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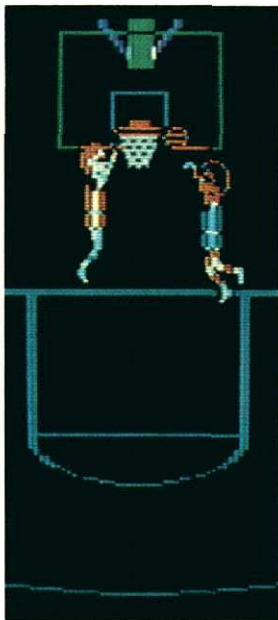
Entertainment Software: A New Way To Play

Game Of The Month: Montezuma's Revenge



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ELECTRONIC GAMING AND THE HANDICAPPED

Game Controllers for the Handicapped: More Than Just Toys

By DIANE YANKELEVITZ

Last year, Electronic Games reported on severely handicapped people using custom-made adaptive controllers to play videogames. Many people have written to request more information about the source of these controllers and about the people who were featured in the story. The article featured several handicapped people. Here's an update on their progress.

John Carasik, a 15 year old, convinced his mother after a few months of using a head switch to let him try using his right foot. She originally opposed this because of her belief that it would increase his spastic movements. He showed her that although his leg movements looked spastic, he actually did have control. She watched him score consistently higher on the games (over 32,000 on Atari 2600 **Centipede**) until she realized that he did have control of his right leg and that control was increasing as John played. As a result of her observations and those of John's medical supplier, John was deemed capable of operating a power wheelchair with his foot. He's only had it a few months now, but it's something John's mother thought would never be possible for him due to his severe spastic movements.

John's controller is a heavy-duty plastic box with five arcade button switches clamped to the foot of his wheelchair. This gives him eight directions and an action button. A separate reset switch is placed on the seat between his legs, and he also has a switch to operate his multi-game board. For the first time in his life, he can play by himself at something he really enjoys.

Kirk Kilgour was on the USA Olympic volleyball team and played professionally in Italy, where volleyball is a national sport, until his accident. Now in his 30's, Kirk is a quadriplegic able to move only his head

and shoulders. In spite of his disability, he coaches volleyball at Pepperdine University in southern California. Since he's a very competitive person and can't compete in sports anymore, he loves to challenge his friends to videogames, which is something he can do very well. He uses a mouth-operated joystick that he helped design. It's a lollipop-shaped disk he can grab onto with his teeth. The joystick is mounted on a stand which clamps to a table on his wheelchair tray.

Kirk's interest in computers started with an Atari 400. He wrote his 1984 coach's manual with the Letter Perfect word processing program. He recently started a new part-time job selling Apple computers to the handicapped. He's using a voice-activated program and exploring environmental control, as well as expanding his knowledge of computers and his own job opportunities.

Tommy Garcia, another 15 year old,





Former Olympian Kirk Kilgour (left) watches his points add up. Above, Margaret Carasik and her son, John, adjust the switch that operates his multi-game board. Right, Tommy Garcia and his brother, David, play videogames together.



is a C-2 quadraplegic, able to move only his head. He plays videogames with a mouth-operated joystick like Kirk's. But Tommy is on a respirator to help him breathe. He also has a diaphragmatic pacemaker. His biggest fear is that his life-support machine will malfunction. He has no control of his chest muscles to breathe on his own; they're paralyzed. He has learned to breathe by himself with his neck muscles and his mother swears that it's due to his home arcaiding Tommy has a puff switch to "fire" at space aliens on his mouth-operated joystick. When he's on a respirator, he breathes when the respirator does, not necessarily when he needs to fire a quick shot at a space invader closing in on him. When Tommy became paralyzed, he could barely move his head. He moves it so much while playing videogames that his neck muscles have strengthened. His therapist concedes that the games have certainly motivated Tommy, and motivation is the key to learning to neck breathe.

And, if that's not enough to bring tears of joy to your eyes, folks, here's a quote from Rebecca Lloyd, whose 15-year-old son, Adam, became a quadraplegic last May.

"When he came home from the hospital, we hooked up the [mouth-operated] joystick to his videogame and he was thrilled. His friends and sister marvel at how he always out-scores them, but the most important thing is what he told us: 'This makes me feel normal again.' "

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