

Masahiro Sakurai shows off a prototype of the game that would become Smash Bros.

Masahiro Sakurai is a YouTuber now, and in his latest video, he showed off a “never-before-seen” clip of the prototype that would eventually become *Super Smash Bros*. You can feast your eyes on *Dragon King: The Fighting Game* beginning at 1:25 in the video at the top of this post or jump directly to that moment by clicking this link.

The *Dragon King* footage is clearly from an early stage of development, but you can already see elements that are now core to the *Smash* franchise, like percentages representing health, the iconic three-platform “Battlefield” stage layout, and characters flying off the edges of the screen to their deaths. Fighters were just polygonal humans – not Nintendo characters – and they could use moves like smash attacks, midair jumps, shields, dashes, and aerial attacks. “There were no special moves, dodges, or even items yet, but the game’s rules were basically the same as *Smash Bros.*,” Sakurai said.

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Dragon King was actually one of two games Sakurai was prototyping at the time. The other was an “RC robot adventure game where you hacked into security cameras to progress,” he said. For both, Sakurai did the design, graphics, modeling, and animation, while the late Satoru Iwata, who was also known as a star programmer before he became the president of Nintendo, took care of the programming. Ultimately, Sakurai moved forward with the fighting game because it could be completed more quickly.

Sakurai talked about some of the philosophy behind *Smash Bros.*, which to this day remains pretty different from most other fighting titles. He felt that complicated and combo-focused games could be alienating. Instead, *Smash* relies on simpler controls and the accumulating damage system to be more welcoming to players and encourage improvisation. The addition of Nintendo characters came later in development. While the characters of course made it into the final game, Nintendo's wholesalers and sales teams "flat out rejected the idea of having Nintendo's characters beat each other up" ahead of release, Sakurai said. (The first *Smash Bros.* was also the game that decided Kirby's now-distinct voice.)

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