

Disclaimer

The games and win rates might not add up because sometimes I write at a later date. Some of the information below are rough estimates. This is just a rough gist of how my progression on KOF XV was like.

Aug 30 (First bought KOF XV)

I decided to get KOF XV since it was on sale (at about 15 dollars). At this point I've only played Brawlhalla (platform fighter) and Street Fighter 6. I played SF6 on modern so KOF XV is technically the first motion input game I'm trying. I honestly thought that KOF XV was going to be like any other 2D fighter but I was in for a surprise. To add on KOF XV is going to be the first time I'm trying to learn to use an arcade stick, I've played Brawlhalla on keyboard and SF6 on leverless. I had always been interested in arcade sticks and decided to buy a pre-owned one to try out. Rather than rewriting my muscle memory from SF6, I decided to try a new game along with it. I immediately hop into rank (I believe that is the fastest way for me to learn in every game). After the 3 mandatory AI games, I got placed in **rank 12**. I started playing with real humans and got trashed so hard I dropped till **rank 8**. And that pretty much sums up my first two days playing KOF XV, logging on and getting a real good beating. Ending off the first two days with probably a win lose ratio of 1:3.

I settled on my 3 characters, Mai, Meitenkun, and Nakoruru.

Sep 1 to Sep 10

I continued to play the game everyday and research more about the game, youtube content and reddit posts. I did not expect to love KOF XV this much as it felt like a mix of both the face-paced nature of a platform fighter and the fundamentals of a standard 2D fighter. I learnt important mechanics like hops and the danger of wake up throws. I also realised that I was too defensive, I was just holding down+back and trying to observe my opponent but was quickly overwhelmed with all the offensive options. Within this time frame of watching videos, researching content, and smashing my head against rank, I managed to reach **rank 20** (my first small achievement). During this period I also switched out Nakoruru for Kula. My terrible winrate got better to around 52% but I took a big loss streak afterwards and fell back to **rank 16**. I realised I hit a wall. I have to change up my gameplan to make any form of progression. Discouraged by this loss, I decided to make my first reddit post, asking for help regarding improvement and the lack of resources.

Sep 11

Thanks to the helpful responses from other KOF players on reddit, I managed to improve my gameplay and make a comeback. I switched out Kula for Blue Mary, still unsure of who I want as my last character. Having to learn 3 characters was too much of a daunting task for me. I started practicing Meitenkun's BNB combos, as I realised that my character model has to be ridiculously close to use the auto combo (which results in getting thrown alot). I still continued attempting the auto combos with Mai and Blue Mary though as I didn't want to overwhelm myself.

Sep 12 to Sep 13

During these two days, I continued to play everyday, but for shorter sessions. Focusing on key areas like trying my BNB combos in training mode for 5 minutes. Grapplers that I was struggling so hard against were starting to feel more manageable with the tips I got on reddit. I felt really productive, despite the shorter sessions, I was playing better. A simple BNB combo that dealt such minimal damage felt so good to finally connect in a real match. Spirits were up, the feeling of improvement was coming back to me.

Sep 14 to Sep 16

I reached back **rank 20** and my win rate was back at 50%. I started looking up Mai BNB combos and practiced them in the lab. I decided to swap positions as I had enough practice with Meitenkun, I decided to put Mai first so I can get a hang of her BNB. I was still unsure about Blue Mary, so I dropped her for Kukri, then Shermie, then O.Chris. By Sep 16, I was fairly comfortable with Meitenkun's inputs and gameplan (of course I still dropped combos and dont hold charge long enough). But Meitenkun was my strongest character. I also decided to swap back to Blue Mary and started working on her BNB combos too. As of now I'm still swapping the positions around because I still want to practice Blue Mary and Mai. But in future my ideal setup will be

1. Point - Blue Mary
2. Mid - Meitenkun
3. Anchor - Mai

Sep 18 to Sep 19

I took a day break and came back to the grind on Sep 18. For some reason I was extremely locked in. I was able to pull off Blue Mary's BNB consistently. I started focusing on Mai's BNB to further improve my ability to meter dump to close out the game. Sep 18 was an exceptional day for me, I finished the day at **rank 24** with a 14win 4lose ratio. I also started exploring oki setups and safejump setups for

Meitenkun, but haven't really implemented anything successfully in game yet though. Sep 19 was pretty good too, I had a 22win 11lose ratio. I noticed people above rank 30 started doing quickmode combos alot. I think I should start learning them too. I still have a lot to learn. I finished Sep 19 at **rank 27**.

Sep 20

Today is a thoughtless day. I just kept playing. Throughout the whole day I probably had like 3 sessions. I took a big fat beating as soon as I logged on and went on a 7 game lose streak to start the day off. But mental was still fine, I wasn't tilting. Fought a bunch of people significantly higher rank than me, won some, lost some. Not much opinion about today, I played decently. I don't see anything that urgently requires changing as of yet. I finished the day with a pretty mid winrate. 19wins 14lose ratio today. I ended the night at **rank 29**. I dabbled a little with max mode in training mode but it was just me trying to freestyle and incorporate it with my existing BNBs. I will look up an actual combo route when I'm planning to properly learn it (still not using it in matches anyway).

Another lingering thought ; should I swap Mai out? TBH I'm having trouble hit confirming into her special moves (specifically 2B>2A>Ryuuenbu [214C / 214AC])

*I can't seem to get her combos out in an actual game, even in training mode they're not really consistent
Maybe it's just a git gud thing, well I'll keep trying for now*

Sep 21

I played for less than 2 hours today. Got home late and had a short session. Literally just a chill wind-down session to close off the day. And also reached my next big milestone, **rank 30**.

Sep 22

I was in a bad mood from waking up early and, of course, it reflected in my gameplay. Looking back at it now, I actually did fine. I had a pretty good, above average winrate.

I even got to **rank 32** for a short while. Good progress but I wasn't super excited and celebrating cause I was in a piss poor mood LMAO. And then I got matched with a rank 40, which I almost won. At a critical moment, I didn't do my charge input correctly, causing me the game. Of course, the chances of me winning a rank 40 were pretty slim, but because it was so close and I was already in a horrible mood, I was really frustrated. I ended the session at **rank 31**.

Some thoughts

Combo execution aside, fighting games also tests our mental resilience. It's more than a game of two people throwing hits at each other. There are mental calculations, decision making, reading opponent's habits, and fighting our own emotions. It's a super bad idea to play fighting games when tired, combo executions might be sloppy, reactions might be slow, and emotions might not be stable. This is something I always knew, since playing Brawlhalla and Street Fighter. When the mood is bad, the gameplay is bad. But I obviously still lack the self discipline to take a break. I believe this applies to many other people too.

Sep 23

I spiraled down on a losing streak till I'm **rank 29**. Looking pretty bad. I probably lost at least 10 games in a row today. I decided to stop playing for now and take a break. Some closing thoughts from this session, after reaching rank 30, I've been fighting people of a higher skill level now (I think so?). The difference in skill has become apparent. I got absolutely destroyed by a rank 40, and I'm struggling to even win against people around my rank. Not sure if it's because of tilt or lack of experience, but I noticed I have been dropping my combos alot today. Simple hit confirms like Meitenkun's 2B>2A>2A>4B are dropping, and I'm still struggling with landing Mai combos. I'm considering taking a few days break and I'll come back fresher. But honestly I don't know if I have the self discipline to keep my hands off the game. I do plan to keep playing, hopefully I can get out of this slump soon.

Sep 23 pt 2

As expected, two hours later I'm back on the game. But much fresher and with a clearer head now. I'm trying to play with an open mind and be more careful about my opponent's decisions and habits. Adding up yesterday and today, I probably lost more than 25 games and won less than 10.

key stuff I must improve on...

- People start to use hop overheads more to start their combos, I have to throw more predictive jabs to stop their offense.
- Get comfortable with hopping overhead as a combo starter
- Stop using punishable attacks (I got away with it cause I was lower rank, now I have to reconsider before randomly throwing something out)

Sep 24

I tried keeping my hands off the game but ended up playing for a short session. Still mid slump, games were pretty bad, but at least I think I won more than I lost.. I think? (at least a +5 I guess since I got back from rank 29 0 stars to rank 30) I managed to get back up to **rank 30**. Still not in the best state right now, but I think I improved at using hops. I'm able to integrate it into my gameplay now more effortlessly.

Sep 25

Had a short chill session before work, played for FUN. And it was pretty fun. Didn't put too much thought into it and let the muscle memory do the work. I got 7wins 3lose. I ended the session in my rank 30 to 31 promotion games.

Sep 26

Even though I didn't take a clean break from the game the past few days, I have been doing shorter sessions.

A couple things I have been doing right :

- Using more hops to start my combos
- Getting better at Mai (yes, turns out it was a git gud problem)
- Trying to use fuzzy grab option select more often

A couple things to improve on :

- Stop auto-piloting and attempting 2D sweep after opponent's block string
- Likewise, add hops after MY block string to dodge opponent's low

I noticed this issue after I was constantly getting my 2D sweeps hopped over and eating an overhead. I realised I was auto piloting during that small time frame. To fix this I've been trying to use 5A jab to counter the hop. But I still haven't been able to anti-air people with jabs consistently (did manage to do it a couple of times though).

Good thing I noticed my mistake, good that I know how to fix the mistake, and implementing the fix will take time and effort to overwrite the muscle memory.

Another problem I faced is that I usually attack too high in my jump to continue the combo when I land on the ground. And I can probably be using the fuzzy grabs option select way way more often. I just forget about it a lot. I didn't count my win loss ratio today but it's definitely better than the past few days. My Mai gameplay is definitely much better too, I'm able to do specials into supers more consistently now. There were even a couple of games where I made a 1v3 comeback with Mai as my anchor. But I definitely can still work on my hit confirms, 2B>2A>2A>236B/D.

Sometimes I drop the combo between 2B and 2A, or in between multiple 2As. Just some smaller details to work on.

I am back at my peak after today's session, **rank 32**.

Sep 27

Grinding and tryharding today. My winrate has finally gotten pretty decent again after the terrible slump a few days ago. Still trying to implement better hop mixups and tbh, I barely remembered to use fuzzy grab option select today. And also, I got clapped so hard by a Clark today, grapplers really are still my biggest hurdle. Apart from the analysis a few days ago and the few improvements I made yesterday, I don't think I had much visible improvement today. That being said, I still somehow managed to get a new peak rank. Currently just achieved **rank 34**.

Sep 28

Same thing as yesterday, nothing new. Just seeing how far I can get with my current ability.

I went on a small tilted losing streak and dropped to **rank 32**. But I took a few hours break and got back to **rank 34**.

Sep 28 pt 2

I had a short session before bed and learned more new stuff. During this short but productive session, I noticed how strong empty hops into 2Bs are now. I always knew about it as a viable mix up but I never utilised them, because in the lower ranks, everyone's either mashing or holding down back. So I didn't form the habit of using empty hops into 2Bs. Now that I'm getting closer to rank 40, I realised people are blocking based on their habit. Everyone blocks standing when you're hopping in, and immediately goes into a crouch block once the block stun is triggered. Doing an empty hop makes it so that the block stun doesn't trigger and the opponent will not crouch block. Thank god I had this short session, because not only did I reach **rank 35**, more importantly, I gained a new piece of important information to further enhance my gameplan.

TLDR ; the opponent does not crouch block because the initial cue, the block stun, didn't activate.

Doing an empty hop ensures that the cue isn't set off and sets the opponent up to be hit by a 2B

This is my understanding of using empty hops which I figured out, please correct me if I'm wrong

Sep 29

Played awhile before work and after work, well things aren't going too great. On a losing streak again. Just wanted to get some chill games in, no thoughts about today. **Rank 33** now.

Sep 30

Today marks exactly 1 month since I started playing KOFXV. Even though I'm winning today, I'm feeling kind of worn out. Might be because of the pressure I put myself under and non-stop analysis of how to improve. I had always been very stubborn and would not stop till I got some kind of productivity. But this time lowkey wanting to chill out for abit. I'm at **Rank 35** now. Might be slowing things down and taking more breaks over the next few days.

Oct 5

Been playing here and there, not really full on grinding. I've been losing and winning, my rank is still around the same at **Rank 35**. I made it to my rank 36 promotion games but I failed it. The difficulty is really getting really hard now. Today I got better at doing hop pressures into grab mixups for opponents that only hold block. I'm starting to struggle with Mai again. My 2B>2A>236B/C is having trouble. I will lab more tomorrow and figure out the problem.

Oct 7

Bruh I'm getting whooped so hard above Rank 35 it ain't even fair ㅋㅋ. Jokes aside, I've been losing a lot. I think my Blue Mary needs longer conversions to deal more damage with lesser interactions. Relying on the standard 0 meter BNB requires too many interactions. I'm still not really sure why my Mai combos are dropping, I'm still having difficulty linking 2A into 236B consistently. The amount I'm losing ain't even fun ㅋㅋ.

Oct 8

I had two short sessions. I'm pretty sure I'm net negative today but I'm feeling pretty good. I fought Immortal players today for the first time and I held my ground pretty well. I went 1-2 against the first immortal and 0-2 against the second immortal. After testing my abilities against two immortal players, I can safely say that immortal reachable. Despite winning only 1 out of 5 games, I came pretty close on most of the games. Even though I'm still not good enough right now, immortal is definitely a rank I can attain soon. After a bunch of back and forth, I'm still at **Rank 36**. I also noticed how to beat cheesy Shermie players who rely solely on crossing up, striking off a character from my PTSD list. (hopefully Clark's turn soon)

Oct 9

After a lot of frustrating back and forth, I somehow still landed in **Rank 37**. I'm pretty sure I'm losing more than I win though. Some key takeaways from today. I have to be able to adapt to different situations more seamlessly and stop resorting to habits. I think I'm falling back on my habits because I'm still not very familiar with an arcade

stick and still trying to get used to it. (even though it's been more than a month) That being said, I'm pretty sure my Meitenkun is strong enough right now. I'm able to win immortals comfortably with him, but my other two.... Blue Mary and Mai are severely lacking behind. And also, from day 1 I have been struggling with Goenitz's zoning tornado, and until today I still have not found a good way to deal with it.

Oct 12

I haven't been playing regularly for the past 3 days, but I did play a little. I lost till I was **Rank 35**. But today I'm learning how to extend my Blue Mary combos. And with a little progress.

Oct 13

Just had a short 30-60 minute session. I've pretty much gotten familiar with a 1.5meter combo for Blue Mary, further enabling myself to extend my lead if Blue Mary is able to get the first round. I also noticed I've been throwing my jump normals at the arc of the jump again, a habit developed from other games that will get me thrown in KOF. I'll be continuing short sessions and less play time over the next few days since it's the end of my holidays tomorrow.

Oct 14

I went to school, took a nap, played some 2XKO for fun, and finally went back to KOF. And I gotta say I performed much better than I ever did the past week. I guess the key to success is to have a life and actually balance stuff out rather than spending 90% of my time trying to get better at KOF. Just kidding, I'll confirm that theory once I actually reach immortal. I've also gotten pretty flexible at using Blue Mary's toolkit to extend my combos. I also got my first win against an immortal 2-0, feeling great today! Finishing the day off at **Rank 36**.

Oct 15

Crazy progress today. Not really sure what changed apart from practicing using more meter for combos. I've been winning a lot today. I think the shorter sessions the past few days cleansed my mind and I'm back feeling fresh again. I still got clapped by Goenitz tornado zoning today, still have not found a proper way to counter it.. Apart from that, I made huge progress today! Not only did I make it past Rank 38 for the first time today, I got even further and am currently sitting at **Rank 39**.

Update (OCT 15) :

I decided to hop onto the game again after my study session and I popped off with a win streak, pushing me to **Rank 40!!!** Super hyped and happy right now, 5 more stars to immortal !!!!! Crazy that I've been stuck at rank 35-37 for the past 1-2 weeks and suddenly after getting the breakthrough I needed, I conquered Rank 37, 38, 39 in a single day. Hopefully I didn't jinx myself with this journal entry. Hopefully I can achieve my goal of immortality soon !

Oct 16

I had a long day at school and spent most of my day at home napping. I played as soon as I got up and lost a couple of games. But after persevering, I managed to reach 5 stars and rank 40 and attempted my first trial. I went 1-3 and failed my first trial, RIP. But I continued trying and I'm sitting in trial now with a win under my belt. I would have liked to continue playing but it's 2am and I took 30 mins to find my previous match $\pi\pi\pi$. Just gotta win a BO3 tomorrow and I'm set!

Oct 17

I lost my first BO3, going 0-2... My trial is currently 1-2 and with only 2 games left, I have to get a 2-0 next. Thankfully I did win 2-0 and I'm finally immortal!!! My last game was super sloppy, definitely because of all the nerves and adrenaline, but I'm super hyped that I did what I set out to accomplish. The opponents were super tough past rank 40, whether it was luck or skill I'm glad I pulled through!

136Hours, 642W600L, 51.7% winrate.

END

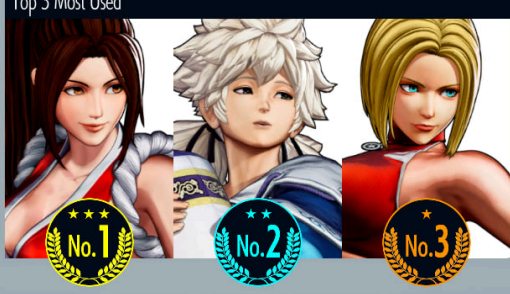
Starting this challenge on Aug 30, it's been 1 and a half months. I learnt a lot of new skills during this journey. I learnt how to use an arcade stick, how to play with motion inputs, how to play and love charge characters. On top of that I learnt many things about being a better 2D fighter player, which can transfer over to other games.

I believe that some luck was involved in achieving Immortal, the game sometimes matches you with people below your rank, and above your rank. Sometimes I win against people higher than me, sometimes I lose to people lower than me. I believe rank is not an accurate representation of anyone's skill level, but I'm just happy that I accomplished my goal of reaching immortal.

KOF is definitely not beginner

friendly, and I wouldn't recommend it to anyone trying to pick up their first 2D fighting game. But maybe you're like me and you love the fast paced nature of the game.

KOF is definitely my favourite fighting game right now and I'm really looking forward to the next instalment!!!

Ranked Match Records	
IMMORTAL	Ranking >>> Not Ranked
Total Fights	1242
Win Rate	51.7%
Wins	642
Losses	600
Draws	0
Top 3 Most Used	
	

Thanks for reading! I hope I gave some useful insights and helped fellow players with their journey to improvement!

food for thought ;

during Rank 32-37, I was so eager to reach immortal I totally forgot I was trying to GET GOOD at the game. I kept smashing my head against the rank queue hoping to win. After taking a step back, shortening my sessions, and working on my combos with Blue Mary and Mai, the wins naturally came together with the improved combos.

As my rank increases, my skill level should symmetrically increase

Even though this sentence might be simple and logical to comprehend, it actually slipped my mind while I was so fixated on reaching immortal. I totally forgot, what was it that I was working on? What was it that I'm trying to improve now? These questions made me realise that I was not even trying to improve my skill level, I was just brute forcing my way to immortal. I believe I am not the only one who faces this problem. Many people get so caught up in trying to increase their rank that they forget about improving their skill.

From Rank 1 to immortal, it's never a simple climb of just winning. To be able to keep winning as you fight better opponents, you have to keep improving yourself consciously and consistently.