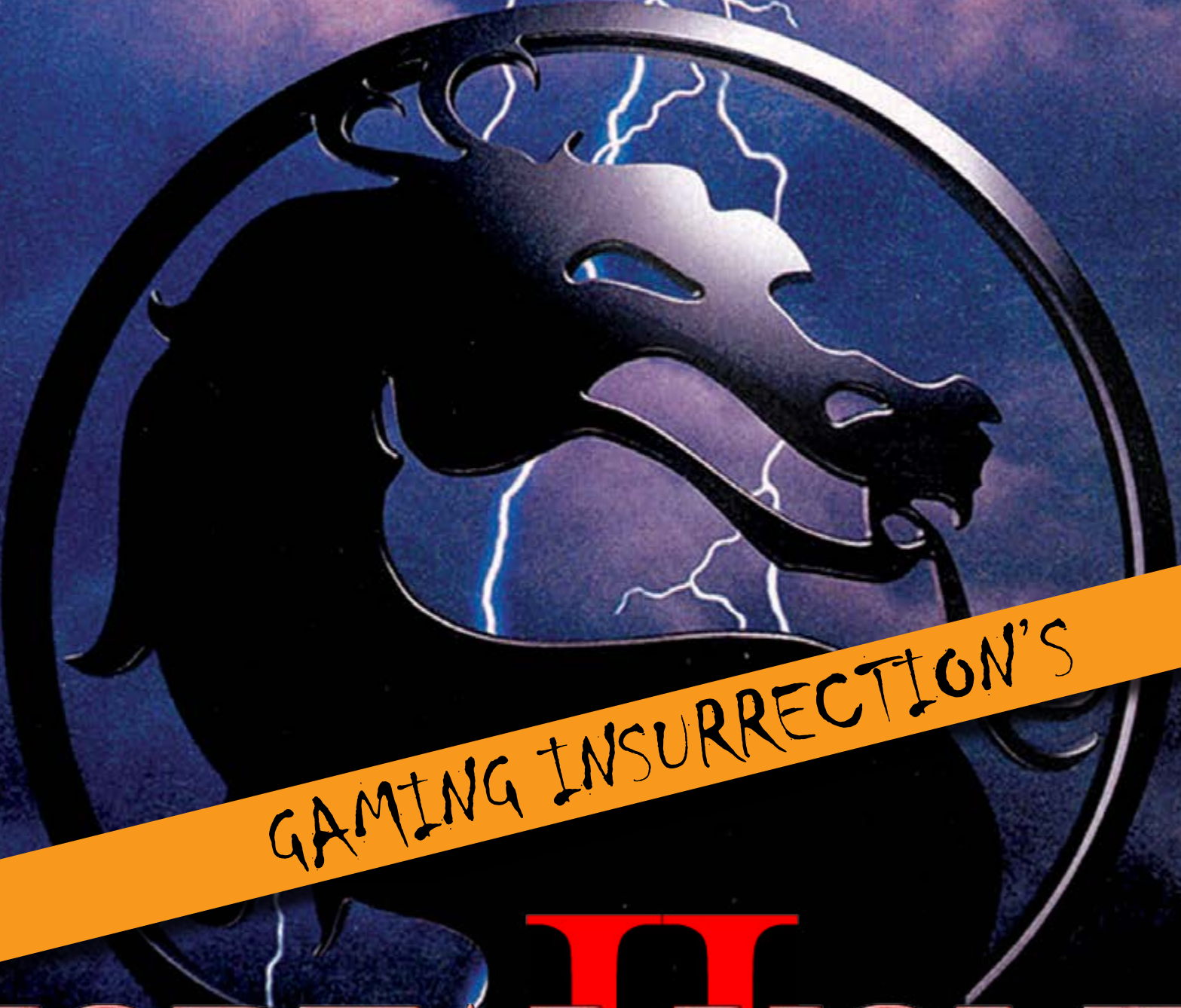


SPECIAL SECTION



GAMING INSURRECTION'S

# MORTAL KOMBAT II

TOURNAMENT





Gaming Insurrection, as a whole, is a longtime fan of the Mortal Kombat franchise, and in 2010, we brainstormed about ways to put that love into play. The plan materialized in a competition under tournament conditions. The result was our Mortal Kombat II tournament.

Completed through a year and a half of recording, writing and analyzing, myself and former Associate Editor Jamie Mosley played through a double-elimination bracket. The results were highly surprising. Fan favorites (and some of our own personal favorites) made it far. Others did not. Tiers were clearly defined and broken down, a truly fascinating process to watch unfold.

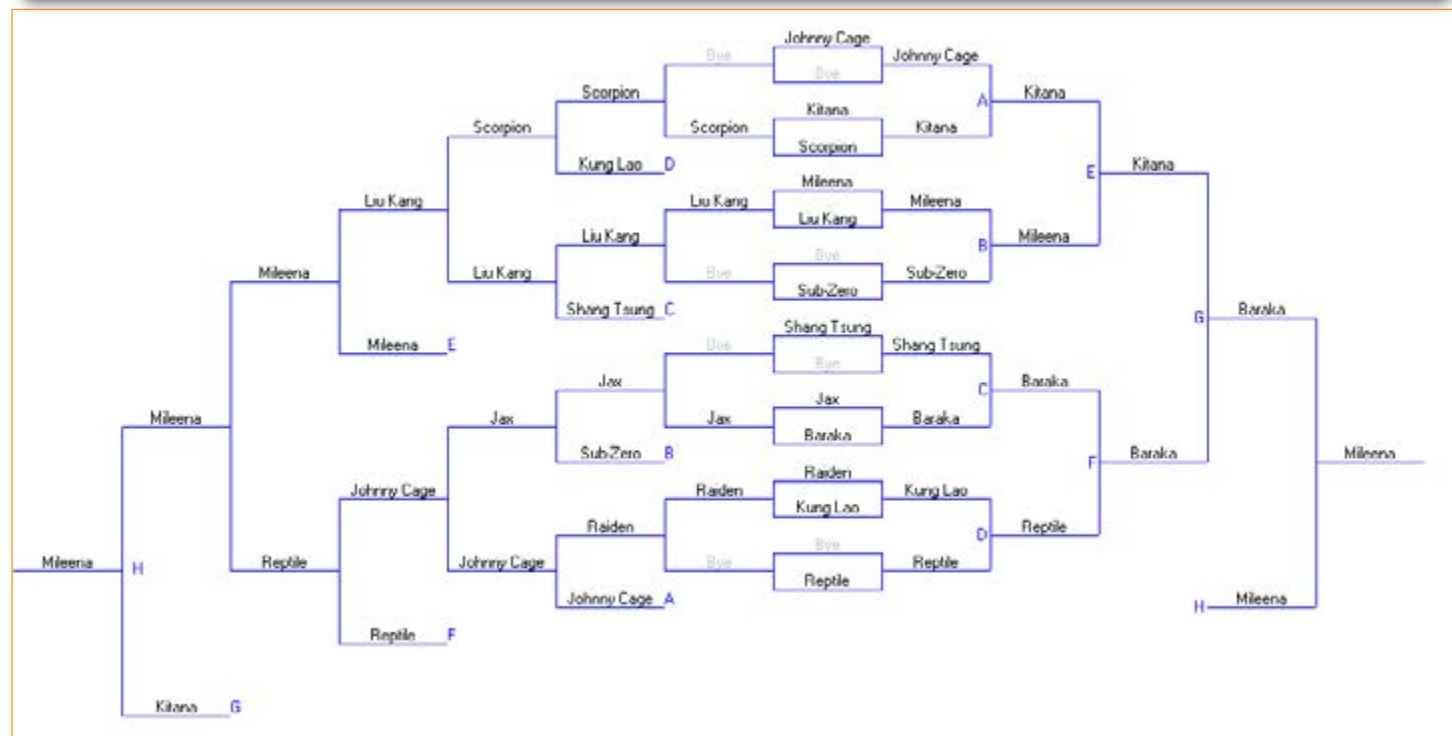
Also part of the tournament was an experiment to see if our high level of play matched up with a long-ago ranking chart from the now-defunct GamePro magazine. We're happy to say that it didn't necessarily match tier for tier. The results of our tournament revealed just what we hypothesized: Everyone plays Mortal Kombat II differently, and when it comes down to it, tiers aren't necessarily as important as one would think.

This special section is the culmination of hard work and fun. Read on for bone-crunching analysis, tips and ideas we learned as we completed our first Mortal Kombat II tournament.

# WHAT'S INSIDE

- Rounds 1-6 analysis.....3-13
- GamePro chart analysis.....14
- Gaming Insurrection's analysis....15
- Tournament statistics.....16

## COMPLETE TOURNAMENT BRACKETS



# match analysis: round 1

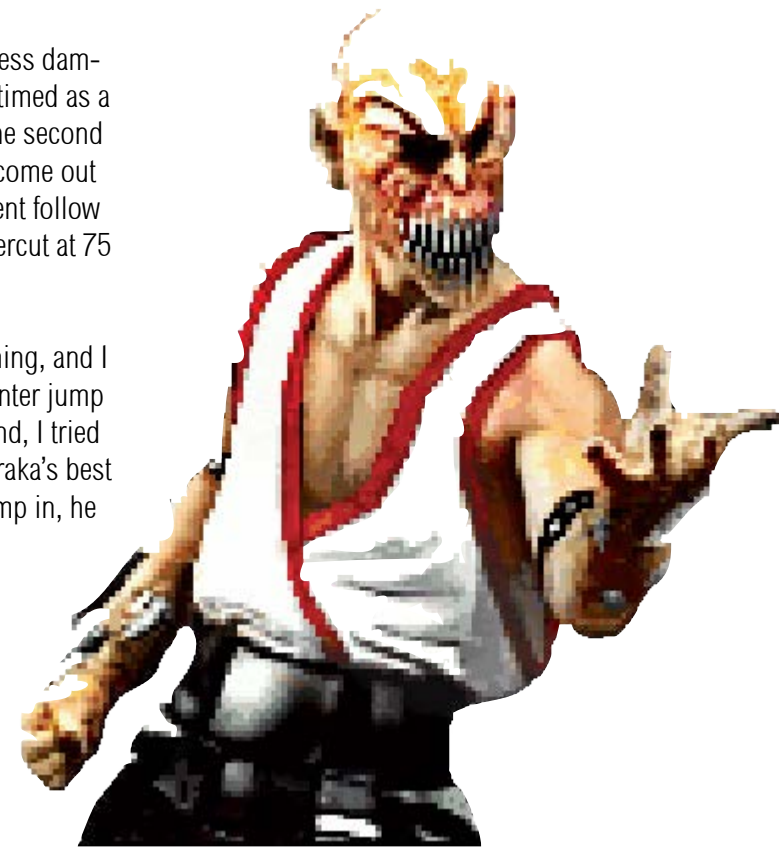
## JAX VS. BARAKA



**Lyndsey:** I had several missed Backbreaker opportunities, which lead to less damage. The Blade Fury from Baraka at the end of the first round was perfectly timed as a counter to my jump kick. He also had perfect timing with his uppercut in the second round. This is what we call textbook timing. I finally got a Backbreaker to come out in a well-timed move at 88 seconds. A Ground Pound from Jax was a decent follow up to a projectile trade that didn't end well for him, however. A missed uppercut at 75 seconds in the second round sealed the loss for Jax.

**Jamie:** I was testing Jax's defensive abilities with jump kicks in the beginning, and I was trying to keep him at a distance. To accomplish this, I tried to use counter jump kicks and Blade Furies, which Lyndsey began to expect. In the second round, I tried to keep Lyndsey on the defensive with counter Blade Sparks and Furies. Baraka's best offense is countering defensively with Blade Furies, so by luring Jax to jump in, he immediately could not block getting cut up.

**WINNER:** Baraka



## KITANA VS. SCORPION



**Lyndsey:** An Air Fan Throw stopped Scorpion's forward movement and momentarily put him on the defensive against a purely offensive character such as Kitana. This set up spacing opportunities within sweep range and the ability to block for the crucial Fan Lift motion. The Fan Lift then set up the dangerous and damage plentiful combo of j. high punch — Fan Throw — hop kick. The missed Teleport from Scorpion created several openings for the round kill at 78 seconds with a simple standing high kick. A Square Wave Flight quickly covered space and regained lost momentum. Kitana is sometimes susceptible to getting knocked out of the Fan Lift. However, the follow up with the jump kick-sweep, which usually ties in nicely for a two-hit, saved her from further damage.

**Jamie:** In the first round, Scorpion needed to set the tempo, which I started with a jump kick. I was hoping for a jump kick-spear combo, which sets up great damage, but it didn't work. A few mistimed uppercuts and a badly bluffed Teleport Punch ended the first round rather quickly. In the second round, I was expecting an opening jump kick from Kitana, which I would have countered with an uppercut. This strategy worked well later. I got a couple of lucky breaks when I knocked Kitana out of the Fan Lift, although I feel I didn't follow up efficiently. A horribly timed Scissor Leg Takedown sealed my defeat.

**WINNER:** Kitana





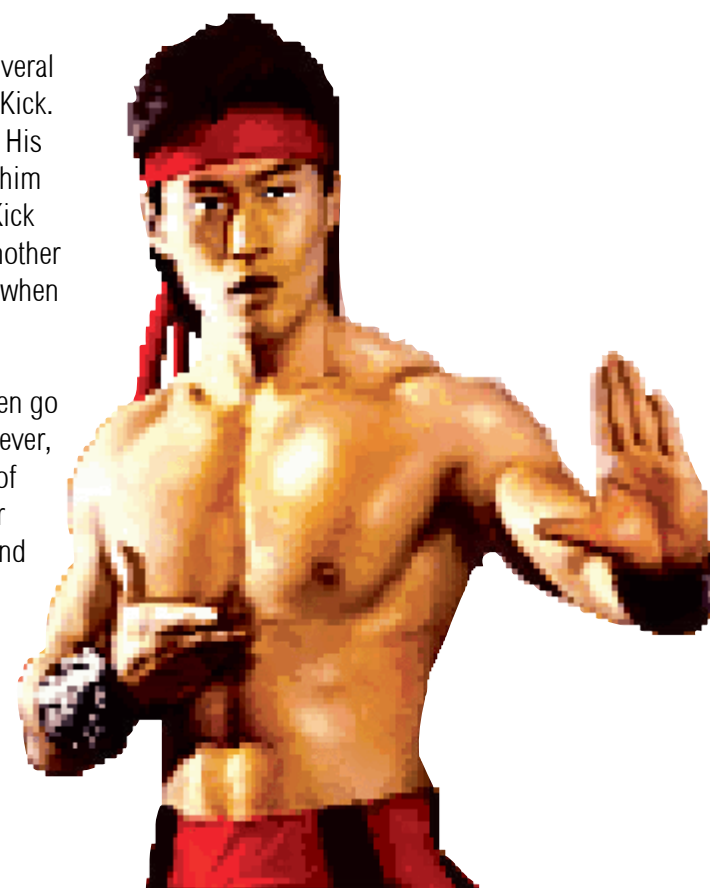
# MILEENA VS. LIU KANG



**Lyndsey:** A very fast-paced match in which Mileena dictates the flow of the action and several ways to control space: Air — Teleport Kick, Sais; Ground — Sais, Ground Roll, Teleport Kick. Mostly, this is a battle of controlling and anticipating Liu Kang's high-low Fireball game. His uneven hit box for his jump kick shakes up the fight and makes it difficult to properly hit him sometimes. Be wary of missing with Teleport Kicks. Liu Kang's perfectly timed Bicycle Kick counter at 75 seconds in the first round is an example of what happens when you miss. Another tip is to always follow up jump kicks. Rolls and Teleport Kicks mean extra damage safely when added to the end of an opening.

**Jamie:** At any time that someone jumps at Liu Kang, I like to use a high punch and then go into the Bicycle Kick. I like to keep the Kick charged. The timing on it this match, however, was off so I couldn't get the combo to come off. Liu Kang needs to set the tempo of the match by using simple combos such as jump kick-h. Fireball or I. Fireball or random Bicycle Kicks. There should have been more uppercuts from Liu Kang and more high and low Fireballs to counter missed Teleport Kicks.

**WINNER:** Mileena



# RAIDEN VS. KUNG LAO



**Lyndsey:** Raiden is in a tough fight. Kung Lao has several options to stop him and hold him in place, and Raiden does not have the advantage of speed on his side. Missed Supermans can cover ground but beware of trying to pull one off and getting hit by a spin. That's unnecessary damage lost in an already difficult match for Raiden. Raiden's uppercut is strong but not fast and strong like Kung Lao's. His Lightning Throw is also not a good trade with Kung Lao's hat. If the opponent jumps back a lot, this is when you throw out a Superman. There is no airblocking so if you time it right, there won't be any impediment to the free hit.

**Jamie:** Diving Kicks are Kung Lao's friends. They can set up a Diving Kick-Hat Throw combo or the Diving Kick — Whirlwind Spin. Although my timing was off on the Diving Kick-Whirlwind Spin combo, I changed my tactics and used random Whirlwind Spins to keep Raiden on his toes. Kung Lao's uppercut is deadly, so I was always on the lookout for a well-placed uppercut to counter a jump-in from Raiden. However, Kung Lao's hit zones are off when he performs a jump kick, so I tried to use it to my advantage by doing quite a few. His Teleport helps him close distance quickly to set up throws, but I was unable to accomplish this.

**WINNER:** Kung Lao



# match analysis: round 2

## JOHNNY CAGE VS. KITANA

**Lyndsey:** Johnny Cage is all about utilization of special moves for maximum damage. The opening Shadow Kick set the tone for him to come out of the gate with a lot of damage to counter a high-powered offense from combo queen Kitana. In the first round, he mastered the up-close-and-personal game by stopping Kitana with a lot of damage early. The female ninjas can't handle a lot of jump kicks, so that was the key to shutting Kitana down.

In the second round, Cage was pounded by the vaunted Kitana offense. He let his guard down and began letting Kitana achieve one of her main objectives: controlling space. If she is allowed to do so, she will dish out major damage in the form of Fan Lift combos. A whiffed Shadow Uppercut at 86 seconds did not help matters, either. Getting caught in a Fan Lift at 61 seconds made the coming Fan Throw worse and sealed his loss in the end.

The final round didn't get better for Cage. Kitana put on a clinic of how not to beat her in the air and on the ground. Her Fan Lift has high priority and cannot be avoided if not blocked properly to start. Also, be careful about whiffed Shadow Kicks. Uppercuts take care of those nicely and lead to big damage if the opponent can capitalize on Cage's mistake.

**Jamie:** As a Kitana player, you want to control the match tempo, creating a rhythm for yourself and your opponent. That tempo is the key to setting up effective combos and crushing your opponent's morale. In the first round, Johnny Cage won the opening tipoff with a jump kick and an unexpected Shadow Kick that threw off my rhythm for the rest of the match. In the second round, I decided not to trade jump kicks with the deadly Cage in the air and started a Fan Lift-jump kick-Fan Throw combo to try to take control of the match.

Cage tried to take back the tempo with a jump kick-sweep combo that had me gasping for air. To keep him at bay — and at the tempo I wanted — a quick jump backward and a random air Fan Throw to make sure he didn't follow led to the proper amount of space need to successfully pull off the Fan Lift on his next jump attempt. A blocked jump kick and unexpected air Fan Throw sealed the "W" for Kitana in the second round. The key element in the Kitana's victory during the third round was keeping Cage grounded. An opening uppercut at the start of the match followed by another uppercut connecting after a missed Shadow Kick helped lead Kitana to victory.

**WINNER:** Kitana

## KUNG LAO VS. REPTILE

**Lyndsey:** Kung Lao never gained the momentum in the match. While in a depth chart this should be an easy win for Kung Lao, this match proves that any seasoned veteran can win with any character. Kung Lao started with an excellent move, the Teleport Kick, to confuse Reptile and gain a free hit. Mixing up his attack with low and high Hat Throws and low juggle punches, Kung Lao managed to come close to victory. However, "death punches" from Reptile stopped his offense and led to serious damage.

In the second round, a nicely timed jump kick stopped Reptile from establishing an effective ground game in the beginning. His uppercut, with its high rating, also kept Reptile from advancing. A great escape at 81 seconds from an advancing Force Ball from Reptile was a high point of the match.

However, Kung Lao fell victim again to "death punches" and couldn't avoid taking damage in the third round, especially in the corner at the end of the match.

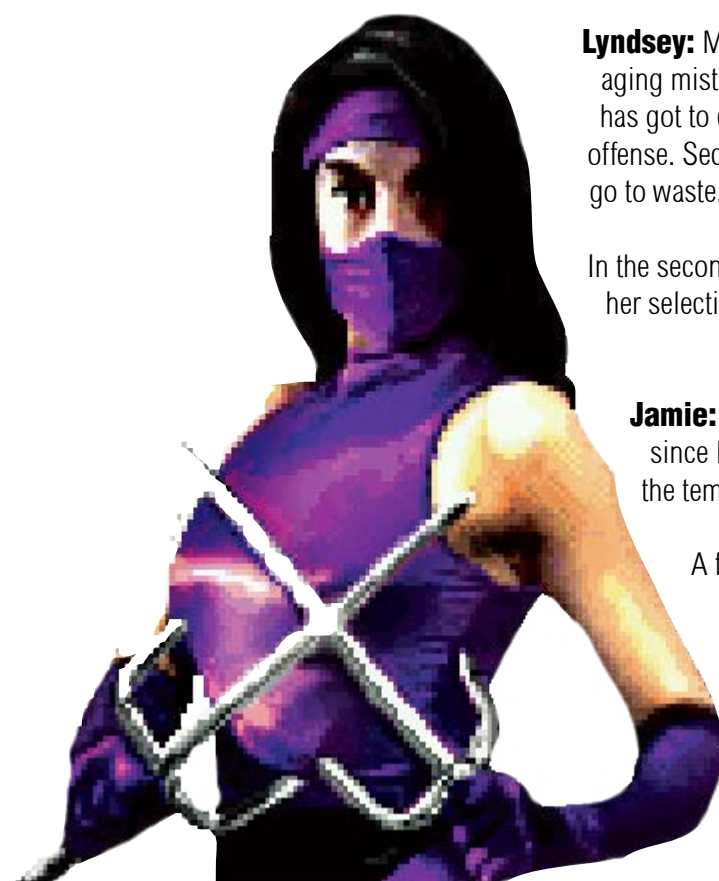
**Jamie:** Reptile is the underdog against almost every opponent in MKII. As a Reptile player, you want to wait for any opportunity to get a couple of shots in and back away. A Slide and a death punch helped Reptile sneak by with a first-round win. At the opening of the second round, a very aggressive Kung Lao started off with a jump kick, sweep and Hat Throw that left Reptile demoralized.

Kung Lao maintained the tempo with a couple of well-placed Hat Throws to capture the second round. After jockeying for position in the start of the third round, an Acid Spit traded with a deadly uppercut lead to some intense death punching in the corner, which caused the upset victory.

**WINNER:** Reptile



# MILEENA VS. SUB-ZERO



**Lyndsey:** Mileena started her offensive strategy early with a Teleport Kick but made several damaging mistakes that nearly cost her the round. First, she let Sub-Zero dictate the pace. Mileena has got to control the pace of the match if she has any hope of dominating with a run-and-gun offense. Second, she whiffed several Teleport Kicks and had an opportunity with the Ground Roll go to waste. Sub-Zero correctly stopped her with a Ground Freeze and comboed for big damage.

Two well-placed uppercuts, however, salvaged the round for her. In the second round, she still let Sub-Zero dictate the pace, a problem to be sure, but her selection of counter moves (a few Teleport Kicks and an uppercut) served her well to rack up the damage enough to pull out the win.

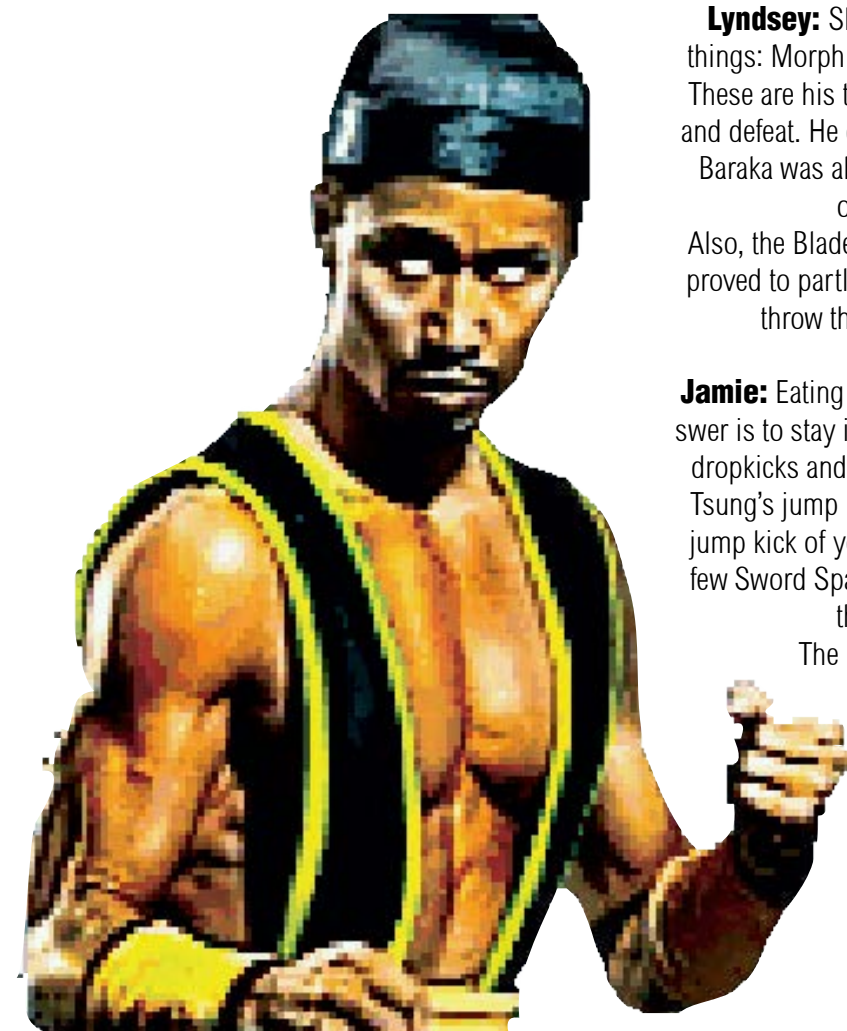
**Jamie:** Sub-Zero has the potential to cause Mileena to slow down, which is key since Mileena is one of the fastest characters in MKII. A Ground Freeze slowed the tempo in favor of Sub-Zero, but two quick counter uppercuts from Mileena quickly showed why she has a never-say-die attitude.

A failed blocked sweep lead to Mileena throwing Sub-Zero. Sub-Zero answered when a failed Ground Roll attack from Mileena led to a Freeze and an uppercut. A Ground Freeze-uppercut combo by Sub-Zero tried to neutralize Mileena's speed. Unfortunately, her speed was too much for the slow ninja tricks.

**WINNER:** Mileena



# SHANG TSUNG VS. BARAKA



**Lyndsey:** Shang Tsung's main offensive strategy needs to consist of two things: Morphing into the player's strongest characters and utilizing fireballs. These are his two strongest choices and mean the difference between victory and defeat. He did not morph until later in the match, and this cost him dearly.

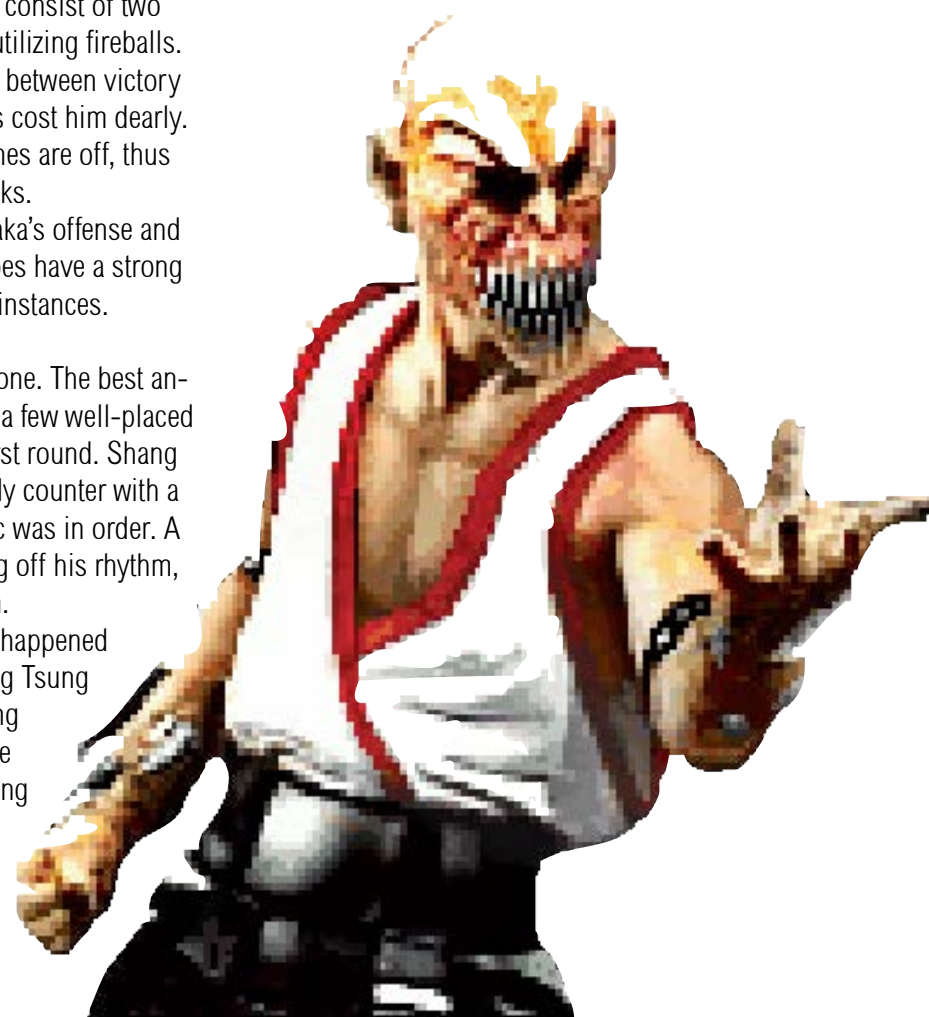
Baraka was able to utilize the fact that Shang Tsung's hit zones are off, thus often stopping his attacks with simple jump kicks.

Also, the Blade Furies in the third round were boons for Baraka's offense and proved to partly be Shang Tsung's undoing. Shang Tsung does have a strong throw that has high priority and was useful in several instances.

**Jamie:** Eating Shang "T" Sung's fireballs are not fun for anyone. The best answer is to stay in his face. Baraka quickly closed the gap with a few well-placed dropkicks and a throw to try to gain the momentum in the first round. Shang Tsung's jump kick is difficult to uppercut against or effectively counter with a jump kick of your own. In the second round, a different tactic was in order. A few Sword Sparks and well-timed dropkick had Shang Tsung off his rhythm, thus effectively taking him out of his game plan.

The best defense is a good defense, which is what happened when I pulled out a Blade Fury to stop Shang Tsung from jumping in. Even when Shang Tsung morphed into Mileena, a couple of Blade Swipes and a dropkick equaled a decapitating victory for Baraka.

**WINNER:** Baraka





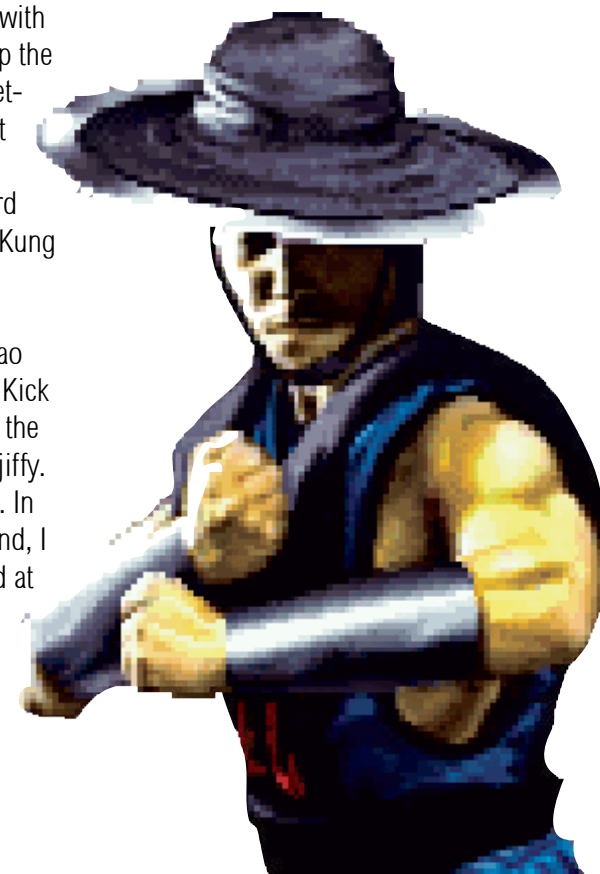
# match analysis: round 3

## SCORPION VS. KUNG LAO

**Lyndsey:** Kung Lao has overwhelming priority with his throws but Scorpion has better priority with Air Throws. This was demonstrated several times throughout the match when Scorpion locked up the air matchup with Kung Lao and dominated with the throw. His Teleport was utilized effectively, getting him out of several tight spots where he could have taken massive damage. The Spear wasn't as successful, however. It did not connect at any time, which would have guaranteed at least 25 percent damage each time it successfully connected. A Hat-Throw-Spear exchange in the third round was not good for Scorpion but he managed to overcome a potentially potent offense from Kung Lao.

**Jamie:** An experienced MK player will always have an uppercut ready for teleporting Kung Lao players. As a result, I wanted to use the Dive Kick for two reasons. Reason No.1: The Dive Kick covers a lot of ground in a short amount of time as long as the opponent doesn't block the attack. Scorpion is a master of creating space. He can easily show up behind you in a jiffy. With that in mind, reason No. 2 for the Dive Kick is to keep Scorpion at close range. In this match, the tactics described above didn't work to my advantage. In the first round, I tried to mix up high and low attacks while using Dive Kicks to stay in the action and at least once Scorpion was downed by the move. Kung Lao's uppercut is one of the deadliest in MKII and while several worked to my advantage, at least one missed uppercut led to a round loss. In Round 3, I used a Hat Throw to try to throw off the tempo of Scorpion. It didn't work and that, along with a final Air Throw and uppercut, sealed Scorpion's victory.

**Winner:** Scorpion

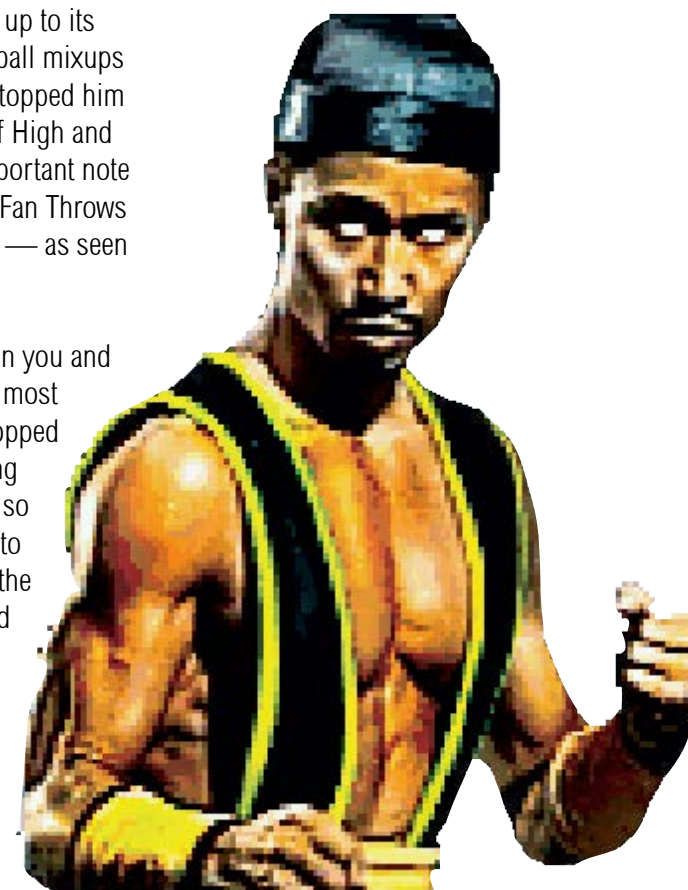


## LIU KANG VS. SHANG TSUNG

**Lyndsey:** The classic matchup representing the end of the first game and movie lived up to its hype. Fireballs made their mark from both characters, and Liu Kang's High and Low Fireball mixups worked to his advantage. The unusual pattern of firing kept Shang Tsung off guard and stopped him mostly. Liu Kang's best bet to secure wins is to push offense slowly, keep a good mix of High and Low Fireballs and punish openings with a well-placed Flying Kick or Bicycle Kick. An important note and lesson learned from this match is that while Liu Kang's Fireballs can punish whiffed Fan Throws from Kitana, Flying Kicks cannot. As a final note, following up Fireballs with Flying Kicks — as seen at the end of the final round — is always a good idea.

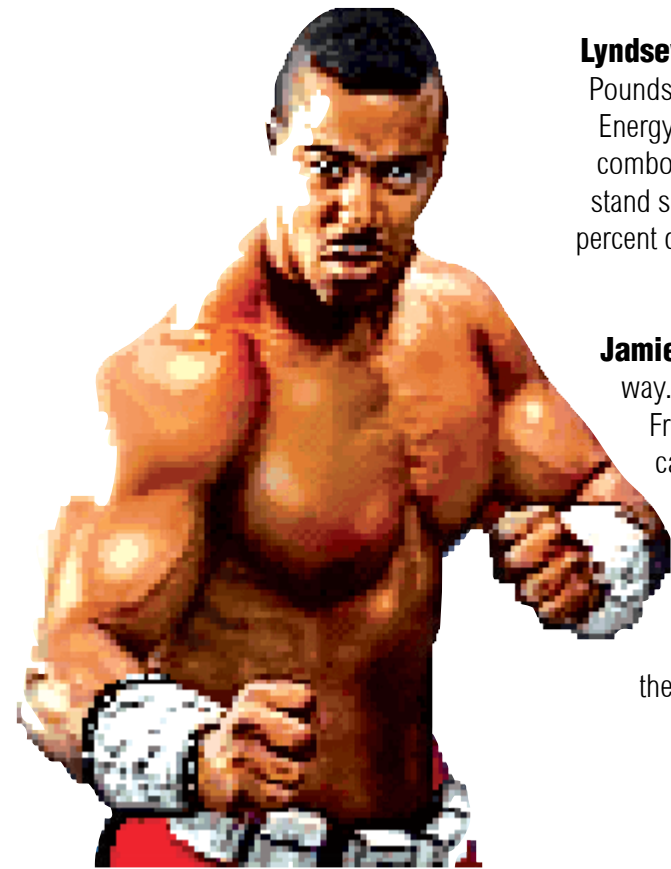
**Jamie:** The key to victory with Shang Tsung is maximizing the distance between you and your opponent. Also, remember that Shang Tsung's standing high kick beats most jumping attacks. A textbook uppercut off of a whiffed Flying Kick practically stopped the offense of Liu Kang and gave me enough time to counter with a standing high kick. I only morph when I am trying to throw off the opponent's tempo, so an aggressive Liu Kang changed tactics against my Kitana morph. That led to a lot of damage wracked up from a well-timed Fan Lift-jump kick combo at the end of Round 2. Ultimately, several ill-advised Fireball trades is what helped end Shang Tsung's run in the tournament.

**Winner:** Liu Kang





# JAX VS. SUB-ZERO



**Lyndsey:** Jax is top tier and can offer varied opportunities for damage. The combined threat of Ground Pounds and Backbreakers can keep opponents off guard, and Sub-Zero was no different. However, an Energy Wave-Iceball trade did not end well in Jax's favor. The follow-up Ground Pound-Backbreaker combo saved the first round for Jax, however. Playing against Sub-Zero, one has to be careful not to stand still and to anticipate a Ground Ice Ball, which can lead to devastating setups that end with a 25 percent damage-dealing uppercut. Jax's uppercut and jump kick are among the strongest in the game so utilize them wisely against a jumping male ninja as I did here.

**Jamie:** Against Sub-Zero, opponents learn to expect lots of Ice Balls heading their way. But, I tried to refrain from using this tactic. Instead, I tried to use the Ground Freeze to throw off the tempo and change the flow of the match in my favor. Jax can always have a Ground Pound ready and his uppercut is the deadliest in MK II. Damaging moves from Jax and bad trades, such as the Ice Ball-Energy Wave exchange in the first round, didn't help Sub-Zero's cause. And, add to that combination the fact that jumping against Jax can lead to a painful Backbreaker. That isn't the best matchup for Sub-Zero to begin with, and after taking a space lockdown beating in the third round in the corner on the ground and in the air, a loss and tournament elimination came for the cold master ninja.

**Winner:** Jax



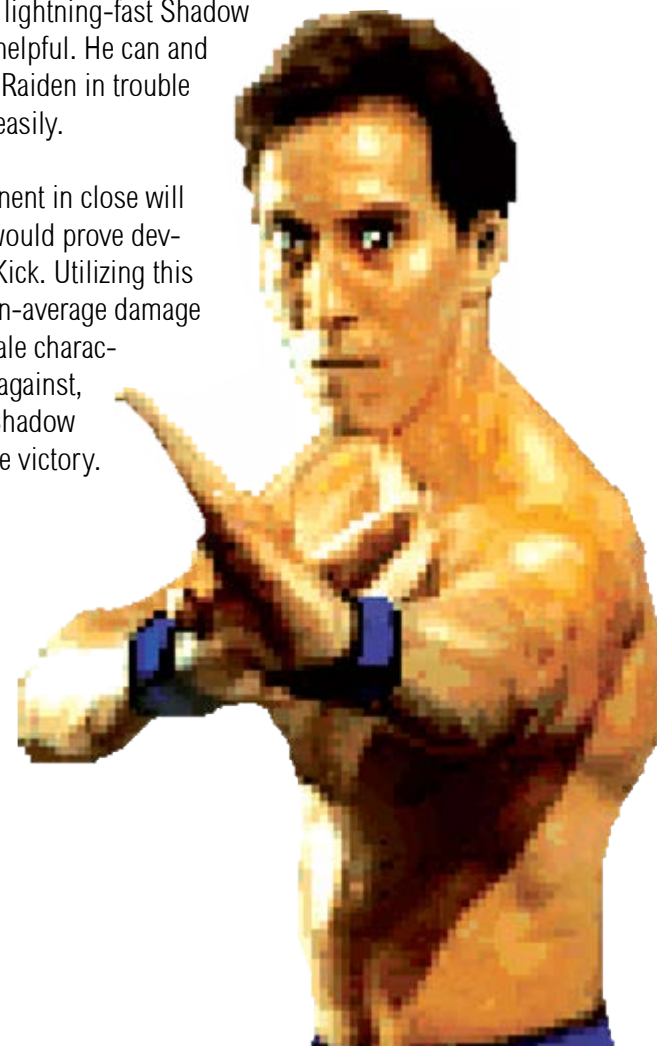
# RAIDEN VS. JOHNNY CAGE



**Lyndsey:** A quick sweep-throw-Superman combo is a great way to counter Johnny Cage's lightning-fast Shadow Kick. Being cognizant of Johnny Cage's ability to sink to new depths for the Split Punch is helpful. He can and will follow up with punishing moves to capitalize on your mistake. This particular tactic got Raiden in trouble in the final round early and meant a lot of damage that he couldn't recover from easily.

**Jamie:** With Johnny Cage, I tried to use the Shadow Kick when in close quarters; an opponent in close will only expect punches and kicks, and a special move such as the fast-release Shadow Kick would prove devastating. A simple combo with Mr. Style is a Groin Punch, standing high kick and Shadow Kick. Utilizing this combo is a great reason why Cage has made it this far in the tournament. It deals more-than-average damage and catches unassuming opponents off guard. True, in MKII it can only be done against male characters, but in the match with Raiden it's needed. Raiden's Teleport is hard for Cage to defend against, especially if he's in the middle of a move such as the Shadow Wave. But pulling out the Shadow Kick is an excellent way to surprise Raiden and that led to his defeat and Cage sealing the victory.

**Winner:** Johnny Cage





# match analysis: round 4

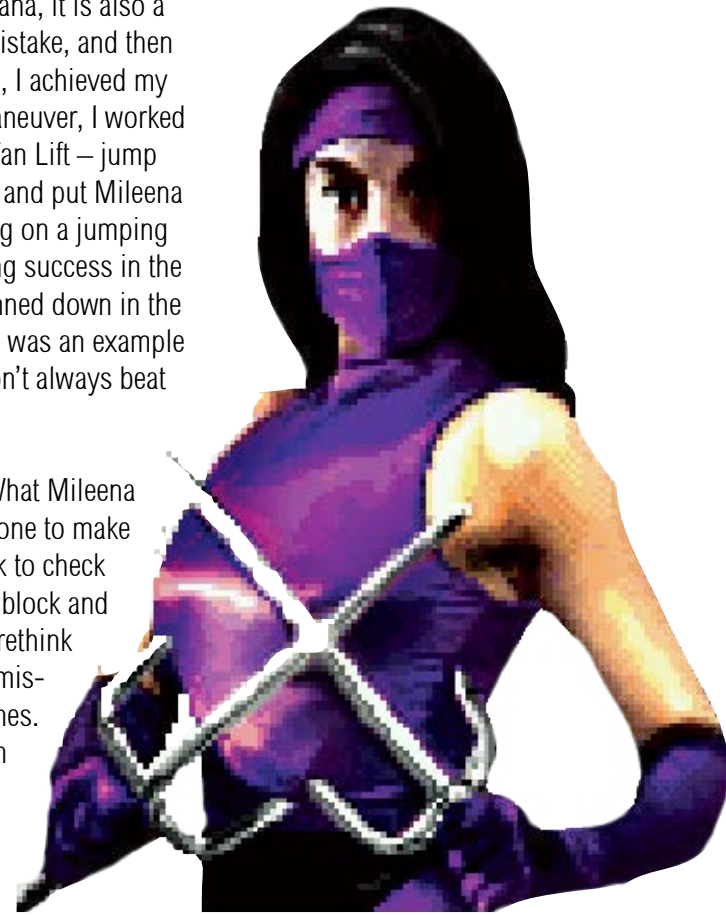
## KITANA VS. MILEENA



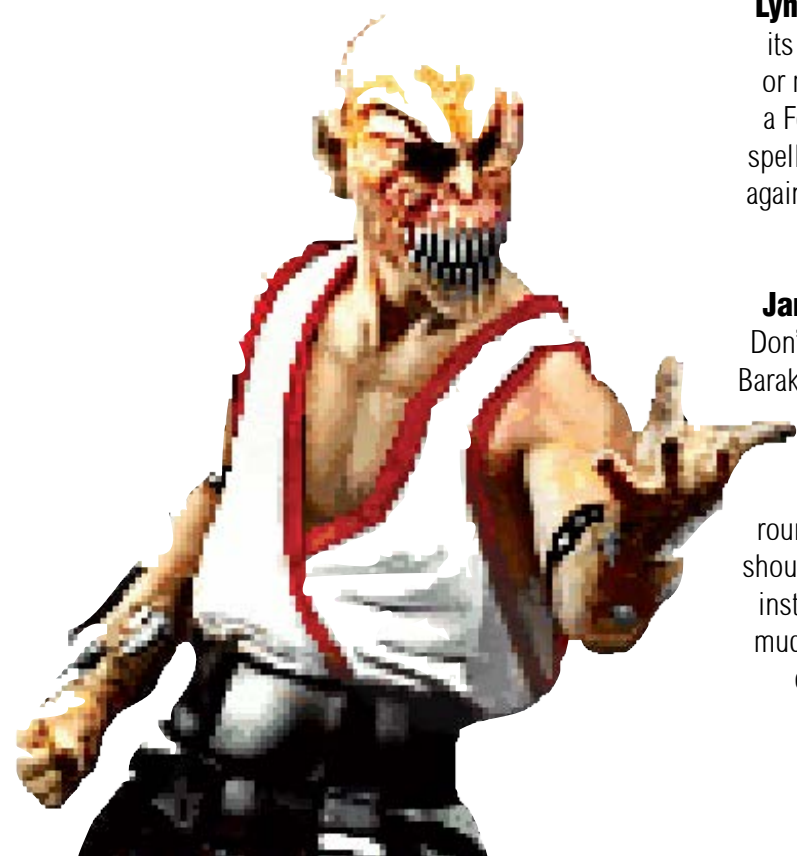
**Lyndsey:** Any fight against Mileena is a game of anticipation. And with Kitana, it is also a fight of capitalization. Kitana has to be patient, wait for Mileena to make a mistake, and then punish quickly and effectively. This was Kitana's plan, and in the first round, I achieved my goals. By blocking and counter-attacking most of Mileena's first offensive maneuver, I worked quickly to spring offense of my own. Controlling space with the patented Fan Lift – jump punch – Fan Throw combo (33 percent damage), I added damage up quickly and put Mileena on the defensive, somewhere most of her users don't want her to be. Tacking on a jumping high kick and sweep pretty much sealed the round for me. Despite my rousing success in the first round, things started going downhill with the failure to keep Mileena pinned down in the second round. Although I eventually pulled out the victory, the second round was an example of Mileena's counter-attack potency against Kitana. Square Wave Flights don't always beat Teleport Kicks.

**Jamie:** Kitana being played by even the most novice player is dangerous. What Mileena has to her advantage against any opponent is speed. You don't wait for anyone to make their move; you make their move for them. I opened up with a Roll attack to check defenses and to move under a possible Fan attack. I was greeted with a block and an uppercut. After a few Fan Lift combos and a corner trap, I needed to rethink my tactics for the next round. At the beginning of the second round, a mistimed uppercut reminded me that MKII's female ninjas have crazy hit zones. Kitana excels at capitalizing on mistakes. I played a little too defensive in this round and a standing high kick by Kitana sealed her victory.

**Winner:** Kitana



## BARAKA VS. REPTILE



**Lyndsey:** Mistakes abounded on my part versus Reptile. As a warning, despite its potency, NEVER throw out Blade Furies without knowing whether it will hit or make the other character block. Because it was Reptile, not much other than a Force Ball or Acid Spit could touch me, but with anyone else that could have spelled the death knell for Baraka. Baraka made up for it with his inherent speed against Reptile and really capitalized with a varied and damaging moveset in the second round.

**Jamie:** I knew that Baraka vs. Reptile was not going to be a pretty match. Mr. Don't Jump At Me aka Baraka was going to slow down the already-slow Reptile. Baraka's Blade Fury can stop anyone from getting up close and personal. In order to win, Reptile needs to be right there. The first round, I played defensively against the aggressive Baraka. A missed attack opportunity with a Force Ball when Baraka was in the air allowed him to take the round. In the second round, I couldn't get anything offensively going. I should have continued using the standing high kick as an anti-air attack instead of going with an uppercut. I respected Baraka's Blade Fury too much to attempt any jumping attacks and that sealed my doom. A few drop kicks from Baraka and Reptile went to the loser's bracket.

**Winner:** Reptile





# SCORPION VS. LIU KANG

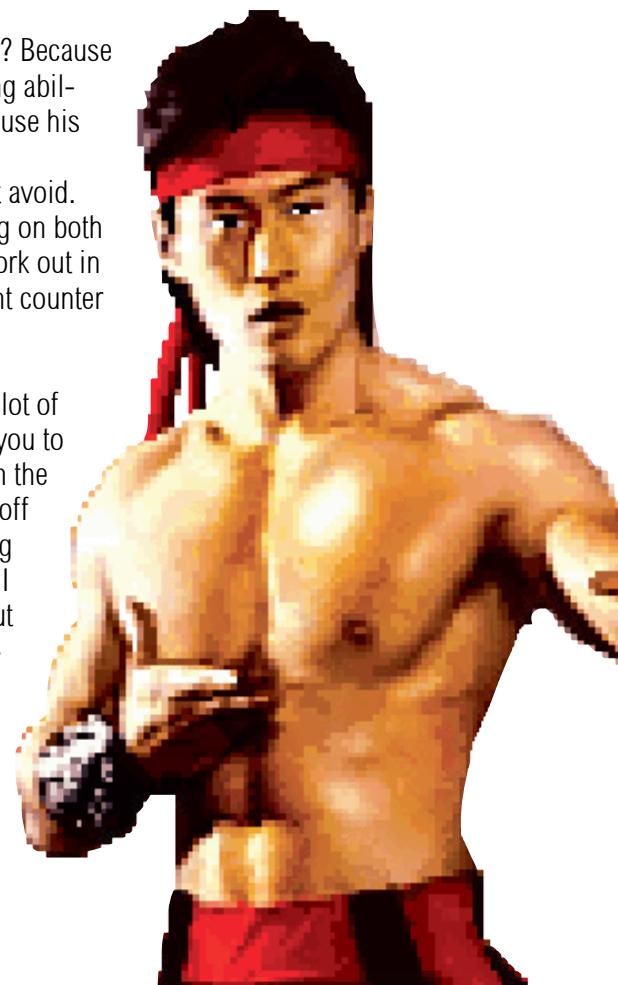


**Lyndsey:** The first round for the yellow-garbed vengeance ninja was a little too close for comfort. Why? Because Scorpion is and should be faster than Liu Kang and should be able to take advantage of his teleporting ability, something I didn't do enough of. Though he made use of his strong uppercut, Scorpion still didn't use his Spear enough and Liu Kang capitalized on that easily.

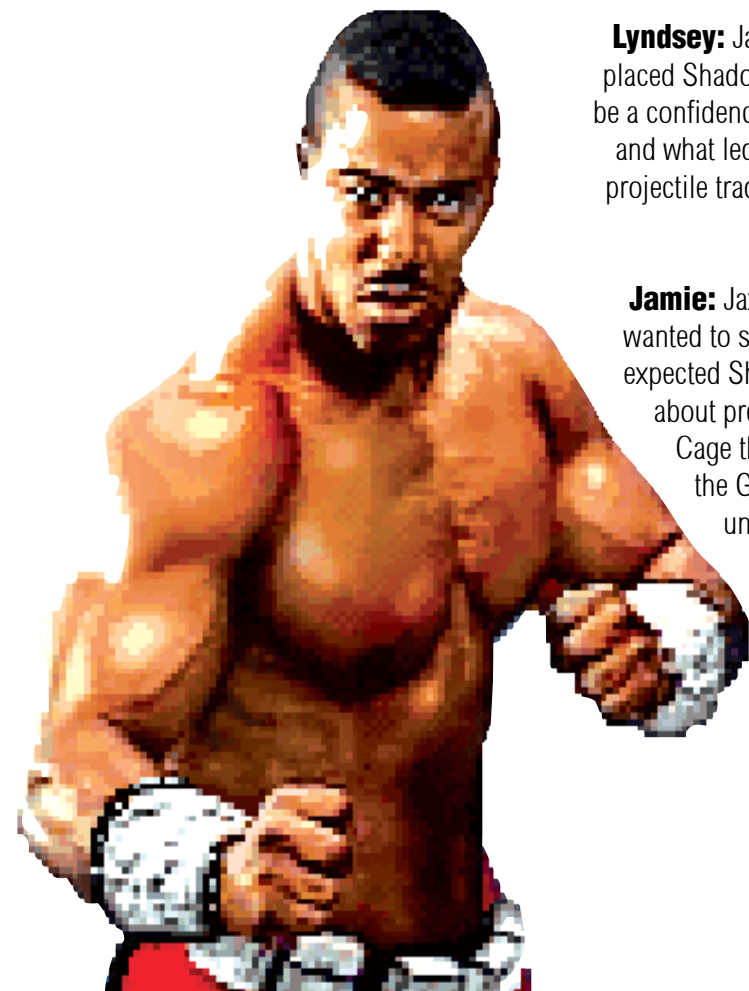
The second round showed that beating Liu Kang means not making mistakes, something I also didn't avoid. Because of that, it came down to a third round, and immediately I was at a disadvantage. A lot of poking on both sides meant a slow-paced match, which neither Scorpion nor Liu Kang need. This definitely did not work out in Scorpion's favor as he lost the match by a wide margin, and was also on the receiving end of a brilliant counter from Liu Kang at the end.

**Jamie:** Playing as the "chosen one," you need to remember that you don't have to jump to cover a lot of distance between you and your opponent. Liu Kang's Flying Kick and Bicycle Kick can get you to them in a hurry. But against Scorpion's Teleport, you may be moving quickly to a Spear in the back of the neck. In this match, I wanted to apply enough pressure to Scorpion to throw off his game plan. I wanted to remain close to him and still remain alert to prevent getting hit by a Spear. A jump kick-Fireball combo connected against the yellow ninja, and I went for the kill with a Flying Kick. The Flying Kick miss and a Teleport Punch all but sealed the round for Liu Kang. I expected a jumping attack, and I believe my opponent was expecting a Flying Kick or a Bicycle Kick at the start of Round 2. A failed Flying Attack was met with a patent Scorpion Spear-Uppercut combo. I kept Lyndsey off balance with a few jump kicks and Low Fireball attacks. Round 3 tactics were to remain passive-aggressive to see if Scorpion was changing tactics. A few sweeps and a Bicycle Kick lead to Liu Kang advancing.

**Winner:** Liu Kang



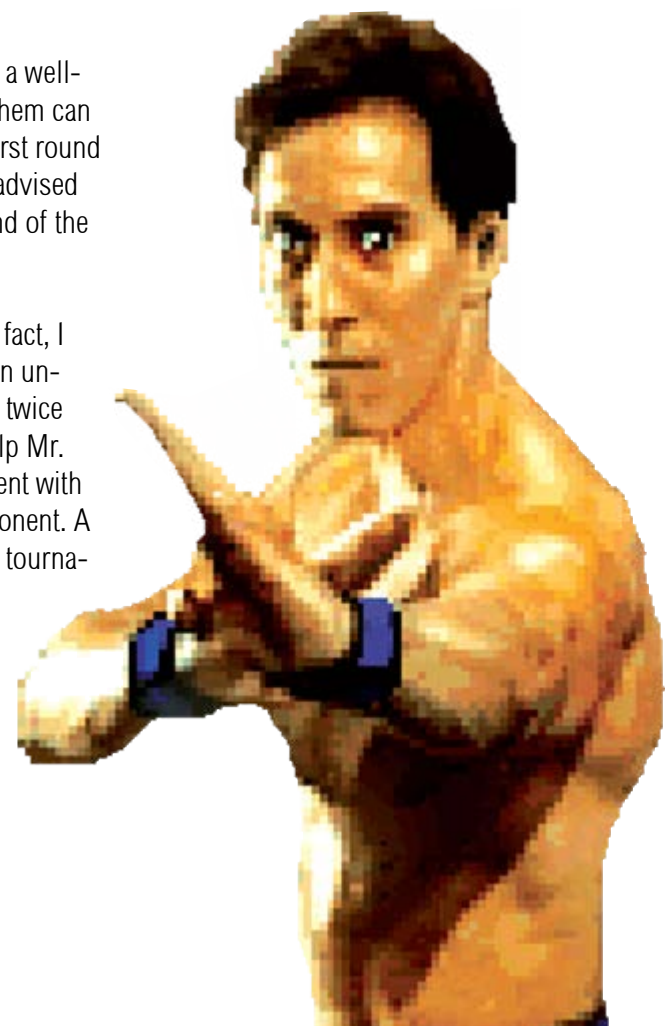
# JAX VS. JOHNNY CAGE



**Lyndsey:** Jax started out well with a well-timed Backbreaker, but immediately fell victim to a well-placed Shadow Kick from Johnny Cage. As we've noted in previous matches, getting hit by them can be a confidence and momentum buster quickly. That's partially what happened to Jax in the first round and what led to a loss there. Jax fared even worse in the second round, thanks to some ill-advised projectile trades. He couldn't get momentum going though there was a flash of it near the end of the match with a jump kick – Energy Wave combo, but alas, it wasn't enough.

**Jamie:** Jax's uppercut is painful if you are on the receiving end of it. And because of that fact, I wanted to stay out of reach of it. The plan was to be close enough to Jax and try to sneak in unexpected Shadow Kicks without trying to jump kick. Jax's BackBreaker will make you think twice about pressing up on the controller. Staying close range and not jumping seemed to help Mr. Cage through the first round. Instead of countering a jump attack with an uppercut, I went with the Groin Punch in an attempt to slow the pace and maybe lower morale for my opponent. A unexpected Shadow Kick and a Rising Elbow helped me keep Johnny Cage in the tournament and put Jax out.

**Winner:** Johnny Cage





# match analysis: round 5

## LIU KANG VS. MILEENA



**Lyndsey:** Opening the match, Liu Kang got good offense going against the speed queen. Following up a missed Flying Kick with another helped him gain traction despite getting hit with a one-two-three combo of a Ground Roll-sweep-throw from Mileena. Ending the first round in a pull-the-trigger-first moment, Liu Kang managed to notch a victory. However, despite only a few missed Flying Kicks, they proved to be his undoing.

Mileena is a character you just can't afford to have mistakes against. Liu Kang has to be just as fast as Mileena, and if he isn't, he's got to cover all of his openings to prevent the kind of quick damage she's known for racking up.

**Jamie:** The one thing you have to remember when you fight against Liu Kang is that his Fireballs can come out of nowhere, high or low. So, you want to make sure that Liu Kang is using his block button more than anything else. In the first round, Liu came out aggressive. I landed a nice Ground Roll-foot sweep-throw combo. But Liu countered with a Flying Kick-throw-Fireball combo of his own. In the second and third round, I played more passive-aggressive. I used Liu's tempo against him and a Teleport Kick help to advance Mileena.

**Winner:** Mileena



## JOHNNY CAGE VS. REPTILE



**Lyndsey:** Johnny Cage made the classic mistake of jumping into an uppercut at the start of the round. Though Reptile is slow, Cage should have just walked forward to cover the space. That mistake led to big damage for Reptile. Getting hit by the huge Force Ball-uppercut combo in the first round did not do Cage any favors. Also, there were a lot of missed Shadow Kick opportunities that could have helped as well as missed Groin Punch opportunities.

**Jamie:** The winner of a Johnny Cage vs. Reptile match is usually Cage. Reptile is slow and all of his moves have crazy recovery time. My tactic going into this was to watch out for Cage's Shadow Kicks and to use the bare minimum of special moves. The first move of the round usually sets the tempo and morale of the match. I landed a textbook-perfect uppercut against Cage in the beginning. Although I felt how big Cage's shoe was against my chest, I took the round. In the second round, Mr. Cage landed a great jump kick-Shadow Kick combo. Low on morale after that combo, I tried to stay close to Cage and look for any openings. It came when he attempted an uppercut, and Reptile slid his way into victory.

**Winner:** Reptile





# MILEENA VS. REPTILE



**Lyndsey:** An incredible mismatch of speed, finesse and potency is what characterized this match. In terms of tiers for Mortal Kombat II, theoretically this is the fastest and top-tier character in the game versus the slowest and lowest-tier character. We've consistently pointed out that Reptile is the slowest character, and this is the matchup where it's the most obvious and the biggest liability. Mileena doesn't have to do much to beat Reptile. All she has to do is keep the offensive pressure on him and bring speed, and that is what she did here. Despite actually losing a round (she isn't totally invulnerable after all), Mileena ramped up the damage and put on a textbook display of how to stop Reptile altogether.

**Jamie:** I felt that this match was going to be a complete uphill battle in 3 feet of snow for Reptile. Mileena is the type of ninja that Reptile dreams he could be. She is quick and can create mad combo opportunities. And, did I mention she is quick? The only tactic I had was to win one round at a time. Mileena's Ground Roll attack seemed to be a counter for Reptile's Slide. I only used the Slide if I blocked a Ground Roll or a Teleport Kick after that. But a knee to the gut laid Reptile flat after the first round. In the second round, I decided to be more offensive by trying to take Mileena out of her game plan. The starting uppercut followed by a Force Ball and jump kick told me to stay at it. A few well-placed attacks and I survived the round. In the third round, I just couldn't get anything going. Mileena cleaned Reptile's clock and showed why she was advancing.

**Winner:** Mileena



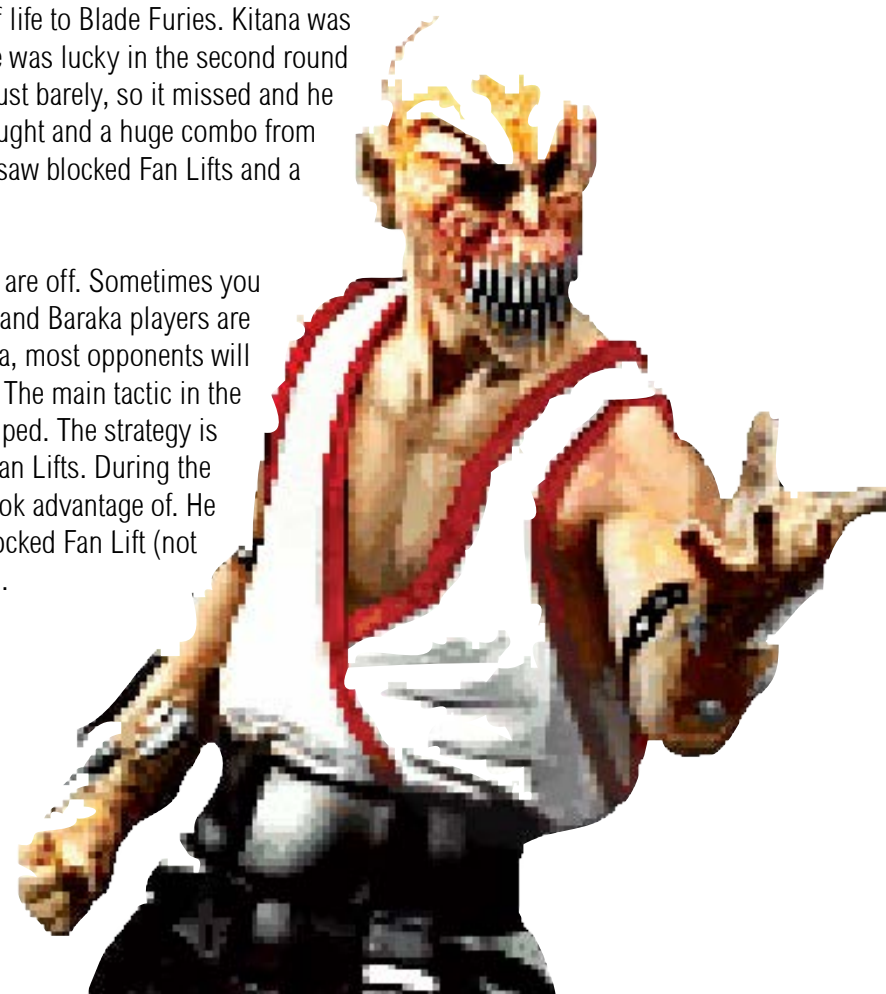
# KITANA VS. BARAKA



**Lyndsey:** Kitana has many openings against Baraka, but a Square Wave Flight is not one of them. Using that move and not judging space properly is the ticket to losing a lot of life to Blade Furies. Kitana was forced to go on the defensive and that is not where she needs to be. She was lucky in the second round with a missed Fan Lift. Baraka's Blade Spark projectile goes overhead just barely, so it missed and he could not follow up with attacks because it would have meant getting caught and a huge combo from Kitana. However, Kitana was quickly dismantled in a combination that saw blocked Fan Lifts and a throw.

**Jamie:** As I have stated before, the female ninjas' jump kick hit zones are off. Sometimes you just can't hit them with an uppercut. But Kitana players are aggressive, and Baraka players are usually passive-aggressive. This means that when you play with Baraka, most opponents will come to you. And when that happens, use the Blade Fury vigorously. The main tactic in the first round was to catch Kitana in a Blade Fury every time she jumped. The strategy is to try to get close enough for Blade Fury, but not too close for Fan Lifts. During the second round, Kitana used a Square Wave Flight that Baraka took advantage of. He did a single punch into Blade Fury for MAJOR DAMAGE. A blocked Fan Lift (not sure how) and a throw sent Baraka to the finals.

**Winner:** Baraka





# match analysis: finals

## KITANA VS. MILEENA



The fight was evenly matched between the assassins in the first round. Kitana made a crucial mistake — a missed Fan Lift — that Mileena could have easily capitalized upon for massive damage. This is Kitana's primary weakness: blocked or premature Fan Lifts, which can leave her extremely vulnerable if the opponent is able to move freely. Also, her biggest problem in the round was her inability to block incoming Teleport Kicks. Mileena took advantage of their speed and potency and sealed the deal for the first round.

Playing a game of wait-and-see in the second round, Kitana managed to patiently outlast Mileena's sophisticated gameplan. For every strike that Mileena employed, Kitana found a way to inflict damage. Mileena worked her health down but Kitana's bread and butter of Fan Lift-jump kick-Fan Throw was too much to counter without the equivalent flurry of offense that Mileena usually employs. Kitana won the round with just such a strategy.

The third round began with a measured strategy from the ladies. Each worked not to give an inch, which would have led to openings and loads of damage.

Eventually, Mileena found the right combination of offense and made the right move with several Teleport Kicks and Ground Rolls. Though Kitana was able to block some of it, the damage done was too much and Kitana lost the war of attrition.

**Winner:** Mileena



## BARAKA VS. MILEENA - MATCHES 22 AND 23

### Match 22

The finals combatants, at first, traded moves until Mileena broke through with a quick Ground Roll. Both used a variety of projectiles and blocking to prevent the other from gaining the advantage. Despite Baraka employing his patented Blade Fury several times, it did not have much impact as Mileena used a Ground Roll to go right through it. Baraka jumped out to an early lead in the second round as he built up offense to keep the pressure on Mileena. He correctly had her locked down and controlled the flow of the round with quick jumping strikes. Though he slipped a little with the fall to a Ground Roll during an attempted Blade Fury, he managed to even the round up with a solid jump kick. Round three of the first match saw Baraka lose for the first time because of a combination of factors. He prematurely used Blade Furies several times, and Mileena was able to capitalize. Baraka came within inches of winning but he attempted to use another Blade Fury, which Mileena countered with a Ground Roll for the win.

**Winner:** Mileena

### Match 23

Mileena began the next match with a potent-but-cautious offense. Quickly taking down Baraka with Ground Rolls and jump kicks, Mileena managed to deftly avoid most of Baraka's attacks. She recovered from missed moves and hit him every time that it counted with a spread of moves. The second round continued with the same ebb and flow. Baraka seemed to flourish at one point with a successful Blade Fury, which he had attempted throughout most of his matches. Finally connecting a second time stopped Mileena's mini-comeback and ended the second round. In the third and final round, Mileena boosted her offense with the intention of finally putting Baraka out of the tournament. The female ninja dominated with a combo of an uppercut, a blocked Teleport Kick and Ground Roll and another Teleport Kick. The misses didn't cause problems so much but they did give Baraka a chance to gain breathing room. Mileena attempted to walk in for the kill, but Baraka was able to successfully counter Death Punches with a Blade Fury and foot sweeps. However, despite his efforts, Mileena's Teleport Kick was able to hit multiple times, put Baraka in danger and eventually take him out.

**Winner:** Mileena

**Overall tournament winner:** Mileena





# GamePro chart analysis

	VS.	Mileena	Jax	Kung Lao	Liu Kang	Johnny Cage	Sub-Zero	Kitana	Scorpion	Shang Tsung	Baraka	Raiden	Reptile	Total wins
TIER 1	Mileena		7	5	6	5.5	6	6	6	6.5	6	6	7	67.0
	Jax	3		5	6	5.5	7	5.5	7	5.5	6	6	7	63.5
TIER 2	Kung Lao	5	5		4.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5	5.5	6	6	59.0
	Liu Kang	4	4	5.5		5.5	6	5.5	5.5	5.5	5	6	6	58.5
TIER 3	Johnny Cage	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5		4.5	5	5.5	5	4.5	6	5	53.5
	Sub-Zero	4	3	4.5	4	5.5		5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	4.5	6	53.5
	Kitana	4	4.5	4.5	4.5	5	4.5		4	5	5.5	5.5	6	53.0
	Scorpion	4	3	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	6		5	6	6	5	53.0
	Shang Tsung	3.5	4.5	5	4.5	5	4.5	5	5		4.5	6	5	52.5
TIER 4	Baraka	4	4	4.5	5	5.5	4.5	4.5	4	5.5		4	6	51.5
	Raiden	4	4	4	4	4	5.5	4.5	4	4	6		6	50.0
	Reptile	3	3	4	4	5	4	4	5	5	4	4		45.0

With the early rounds and now, the finale of Gaming Insurrection's Mortal Kombat II tournament, we've run a remade tournament wins chart that once ran in the now-defunct GamePro magazine. First appearing in issue 59 (June 1994), the chart was created through dissecting matches of two players, Mike Guzman and Martin Vega, of the California Mortal Kombat Association. We're breaking down this chart, which is considered one of, if not the best, professional tournament rankings for Mortal Kombat II.

#### Tier 1: Mileena, Jax

**Mileena** nearly should be a tier by herself. That's how dominating she can be in the right hands. Nine times out of 10 matches, Mileena is going to make her presence known with an assortment of speedy moves that will lead to a punishing absolute victory. Though she has counters (Kitana comes to mind), Mileena is hard to defend against because she has such a punishing offense. She does exceptionally well on the chart against Jax, Shang Tsung and Reptile. **Jax** deservedly owns the second spot. Most matches against Jax are designed to punish you for jumping toward him or standing still. Jax rules the air with BackBreakers and takes control of the ground with Ground Pounds. It's hard to fight against a good Jax that knows how to control space and use his Projectile Wave well. The male ninjas (Sub-Zero, Scorpion and Reptile) have the most trouble against Jax and will not do well in a majority of their matches.

#### Tier 2: Kung Lao, Liu Kang

**Kung Lao** is a handy character and good newcomer, according to the data presented in the chart. He wins, on average, about half of his fights across the board with above averages against Reptile and Raiden. What makes Kung Lao useful is his myriad of change-ups through his Dive Kick, Teleport and Spin. Though he did not fare well in GI's tour-

nament, that's because of a lack of knowledge on GI's part of his tricky hit zones and not his overall ability. **Liu Kang** is much like his tier counterpart Kung Lao in that he does well across the board against all other characters. He doesn't dominate but he isn't dominated against, either. The combination of Liu Kang's High-Low Fireball game and his out-of-nowhere Bicycle Kick and Flying Kick make Liu Kang a potent force to be wary of in high pressure situations.

**Tier 3: Johnny Cage, Sub-Zero, Kitana, Scorpion, Shang Tsung, Baraka, Raiden**  
**Johnny Cage:** The superstar is average and middle of the road, according to the chart. We tend to agree with this assessment. Johnny Cage isn't anything spectacular in MKII, and his performance in the hands of our tournament players also reflected this. He has a decent high-low game through his Energy Shot, but mostly it's nothing special except for his Shadow Kick. He would probably be higher if his Rising Uppercut was considered more of a factor. **Sub-Zero:** The ice ninja was obviously and deliberately neutered when it came time for the sequel, and the chart supports this with his placement squarely in the middle of the rankings. Sub-Zero was formerly a top-tier character, and he doesn't have much a chance in MKII since all of the male ninjas have some poor match ups (see Mileena's or Jax's description above). Though his Freeze Ball remains an important part of his arsenal, his Slide is obvious and his Ground Freeze — while more useful than the Slide — can present problems for him when he's trying to quickly win a match. **Kitana:** This assessment is the one we have the most trouble with. Kitana is a much better character than the one portrayed in her wins percentage. However, though we disagree with the statistics and our tournament results agree with us, we can understand how she isn't top tier. She isn't

particularly strong against most characters, and her moveset has a few openings that can lead to big gains. However, she puts up a good fight in most situations, and if used correctly, Kitana can be a strong character in anyone's arsenal. **Scorpion:** One of the most popular characters in the game and in fighting games in general should be faster and better than this. See Sub-Zero's description for the reason why because it applies to Scorpion as well, except substitute cold moves for a Spear and Teleport. The Scissor Leg Takedown is practically useless, though the Spear-Uppercut combo of yore is useful in that it guarantees at least 25 percent damage immediately. **Shang Tsung:** Despite his prowess at transformations, Shang Tsung doesn't do well in MKII. His shapeshifting is obvious and slow, and can be countered quickly, especially if you know the change's timing. The chart is explicitly designed with Shang Tsung not transforming in mind, so when you look at the statistics, keep in mind that it's mostly Shang Tsung fighting on his own with only three solid special moves available: Fireballs. Add in the fact that he fares extremely poor against Mileena, and you have the reason why he's at the bottom of the chart. **Baraka:** Like Kitana, Baraka performed exceptionally well in our tournament. He doesn't do so well in the chart performance tests. And it's for a reason: Baraka is a strange character to get a handle on well. Throw him up against other characters such as Mileena and what can he throw back? Not much. He performs mostly slightly below average though he can make a stronger case for being a little higher on the chart. Fights against Liu Kang, Johnny Cage, Shang Tsung and Reptile help his case. **Raiden:** The God of Thunder just doesn't make the grade, in either our tournament or in the chart matchups. He is definitely an under-performer and doesn't really dominate against many other except for his fellow cellar dwellers

Baraka and Reptile. Raiden's win percentage averages out to exactly 50 percent so don't expect to win a lot of match-ups with him. Raiden had a solidly bad performance against many characters, even those in his tier, and it's because he doesn't really have a way to counter without being left vulnerable. His Teleport is obvious and slow, and his Superman move really doesn't do much to catch anyone off guard.

#### Tier 4: Reptile

The very bottom tier of the game is Reptile. Anyone who has ever played the game even casually knows that Reptile is the slowest character in the game. His entire moveset is slow and does nothing for his competitiveness. Because he's a male ninja, he performs poorly against Jax and especially Mileena. Though he does have some matches where he may win half of the time out of 10 matches, Reptile still doesn't quite get the job done.

### HOW TO READ THE CHART

The numbers listed are the number of fights the character in the left vertical column would win against the character listed across the top in a 10-match series. A heavily red outlined box means a severe disadvantage. A heavily blue outlined box means a severe advantage. Tiers are calculated by the total number of wins. Equally skilled experts are assumed. Shang Tsung's numbers assume he does not transform.



In GI's recently completed tournament, there were some surprises in the hierarchy that shaped out of our tiers. Characters generally not known for prowess until later MK games made their force known, and a surprising theme kept emerging: underdogs. Those who generally were considered mid-tier characters pushed to the top of our ranking chart and others ... well, let's just say they went home early crying.

Our tournament rankings are based on performance in the tournament, i.e. order of the character's elimination and how many matches they won versus how many they fought and their final rankings at the end of the tournament. Equal skill level is assumed.

# GI MKII character rankings



**MILEENA**

**1** The queen of Mortal Kombat II showed why she is considered a universal top-tier character. Her speed served her well throughout and very few characters (like Kitana and Baraka) gave her trouble. Her extremely good selection of moves and hard-to-counter speed wrapped up the victory in a particularly easy fashion for her.  
**GP rank: 1; number of matches fought: 9; number of matches won: 8**



**BARAKA**

**2** Despite his awkward style, Baraka continuously showed up in the winner's bracket. Never losing until the finals, Baraka took his former position in tier 3 of the GamePro rankings and ran with it all the way to the end. His strange hit zones confused most of the cast and contributed to him having the second-highest total of number of matches won in the tournament.  
**GP rank: 10; number of matches fought: 4; number of matches won: 7**



**KITANA**

**3** Although regarded as a mid-tier character in professional analysis, Kitana has always placed high with others and within GI's tier list. Her impressive selection of zoning moves and myriad of high-damage combos and pressure tactics make her a dangerous foe. Never underestimate what Kitana players are capable of.  
**GP rank: 7; number of matches fought: 5; number of matches won: 3**



**REPTILE**

**4** Reptile came into the tournament with a well-deserved reputation as the worst character in the game. He came out with fourth place. How exactly he managed this feat, we may never know. But Reptile is the only male ninja to have a decent showing, actually put up a fight and refuse to go quietly with a decent set of parlor tricks at his disposal against arguably better-empowered foes. Reptile embodies the term underdog if there is such a thing in MKII.  
**GP rank: 12; number of matches fought: 4; number of matches won: 2**



**JOHNNY CAGE**

**5** The movie star proved he's a solid character to make a run through any tournament involving Mortal Kombat II physics. Cage put up a good showing with surprising victories and great liberal usage of his patented Shadow Kick. Cage held his own by putting his foot into a lot of chests.  
**GP rank: 5; number of matches fought: 4; number of matches won: 2**



**LIU KANG**

**6** The chosen one wasn't so chosen in our tournament. As Johnny Cage asked in the MK movie, "What's so special about you?" Well, there's something special about Liu Kang in that he tied for fifth and gave the upper echelon of the tournament plenty of trouble. The problem is he couldn't stop Mileena's roll to the finals.  
**GP rank: 4; number of matches fought: 4; number of matches won: 1**



**JAX**

**7** The normally top-tier military man failed to make a sizable impression in the tournament. Normally dishing out punishing damage and counters for the mistake-prone who take him on, Jax really could not get offense going in any of his meager appearances. The strongest man in the world had a poor showing, only winning once. We expected more from this powerhouse.  
**GP rank: 2; number of matches fought: 3; number of matches won: 1**



**SCORPION**

**8** Another powerhouse character that should have fared better, Scorpion is unique in a bad way in MKII. His moves are slightly neutered, and he seems slow as a male ninja that was once at the top of the heap. The strangeness of Scorpion was certainly a hindrance in this tournament as he seemed to be outclassed in nearly every match-up.  
**GP rank: 7; number of matches fought: 3; number of matches won: 1**



**RAIDEN**

**9** The God of Thunder swiftly became the God of Not Winning with his poor performance. Raiden is not a tournament-viable option and that was proven with his extremely poor win percentage and early exit after two matches.  
**GP rank: 11; number of matches fought: 2; number of matches won: 0**



**SUB-ZERO**

**10** Much like Scorpion, the ice-cold ninja did not fare well in the tournament. Also, like Scorpion, he was once top-tier and suffered an ignominious drop in MKII, which hurt him in this tournament. Everything that Sub-Zero tried to do to move ahead in the tournament backfired, and he was pushed out early because of slow moves and a lack of offense.  
**GP rank: 5; number of matches fought: 2; number of matches won: 0**



**SHANG TSUNG**

**11** There's not much to say about the game's resident shape-shifter. Even with his allowed morphing abilities, he still did not do well in matches. It's no secret that in order to master Shang Tsung, one must learn the correct timing of his morphs and all other characters in the game. We couldn't accomplish that here, and that's a primary reason for Shang Tsung's ouster.  
**GP rank: 9; number of matches fought: 2; number of matches won: 0**



**KUNG LAO**

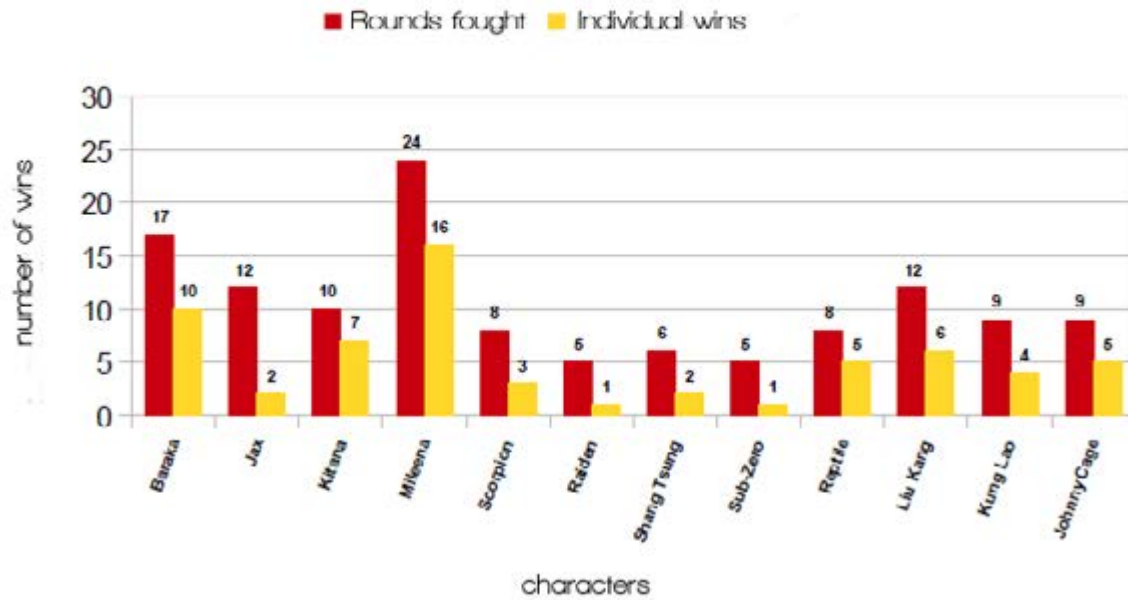
**12** At the very bottom of the heap is someone who is near-universally acclaimed as one of the game's strongest characters. Kung Lao was expected to go far — not necessarily win the tournament, but at the very least show in the semifinals. But Kung Lao started weak and never recovered. He was the first to be eliminated, and no amount of top-tier magic could bring him back. So, what was his downfall? A lack of offense and wide-open defense are culprits. Kung Lao is better than this and should have shown it.  
**GP rank: 3; number of matches fought: 3; number of matches won: 1**



# tournament statistics

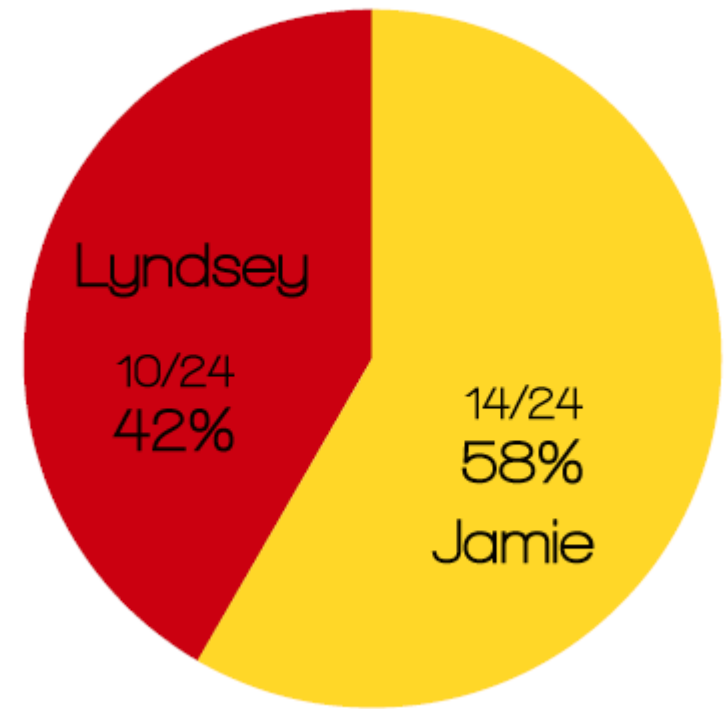
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How characters fared individually



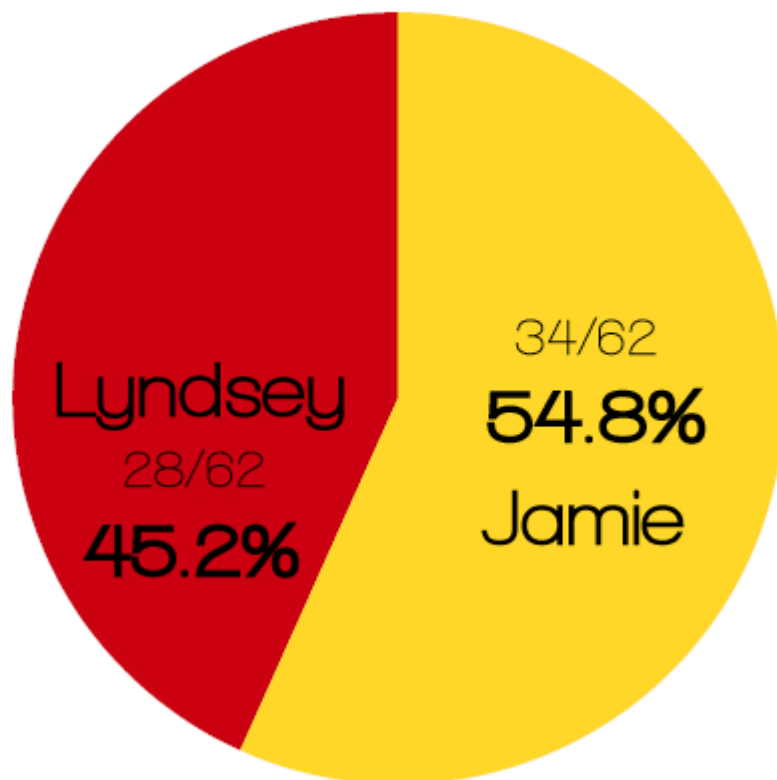
Match wins percentage - players

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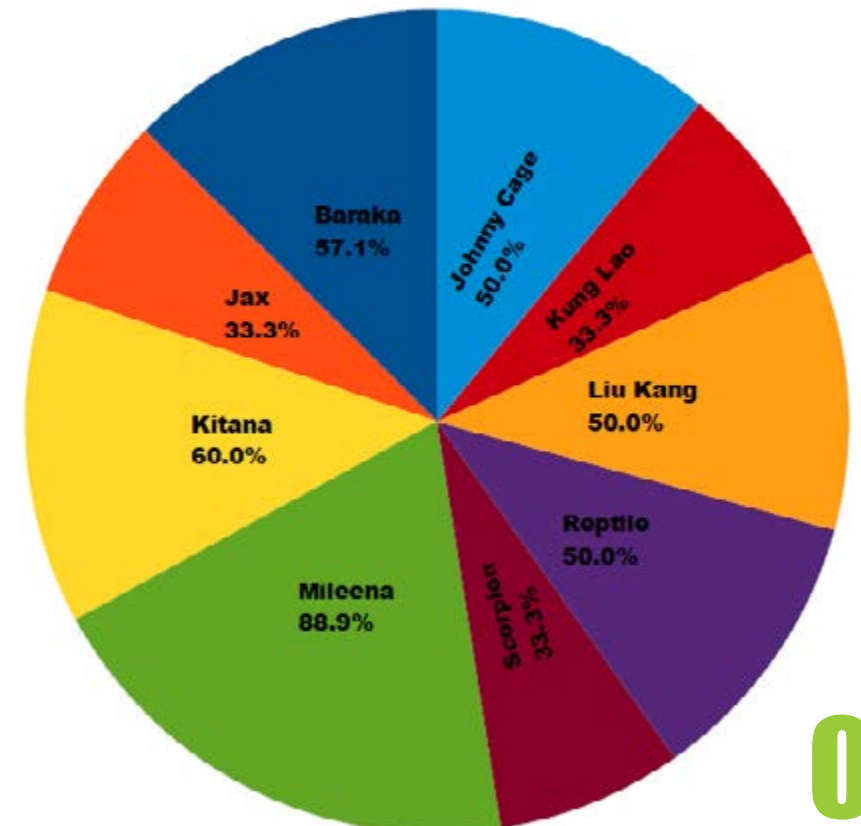


Wins percentage - Individual rounds

02



Match wins percentage - characters



04