

= Victorious Boxers : Ippo 's Road to Glory =

Victorious Boxers : Ippo 's Road to Glory , known in Japan as Hajime no Ippo : Victorious Boxers (?????? VICTORIOUS BOXERS , lit . " The First Step : Victorious Boxers ") , is a Japanese @-@ developed boxing video game created by New Corporation for the Sony PlayStation 2 video game console . It is based on the manga and anime series Hajime no Ippo . Though the original series is very popular in Japan , it is not as widely known in the United States (US) . The game was released in Japan on December 14 , 2000 and in North America on November 5 , 2001 .

The game features a mix of simulation and arcade style boxing . The storyline , which unfolds in the story mode , takes place in six linear segments that originally overlapped in the manga . The game 's fights mirrored the fights from the manga series . The beginning of the game focuses on Ippo Makunouchi 's rise to the Japanese Featherweight championship , and later switches to Ippo 's fellow gym mates ' careers .

Victorious Boxers was the first Fighting Spirit video game on the PlayStation 2 and was met with a mixed reception . It was commercially successful in Japan , but did poorly in the US . Victorious Boxers received positive review scores , though aspects of the game were both criticized and praised . The visual style and graphics were poorly received , while industry experts considered it to be " one of the most technically accurate representation of the sport of boxing " .

= = Gameplay = =

Victorious Boxers 's gameplay is a mix between simulation and arcade style boxing . It features 3D character models fighting each other within a boxing ring . The game keeps track of the fight records and saves it to the memory card , via an auto @-@ save option . In addition , actual matches can be saved to the memory card as " replay data " and be viewed later . Eighteen camera angles available during matches , some of which include a first person view from either character , a TV camera angle , and overhead views for various angles .

The controls were designed to give more realistic movement to characters . Characters can dash , bob and weave in all eight directions . The punches are divided into left and right jabs / hooks . When punches are used in conjunction with " technique " and " special " buttons , extra types of punches can be executed . Combinations and counter @-@ punches are also possible . By combining upper body movements with punches , players can duck down and hit to the body or lean back and throw a quick punch to the head . The initial setup uses the left analog stick for all the character 's bodily movements ; minor movements to the stick control the upper body movements , while larger movements control the lower body and movement within the ring .

Victorious Boxers does not use a damage or life meter . Instead , visible damage can be seen on a boxer 's face , which is most noticeable between rounds when the characters are sitting in their corners . The amount of damage taken is reflected by bruises , swelling , and black eyes on the characters ' faces . Another sign of damage is the characters ' speed of movement throughout the fight . The characters begin to move slower and the controls become less responsive to simulate fatigue . The more a boxer is hit or uses special moves , the more their stamina is affected . Distance is a factor in determining a punch 's damage . For example , a jab thrown while next to an opponent will not do as much damage as it would at arms length . Also , right hooks do not do as much damage if the character is positioned to the opponent 's left and vice versa .

= = = Modes = = =

The game has two modes , a single player story mode and a multi @-@ player versus mode . The story mode follows the boxing careers of the main characters from the original series . All characters available to the player are from the Kamogawa Boxing Gym . Cut scenes are added in before and after matches as the main story telling device , and utilize the same character models as the fights . The game has six story arcs and begins with Makunouchi Ippo , the protagonist from the manga series . Story mode also unlocks more options in the versus mode as a player progresses through

the story . Once a character has been played or a special technique learned , they become available in the versus mode . Likewise , once an opponent has been beaten , they are playable in the versus mode .

The versus mode is a free fighting mode where multiple players can box . The number of players can range from 0 ? 2 ; both fighters can be controlled by either the computer or by a player . Initially there are only two playable characters ; additional characters become accessible by playing through the story mode . Although the characters are grouped by their boxing weight class , any character can be selected to fight another regardless of weight class . Players can choose from ten locations for the bout . Initially , the only available arena is the Kamogawa Boxing Gym basement . New locations become available once a fight occurs there in the story mode .

= = Plot = =

= = Setting and characters = =

Victorious Boxers is set in Tokyo , Japan . The story unfolds via cut scenes set in either the Kamogawa Boxing Gym , the fictional boxing gym of the main characters , or the waiting rooms of the boxing arenas . The gameplay takes place in boxing arenas , some of which are based on locations in Japan and include Korakuen Hall , Ryogoku Sports Arena , and the Osaka Prefectural Gymnasium . Other locations include the mountainous area around Niigata , and an outdoor boxing ring set in post @-@ World War II Tokyo , Japan .

The game features forty @-@ four playable characters ? forty @-@ two characters and two duplicate characters that have handicapped abilities . The protagonist is Ippo Makunouchi , but the story shifts to his friends and fellow contenders as well . The game features most of the boxer up to the 53rd volume of the manga , including Ryuichi Hayami , Ryo Mashiba , Vorg Zangief , Kazuki Sanada , and Ryuhei Sawamura . Excluded are , Itagaki Manabu , Makino Fumito , Hama Dankichi , and Rally Bernard . The different boxers span five different weight classes ; most boxers have a special move derived from the manga series .

The two duplicate characters are Ippo and Mamoru Takamura . The two characters are weaker than their normal versions and are embodiments of parts of the original story . The weaker Ippo is the first version of the character available . He wears sweats and a T @-@ shirt rather than the boxing trunks the other characters wear . This version is based on when Ippo began boxing and was training to fight his rival , Ichiro Miyata . The weaker Takamura has less muscle mass and looks ill . He is based on a fight in the manga when Takamura overdid his weight management .

= = Story = =

The game begins with a sparring match with Ichiro Miyata , which is actually a rematch from a previous sparring match with Miyata that took place in the manga series . After winning , Ippo take his professional boxer exam to begin his boxing career . He then enters the East Japan Rookie Champion Tournament , and after succeeding , he faces the West Japan Rookie Champ , Takeshi Sendo . Ippo later enters the Class A tournament where he wins his chance to challenge the Japanese Featherweight Champion , Eiji Date . After losing to Eiji Date , Ippo climbs the ranks again to the featherweight championship , where he faces Sendo , who has become the new champion . After becoming the champion , Ippo then defends the title five times .

The story then shifts to one of Ippo 's sempai , Masaru Aoki , who has been boxing for a number of years before Ippo . He enters the Class A Tournament , but loses . Afterward , he begins his comeback and rises through the Lightweight division to win the Lightweight Championship against Katsutaka Imae . Aoki 's story differs from the manga in that Aoki lost several of the fights , and achieved a draw in the Title bout . After Aoki 's story arc , the game shifts again to another of Ippo 's sempai , Tatsuya Kimura , who began boxing with Aoki . His story is very similar to Aoki 's in that he also enters the Class A Tournament and loses . Afterward , he begins his comeback that eventually

leads to winning the Junior Lightweight Championship fight against Ryo Mashiba . Kimura 's story is also different than the manga in that he lost several of the fights and did not become the Junior Lightweight Champion .

The story switches again to Mamoru Takamura . His story is the most similar to the manga in that he is the only character in the series to have never lost a fight . It begins with Takamura as the Japanese Middleweight Champion , defending his title against the Class A Tournament winner . After winning , Takamura and the others go to a lodge in the mountains to train . While there he encounters a mountain bear that he knocks out . After having a successful boxing career in Japan , Takamura aims for a world title and receives a challenge from the World Junior Middleweight Champion , Brian Hawk . Takamura begins a strict weight management program to drop to Hawk 's weight class . When they eventually fight , Takamura is victorious and becomes the new Junior Middleweight Champion of the world .

After the main boxers have been played , Ippo visits his coach , Genji Kamogawa , at the mountain lodge . While there , he learns about Kamogawa 's history as a boxer via a flash back story . Kamogawa and his longtime friend and rival , Ginpachi Nekota , were both boxers before World War II . After the war , they boxed in exhibition matches . The two boxed each other often and once they met Yuki , a young girl from Hiroshima , their rivalry grew . While boxing , Kamogawa severely injured Nekota , but Nekota hide it because of their friendship . One day , Ralph Anderson , an American soldier stationed in their area , challenged and beat up the local boxers to show American dominance over Japanese boxers . Nekota challenges Anderson , but loses due to developing punch @-@ drunk syndrome from his fight with Kamogawa . During the fight , Anderson used an illegal punch on Nekota that worsened his condition . After Nekota 's defeat , Kamogawa begins intensive training to defeat Anderson . Through his training , he develops an " iron fist " technique . He then challenges Anderson , who because of his near loss has also trained extensively . After defeating Anderson , Kamogawa vows to pass on his boxing spirit to his students in order to show his boxing to the world .

= = Development = =

Victorious Boxers : Ippo 's Road to Glory was produced by Entertainment Software Publishing and was adapted from the Fighting Spirit manga series , at a time when the publishing company was focusing on its licensed comic properties rather than original titles . Development for the game was handled by New Corporation . The developers noted the capacities of the PlayStation 2 allowed them to reproduce the characters of the series accurately . The soundtrack of the game was composed by Takayuki Aihara , Shinji Hosoe and Naoki Tsuchiya . In May 2001 , British video game company Empire Interactive announced it would publish the game in Europe and North America . Since Empire 's presence in the United States market was minimal , a distribution deal was passed with Vivendi Universal for them to distribute the game , along with six other titles , in North America .

= = Reception = =

In Japan , Victorious Boxers : Ippo 's Road to Glory was the fourth best @-@ selling game of December 14 , 2000 , and sold 256 @,@ 000 copies by February 18 , 2001 . It did not sell well in the United States however , mainly due to very little name recognition and poor marketing . Many reviews commented that the anime / manga style of characters and use of Japanese names were a turn off to US gamers who were more familiar with boxing games like Knockout Kings or Ready 2 Rumble . Despite the lack of sales , it received overall positive reviews and ratings . In 2001 , GameSpot awarded it " Best Game No One Played " . Next Generation Magazine stated , " It 's arguably the best 3D boxing game yet " and the versus mode offered " solid replay value " .

Many reviews commented on the graphics , citing there were other games with better graphics at the time . GamePro rated the graphics at 3 @.@ 5 out of 5 . Though the graphics were not well received , the character animations were very well received . The lack of audio dialog , which forced

the player to read text for the story mode , was also a negative when many other games on the PS2 at the time were adding in voice overs . GamePro rated the overall sound a 3 out of 5 . Other reviews rated the audio better , particularly the music and sound effects during the fights .

The gameplay received mixed reviews . Reviews stated that Victorious Boxers was one of the most technically accurate boxing games of its time . Matt Helgeson of Game Informer described it as dramatically different from the " combo @-@ intensive , somewhat sluggish feel " of Knockout Kings . GameSpot stated the controls gave players " better boxer control " , and the " AI of the computer opponents is extremely advanced " . While many critics complimented the control scheme , they also commented on its difficulty to master . A common complaint was about characters improperly positioning itself in relation to the opponent while circling the ring . GamePro rated both the controls and fun factor a 4 @.@ 5 out of 5 , and mentioned though the controls were very intuitive and precise , " they require a lot of brainwork and dexterity " . Next Generation commented on the initial controls , stating they are problematic at first but can be reconfigured to suit the player .

= = Sequels = =

Victorious Boxers was followed by sequels on other video game consoles . The first title was Hajime no Ippo : The Fighting ! (?????? THE FIGHTING ?) , which was released only in Japan on December 12 , 2002 for the Game Boy Advance . The game features 2D graphics rather than 3D , and uses the Game Link Cable for two @-@ player gameplay . Two titles were released on the PlayStation 2 ; Hajime no Ippo 2 : Victorious Road and Victorious Boxers 2 : Fighting Spirit . Hajime no Ippo 2 : Victorious Road was released on January 29 , 2004 exclusively in Japan , and features a fighter @-@ creation mode and new boxers . Victorious Boxers 2 : Fighting Spirit was originally released in Japan on December 22 , 2004 as Hajime no Ippo : All @-@ Stars (?????? ALL ? STARS) , and features gameplay similar to the first Victorious Boxers . It was later released in Europe in 2005 and in North America in 2006 . A title for the Wii , Victorious Boxers : Revolution (?????? REVOLUTION , Hajime no Ippo : Revolution) , was released in Japan on June 21 , 2007 . It was later released in North America in October 2007 , and in PAL regions in 2008 . The game uses the Wii 's Wii Remote motion @-@ sensing controllers to simulate punching .