

The Aftertouch

Bimonthly Magazine for the KOA

No. 1 November 2003

3rd Kick Off 2 World Cup

WHO'S GONNA
WIN?

MEGA REVIEW:

Kick Off
2002

INTERVIEW:

Klaus Loite breaks
his silence!

The Aftertouch

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Editorial

Hello fellow KOAers, and welcome to the first issue of The Aftertouch. What you are currently reading is the first effort of what we hope will evolve to a bimonthly online magazine for the Kick Off Association and Kick Off players in general.

The current issue is naturally dedicated to the upcoming Kick Off 2 World Cup that will take place on November 8-9 in Groningen, Holland. Once again, the best players of the world will gather and test their skills against each other. Will the favorites dominate their opponents? Who should we keep an eye on? Read all about this major event here.

For this issue, we have an exclusive interview of one of the best Kick Off 2 players in the world: Klaus Loite from Norway, bronze medal winner and best defender of the last world cup, and leading scorer of the KOA with 6.07 goals per game.

You will also find a special review of Kick Off 2002, the reincarnation of our favorite series that became a possibility thanks to the efforts of Steve Screech and the collaboration of many KOA members. Read the remarks of our new era KO games specialist, Danne Johansson.

On each issue we will give you a review of a quality game from the golden 16-bit era. This month we will present to you Lionheart by Thalion, a title that deserves your attention. Nikos Andreou signs this very interesting review.

I hope you will enjoy the hard work we have put on this magazine and decide to support future issues of The Aftertouch.

Alkis Polyrakis

Interview



Klaus Loite: The Norwegian icebreaker

Interview to Alkis Polyrakis

Klaus played his first KOA tournament in Lund, Sweden on February 9th 2002. 9 months later, he impressed everyone in the world cup by playing perhaps the most attractive Kick Off ever seen and missing the final on details. A natural talent on both ends of the field, he gained the best defender trophy and came second on goal average.

Although Klaus' KO skills are notorious, few people know his thoughts on the KOA and the game in particular as he is a man of few words. We believe we couldn't have picked a better man for that first interview of ours, as we knew that our readers would be eager to finally get to know the giant better. He did not disappoint us and the answers he gave were very interesting.

AP: Hello Klaus, and welcome to the first issue of The Aftertouch. Do you think an on line bimonthly magazine for the KOA is a good idea?

KL: I haven't heard much about it, but that sounds like a great idea.

AP: Please tell us a bit about yourself, how old are you, what do you do, when did you get your first computer, when did you start playing Kick Off?

KL: I just had my 21st birthday. Right now I'm looking for a job, because I recently lost my former job as a lorry-driver. I only have a driver's license class 1, cars up to 3,5 tons. But if I get class 2, trucks up to 21 tons, I will get my job back.

My two elder brothers and I got our first computer when I was about five years old, I think. It was a Commodore 64, but we got our first Amiga 500 when I was eight. We also bought the brilliant Kick Off 2 game right away because we had played it before with a friend of my bother Glenn's.

AP: What's the name of the joystick you are using?

KL: I don't know its name, but it's made in Holland. I bought it from a friend six or seven years ago or something.

AP: How did you find about the KOA?

KL: I searched for Kick Off 2 on Yahoo and saw the site there. That was just before the first world-cup in Dartford if I remember it right. At

that time I didn't play Kick Off 2 because our disk was broken, and we didn't know anyone to copy it from. So I found KOA while searching

for someone who could help us get the game back.

AP: What in your opinion makes a 13 year old game so addictive that so many people are interested in it, even today?

KL: I believe it's because this game is so different from other football games. It takes skill to control the ball! You have to stay focused all the time and you must be able to react and think quickly. I also think that, for many of the players, the game brings back a lot of memories from earlier days.

AP: What's your opinion about the new Kick Off games? Have you ever played Kick Off 2002?

KL: Sadly I've never played any of the new Kick Off games.

AP: Although you're one of the youngest players, you lead the KOA in goal average with 6.07 GPG. What's your secret? What makes a player good in offense, mere practice or a killer's instinct?

KL: I don't think there's any big secrets, but I try to surprise my opponent when I attack, and also when I defend myself.

Practicing against good players, with different styles, many times, would make you a better offensive player. But the reason I have this high goal average could be that I started playing so young.

AP: Unlike the English and the Greeks, in Norway you don't have enough opponents to practice against. How difficult is it to stay in full form without practicing against human opposition?

KL: I play against my brother maybe a couple of hours per week, and some few tournaments now and then. But I don't feel that I'm in any good form. I look forward to watch and to play some other players soon in Groningen.

AP: During the games, you seem exceptionally silent. How do you manage to remain so calm even during crucial games?

KL: That's because I try to keep my focus on the game. The reason why people like my brother loose their games is probably lack of concentration. Especially tight and close games. So the reason why I use to be silent during matches and tournaments, is that it's helping me concentrate on the game.

AP: You came third in the Athens world cup. Tell us a bit about the experience, did you enjoy being there?

KL: It was a great experience for me. The Greeks seemed to be a very touchy, but friendly people. They really wanted all of us to have a good time there.

AP: You have played against 29 KOA players, including some of the best of the world. In your opinion, who is the toughest opponent you have faced and why?

KL: I haven't played against Panayotis or any of the Dutch, and none of the new English guys. But Alkis and Rikki are the toughest on the Oracle version. I've never beaten Alkis, so I guess he is the toughest I've ever played. But playing against James or Martin Beard on 1.4 (no magic) is also tough.

AP: Is there a particular game you have played that stayed in your memory?

KL: I remember Rodolfo's joystick very well.

AP: Are you happy with the current rules used in most KOA tournaments? What would you change if you could?

KL: I think they are very fair. The rules from the last world cup were perfect in my opinion. I don't think that anything should change. As long as we play one home, and one away game against each other with the home team deciding version. That's fair.

AP: The 3rd Kick Off 2 World Cup in Groningen is coming up. It looks like it's going to be even harder than the previous two. What are your expectations? Which place would satisfy you?

KL: Even though I don't have many expectations, only the 1st place would satisfy me. There are many players there who are better than me, and even more players that are around the same level as me, I think. I haven't improved since the last world cup, but I have the experience from one now.

AP: If you were forced to only pick ONE, who do you think will be the 2003 world champion?

KL: I've never seen him play, but I guess Martin Jeffrey will win.

After all I think this will be a cup where anybody can beat almost anybody, and that luck combined with determination and a good day could get any player far.

AP: What other computer games do you play?

KL: I like Championship Manager, but for the time I have no PC, and my brother Glenn, has uninstalled this game from his computer. I also like to play other old Amiga games, for instance Ports of Call and Player Manager.

AP: Thank you for the interview Klaus, and good luck to you in the world cup.

Mega Review



Review by Danne Johansson

During the early 90s ANCO developed the Kick Off series which were totally superior compared to earlier football games. With a focus on gameplay Dino Dini with Steve Screech in his team managed to create games that were addictive, fun and incredible enjoyable. The market was thrilled by the intense gameplay and it became a world success.

Kick Off 2002 was developed in the same vein. The difference was that the year for the release was 2002 and not 1990. The focus for the game industry had changed. The keyword was 'realism', and the 'gameplay' was no more the number one priority. The average reviews in game magazines were therefore no surprise. People that were used to playing games of the new millennium such as FIFA

had also problems with the difficult gameplay. So for most of those people Kick Off 2002 isn't just an average game out of realism but also out of gameplay.



Kick Off 2002 is best played from a top down view perspective, just like the early Kick Off games.

However the project's goal wasn't to please the reviewers or the new generation gamers. The focus was instead on a small group that still liked the old school football games. To release that type of game nowadays was a really brave thing to do. Out of a market perspective this wasn't a smart thing to do but if you look at the gameplay outcome you have to be impressed. And if you look at Kick Off 2002 from a Kick Off fan perspective the conclusion you draw is also different from most reviewers.



The 3D Engine allows total camera freedom when watching replays

The first thing you notice when you play is that the classic gameplay from the original games is there. Unlike all other games developed in the new millennium you really have the possibility to control your player. You can aim at the top corner, add a little aftertouch if needed and make unique dribbles. The game feels almost perfect out of gameplay in the beginning but the more you play the more you understand that there are things with the gameplay that aren't 100 percent. The game feels to be done in the right way but you get the impression that it needs tweaking. The passing system feels to difficult, the AI is repetitive, the ball flow doesn't feel right and the players don't slide when you order them to. But even though there are flaws in the game it has that addictive and enjoyable gameplay so you just have to play another game. It is strange to explain how a game can be both irritating and very enjoyable at the

same time but this is definitely the case with KO02.



The game's team editor

When you take a closer look at animations and graphics you get the same feeling. The basic player models looks right and the animations as well. But when they are inserted in the game engine some of the players do jerky movements. This makes the game more difficult to play. Just as with the gameplay you realize that the animations and graphics need tweaking as well. However if you compare the graphics with earlier top down view games like Kick Off or Sensible Soccer the graphics are really good. Naturally, compared to today's games, the graphics of Kick Off 2002 are inferior.



You can create custom leagues and cups

The game features all FIFA's official national team members. Unfortunately, the players' names are fictional due to copyright problems, but that thanks to the hard work of the KOAers most of the well known clubs & international teams are available for downloading on various Internet sites.

The available competitions in KO02 are FIFA's World Cup, World Cup Qualifiers and a Challenge Round in which you compete against all teams in increasing difficulty.

I have wondered many times what the game would be like if Steve Screech had more time during the development. What the game would be like without all the small bugs in the gameplay, with a more smooth look. simply a game with only enjoyment but no irritation. I believe it would be a true masterpiece and this awareness make future releases of the Steve Screech Kick Off family extraordinary interesting. Whether the



A number of options makes the game highly customizable

future sequels will live up to the high expectations and prove me right is something only time will tell us.

3rd Kick Off 2 World Cup



Article by Alkis Polyrakis

On November 8-9, Groningen will host the world's best Kick Off 2 players for the KOA's annual gathering. Another world cup, then? More of the same? Not quite. This competition is expected to be the toughest tournament ever, as this time almost every single one of the favorites will be there.

32 players from 7 countries will compete for the title. More importantly, they will visit the Dutch city to have a wonderful time with old friends and make some new ones. Although only one of them will win the final, we can safely say that everyone who will decide to take a break from real life in order to play his favorite 13 year old computer game will be considered a winner.

THE PLAYERS

Netherlands:

Mark Poelstra
Riemer Poelstra
Pascal Vermeulen
Gunther Wening
Niels Tijssen
Kees van den Berg
Evert van den Berg
Luitzen Boonstra

England:

Sjoerd Knol
Robert Swift
James Beard
Martin Beard
Mark Williams
Mark Elliott
Martin Jeffrey
Steve Camber
Nick Housden

Germany:

Christian Dietz
Matthias Dietz
Jorg Panhorst
Wolfram Heyer
Alex Brante

Greece:

Alkis Polyrakis
Nikos Andreou
Panayotis Pantazis
Spyros Paraschis

Norway:

Klaus Loite
Glenn Loite
Knut Olav Loite

Italy:

Gianluca Troiano
Giacomo Troiano

Spain:

Rodolfo Martin

Players you can bet your money on:

- **Martin Jeffrey**

English champion, highest ranked player in Groningen and most successful player for 2003 with 6 consecutive tournament wins.

- **Panayotis Pantazis**

Greece's main hope of bringing the trophy back to the south.

- **Klaus Loite**

This year he has the experience to match his excellent skills.

- **Alkis Polyrakis**

He's had a mediocre year in Greek tournaments, however you can never rule out someone who's been in two consecutive world cup finals.

Players that can also go all the way:

- **Mark Poelstra**

2nd in 2001, will he be able to do as well in Groningen?

- **Gianluca Troiano**

The Italian champion is back and he is ready to party.

- **Nikos Andreou**

He's been on devilish form in the past few months.

- **Spyros Paraschis**

The newly-wed would certainly like to bring the trophy back to his wife.

Players that have something to prove:

- **Christian Dietz**

His first KOA tournament, he will want to show the world that Germany is a Kick Off world power too.

- **Robert Swift**

Determined to avoid the mistakes of the past two world cups.

- **Rodolfo Martin**

The Spanish wants to prove that he's a better player than he showed in Athens.

Players than can cause serious damage:

- **James Beard**

Two times quarter finalist, he always plays his best on major tournaments.

- **Martin Beard**

Always ready to surprise some of the favorites with his lethal 4-3-3.

- **Kees van den Berg**

Those who remember him from Dartford will not be surprised to see him go far.

Previous World Cups

- ➔ **Dartford, England 2001**

Winner: Alkis Polyrakis

Silver Medal: Mark Poelstra

Bronze Medal: Gianluca Troiano

Best offense: Gianluca Troiano

Best defense: Alkis Polyrakis

Shirt of shame: Niels Tijssen

➔ **Athens, Greece 2002**

Winner: Rikki Fullarton

Silver Medal: Alkis Polyrakis

Bronze Medal: Klaus Loite

Best offense: Rikki Fullarton

Best defense: Klaus Loite

Playouts winner: Nikos Andreou

Shirt of shame: Darren Gurney

World's Top 20

November 2003

#	Player	Country	Points
1	Rikki F	England	2262
2	Martin J	England	1945
3	Alkis P	Greece	1797
4	Klaus Lo	Norway	1638
5	Gianluca T	Italy	1540
6	Bill V	Greece	1531
7	Panayotis P	Greece	1529
8	Mark P	Netherlands	1512
9	Robert S	England	1496
10	Spyros P	Greece	1482
11	Steve C	England	1470
12	Trevor D	England	1467
13	Nikos A	Greece	1443
14	Martin B	England	1402
15	George K	Greece	1364
16	Simon B	England	1221
17	James B	England	1217
18	Nazim C	England	1201
19	Kees V	Netherlands	1190
20	James L	England	1154

Latest News

During the last couple of months, the following KOA tournaments have been played:

- **Athens XXI**

Date: 13/9/2003

Players: 6

Winner: Nikos A

Best offense: Nikos A

Best defense: Nikos A

- **Kristiansand II**

Date: 20/9/2003

Players: 8

Winner: Klaus Lo

Best offense: Klaus Lo

Best defense: Klaus Lo

- **London XI**

Date: 25/9/2003

Players: 4

Winner: Robert S

Best offense: Robert S

Best defense: Robert S, James L

- **Athens XXII**

Date: 2/10/2003

Players: 4

Winner: Nikos A

Best offense: Nikos A

Best defense: Nikos A

● **Grimstad II**

Date: 3/10/2003

Players: 5

Winner: Klaus Lo

Best offense: Klaus Lo

Best defense: Klaus Lo

● **Grimstad III**

Date: 10/10/2003

Players: 5

Winner: Klaus Lo

Best offense: Klaus Lo

Best defense: Klaus Lo, Glenn L

● **Newent I**

Date: 30/10/2003

Players: 7

Winner: Martin J

Best offense: Trevor D

Best defense: Martin J

16-bit Jewel



Review by Nikos Andreou

Thalion has always been one of my favorite game companies of the 16bit era. One thing that I always found strange with Thalion, is that it has always been underrated. They released marvelous games like Wings of Death, Lethal Xcess, Enchanted Lands, No Second Prize, Chambers of Shaolin and many other gems. The game that made people realize how great Thalion was is without a doubt Lionheart.



Yes, this is an OCS game!



Ginger-ish end of level boss

Lionheart is a left-to-right platformer/slash-em-up. The game starts with an excellent intro that provides the necessary background to the game. The menu system is simple and you can select the difficulty level,

the number of buttons to be used in the game (excellent if you have a Megadrive joypad) and there is also a sound test option.

When you start the game, it takes a few seconds to realize that Lionheart is one of the best looking games on the Amiga. All graphics are made in 32 colors with rasters and other tricks increasing this number to nearly 600 colors on screen at once. The graphics are stunning even for modern standards and I still believe they are second to none on OCS Amigas. If you think Shadow of the Beast was top, you get Lionheart with three times the number of parallax scrolling layers, real-time scaling/rotating like the SNES mode7 (!) and an increased number of sprites on-screen.



Excellent colors.



No, it's not Gods. This one is better!

Sound is also very good. It's not up to the same standards as the graphics but it is very good overall. There is a different musical score for each level. Considering that the game is huge, you never get bored with it. One thing that I loved in Lionheart, is that the music follows the action. In levels where the adrenaline is up, the music is mad and helps you to live in the game. Even today, I find it difficult to understand how Thalion programmers managed to squeeze all this music into 4 floppy disks together with all the code and the graphics. Amazing!

Good graphics and sound do not always make a good game. Shadow of the Beast has been a bright example of how a good looking game can be spoiled by bad gameplay. Thalion didn't do the same mistake and they spent a lot of time to ensure that the gameplay is kept to high standards. I still believe that the strongest point of Lionheart is not the graphics but the gameplay. The difficulty curve is excellent and it helps the process in the game. In addition, there are levels where you have to ride dragons, flying monsters, attack flying ships etc. There is great variety in the gameplay and you can't ask for more.



Acrobatic performance by Lionheart



Amazing graphics that move even better!

Overall, Lionheart is one of the best looking games on the Amiga. You may experience a few problems in the first two levels because the sprites are not properly colored, but after that the game is excellent. You may also experience a slight slowdown when more than 40-50 sprites are on screen (!), but A1200 users should feel happy enough since Lionheart takes full advantage of their hardware to handle the increased number of sprites. End of level bosses are just awesome and a bit huge. Sound is very good and gameplay is second only to Turrigan 2. Difficulty level is just right and I still try to finish the game in the difficult level after so many years. I strongly believe that people should give it a try. They can download Lionheart from the Official Thalion Webshrine

(<http://cus.org.uk/~alexh/games/lionheart/lionheart.zip>) and play it either on a real Amiga or an emulator.

<i>Graphics</i>	92%
Sound	89%
Playability	94%
Durability	93%
OVERALL:	93%