

Video Game Review: ‘NBA 2K10’ Dunks Over ‘NBA Live 10’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on October 22, 2009 - 11:42pm

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CHICAGO – It’s the same story every year. 2K Sports and Electronic Arts release their basketball video games at the same time and it’s impossible not to contrast and compare. This critic was looking forward to writing something like a scorecard, choosing which title wins in different fields like graphics, gameplay, presentation, etc. Sadly, it’s not close enough or a breakdown. “NBA Live 10” isn’t a bad game by any stretch, but the fact is that “NBA 2K10” beats it in every single one-on-one competition imaginable. It’s just a more well-rounded title and the clear choice if you can only buy one basketball game this year.

What’s interesting about playing the games back-to-back is how much the titles have in common but how the little differences can give one version the edge over another. The controls are nearly identical, each game includes updating season-long stats and scores, and both have almost identical modes. But “2K10” simply feels more accomplished. The 2K titles have long won the critic battle against the EA ones when it comes to the NBA games - although, to be fair, EA wins in every other sport - and “Live 10” does make a few steps in the right direction to make the game less of a blow-out, but there’s still a clear winner.



“NBA 2K10”

With fluid animations and smooth ball control, “NBA 2K10” beautifully recreates the flow of an actual game. Players can choose from a variety of modes, including “NBA Today,” which allows one to play the games going on that day. It’s a new feature this year and a great addition that can make a player feel like they’re actually controlling an NBA team.



NBA 2K10
Photo credit: 2K Sports

Like most modern sports titles, "2K10" allows for a variety of levels of involvement. Players can pick up and play any match-up they see fit or dive into something significantly deeper including a Playoffs mode, Association mode, My Player mode, and more.

All the modes in the world mean nothing if the game doesn't feel right on the court and that's where "NBA 2K10" shines. Fadeways, jump shots, dunks, screen passes - they all feel smoother than years past and the players rarely feel locked into animations or patterns, giving the game an actual on-the-court feel that's unmatched. The pacing is key to a title like this one, resulting in a title that doesn't feel too manic like some arcade-ish basketball titles but also doesn't feel clunky.



NBA 2K10

Photo credit: 2K Sports

The turbo system has been altered this year, making it not feel like such an overused part of the game. Now, each player on the court has a limited amount of turbo, making the choice of when to use it or not a part of the strategy of the human player. Reserve a little turbo for a fast break or risk being embarrassed if the opportunity presents itself and you're spent. In fact, if you use too much turbo, you may have to bench a player for longer than you otherwise would. It's a great strategy addition to the gameplay.

The offensive play-calling has been significantly expanded, allowing more choices and easier player control. As for the actual shooting, it's relatively consistent, although the title still feels like it has a bit of a rubber-band effect, making players miss shots if their team is getting too far ahead or having a CPU opponent sink every single shot in a come-from-behind situation. Even games feel this way with my Chicago Bulls going up 3 games to none against the Boston Celtics in the Playoffs only to have the series go all the way to game 7.

Defensive play is much like last year with lockdown defense returning again and pretty much working well. Teammate AI can be frustrating and it can sometimes feel like you need to control all five players on the court to adequately foil an attempt at the basket. As for turnovers, they flow smoothly and don't come too often to be unrealistic.

As for the graphics, the game looks gorgeous from menu screen to court. Highlight shots look professional menus screens are informative and well-designed, and on-court animations are strikingly fluid.

NBA Today will integrate not just player stats and styles but the latest news, trade info, and stats. It even updates information for the announcers to discuss. If Shaq had a big game last night in real life, the announcers will probably talk about it in the game you're playing. That's insanely cool.

"My Player" allows for an individual experience. Design a player with your name and attributes you admire in a baller and work your way up to the pros. Some of the "My Player" experience can be frustrating. I didn't like the unusual "goals" I had to reach in the Circuits like getting two assists in a game or stopping three-pointers. They seemed random and hard to control. And it's annoying to be chastised for giving up four points in a game. FOUR points.

Ultimately, 2K Sports make the smart move of not doing too much to reinvent their basketball wheel. The changes are effective and pretty much everything that worked in the past is still going strong. The leader is still in first place.



Video Game Rating: **3.5/5.0**

"NBA Live 10"

But the competitor is catching up. Electronic Arts' "NBA Live" series has had some serious flops in recent years, but they have released a fluid, enjoyable title this season, one that hardcore EA devotees will be certainly satisfied with. There are still a few players on this team that ultimately sabotage the effort to rise above "2K" but it's not a failure by any stretch of the imagination.



NBA Live 10

Photo credit: EA

The biggest problem with "NBA Live 10" is right there on the court where it does the most damage. Too often players feel like they lock into animations. I can't tell you how many times an opponent made a move that I anticipated but they headed to the basket regardless. There are too many times on the "Live" court where it feels like the defense is completely out of your control.



NBA Live 10

Photo credit: EA

There are also graphic glitches that are simply unacceptable and not there in "2K". Several times I saw players in "Live" run through other players and the game just doesn't have the same gravity as "2K". Players feel more like they float up and down the court rather than run and rim contact doesn't have the punch that it should.

I also felt advertised to way too many times in "NBA Live 10". One of the trophies is even named after Sprite and ads for "Transformers 2," T-Mobile, and Adidas litter the court. Subtle product placement is one thing but this is overboard.

Of course, these issues won't hold back a lot of players from having a blast with "NBA Live 10". Their answer to "NBA Today" is the "Dynamic DNA," another feature that seamlessly integrates the real life experience with the one you're having on your PS3. And the modes of "Live 10" are well-organized and designed. Audio and player models are very well-done, the rebounding is actually smoother than in "2K," and "Adidas Live Run" is a fun feature that allows players to set up dream 5-on-5 games.

OVERALL

It seems unlikely that anyone but the most hardcore NBA fans will buy both titles. So, how do you choose? As an overall experience, "NBA 2K10" wins the game, but it's a lot closer than it has been in years past and sports gamers are awfully loyal to the giant of their genre, Electronic Arts. I'm going back on the court with "2K10" but the winner this year was hard enough to discern that I look forward to next year's match-up.

'NBA 2K10' was released by 2K Sports and developed by Visual Concepts. It is rated E (Everyone). The version reviewed was for the PS3,

but the title is also available for the XBox 360, PC, PS2, and Wii. It was released on October 6th, 2009.

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