

## *Conan the Barbarian* Instructions/Tips

By Paul Thacker (with additional material by Adam Trionfo)

July 9, 2017

These instructions and tips are for the unreleased Bally Arcade/Astrocade game *Conan the Barbarian*. Paul Thacker originally posted this information to the Astrocade High Score Club, here:

<http://atariage.com/forums/topic/267047-hsc02-round-7-conan-the-barbarian-the-crown-of-zeus/>

### Introduction:

*Conan the Barbarian* is an unfinished game developed by Astrocade, Inc. in 1982. Astrocade claimed that it would be the first video game based on a movie license. As it stands, you play as Conan, using your sword to clear rooms of enemies. Try to advance to the highest level you can, but once you die, you have to start from the beginning.

### Controls:

Move Conan with the joystick. Swing your sword by turning the knob back and forth. Pull the trigger to flip the direction Conan faces, and thus the direction of your attack. You can play the game on MAME, but will probably need to use a different control setup than usual. I used an XBox 360 controller with the joystick mapped to the left analog stick, the knob mapped to the right analog stick (so you could swing your sword by pushing the stick up and down), and the trigger mapped to the right bumper.

### Gameplay:

Your character has three stats--stamina (health), strength, and defense. As it is, your strength and defense never goes up, but at the end of each level, your maximum health will increase, and you'll recover your health. Each level is a single, rectangular room. The size and shape varies, but there are never any obstacles inside the room. After the level starts, one to four monsters will spawn. There are a variety of monsters with varying shapes and speeds. If you clear the room of monsters before you run out of health, you'll advance to the next level.

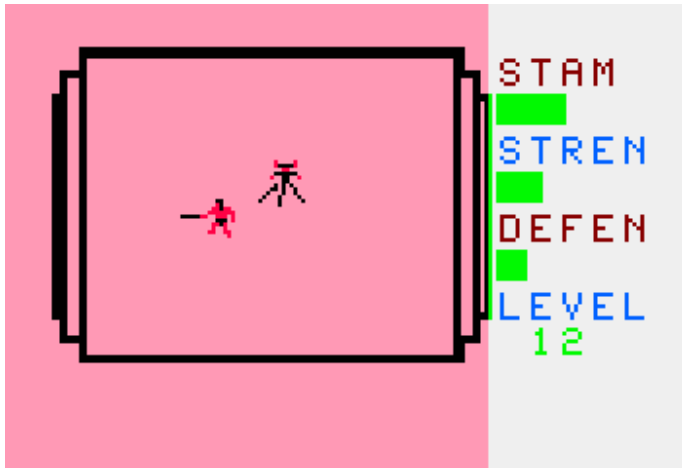
### Tips:

The battles are more RPG-like than might be immediately apparent. You don't take damage simply from touching an enemy. They have to actually attack you. But monsters might charge at you from the other side of the room. As such, I found it most effective to concentrate on offense rather than defense. Fight like a barbarian. Rather than trying to avoid monsters, charge into battle swinging your sword as quickly as possible. If you see multiple enemies grouped up, you might be able to hit them all at once. Remember to turn to face the enemies so you don't have to move to the other side of them. The faster you can clear out some monsters, the less attacks you have to worry about, so start attacking whatever monster spawns closest to you. Once you start attacking a monster, you'll probably want to concentrate on it until it's dead. You have a little time at the start of a level before the monsters spawn, so you can use this time to move to the center of the room.

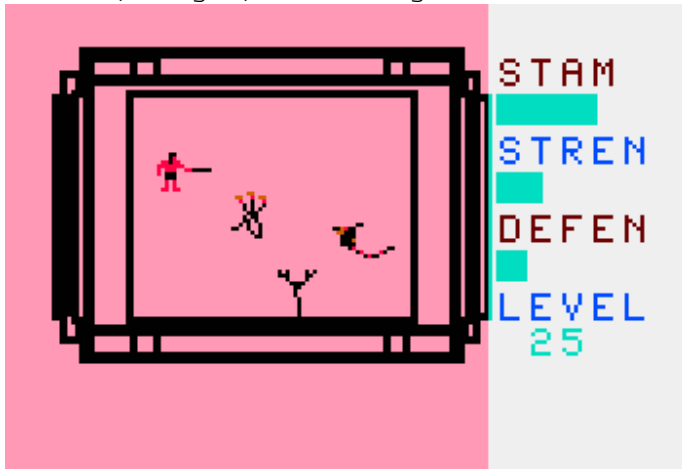
## Monsters

There is indeed a wide variety of monsters, and they can get pretty creative. They do tend to mix and match the same parts, which can make some creatures a bit abstract. The ones with just a straight line at the bottom tend to look kind of ridiculous. I keep seeing alien pogo sticks and such. Here's a good sampling of what I found, and some guesses at what they might be called:

Cthulhu Demon:



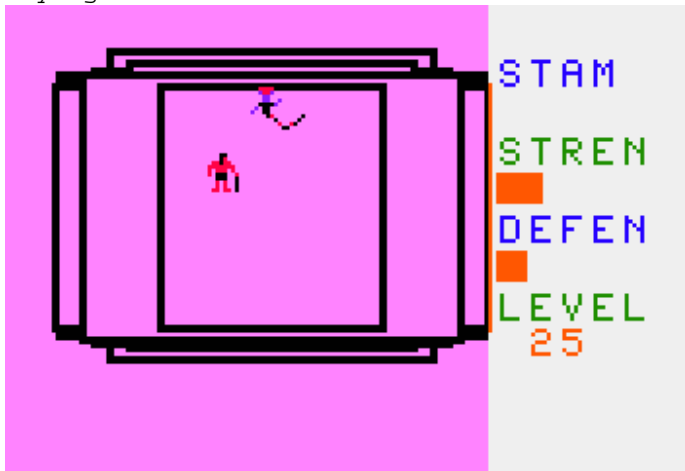
Cthulhu, Dragon, Antler Pogo Stick:



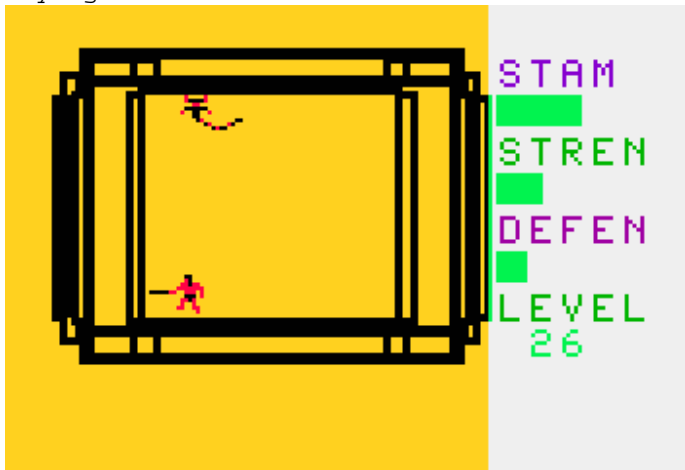
Cyborg:



Flying Alien:



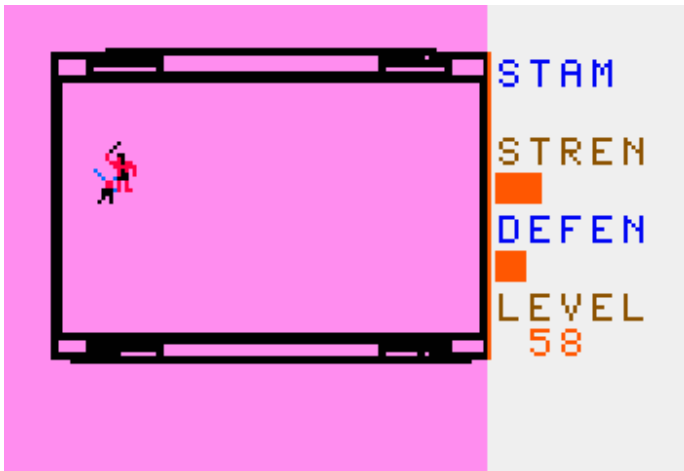
Flying Demon:



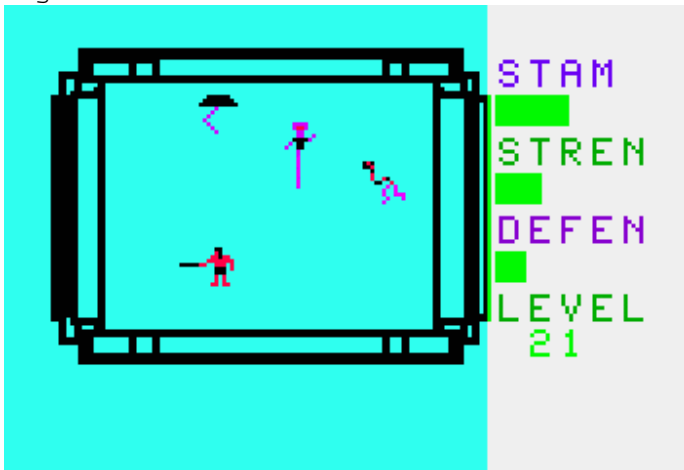
Flying Jellyfish:



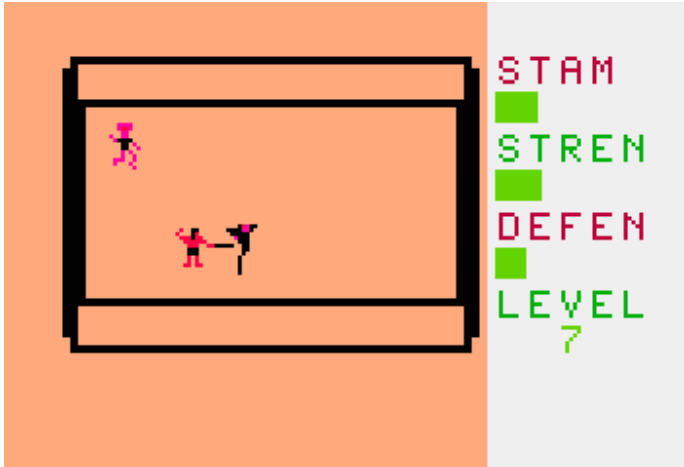
Moth:



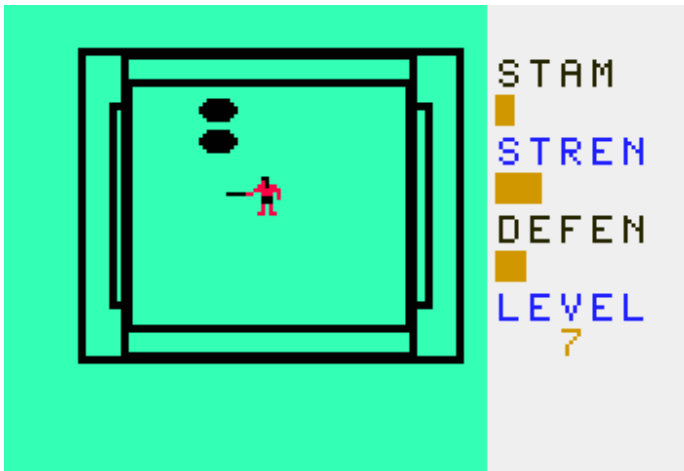
Pogo Alien:



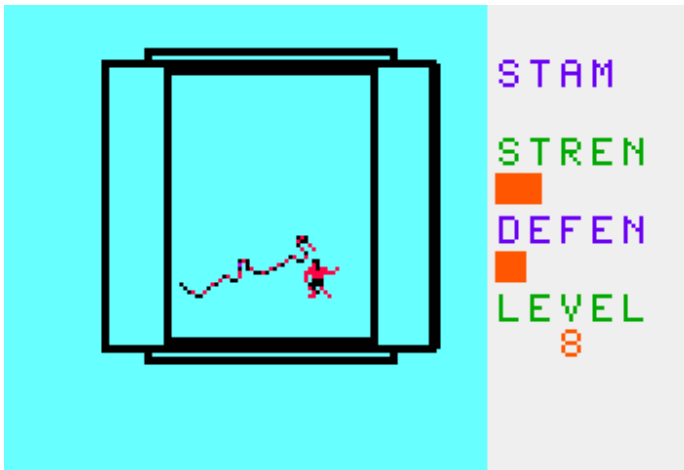
Seahorse, Alien:



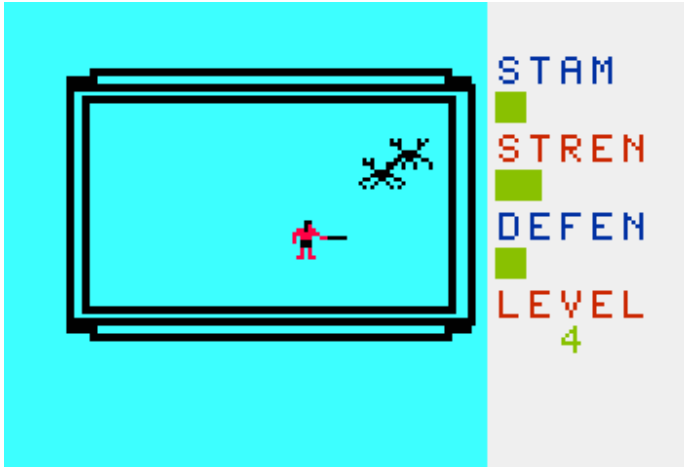
Slime:



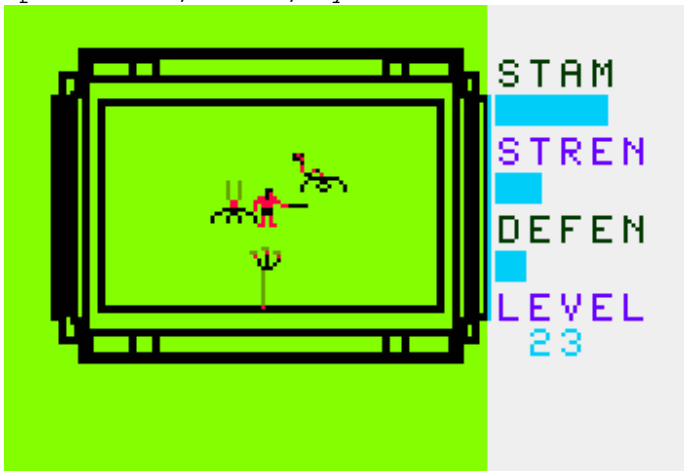
Snake:



Spiders (or maybe crabs?):



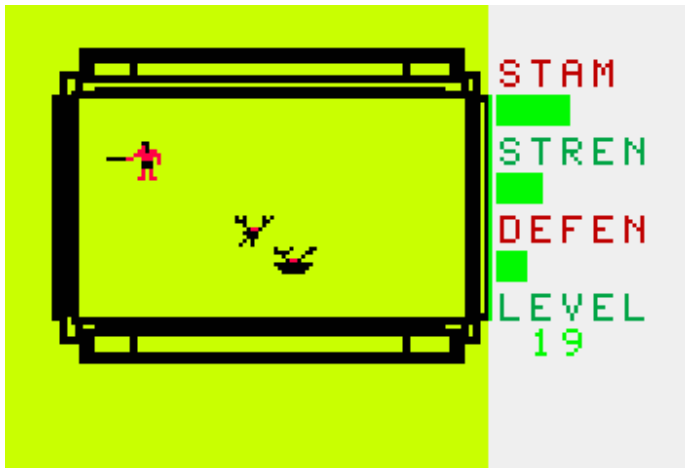
Spidersnake, Robot, Hydra:



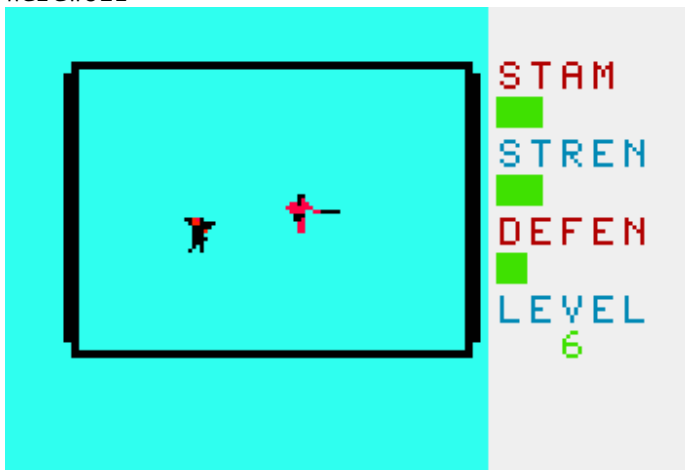
Squid, Mothman, Snakeman:



Stag, UFO:



Werewolf:



Additional Information about *Conan the Barbarian*:

*Conan the Barbarian* is a prototype 8K game that never had an official release on cartridge. There is quite a bit of information known about this cartridge, which was known by three different names during its development: *King Arthur's Adventure*, *Conan the Barbarian* and *Quest for the Orb*.

Since Conan had no official release, the only cartridge label that is available is in black and white.

This game has a very long and convoluted background. The Bally/Astrocade Game Cartridge and Hardware FAQ has some interesting information on this game under its various titles:

*King Arthur's Adventure*  
Astrovision Inc., #5005

Suffered the same fate as *Roman Checkers*. This time the number went to *Artillery Duel*. It was supposed to be a *Dungeons & Dragons* type game. (*Cursor* pg.73). It may be an early version of *Conan the Barbarian*, before the movie

license was attached. (Brett Bilbrey, Astrocade Discussion Group, Message #7175)

*Conan the Barbarian*  
Astrocade Inc., Strategy Series, #5005, 8K cart

AKA *Quest For The Orb*. This cartridge is not finished, but did see a limited release through Dave Carson Software in 1985 (about forty were made). (Michigan Astrobugs Newsletter JUL.82 pg.1, Arcadian vol.4 pg.33,75, vol.5 pg.16,36,46,66, vol.6 pg. 99, vol.7 pg.2,13,46,67,94). Hyped up to be one of the greatest games Astrocade players would ever see, and the first video game to spin off from a movie (Astrocade press release). They failed to secure the rights, however, and the game continued development as *Quest for the Orb*.

*Quest for the Orb*  
Astrocade Inc., #5004

AKA *Conan the Barbarian*. When Astrocade failed to secure the Conan license, the game continued development as *Quest for the Orb*.

According to a news item in Astro Bits that was published on page 11 of the August 1982 *Electronic Games* magazine, *Quest for the Orb*, like *Conan*, would also have also been a licensed property:

"Two major licensing agreements soon bring star characters from other media into the world of videogaming. Astrocade has concluded agreements for games based on Conan and G.I. Joe. The two titles, both reworkings of programs already in development, should be available quite soon. (Conan is based on the *Quest for the Orb* game which the game-maker had previewed at 1982 industry shows)."

I looked into this, and came across a few links about *Orb Quest*, a pen and paper role playing game based on *The Fantasy Trip* game system.