

FIFA 09: Hands On

FIFA 09: Hands-on Next Gen (gameplay)
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FIFA Informer have been playing the brand new installment in the FIFA series: FIFA 09. Focusing on gameplay, this preview is designed to give you some fascinating insight into what to expect this year. Will it be a championship winning performance, or mid table mediocrity?

Refined gameplay

Arguably the most realistic football simulator, FIFA 09 is no disappointment. As an avid and passionate football and gamer fan, FIFA 09 offers the best of both worlds. To kick off, one of the most impressive improvements is the style and manner in which players aim to win possession of the ball. Tackling and heading animation is visually spectacular. You can see players stretching and straining to reach the ball everywhere on the pitch. Each player reacts differently depending on their height, weight and even balance. Thus, the physical nature of football is illustrated extremely accurately. As a gamer, this depth and detail encourages you to not only concentrate more carefully, but also almost feel the exertions needed to win or retain possession of the ball.

Momentum

Responsiveness has been greatly improved. With more focus on the physical nature of football, it is a relief to report that triggering actions such as tackling and passing are almost as quick and spontaneous as the moment you think of the next move. The passing power bar has greatly improved precision passing, and also allows scope for some glorious one touch passing combinations. Crossing the ball, (especially from corners) curl, whip and curve splendidly. As always, dribbling can be a fun and cheeky way to bypass your counterpart on the pitch.

Although the game is extremely playable, addictive and enjoyable, I am slightly anxious of the overall gamespeed. Personally, the previous FIFA offered a gamespeed which was realistic but at times a little frustrating for an impatient gamer. In FIFA 09, everything looks as if it has been sped up; therefore distinguishing between different league styles is difficult. The legs of players appear to motor at an alarmingly rapid rate. What this often results in, apart from a slightly odd looking Peter Crouch, are easily achieved counter attacks via long balls in the air. Strikers almost always outrun flatfooted defenders who stand at a high line resulting in frequent one-on-ones. Nevertheless, it is important to note that these one-on-ones are unquestionably trickier than FIFA 08, yet undeniably more realistic. As reflected in real life, the gamer must find more creative ways to slot the ball past the goalkeeper, than just the easy clinical finishing in FIFA 08. The goalkeepers seem to have a brain this year which is comforting, but punching and parrying are a little excessive.

Presentation

Having scored a hard earned and rewarding goal, however, the gamer is faced with another decision – how to celebrate. First introduced in the Euro 2008 game, personally I believe that this feature is slightly wasted energy and adds no real value to the game. I would have preferred time spent on other more important details such as more unique in-game cut-scenes or slicker and more TV-like presentation. Other in-game gimmicks include the introduction of a referee who occasionally gets in the way (in more ways than one), and his flag holding colleagues on either side of the pitch.

Matchday experience

Overall, FIFA 09 is an exceptionally well produced and thought through game. Nothing radically revolutionary has been changed or added, but things that needed tweaking have reassuringly been tweaked. It achieves the perfect blend and balance of fun on-pitch battles between gamers, alongside accuracy and detail which simulates real life football.

The FIFA 09 demo will be available online for Playstation 3 and Xbox 360 on September 11th.