

British Olympian Turns to Video Game to Hone 2012 Fighting Skills

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One of Britain's best hopes for Gold in the London 2012 Olympics is using a new video game as part of his day to day training.

Tyrone Robinson, a British International Championship Gold Medallist and a European Championship Bronze Medallist in Taekwondo, is using martial arts fighting game 'Street Fighter IV' as a way to mentally rehearse moves, sharpen coordination, speed up reflexes and advance fight planning.

"I'm never going to be able to throw fireballs in the ring like the characters in Street Fighter IV, but I can still try some of the crazy kicks they do. It's a good way to relax at the end of a hard day's training and great to have a tournament with friends" says 22 year old Tyrone, who is one of the current GB Team's elite performance academy athletes and who has high hopes for Gold in 2012.

Sports psychologists and sportsmen themselves have long accepted that mental rehearsal and training does translate to dramatically improved results on the field. Now coaches think Street Fighter IV, with its complex structure and split-second timing, is the ideal tool to assist in athletic preparation and help athletes get in the 'zone'.

Like Taekwondo, Street Fighter IV has a strict set of moves that can be used in any given situation. Trainers believe that the complex tactical forethought required to play the game can bring real benefits to the fighting strategies of Olympic hopefuls.

Des Blackburn, the Performance Analyst for Great Britain Taekwondo, believes that Street Fighter IV is an ideal mental training supplement.

"To complement their physical training our athletes are also encouraged, in their spare time, to play this type of game, as it is known that doing so can increase their attention span, depth perception and hand-eye co-ordination; though this is always recommended as an addition to their physical training and never as a replacement!"

Tyrone's use of a computer game to prepare for a real world event is part of an increasingly popular trend of using 'brain training' or balancing games to improve mental or physical prowess.

TYRONE ROBINSON AND DES BLACKBURN ARE AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEW - PLEASE CONTACT ME SHOULD YOU SPEAK TO THEM IN CONNECTION WITH THIS RELEASE

PHOTOGRAPHS OF TYRONE, AND SCREENSHOTS OF THE GAME, ARE AVAILABLE

Editors' Notes:

Street Fighter IV is out now on Playstation 3 and Xbox 360.

Beat-em-ups are complex systems that run at sixty frames a second, and whilst they provide a vague overview of their (highly) complex systems of rules in the manual, the way most players have learned about them is through educative tutorials and inferring them backwards through the game. In them, you see complex analysis of systems, with frame counts for the duration of each move and its recover time, and lists of unblockable combos, that have all been inferred through trial and error. Of course, the high-level players have taken this analysis and then internalised it: the ruleset lives and breathes within them, and what was once carefully analysed appears instinctive to the outsider observer. In fact, what you're seeing is a highly advanced form of systems literacy.

Players are often planning the next move based on an understanding not of what their opponent is currently doing, but based upon their knowledge of their opponents' decision tree. That means players are juggling the moves list - and, indeed, the strategies and tactics - for two characters in their heads. This is clearly very advanced systems thinking, and beat-em-up players practice it all the time - much as martial artists do in competitive bouts.

Best wishes,

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