

Video Game Review: ‘NCAA Football 12’ Wins Sports Game Championship

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on July 25, 2011 - 4:24pm

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CHICAGO – I’m not sure there’s any sports title of the year that I look forward to as much as “NCAA Football” and the new edition, “NCAA Football 12” is like another solid season from your favorite team — it doesn’t make any significant-enough changes to drop the ball but doesn’t really air it out either. It just moves it on down the field and wins the game.

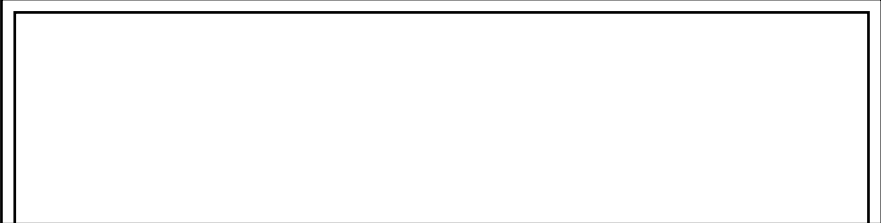


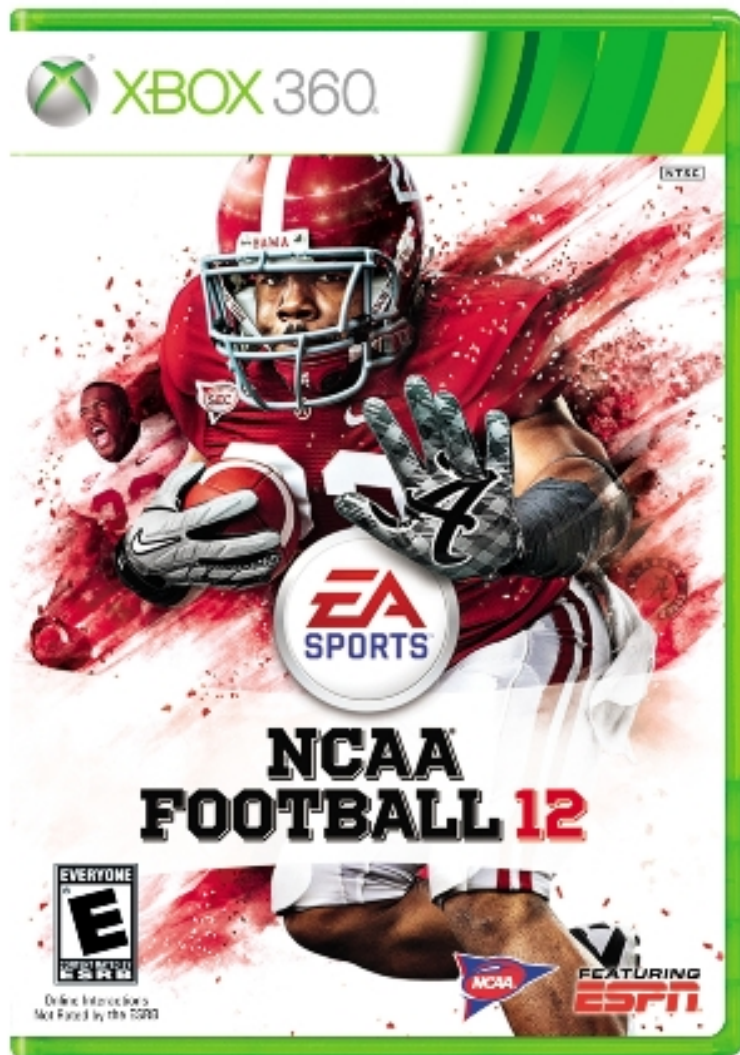
With controversies off-the-field dominating college football headlines recently it can be easy to forget how naturally cinematic the sport can be. Amazing comebacks, underdog victories, unexpected heroes — any weekend can create the kind of story that Hollywood screenwriters spend their lifetimes trying to devise. With ranked teams toppling every weekend and more-and-more parity leading to unpredictable superstars, how could a video game compete with the real thing? The fact that “NCAA Football 12” comes as close as it does to replicating what you and I love about the sport is amazing. It can never replace the real thing, but it comes closer to the same adrenalin-pumping entertainment than most of us thought a video game possibly could.



NCAA Football 12
Photo credit: Electronic Arts Inc.

Once again, as with most EA games, the main draw to “NCAA Football 12” is an insane amount of depth. Not only can you pick your favorite college team, complete with detailed stadium and mascot designs, but you can even recreate your high school football experience through “Road to Glory.” Of course, the details there aren’t as distinct, but just the fact that there are as many high school options as there are (and you can put in your colors to make sure it’s accurate or use Teambuilder to make it completely genuine) is indicative of the level of detail and customizable player experience. With Dynasty choices and RTG options, it’s honestly true that your “NCAA Football 12” experience will probably be unlike nearly anyone else’s.





NCAA Football 12

Photo credit: Electronic Arts Inc.

Once again, I built my experience around the University of Michigan Wolverines in Dynasty and, this year, created a stellar QB who started second string for Notre Dame but eventually earned his way on to the squad (through a new dynamic called “Coach Trust,” in which practice and in-game skills earn points that not only get you on the team but earn you more abilities like changing the playcall in the huddle.) Once again, both Dynasty and Road to Glory are DEEP. The former has a new emphasis on coaching with benchmarks (like winning six games in a row) and reminders if you’re sitting on the hot seat. You can even start off as a coordinator and work your way up through the coaching ranks. Road to Glory features 8-12 regular season high school games and the playoffs, allows you to play both sides of the ball, and features save-able highlights. You can share your exploits online in multiple ways, even through Facebook and Twitter.

Obviously, “Dynasty” (which can also be played online with real friends taking on other teams in your conference) and “Road to Glory” are deep gaming experiences that require more than casual gaming, but the title works just as well as a “pick up and play” title — something you can grab with a roommate or friend and play for 20-30 minutes before you go out on a Saturday night. Those players will be most concerned with game presentation and control, two elements that have been slightly tweaked in this incarnation.

I must admit that if the game has a flaw, I believe this year’s incarnation is a bit heavy on “big” plays and highlight-driven animations. In one game, I experienced (either on my side or the other) over a dozen sideline catches in which the wide receiver had to use their tiptoes to stay in-bounds. And yet not one fumble. And only two penalties. I know that most people don’t want to experience the minutiae of football and would rather have the jumping catches than a holding penalty, but the realism this year is a bit off in the default setting.

As for graphics, each of the school stadiums, mascots, and even cheerleaders have been lovingly recreated along with a few new mascots (Georgia Uga, LSU Mike the Tiger, USC Tommy Trojan, more) and entrances/touch traditions (Boston College Eagle Statue, Indiana the Rock, more). Overall, I’d say the graphics are about on-par with last year, no better but certainly no worse.

The audio of the game is, once again, typically strong with ESPN reporters providing commentary and a deep, new level of crowd noise. There are 200 total in-game sounds (as opposed to 50 previously) and crowd noise that was actually reported at a 100,000 person crowd. Audio may not seem like a major factor but it adds depth and believability to the game that you may not even realize. There are some glitches (my favorite being when Kirk Herbstreit congratulated me on my mixing it up on a drive that consisted of one long play) in the audio but they’re minor.

All complaints about “NCAA Football 12” are minor. There are a few glitches, some repetitive play-calling, some lengthy load times, but they all fade away when you’re in the moment and experiencing what this franchise does SO right. I like a lot of sports franchises and consider myself a fan of “Madden,” “NBA 2K,” both “MLB 2K” & “The Show,” “NHL Live,” and more, but if I had to pick just one sports game to have every year, there would be no contest. It would be “NCAA Football 12.”

‘NCAA Football 12’ was released by Electronic Arts Inc. and developed by EA Tiburon. It is rated E (Everyone). The version reviewed was for the Xbox 360 but the title is also available for the PS3. It was released on July 12th, 2011.

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