

Gamers to bid farewell to FIFA franchise after 30 years

September 29 2022, by Joseph Boyle and Yassine Khiri



EA said last year that the game had sold more than 325 million copies over its three decades.

One of the biggest franchises in video game history is coming to an end on Friday with the release of FIFA 23, the final installment of a football

game that has entranced millions of fans for the past three decades.

US game maker Electronic Arts (EA) and global football body FIFA spent months negotiating over the [licensing agreement](#) that has underpinned the game since its first edition in 1993.

But they confirmed the split in May when FIFA said it would be seeking other partners and EA said it would rebrand its game as "EA Sports FC" from next year.

For the final version, EA has included women's club teams for the first time—though only from England and France—several years after it introduced women players.

Australian superstar Sam Kerr, who plays in the English league, is on the game's cover along with French World Cup winner Kylian Mbappe.

"It is—and remains—one of the most popular franchises in all of gaming," said Tom Wijman of Newzoo, a firm that analyses data on the industry.

The decoupling is risky for both EA and FIFA, with neither guaranteed success from their new ventures.

But analysts say EA is in a stronger position after spending 30 years developing and marketing the game.

The firm said last year that FIFA had sold more than 325 million copies over its three decades—reportedly generating more than \$20 billion in sales.

'Out on a high'

Gamers were less bothered about the corporate fallout and just wanted to play the latest version of the game.

Professional eSports players—some of whom earn hundreds of thousands of dollars for playing the game—queued up to livestream their first attempts.

"One of my favourite videos ever," tweeted Donovan Hunt, one of the most successful eSports players, linking to a YouTube video of his first try.



Chelsea's Australian striker Sam Kerr was chosen as the cover star for the 2023 edition.

Swedish gamer Olle Arbin livestreamed his first attempt for 12 hours on Wednesday.

Reviewers have been impressed by the game's improvements in graphics since the last edition, and praised additional features such as a "power shot" for giving gameplay another dimension.

"FIFA 23 sees the series bow out on a high, and provides encouraging signs for the debut of EA Sports FC this time next year," wrote Ben Wilson on the specialist site GamesRadar.

'Risky endeavour'

The video game industry, estimated to be worth around \$300 billion a year, has become increasingly cutthroat in recent years with the biggest companies buying up many of their competitors.

EA had a turnover of \$5.6 billion last year, making it one of the biggest game makers that remains outside the grasp of the four giants—Tencent, Sony, Microsoft and Nintendo.

The end of the deal with FIFA came after the football body reportedly raised its licensing fee demand from \$150 million a year to \$250 million—bring the total for the mooted four-year contract to \$1 billion.

EA will lose the right to use the FIFA name and competitions such as the World Cup, but it can still use player names and non-FIFA competitions such as the English Premier League—a key advantage over its rivals.

However, the firm was already pivoting increasingly towards club competitions, both on and off screen.

It is taking on a five-year sponsorship deal of Spain's top-flight La Liga

next year, for a reported 30 to 40 million euros a year.

Newzoo's Wijman said "EA Sports FC" has a good chance of success.

"Losing the FIFA brand may hurt EA's chances somewhat, but they have the game engine, development teams, marketing expertise, and branding expertise," he said.

FIFA could struggle to attract potential partners after its reported \$1 billion demand, Wijman said.

It would be a "risky endeavour", he said, "in any circumstance, but especially if you then have to compete with EA to build the most popular football [game](#)".

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