

With Madden NFL 22 arriving, these are the best football video games ever made

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Are you ready for some football?

On Friday, fans of the National Football League can jump in the digital gridiron with the launch of Madden NFL 22.

The release of the pro [football](#) video game from Electronic Arts not only drums up excitement for the upcoming NFL season, but the annual launch of Madden has served as an unofficial marker for the beginning of the holiday video game season, the most important time of year for the industry.

Football at all levels has had a rich history in the video game space, dating back to days of the arcade. And it's way more than just Madden.

Here's a look at the best football video games ever made:

10 Yard Fight

This classic started in the arcades in the 1980s before making the leap to the Nintendo Entertainment System. It was a very basic form of football where you'd attempt to move the ball up field with basic passing or running. Players will remember the rectangle-shaped running formation your blockers would execute on a kick return, as well as crowd noise resembling static from an old TV. I will forever have the quarterback shouting "Hut" stuck in my brain.

Tecmo Bowl

A legend among NFL video games, it too started in arcades but really drew fan adoration from its NES run. Tecmo was a bit more complex, but still downright basic compared to modern football games. You had the choice of two run plays or two pass plays. But that didn't matter because as long as you picked the Los Angeles Raiders with Bo Jackson or the Chicago Bears with Walter Payton you were set. Let's not forget it

also had awesome music.

NFL Blitz

This was the '90s pro football equivalent to NBA Jam, which makes sense considering both were made by the same game developer, Midway. This was another example of a game that hit big in the arcades before shifting to home consoles. Blitz was just as audacious as NBA Jam, with players moving at top speed while tossing footballs with smoke shooting out. Blitz also tinkered with NFL rules a bit. For example, you had to move the ball 30 yards for a first down instead of 10. It was also seven-on-seven as opposed to 11-on-11. It was also super violent.

NFL GameDay '98

Video game players now know Sony more for its stellar MLB The Show franchise, but they used to make NFL games, too. At a time when there was genuine competition among NFL video games, GameDay '98 stood out as being one of the first to introduce three-dimensional player models. The game also featured Total Control Passing which allowed you to lead receivers to a spot or underthrow to avoid a turnover.

Madden NFL 2004

When you release a new Madden every year, you end up with a lot of titles to choose. The question is which one? My pick is Madden NFL 2004 because of its cover star at the time: Atlanta Falcons quarterback Michael Vick. He might as well have been a cheat code considering how overpowered he was in the game. He had a powerful arm, but also ran as fast as wide receivers. You could run a Hail Mary play and then have Vick run for 20 to 30 yards. It was madness, but also arguably the most fun Madden title.

NFL 2K5

Back when there was real competition among NFL titles, the 2K franchise was Madden's prime rival. When Sega introduced NFL 2K5 to the world, they sold it for \$19.99 in July, an incredible price at the time and a clear shot at Electronic Arts' NFL game. It also boasted a crucial ESPN licensing partnership, as well a really strong Franchise mode allowing players to lead their favorite team. This would be the last 2K game as EA signed an exclusivity deal with the NFL on [video](#) games. But there was a multi-year run where any time a new Madden released, detractors would point out the supremacy of 2K5.

NCAA Football 14

The last release of EA's college football simulation was also its best. After several seasons where it seemed to dwell in Madden's shadow, this 2013 [game](#) finally stood out on its own. The gameplay was vastly improved, featuring virtual players that moved more like their real-life counterparts. Of course, there was also the superior Dynasty Mode, which let players build their own football powerhouse through recruiting. Plus, you had all those great college offenses you couldn't run in Madden.

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