

Video Game Review: ‘Madden NFL 10’ Another Quality Release in Legendary Franchise

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CHICAGO – What more can possibly be written about EA’s unbelievably successful line of football games that bear the name of one of the best announcers in the history of the sport? If you haven’t played a “Madden” release by now (the latest “Madden NFL 10” is now available for PS3, XBox 360, PSP, and Wii), then you haven’t really played video games.



With such a stranglehold on the pro football market, the fact is that EA doesn’t really have to do anything but update the rosters from year to year and they would still make a massive profit. “Madden” games have become as much a part of the annual NFL tradition as tailgating, fantasy leagues, and making fun of the Lions.



Madden NFL 2010
Photo credit: EA

Consequently, it’s more notable how each edition feels a little different than the previous one than how much remains the same. The basics of “Madden NFL 10” are pretty much the same as they’ve always been. You won’t see any major upgrades in the play-calling, control schemes, or even the on-the-field graphics. The changes are subtle but still significant.

The tagline for the game this year is “Fight for Every Yard,” and there definitely seems to be more of a focus on tackling and increased difficulty in the running game. Don’t expect to break a tackle with a quick spin or jump and don’t expect to rack up too many running plays of twenty or more yards in a year, much less one game.



Madden NFL 2010

Photo credit: EA

On the other side of the ball, tackling feels more involved and there's even a new fumble mini-game where the players battle it out for control after the pigskin hits the turf. The developers of "10" have clearly placed an emphasis on play after the snap with much more detail and control during the individual play.

It also feels like a lot of the ridiculous "Madden" plays, like receivers with magnets on their hands near the sidelines, have been jettisoned for a more realistic style of play. You'll have to work harder for that first down, but it will be more rewarding as well.

It's not just ball control. New graphics include referees pulling players off a pile to determine possession, the chain gang running out to check the down, and tackles that can take up to nine men. Even the quarterback experience is a bit different with a more realistic pocket and a controller that starts to vibrate as it begins to collapse.

For a lot of players, the key addition to "Madden NFL 10" is the fact that you can finally take your franchise online in a 32-team league that features real NFL scheduling, live drafts, player transactions, league message boards, and more. You can even manage your team from your iPhone.

Other new additions include an online co-op feature that allows for you and a friend to team up online to battle the CPU. (Pretty soon you won't have to have any friends who you have actually physically met.)



Madden NFL 2010

Photo credit: EA

"The Extra Point Show" is a new dynamic, network-style show hosted by Fran Charles and Alex Flanagan of the NFL Network. As you're playing a franchise year, you can actually watch a highlight show of plays around the league, including hearing the announcers introduce the game you just played. It's a pretty cool recap and an addition to the franchise that the developers should definitely keep around for years to

come.

There's also a new broadcast style and very professional TV-esque presentation, but some of the graphics are still a bit off. Players often run with a jerky, robotic style, especially in what are essentially cut scenes between plays, and the stadiums may look authentic but the crowd graphics are often incomplete.

As for other negatives, some of the AI is a bit confusing - the running back too often comes open on pass plays, the AI opponent doesn't call an audible nearly enough, and some of the tackling on the line is baffling - but they are elements of the franchise that fans are used to by now. I'm not saying that we should give imperfect AI a pass, but the developers clearly focused on other elements between "09" and "10" and what they did focus on was truly improved.

A few graphical glitches aside, "Madden NFL 10" is clearly as deep and customizable an experience that a football fan could ask for this time of year. You can play one player (and even import yours from "Road to Glory" in "NCAA Football 10," bringing your guy up to the big leagues), you can play a team, or you can start your own franchise. You can play on your own, against friends in the same room, or against people around the world. "Madden NFL 2010" doesn't break the mold of previous years, but it also certainly does nothing to diminish the legend of the biggest sports game franchise in history. In fact, the most successful team in sports game history got better in the off-season.

'Madden NFL 2010' 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, Wii, PSP, and PS2. It was released on August 14th, 2009.



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