ATARI® 7800™ Game Manual

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DON'T OVERREACT!

Don't panic! A gang of international terrorists has systematically set about destroying the world. They have sabotaged a number of nuclear reactors by unleashing a deadly string of "sparkx" that will break down the protective control rods and make their way into the very core of each reactor. If the sparkx reach the core, the end result will be a dreaded MeltDown. If the terrorists are successful in their hideous plot, we can kiss this world goodbye!

Only you stand between life as we know it and total annihilation. You are armed with a specially engineered sparkx-destroying gun, a blueprint of each reactor, your wits, and your desire to save the world. Get moving. There's no time to lose!

GETTING STARTED

1. With your 7800 game system switched off, insert the MeltDown cartridge into the cartridge slot as described in your owner's manual.

2. Connect a light gun to the left controller port. Press the **POWER** button on your console.

3. Switch on your TV.

4. The MeltDown title screen displays. Press **SELECT** to choose number of players (one or two players) and the difficulty level (Novice or Expert). The Expert level contains faster and more numerous Sparkx. Pull the light gun trigger to select the displayed options.

5. The Passkey screen displays. Begin play on level one by shooting the word START. Begin play on a specific level by entering that level's four character passkey code. To enter a passkey code, shoot the arrows above and below each character slot to display a

higher or lower number. Shoot the word START to begin on that level.

Note: The passkey screen displays a level's four character passkey code the first time you advance to that level. To begin play, shoot the word Start.

Optional Game Controls

The following optional game controls allow you to pause and restart the game:

- To pause the game press **PAUSE**. Repeat to resume play
- To return to the title screen and restart the game (during gameplay), press **RESET**

PLAYING THE GAME

MeltDown is a fast-action arcade game. The object of the game is to keep deadly sparkx from eating away at the cores of twenty different nuclear reactors. If you can't blast the sparkx before they chew up the reactor cores, the result is a MeltDown!

The area surrounding each reactor's core is filled with radioactive matter. Two protons rapidly circle the core. When the two protons intersect, sparkx are released into the reactor. As many as 14 sparkx can be on screen at the same time. You must shoot the sparkx quickly before they can damage the reactor core.

Inside the core of each reactor are eight or nine blue control rods arranged in various geometric patterns. Each time a sparkx hits a control rod, the rod sustains damage. These rods keep the walls of the reactor from collapsing. If the rods are damaged, the reactor walls begin to collapse. If the rods are destroyed the walls collapse completely and the entire reactor suffers a MeltDown.

Use the light gun to shoot at the sparkx as they bounce off the borders and control rods. When you destroy a sparkx it will disappear. Be careful! A bad shot from you can damage the control rods. If you place a shot outside the reactor core into the containment wall you will also damage the reactor.

If you shoot and don't hit anything, a barrier will appear. The barrier will function like a wall until it fades away. You can have up to four barriers on screen at a time. The sparkx will rebound off the barriers, so well-placed shots can reflect sparkx away from the control rods. In addition to shooting sparkx and setting up barriers, you can also protect the reactor core by using special protective Power Crystals and bonus blocks found in each reactor. (See **Power Crystals** and **Bonus Blocks**.)

After a time the earth will suffer damage from reactor radiation. The damage will result in increased seismic activity. The earthquakes will further damage the control rods. Protected rods suffer less damage from earthquakes. (See **Protect Control Rod** power crystal.)

Save all 20 reactors to win the game. If your score is higher than the lowest score displayed on the high scores screen, the high scores initials screen displays. Enter your initials to be displayed next to your high score. The high scores screen will then display in demo mode. High scores are only retained during the current play session. Once the game is switched off, your high scores earned are erased.

SCREENS

Two MeltDown screens are important to actual game play. One is the Reactor Statistics screen which lists information about each reactor. The other is the Action screen, where game play takes place.

Reactor Statistics Screen

The Reactor Statistics screen appears whenever you advance to a new reactor.

High Score displays the high score for the current play session.

Reactor Blueprint displays a layout of the reactor. This helps you plan out your attack before you begin play.

Score displays your current score. The score is accumulated over the current play session.

Sparkx to Eliminate lists how many Sparkx you need to destroy to save the reactor.

Action Screen

Control Rods provide the necessary protection to keep the reactors cool and prevent potential MeltDowns. Each control rod can sustain five hits before it is destroyed.

Power Crystals displays the types of Power Crystals you will encounter in the reactor.

Protons move more quickly to make more sparkx when you destroy all the sparkx currently in a reactor. This helps you finish the round more quickly before the 5 earthquakes hit.

Reactor Number displays the number of the reactor you are currently attempting to save.

Reactor Walls collapse in on the reactor core when the reactor rods sustain damage.

Score lists your current score.

Sparkx Remaining lists the number of sparkx still to be destroyed before the reactor is saved.

ITEMS

In addition to deadly Sparkx, other items can be found in reactors. These items can help you in your fight to rid each reactor from Sparkx.

Sparkx

Sparkx are the deadly invaders that threaten power plants with devastating meltdown. Shoot Sparkx to destroy them.

Container Sparkx open every round of play. Container Sparkx can float into the reactor from various points. If they hit the reactor wall, a control rod, or one of your shots, they will burst into six different Bounder Sparkx, which will bounce all over the playing field. Then you must corner and destroy all six Bounder Sparkx!

Bounder Sparkx are the most common type of sparkx. These tiny sparkx bounce off the different elements within the reactor and off the reactor itself, inflicting damage wherever they hit.

Exploding Sparkx are very deadly. These sparkx slowly change color from blue to red. If you blast an exploding sparkx while it is still blue, the energy is absorbed. If you hit one of these sparkx after it has changed to red, it sends particles flying in four directions, away from the point of impact.

Expanding Sparkx require five hits to destroy, and they expand slightly each time they are hit. These sparkx are slightly more damaging if they hit the reactor's wall after they have expanded.

Quick Sparkx also require five hits to destroy, but they increase in speed rather than size with each hit.

Note: Red sparkx are more damaging than blue sparkx.

Power Crystals

Power Crystals are identified by a single letter or number (shown in parenthesis after the name of each Power Crystal). Shoot a Power Crystal icon release its special power. The special power of the shot crystal will remain in effect until you finish that reactor level. The single exception is Control Rod Repair.

Big Shot (B) doubles the size of your shot's barrier for that round. This is especially helpful in creating blocks around sparkx and around the control rods.

2 Extra Shots (2) allows you to place up to six barriers, instead of the usual four.

Continuous Shot (C) allows you to shoot continuously--a real finger saver!

Freeze (F) causes everything inside the reactor to slow and then freeze for a short time, before thawing and resuming full speed.

Killer Barriers (K) are deadly to sparkx. Instead of bouncing off the barriers left by missed shots, sparkx running into Killer Barriers are destroyed.

Control Rod Repair (R) repairs some of the damage done to the control rods in that round.

Protect Control Rods (P) puts a series of indestructible barriers around each of the control rods for the duration of the round.

Double Points (D) bonus doubles the point value for each item you have eliminated.

Bonus Blocks

Bonus Blocks are impervious to sparkx damage. A bonus block appears at random locations within the reactor whenever you temporarily eliminate all the sparkx from the reactor before the next sparkx is released. The block remains in position for a short time and then disappears.

STRATEGY

Use the Freeze Power Crystal as often as you can. Destroy frozen sparkx before they thaw.

Hit the sparkx as soon as they appear. The earlier you destroy sparkx, the less damage they cause.

Learn to protect control rods by surrounding them with barriers. Protected control rods suffer less damage from sparkx and earthquakes.

SCORING

Container Sparkx .....10 points
Bounder Sparkx .....20 points
Exploding Sparkx .....40 points
Exploded Sparkx Particles .....40 points
Expanding Sparkx
(The first 1 to 4 hits)..... 10 points/hit
(The fifth and final hit).....50 points
Quick Sparkx
(The first 1 to 4 hits)..... 10 points/hit
(The fifth and final hit).....50 points
Sparkx hitting barriers .....1 point

Bonus Blocks are worth 100 points for the first block, and 100 additional points for subsequent blocks. For example, your first block is worth 100 points, but your fourth block is worth 400 points. If you miss a block, the block point value drops back to 100 points.

Shooting a Double Points power crystal doubles all earned points from bonus blocks.

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Printed in Hong Kong. G. C. 11. 1990 **C300018-075 Rev. A**