

## Video Game Review: Smash ‘Madden NFL 12’ Returns For New Season

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on September 13, 2011 - 4:22pm

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CHICAGO – Maybe you’re still shaking off the hangover of an amazing first week of NFL football that saw the Chicago Bears, Green Bay Packers, New England Patriots, and Baltimore Ravens successfully start their run at another post-season, but you should know about a video game that a vast majority of pigskin fans have probably already plunked more time into than Jay Cutler does his practice. “Madden NFL 12” is here— tougher and meaner, but basically the same great game you know and love.



Video Game Rating: **4.5/5.0**

Is there anyone out there who hasn’t played a version of “Madden”? Honestly, it’s one of the most reliable sports game franchises in history. And it’s such an immensely popular part of the gaming landscape that it’s had TV shows built around it and become a widely-acknowledged cultural reference. We’re quickly approaching the point where kids will know John Madden more for his video game than his playing, coaching, or announcing.

Last year’s edition of “Madden NFL” made some significant alterations to the hit series, most notably adding the controversial default option of GameFlow, in which the emphasis was placed more on speed and on-the-field action than play-calling or coaching. It’s returned and been amplified a bit by allowing offensive and defensive playcalling based on “Gameplan,” “Conservative,” or “Aggressive” strategies. You can easily get out of the quick play-call structure and choose from a massive playbook or you can play more like an on-field athlete and let the game call itself in a way that the developers think would be appropriate for the team and situation.



Madden NFL 12

*Photo credit: EA*

What’s new this year? Visually, the game is more detailed with darker greens on the field and more complex character animations. Most notably, the stadiums look significantly better, as Soldier Field feels more like the real thing and details (like the shadow of the Bucs pirate ship



on the field at Raymond James Stadium) add believability to the locations. I’m still often thrown off by the lack of detail in the crowds or sidelines, but this is a notable step forward overall in graphics from “Madden NFL 11” and that’s all we can ask for from year to year.



Madden NFL 12

*Photo credit: EA*

There seems to be a more refined attention to player detail throughout the title. The players I know well from the actual sport — Brian Urlacher, Calvin Johnson, Adrian Peterson, more — feel “right” in their “Madden” iterations. The level of realism on the field feels noticeably stronger than in years past. And said realism transfers to multiple areas of the game, including clock management (time goes much faster with the default 5-minute quarters than in years past as seconds are run off the clock between plays) and player flaws. Matthew Stafford’s release time is notably different than Jay Cutler’s, as it should be.

EA touts the new collision system that purportedly amplifies player impact and there is a noticeable difference on the line of scrimmage. There are over 100 new tackle animations and it’s not just a number. You’ll notice the difference. It also feels like the defensive A.I. is smarter and more keenly aware of your patterns. More than in most “Madden” years, you better mix up your play-calling or risk being exposed. Once again, EA boasts over 100 defensive enhancement, all designed to create a more realistic feel and flow to the game.

“Madden NFL 12” boasts a number of enhancements that were in response to player requests, a majority of which center on player customization. We all play “Madden” a little differently and wouldn’t it be nice to find a community of people who play like you do? Want the same quarter length? Game speed? Penalties? You can create an online community with up to 2,000 like-minded players. Within that community, you can form teams or merely play head-to-head games. Another customizable feature, reportedly the #1 most-requested enhancement, is a modifiable playbook with up to 400 offensive and defensive plays from 75 different playbooks. You can spend hours picking just the right plays and incorporating them into the GameFlow system.



Madden NFL 12

*Photo credit: EA*

The broadcast elements of the game have been refined with an overhauled presentation that now includes all 32 team-specific run-outs with new mascot and cheerleader animations. The camera placement and usage is now more stadium-specific. Once again, every year, the developers of “Madden NFL” attempt to add another layer of realism to the experience. And this year’s are mostly in the details from the run-outs to the stadiums to the blocking animations and so on and so on. It’s hard to point to one element and say “Ooh, that’s different and better.” But they add up to create a game that is arguably the best “Madden” yet.

The enhancements extend to nearly all modes. There are over 100 new features and enhancements to franchise mode, including hot and cold streaks that stretch from game to game, an all-new rookie scouting system, and more. The “Be a Superstar” system has an all-new progression system with new tools and audio designed to amplify the experience of going from unknown to Pro Bowl starter.

“Madden NFL 12” boasts that “no two players will play the same,” referring to NFL stars, but it could also refer to gamers as well. With the deep customization, immense number of on-field variables like injuries and penalties, and even more player-chosen setting changes, my “Madden” experience will be different from yours. I’m a Franchise guy, someone who loves taking a team through years of improvements, excitement, and even disappointment. But you might be an online guy or someone who just likes to pick up and play every once in awhile. Great sports games offer something for everyone. “Madden NFL 12” is a great sports game.

*‘Madden NFL 12’ was released by EA 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, Nintendo Wii, PSP, and PS2. It was released on August 30th, 2011.*



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