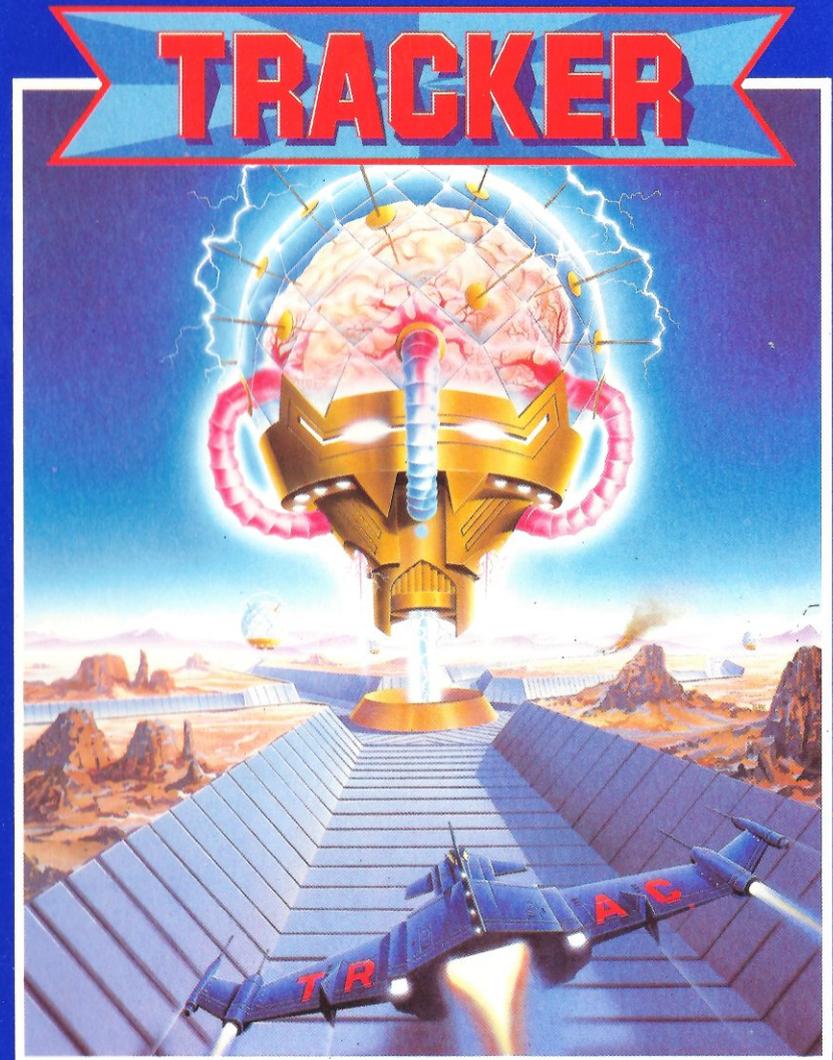




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G527



Contestant's Playguide

TRACKER

CONTESTANT'S PLAYGUIDE

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If you have no success in getting the program to run correctly, return it to Rainbird (or Firebird in the United States) **without our packaging**, ensuring that the disc is safely packed. Please include a short letter telling us exactly what the problem is, and what equipment your computer system comprises of.

Software Returns Department
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PREFACE

It wasn't long after the first microcomputers started rolling off the production lines that programmers began writing strategy games for them.

Strategic simulations were split into two major categories: traditional board games (such as Chess, Checkers, Go, Tic-Tac-Toe), and war games which were simply computerised versions of those battle games involving model soldiers and artillery.

The players usually started by deciding how large the two armies were going to be, and what weaponry they had at their disposal. The soldiers and artillery were then positioned around a crude map, and the game began in earnest...

War games became slightly more sophisticated when the option allowed the computer to take the role of your adversary, but they have never been a truly great challenge to the skilled tactician.

Until Tracker!

When Tracker was in the design stage, all the archaic rules of war gaming were thrown away, and the following design brief was implemented:

- * A computer controlled enemy using the latest artificial intelligence strategy techniques.
- * An exciting real time three dimensional combat mode, with solid filled graphics representing the player and the enemy.
- * A facility to save the game and continue with the scenario at another time.
- * A massive playing area capable of supporting an awesome number of enemy units.

This guide will explain the objectives of the game, and how to achieve them. Since Tracker employs sophisticated artificial intelligence in order to determine the computer responses to your movements, you will find every game requires a different strategy.

INTRODUCTION

Greetings, Inner World being, and welcome to Tracker, the most successful television game show in the history of the Egron Broadcasting Autonomy. As a prospective contestant, it is vitally important that you read this Guide, prior to playing the Simulator.

Before starting, there are a few rules governing those who are eligible and those who are not.

CONTESTANT ELIGIBILITY

Any creature from the Egron Inner World Empire may enter Tracker, provided they have passed through quarantine, and provided they do not fall into the following categories:

1. Droids

Droids are banned from playing Tracker. They don't make enough mistakes, and since they have no family, we wouldn't be able to show scenes of mourning relatives, as is customary during the closing credits at the end of the show.

2. Time Lords

It's no fun for the viewers if players were to repeatedly jump back in time and have another try. Time Lords will be reported to the Time and Space Council if they attempt to participate.

3. Electrochemical Beings

Electrochemical life forms may enter Tracker, but please note that trying to get an extra 'buzz' by plugging yourselves into the control panel is strictly forbidden. Please ensure that you are fully earthed before firing the starter motor in the Skimmer.

4. Multi-Limbed Creatures

Contestants with more than six arms, legs or tentacles are not eligible for Tracker, as the cockpit in the Skimmer craft will not facilitate their presence. Attempts to hide extra limbs under excessive clothing will be heavily frowned upon by the Game Controller.

5. Immortals

Immortals are utterly forbidden to enter the contest. It's not exciting for the viewers if you have no fear of impending doom. Any immortals attempting to enter Tracker will be terminated (!)

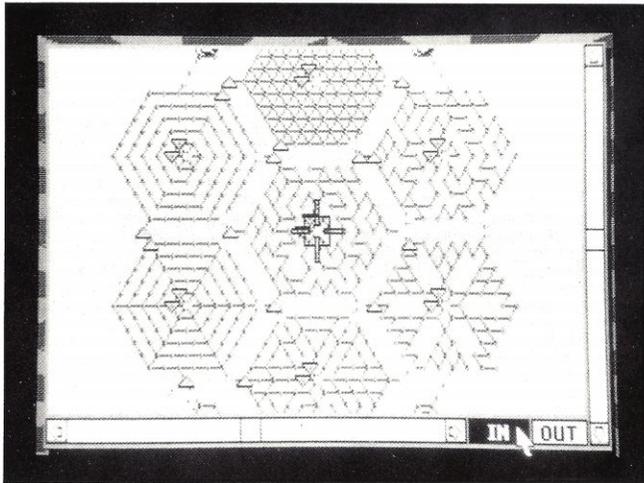
VIDEO INTERVIEWS

If your performance on the Simulator demonstrates that you have achieved the required standard, a place will be reserved for you in the next show. Twenty minutes before the start of the programme you will be interviewed by the host of the show, Zax Kenomis. We must warn prospective contestants that product endorsement is utterly forbidden during the interview. The Egron Broadcasting Autonomy is a commercial network, and we don't want advertisers trying to cheat us out of our meagre revenue. Also, if any Funeral Directors approach you asking if you would wear their T-shirts, you are advised to decline.

After the game, your interview will be replayed on a monitor embedded into your gravestone, until the end of the universe.

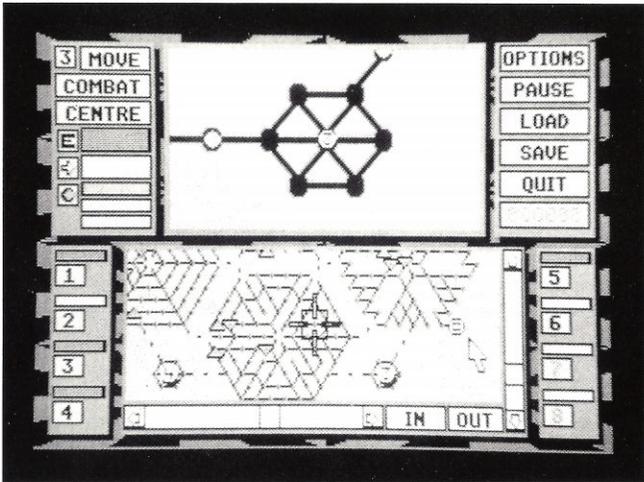
As is customary, your epitaph will be chosen by the judges of the weekly caption competition run in the weekly Egron TV Guide.

THE PLAYING AREA



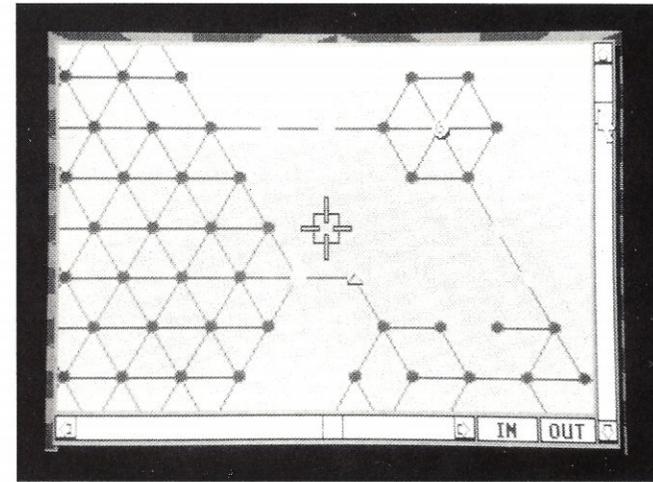
The game of Tracker takes place in a huge maze complex made up from thousands of trackways. Each of the trackway sections are connected by 'nodes'. Owing to the flow direction of the conductive electrical fields in the trackways, it is impossible for any craft to turn around - they may only change direction in the nodes.

SAFE AREAS



At the northwest, northeast, southwest and southeast corners of the map are four small sectors each consisting of seven nodes and twelve trackways. These are known as Safe Areas and on the first level the enemy Cycloids are unable to enter them under any circumstances. At the beginning of the contest, your Skimmer craft are located in these safe areas.

COMMUNICATION LINKS



At the junctions where adjacent sectors meet, there are special nodes known as Communication Links. These are switching units for the Centrepoint intelligence system. After destroying a Communication Link by hitting it with a Plasma ball, you will be given the means to attack a Communication Centre (see below).

The trackway complex is grouped into seven major sectors, as follows:

OUTER SECTORS

There are six outer sectors, each consisting of approximately one hundred nodes, each with a completely different design. Situated in the middle of every sector is its most important node - known as the Communication Centre. The six Communication Centres are smaller AI slave computers which serve the Centrepoint computer. These can only be destroyed by using a Quark bomb collected after destroying a Communication Link.

THE CENTREPOINT SECTOR

The sector in the middle of the map is known as the Centrepoint Sector. This is where the Centrepoint computer is located, and is the most strongly fortified area in the map.

The Centrepoint is a vast organic plasma-based computer which controls the Scout and Defender Cycloids via its network of Communication Centres.

To destroy Centrepoint, you will need to obtain a Neutron bomb (which can be collected after destroying one of the six Communication Centres). Explicit details concerning the methods used to destroy the Communication Centres and the Centrepoint can be found in the 'Combat Mode' section.

THE CYCLOIDS

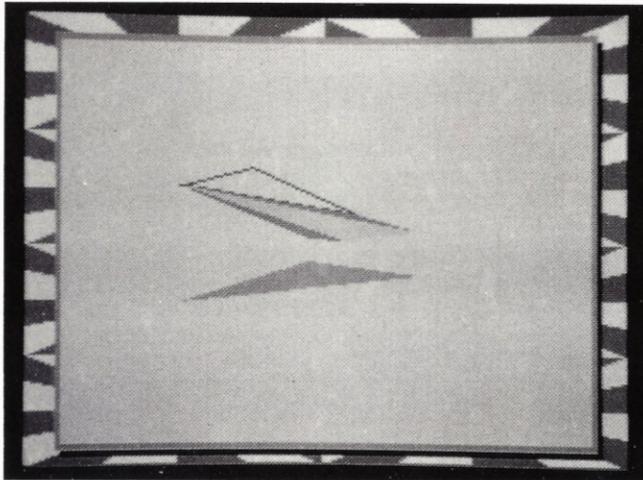
The Centrepoint's AI Defence Force consists of two kinds of craft - Defender and Scout. They are known collectively as Cycloids.

The Cycloids are controlled by the Communication Centres in each sector. The Communication Centres are, in turn, controlled by the Centrepoint itself. Because of this centralized control, Cycloids will tend to work together to head you off and trap you in a position from where they have a good chance of defeating you.

Each Cycloid has an energy shield, which is depleted each time it receives a direct hit from a Plasma ball fired by one of your Skimmers. The Cycloids' shields will slowly recharge as time passes. If the shields reach zero the Cycloid will explode. The Centrepoint will then begin to manufacture, or instruct a Communication Centre to manufacture a new Cycloid to replace the one that has been destroyed. After a period of time, the new craft will be strategically deployed at a Communication Centre or Link, and given its instructions. New Cycloid units cannot be deployed in a sector whose Communication Centre has been blown up, or at destroyed Communication Links.

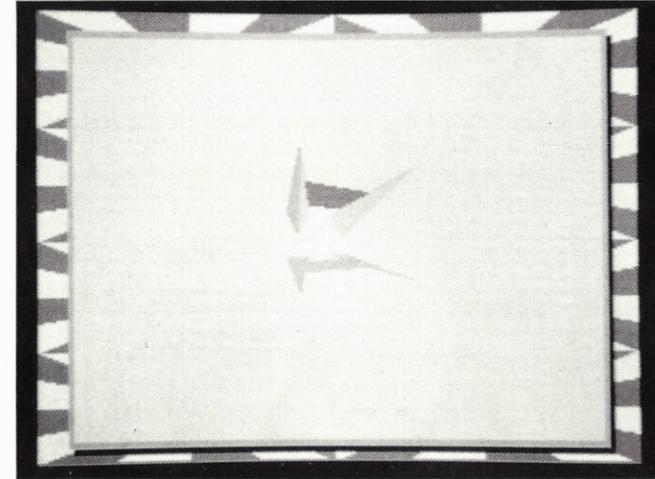
Cycloids are also unable to travel through destroyed Communication Links, unless they were set on a course to travel through that Link before it was destroyed.

DEFENDERS



The Defender craft are single plasma-drive based vehicles whose main purpose is to patrol the central areas of each sector, defending the Communication Centre. In the event of a Communication Centre being destroyed, any Defenders in the sector will immediately flee to the central sector in an attempt to defend the Centrepoint computer itself.

SCOUTS



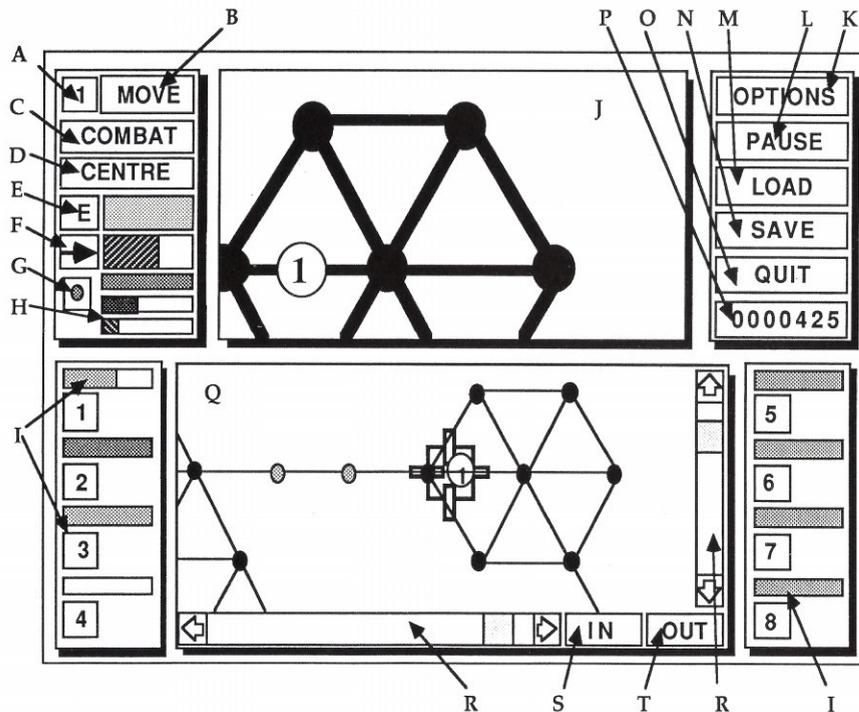
The Scouts are twin-hulled Catamaran craft. Each hull houses a powerful Plasma drive unit. Scouts are free to travel anywhere in the Tracker system, except through Safe Areas, and destroyed Communication Links. In the event of a Communication Centre being destroyed, the Scouts in the sector will attempt to kill you by any means open to them. If you then leave that sector, the Scouts will return to the central sector to assist in the defence of the Centrepoint.

It is worth noting that because Scouts have twin Plasma drives, they require more Plasma energy to power the drives, leaving less Plasma available for their weaponry and shields. Hence, they have a lower shield tolerance and are less resilient to your firepower than Defenders.

THE SCREEN DISPLAY

Tracker features a unique screen layout to display the various maps of the trackway complex, and the three-dimensional views transmitted by the Skimmers' TV cameras.

The following diagram depicts all the important areas of the screen display, and the table provided below briefly explains each of the screen elements. Throughout the rest of this guide, as each new element is introduced, the corresponding letter given below will be shown in italics.



- | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| A | Currently selected Skimmer unit | B | MOVE. Moves current Skimmer |
| C | COMBAT. Enters Combat mode | D | CENTRE Long Range Scanner on unit |
| E | Current Skimmer's Energy Shield | F | Current Skimmer's speed |
| G | Currently Selected Ball indicator | H | Ammunition level indicators |
| I | Individual Energy Shields | J | Short Range Scanner |
| K | OPTIONS. Defines game settings | L | PAUSE/Unpause game |
| M | LOAD previously saved game | N | SAVE current game position |
| O | QUIT game | P | Score. Click this, or press H for Hiscores |
| Q | Long Range Scanner | R | Horizontal & Vertical Scroll Bars |
| S | Zoom IN on Long Range Scanner | T | Zoom OUT on Long Range Scanner |

Skimmers are displayed as small discs containing their assigned unit number. If two units are stationary in the same node, a small dot will be visible outside the top unit representing each Skimmer hidden underneath.

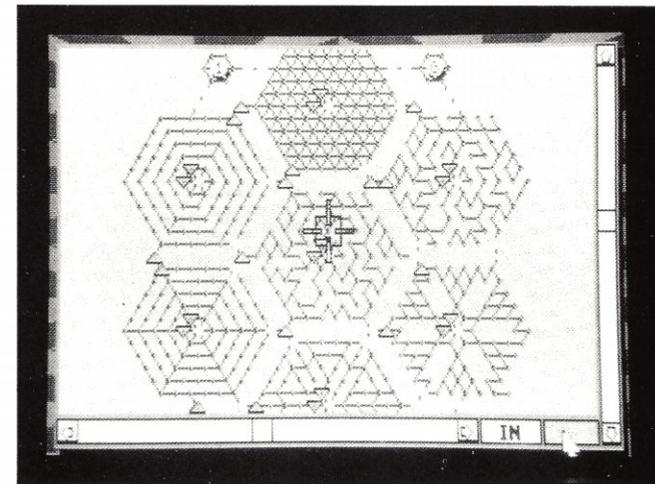
The Cycloids are displayed on the map as follows:



LONG RANGE SCANNER (Q)

One of the most important features when playing Tracker is the ability to manipulate the map of the trackways in a number of different ways, in order to keep a watchful eye on the activities of your Skimmers as well as the Cycloids. The bottom half of the screen contains the Long Range Scanner - a large, moveable map. Skimmer units, Cycloids, and Communication Links and Centres are all displayed in a similar way to those on the Short Range Scanner.

There are two forms of map manipulation available: **SCROLL** and **ZOOM**. To scroll, move the map in any of the four directions. This is achieved by using either the mouse, or the keyboard.



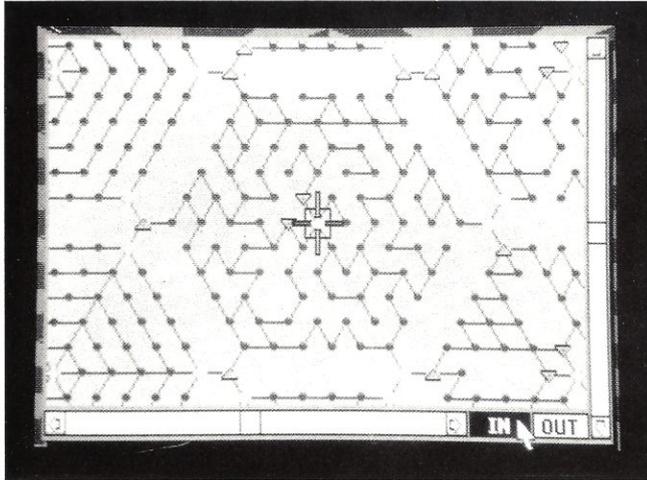
MAP SCROLL

To scroll the map, repeatedly click the arrow boxes at either end of each scroll bar (R) until the map is in the right place, or drag the scroll boxes to their destination immediately. Users with a numeric keypad can take advantage of this facility to scroll the map as follows:

- | | |
|---|--------------|
| 8 | SCROLL UP |
| 2 | SCROLL DOWN |
| 4 | SCROLL LEFT |
| 6 | SCROLL RIGHT |

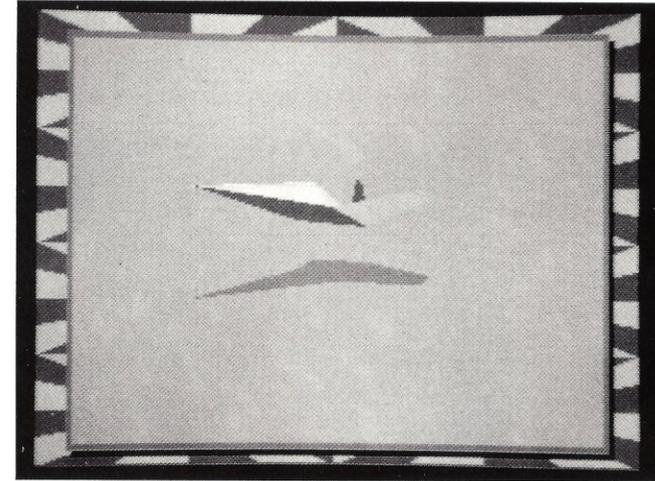
While piloting your Skimmer around the trackways, the Short Range Scanner always remains centred on the current unit. The Long Range Scanner does not automatically follow the current unit - instead, it remains fixed until it is manually scrolled by the contestant. This is so that the player can concentrate on an area of the map and have it in view at all times. To centre the Long Range Scanner on the current unit, either click on the **CENTRE** box ((D)) or press 5 on the numeric keypad.

MAP ZOOM



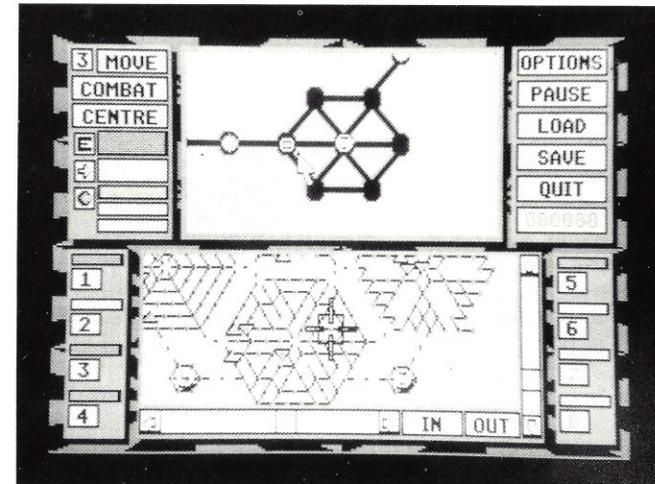
Zoom in on any section of the map for a closer look by clicking on the **IN** box (S) at the bottom of the screen, and zoom out again by clicking on the **OUT** box (T). You may also use the + and - keys on the numeric keypad instead.

SKIMMER CONTROL



All players of Tracker are given control of six Skimmers, armed with Plasma balls. Each unit is represented on the maps by a small disc containing the unit number. At the beginning of the contest, all six Skimmers are situated in the Safe Areas. Two craft in each of the northern areas, and one each in the southern areas. You automatically take control of Skimmer One.

AUTOPILOT CONTROL



There are two methods available for moving units around the map. If you are not using the pointer to control your actions, you may select a course for the Skimmer by moving the map about until the node you wish to move to is directly under the large cross-hair cursor, and then click on the **MOVE** box (B) or press M to send the Skimmer on its journey.

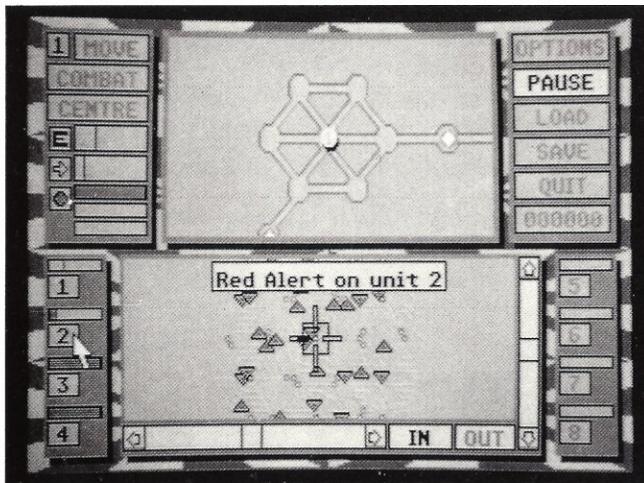
The second method is to click on the unit with the pointer, drag the small disc to the place where you want the Skimmer to travel to, and release the mouse button. You can change the course of the unit at any time by clicking on the Skimmer and then moving the disc to a new destination. The Skimmer will change course as soon as it reaches the next node.

Note that you can use either the Short or Long Range Scanner to move Skimmers around the map complex.

To select another unit, either press the number of the unit you wish to take control of (using the numbers along the top of the keyboard, NOT the numeric keypad), or click on one of the unit boxes which are situated along the left and right sides in the bottom half of the screen display (1). By using this system, you can have all your Skimmers travelling on a preset course simultaneously.

While travelling on autopilot, your Skimmers may cross the path of a Cycloid. If this happens, the Cycloid will attempt to kill your unit. It is inadvisable to leave a large number of units on autopilot without keeping an eye on them from time to time.

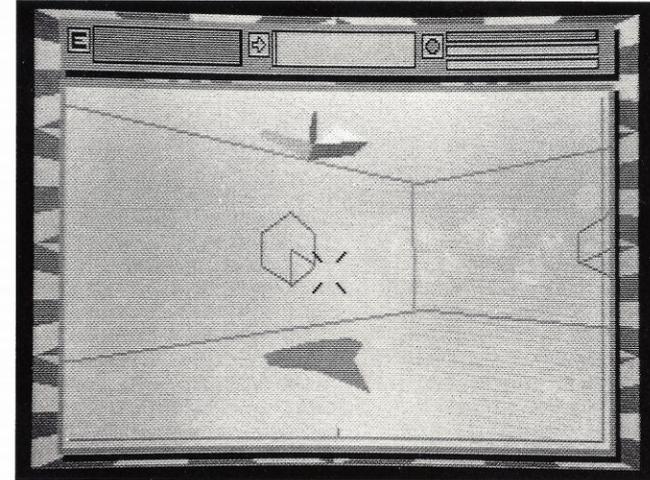
ALERT STATES



If a Skimmer is situated in a vulnerable situation (e.g. a Cycloid is getting very close) you will be given a 'Yellow Alert' warning displayed on the Long Range Scanner. If things get really dangerous, you will be given a 'Red Alert' message.

COMBAT MODE

By clicking the mouse button while the cursor is positioned over the **COMBAT** box (C), or by pressing C, the Long Range Scanner will be replaced by a three-dimensional view from the cockpit of the currently selected Skimmer. You will either be situated in a node, or travelling along the trackway.



There are a number of advantages when using Combat mode to pilot a Skimmer. The main three are:

- a) You can fly faster than the enemy when in Combat mode
- b) You can kill Cycloids
- c) You can destroy Communication Links and Centres

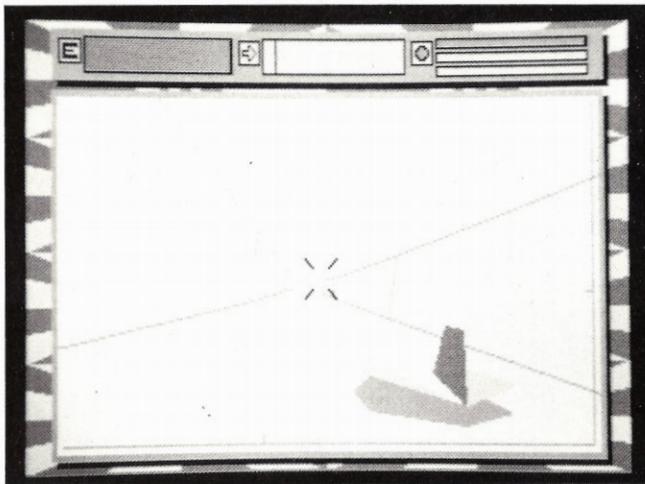
It is in Combat mode that all your gladiatorial battles against the Cycloids take place.

Control of the Skimmer is either via the mouse, or the keyboard. Refer to the machine-specific key card for instructions concerning Skimmer flight operation.

EXITING THE NODE

Assuming you are currently in a node, the first thing you will want to do is know how to get out of the node and fly along one of the trackways in a specific direction. If you spin your Skimmer either left or right, you will notice one or more hexagonal patterns on the wall sections of the node. Within the hexagon, a segment points in the direction corresponding to a visible exit on the Short Range Scanner. Simply align your Skimmer to the hexagon pattern displaying the correct exit you wish to take, and accelerate towards it. You will exit the node and begin to fly along the trackway.

FLYING THE SKIMMER



It is advisable to fly slowly at first, until you are familiar with the Skimmer controls. Avoid hitting the walls, as this will deplete your shields heavily. It is, however, safe to fly close to the ground, or at maximum height.

When you reach a bend in the trackway, it is important to reduce speed, otherwise you will find negotiating the bend extremely difficult. The manoeuvrability of your Skimmer craft is inversely proportional to your speed - in other words, you will find it much easier to manoeuvre your craft when travelling at a slower speed.

FIRING PLASMA BALLS

When flying in Combat Mode, periodically check the Short Range Scanner for the approaching enemy. If you encounter a Cycloid in the trackway or a node, you can attack it by firing Plasma balls. If you register a hit on a Cycloid, its shield will be depleted. About two or three direct hits are usually required to destroy a Cycloid with full shields. Plasma balls will destroy any ammunition fired by the Cycloids. If you are in really dire straits, you can make use of either Quark or Neutron bombs since either of these will destroy a Cycloid with a single hit.

Try not to fire too many Plasma balls at one time, or you will exhaust your supply. If this happens, you will have to wait until the Skimmer's Plasma Drive recharges its quota of Plasma Energy.

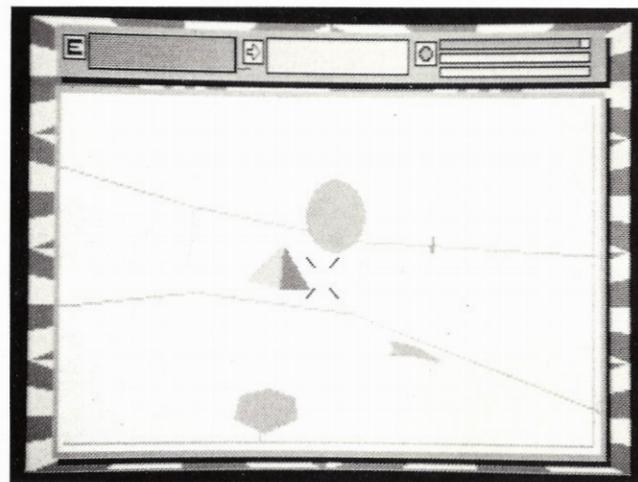
If you are flying along the trackway slowly, be careful not to fire and then accelerate, as you will catch up with the Plasma balls and crash into them! You will also lose a large proportion of your energy shield if you crash into another Skimmer, or a Cycloid.

When you reach a node entrance, reduce your speed so that you do not travel straight across the node and into one of the node's facing walls.

In the event of your Skimmer's shield being depleted to an extent where its Plasma Drive cannot protect the craft any further, it will explode. All Plasma, Quark and Neutron bombs carried by the Skimmer will be lost, and you will automatically be given control of the next Skimmer.

If there are no Skimmers left, the contest will end, and any reasonably successful player will be given a chance to enter their name to be stored for posterity. Insert your 'Saved Games' disc once you have entered your name, and then select the 'Save' option. The High Scores will be saved onto the disc, and whenever you load a previously saved game, they will be reloaded.

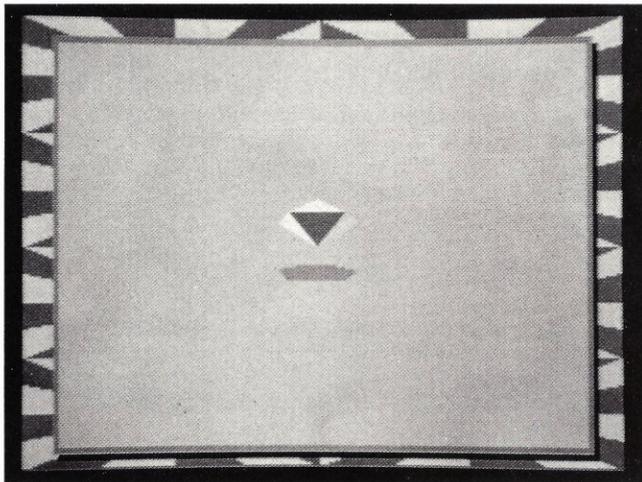
DESTROYING COMMUNICATION LINKS



When you enter a Communication Link, you will notice the Link Computer spinning in the centre of the node. To destroy the link, shoot it with a Plasma ball. Once the Link has exploded, a Quark bomb will materialise. To collect the Quark bomb, fly slowly towards it. The computer will inform you when the bomb has been successfully loaded onto your Skimmer, and the Ammunition Level Indicator (*H*) will show that a bomb is present.

Avoid colliding with Communication Links or Centres, as contact with them causes the immediate destruction of your Skimmer, since they are highly charged with static Plasma Energy.

DESTROYING A COMMUNICATION CENTRE



Once you have collected a Quark bomb, you have the means to make an assault on a Communication Centre. It is suggested that you collect at least two or three Quark bombs before attempting an offensive against a Centre, as they are far more heavily defended than Communication Links.

As your Skimmer approaches the Communication Centre your score will start to increase. You will score 50 points as you reach a node that is twelve nodes from the Centre, 100 points when you get to within eleven nodes, 150, 250, 400 and so on. This accumulative scoring process will continue until you reach the Centre or until your Skimmer is destroyed, in which case your score will only start to increase again when a Skimmer carrying a Quark bomb reaches the same distance from the Centre as the previous one managed to achieve.

To destroy a Communication Centre, you must successfully hit it with a Quark bomb. Select the Quark bomb by pressing the key which is defined as 'Select Ball Type' on your machine-specific instruction card. The Current Ball Indicator will change, and you will be able to fire the Quark bomb. If you miss the Centre, the Current Ball Indicator will revert back to Plasma balls, so you will have to reselect Quark Bombs.

If you destroy the Centre, you will be able to collect a Neutron bomb, by following the same procedure as when collecting a Quark bomb.

Once you have obtained a Neutron bomb, you will have the means to destroy the Centrepoint itself. . .

DESTROYING THE CENTREPOINT

As far as the Centrepoint is concerned, Skimmers are a small nuisance. Nothing that a few Scouts can't deal with, but a nuisance nevertheless. If a Skimmer destroys a couple of Communication Links, the Communication Centre computers take note. Defenders are put on alert, just to be on the safe side - not that they usually have to worry too much about it. Occasionally, a particularly adept contestant manages to destroy a Communication Centre and pick up a Neutron bomb. A Skimmer armed with a Neutron bomb is a very serious threat to the Centrepoint computer. It will redirect Defenders from the destroyed Communication Centre, and deploy them around its local trackways.

Any contestant who dares to venture towards the Centrepoint has an awesome task on their hands. However, it is not impossible to destroy Centrepoint, and it is a relatively straightforward procedure, once you have the required Neutron bomb. As you approach the Centrepoint node, your score will begin to increase in a similar way to the scoring process for a Skimmer carrying a Quark bomb to a Communication Centre, except the scoring will start at 150.

Select Neutron bombs (press the 'Select Ball Type' key twice if you have Plasma balls currently selected), aim for the Centrepoint, and fire. Simple.

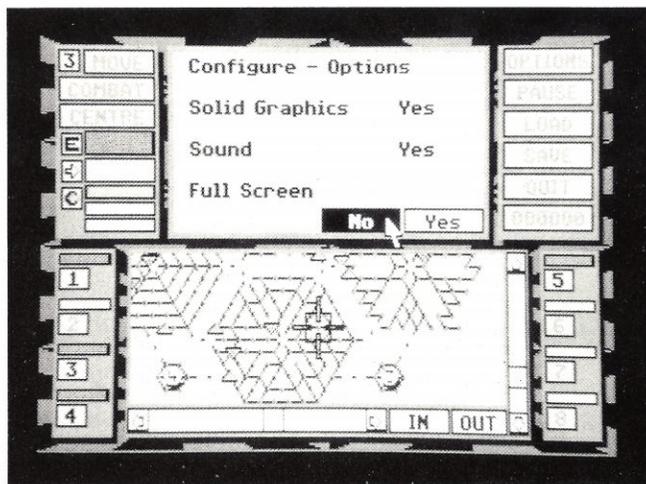
On the offchance that you actually manage to destroy the Centrepoint computer, the Simulator will present you with two extra Skimmer units (up to the maximum of eight units), a bonus score, and enter you in a higher level of competition. You will be allowed to keep any spare Neutron bombs that you managed to collect on the previous level.

To make life more interesting, on higher levels the Simulator will present a far greater challenge, with more intelligent Cycloids, and some interesting variations on the 'Destroying Links and Centres' theme.

GAME CONTROL OPTIONS

OPTIONS (K)

By selecting the OPTIONS box (or by pressing O) you will be able to configure various user options:



SOLID GRAPHICS

This option determines whether solid or line drawn graphics are used to display the various three-dimensional shapes in Combat Mode. This option is mainly of use to contestants who have machines with a slow processor.

SOUND

This option selects sound effects.

FULL SCREEN

This option determines the size of the screen in Combat Mode. Usually the Combat screen is displayed in the area reserved for the Long Range Scanner, but if Full Screen is selected, the whole screen is used. You may also toggle this option by pressing F while in Strategic Mode.

CONFIGURE KEY CODES

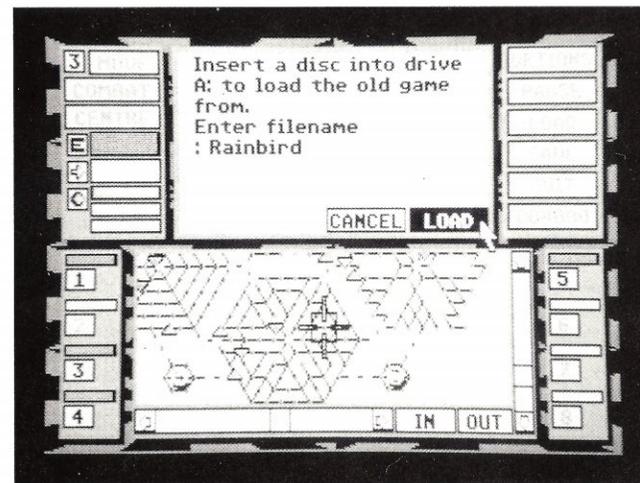
The keys used to control the game in Combat Mode (usually most are not required if you are using a mouse or joystick) can be reconfigured.

When the Tracker game position is saved to disc, the user options are saved along with the game.

PAUSE (L)

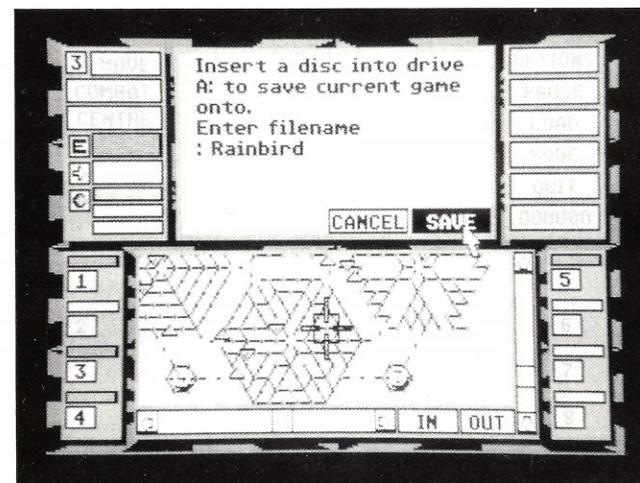
When the PAUSE box is selected, or the P key is pressed, the game will be frozen until Pause is selected again. While the game is paused, you will be able to use the map scroll and zoom functions.

LOAD (M)



This option allows the contestant to reload a previously saved game from disc. Insert the Saved Games disc in the default drive and enter a filename. You are given the chance to cancel, or to proceed. When you load a saved game the program will also search the disc for a High Score file, and if it is found, it will be loaded.

SAVE (N)



This option allows you to save the current game position to disc, along with all options such as reconfigured keys, sound on/off, full screen on/off. You must save the game to a preformatted disc in the default drive. Ensure that there is plenty of free space on the disc, and do not write-protect it. After entering the filename you are given the chance to cancel. When the game has been saved, replace the Tracker game disc in the drive before continuing with the game.

QUIT (O)

To abort your mission, select the **QUIT** box, or press **Q**. You will be given the chance to cancel this option, in case it is wrongly selected.

CURRENT SCORE (P)

Your current score is constantly displayed in the **Score** box. If you click on this box, or press **H**, the **High Score** table will be displayed.