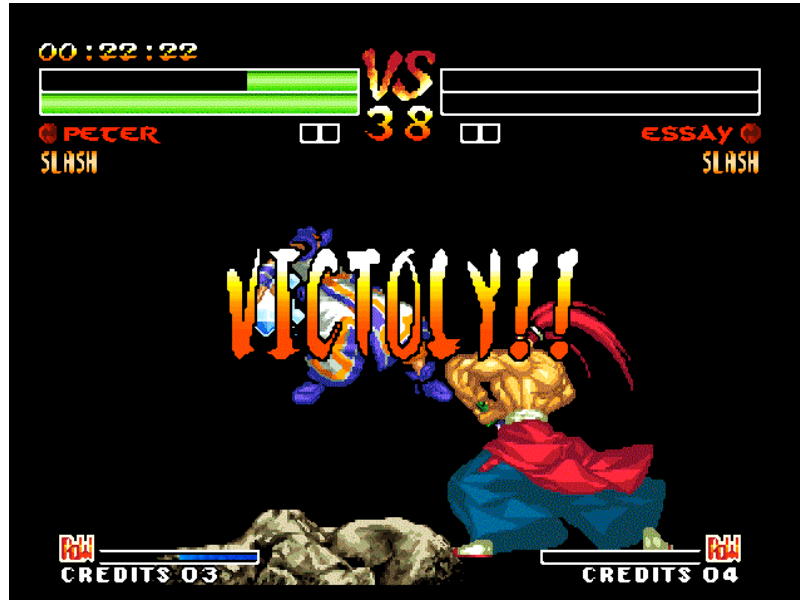




WHY I PLAY L5R CONTEST WINNER

CRAB CLAN – PETER LIPPHARDT



For years, mankind has debated the greatest question of ours or any other era: why do I play l5r? After literally hours of research, the answer came to me in the form of a repetitive street fighter clone from the late nineties...SAMURAI SHODOWN! The answer to this burning question is hidden in these powerful, and in one case boldly misspelled words...so let us examine this title to uncover the staggering awesomeness that makes l5r the game of choice for me and so many others.

First off...Samurai. Samurai are the essence of l5r. These majestic and bloodthirsty fighters capture the interest of any true man. Like the unholy spawn of a Ninja and a Pirate, they combine brutality and asianousity, with just a hint of bugging, to form the most awesome subject matter for a card game you could ever hope to have. These mysterious and mighty warriors are fearsome enemies, merciless killing machines, and generous lovers. As soon as I realized someone had actually made a card game centered on these legendary figures, I was hooked.

The chance to play as a samurai is irresistible, an unstoppable sirens call of peasant gore and epic sword fighting. It's a completely unique idea in the often faerie and orc infested world of card games, and it treats the players and the subject matters with an equally unique level of maturity. Nothing is watered down. The entire samurai experience, from life and death duels, to the even more deadly intrigues of court politics, is represented within the confines of a single card game, and I found that astounding.

The art of war is captured in the back and forth battle for province destruction, as your samurai engage in an intricate duel of battle actions and sheer force. The nobility of these proud warriors is made clear in the way a player can win simply through the power of his samurai's honor...and the deadly political machinations of a samurai's life in court, where a poorly chosen word can mean death, and a dagger hides behind every polite smile is highlighted in the dishonor strategies that seek to shame a player into defeat.

L5R takes the concept of samurai, breaks it down into minute detail, and then somehow weaves it all back together in one cohesive game. When your card game is framing

people for murder using a spoon...that is kind of amazing detail that just draws your interest and never lets go.

That is the power of samurai. The allure of the exotic. The thrill of the battlefield and the unique and completely immersive environment in which it all takes place.. so now let us cast aside proper English spelling and dive into the idea of the "shodown".

Besides being unintentionally hilarious engrish, Shodown is the man on man battle for Victory! Or to put it another way / in actual English, the showdown is the back and forth strategy of an L5R battle. Unlike another card game that rhymes with Magic the Gathering, L5R is not simply a race to see who can get out their \$200 dollar instant win faerie combo...or whatever nonsense it is that's being used by Magic players, with their broken cards and their ether frolics.

L5R is all about the showdown, the battle of wits that occurs when simply having the most expensive deck is not enough to win a game. You need to plan every attack in detail if you hope to win. If you move to this province, will he negate the movement? Would you be better off moving in a smaller unit to an unopposed province and hope to build his force enough to take it? Should you trigger a duel that you actually plan on losing just to gain honor from your focus cards? Is that the spoon used to frame the dragon for murder poking out of Tenbin's shirt? These are just a few of the considerations you must make before every action. When even common cards can shift the outcome of an entire match, every card in your deck is an agonizing decision, and every action played is a game of cat and mouse with your opponent.

When I first saw a game of L5R played, I was blown away by the strategy both players had to use to achieve even the smallest goals. I have seen games of L5R take an hour and a half, with each player trying to trump the other player in a constant progression of movement, negotiation, force bonuses, bows, and unbows. It's like watching two masters play chess, or a kitten teach a gorilla how to love. Every action must be carefully planned out, from managing your gold to choosing the order of your battle actions, because in these L5R showdowns, you do not simply play the cards...you play the opponent.

You have out think your opponent, anticipate his moves before he makes them and then set up a strategy to counter it. Your deck may be full to the brim with win, but if your opponent can predict your attacks and counter your actions, you will lose. You have to know your opponent just as well as you know his cards.

Like poker, the key to victory could be knowing when your opponent is bluffing. Figuring out that while he has five cards in he hand, they probably aren't battle actions could win you a game. That is why the showdown between players is so critical: L5R is one of the only card games where knowing your enemy can push your deck to victory!

And speaking of victory...the amount of effort it takes to win a game of L5R makes the victory so much sweeter than any card game I have ever played, and yet your struggle to win is never tedious or grueling. Much like painting a picture, it takes good amount of time and effort, and yet the end result is something memorable and beautiful. Plus, if you try to make a living at it you will starve to death under a bridge.

So for those two reasons, the Samurai and the Shodown, I play L5R ...and you will have to pry the cards out of my cold, dead hands to stop me.

Even then, there is a fifty fifty chance I will try to eat your brains.