

Video Game Review: ‘Tiger Woods PGA Tour 12: The Masters’ Elevates Golf Game

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on April 4, 2011 - 5:02pm

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CHICAGO – As the Tiger Woods controversy has subsided and fans of golf wonder more about whether or not he can reclaim his glory on the links instead of his personal life, a question for gamers has been whether or not the game franchise that bears his name could elevate its game after a few solid-if-unspectacular efforts. In one of the biggest surprises of the year so far, “Tiger Woods PGA Tour 12: The Masters” represents a giant leap forward for the franchise, delivering one of the best golf games of all time.

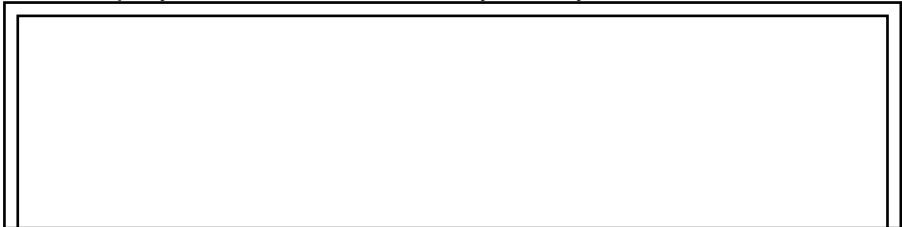


Last year, they tried to draw attention away from its star’s personal problems by introducing the team play of the Ryder Cup and this year’s edition feels similarly distracted from its lead (who’s not even really on the cover of one edition of the game, as you can see below), moving focus to, of all people, the caddie. In one of the best additions to a sports game in a long time, EA has added a partner for your gameplay, a man who can advise you on the best club, strength percentage, and angle to take for every shot. It adds accessibility and speed to the title in much the same way that “Gameflow” added to “Madden NFL 11” although it’s an even more landmark development for the game.



Tiger Woods PGA Tour 12: The Masters
Photo credit: EA

Don’t worry — the caddie is imperfect. Sometimes, you’ll want to customize your own shot and sometimes the caddie will just seem to steer you a bit wrong. In fact, as you accomplish certain goals on each course, then the caddie gets better and better reads on each hole. And if you want to play the old-fashioned way then you can disable the caddie entirely.





Tiger Woods PGA Tour 12: The Masters

Photo credit: EA

The main draw for "Tiger Woods PGA Tour 12: The Masters" is right there in the title. You start a career and build your way through Q School, the Nationwide Tour, the PGA Tour, and, of course, The Masters. And, for the first time ever, you can play at the Augusta National Golf Club. Practice before you get there. And you should still be prepared to scream in frustration a few times.

Another new addition this year is "Masters Moments," in which you can play through memorable, historic moments from the Masters not unlike the Madden moments from the football game. You can also play "Tiger at the Masters" and relive each of Tiger's four wins by trying to equal or beat his score.

But the draw is the career mode. It's the best career mode in a golf game yet and the first one to truly get its hooks into me to the point that I played round after round without break. You play through the PGA Tour, rising in the EA Sports World Rankings until you're high enough to play the Masters. The attempt to mirror the real-life journey of an amateur golfer makes for the most rewarding golf game experience yet.

As the game progresses, the customization gets deeper. Accomplishing things on the courses earns XP which can be used to upgrade skills and certain goals can be met to earn different sponsorships, leading to different clubs and outfits available in the Pro Shop. You can always play as a famous golfer, but it's never been more fun to try and make your own.

"Tiger Woods PGA Tour 12: The Masters" is not perfect. Some of the animations look downright goofy, especially the scant crowds who all clap and look in the same direction like a bunch of robots. Don't bother to put people on the side of the course if they don't look better than this. The hole design/recreation is remarkable but the graphics of the humans need more work.



Tiger Woods PGA Tour 12: The Masters

Photo credit: EA

As for audio, Jim Nantz rules. He teams up with David Feherty to lead the broadcast presentation and he sounds great. The music combined

with the nicely-mannered audio makes for a relaxing day on the links.

Every little tweak makes for an improved game. For example, if you're in a hurry, you don't have to watch the trajectory of the ball and can fast forward to its landing spot and your next shot. You can also save mid-round, which is new and long overdue. And, of course, you can now use your Playstation Move to golf like you used to with the Nintendo Wii.

Of course, like every sports game, "Tiger Woods" includes online play and, more than ever, multiple add-ons that are already available. In fact, you may be a little annoyed at how often you'll be encouraged to spend money on a new course to make your PGA Tour experience just a little deeper. It sucks to have kids skipping events after spending \$60 because they're being asked to buy more.

The last few editions of "Tiger Woods" have been entertaining but nowhere near addictive. This one truly is addictive, more so than any golf game in years. The franchise has surprised us all. Maybe Tiger Woods himself will eventually do so too.

'Tiger Woods PGA Tour 12: The Masters' was released by Electronic Arts and developed by EA Tiburon. It is rated E (Everyone). The version reviewed was for the PS3 but the title is also available for the Xbox 360, Wii, PS2, and PSP. It was released on March 29th, 2011.



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