfield Research" was doing market research on the gaming industry, and "Otter" neatly summarized the situation by saying, "The future of gaming can be summed up in two words – Pong and Joust". Dan Mazurowski started tossing out some ideas based on a hybrid concept (and noted that it was an arcade game that would require only a single button to play) and Jon Kade even suggested it as an Atari project.

This is Kirk Israel's fourth version of JoustPong. You can see the original 1998 version for Windows, the 1999 PalmPilot version, and the 2000 Java update at http://alienbill.com/abp/

The Atari 2600 port is the first version to include Pterry, theme music, and the "Poorlords" variants. Despite these additions, the game still stands as arguably the most satisfying game requiring only a single button to play. To learn more about the making of this game, check out its development journal at http://alienbill.com/joustpong/ where you can see its progress from a simple learning experiment to today's full game.

ABOUT THE PROGRAMMER

Kirk Israel is a software developer currently living in the suburbs of Boston. He is fluent in Java, Perl, and several other computer languages. JoustPong is Kirk's first foray into Atari programming.

Kirk maintains a daily "quotes and links" blog at http://kisrael.com/. Gamers interested in minimalistic games may be interested in Kirk's Gamebutton Arcade, games entirely contained in a single HTML pushbutton: http://kisrael.com/features/gb.html

Programmers interested in making the jump into Atari 2600 programming are invited to check out Kirk's tutorial, "2600 101" at http://www.atariage.com/2600 /programming/2600_101/

Feel free to drop Kirk a line at joustpong2600@alienbill.com.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is safe to say that without the smart and supportive programmers on the Stella mailing list this game could never have happened. The latest version of JoustPong's kernal (the really difficult to write part that 'makes it go') was pretty much handed to me by Paul Slocum. Other invaluable contributors include Thomas Jentzsch, Dennis Debro, Erik Mooney, Christopher Tumber, and Andrew Davie. Their patience and generosity with this 6502/6507 newbie was outstanding. Actually it seems like almost everyone on the Stella list helped in one way or the other, so apologies to anyone I'm leaving out.

Christian Scott, Scott "Club Ninja" Bertulli, Joe Grand, and everyone else with the New England Classic Gamers–you've been a great inspiration as well.

Thanks to David "Liveinabin" Exton for his wonderful art design and logo work.

And extra special thanks to Albert "AtariAge" Yarusso. His site has become the web's premier stop for all things Atari, he brings the hardware knowledge that lets programmer's binary dreams become silicon reality, and his feedback, support, and encouragement to add in that "one last feature" really made the difference in letting JoustPong become a full-fledged game rather than a tech demo novelty.