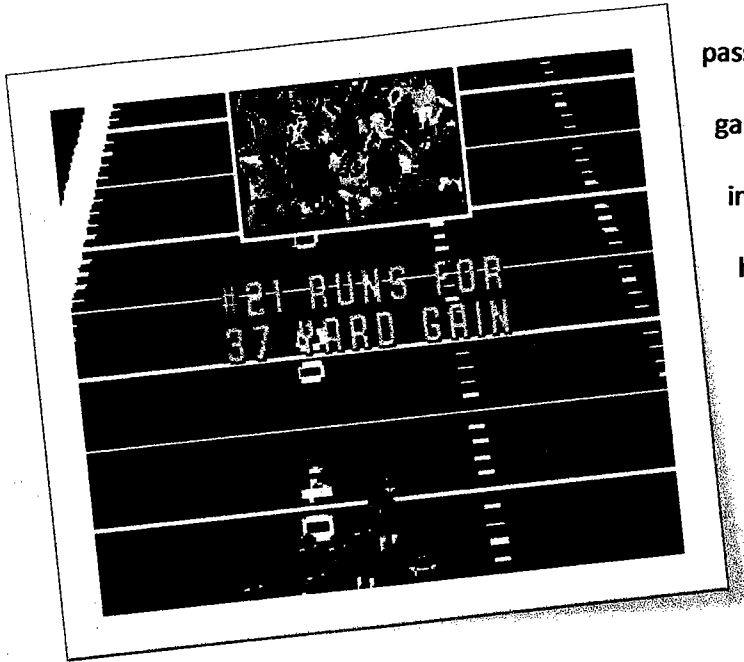


The Evolution of Madden NFL Football

The Madden NFL series is the most renowned sports video game of all time. Its in-depth game play, graphics, and overall fun factor has improved every year since its debut in 1989. Madden has appeared on many platforms, ranging from the original Apple II computer to today's newest console, the PS3. It has revolutionized the way sports games are made, with new features, rosters, control options and much more being added to a new title each year. In this essay, I will analyze the various utilizations of controls that the Madden series has adapted into its game play in three of its titles: Madden 93, Madden 2001, and Madden 2007.

Madden 93 is said to be the greatest sports game on the Super Nintendo (SNES) console. Other football games like Tecmo Super Bowl and NFL Football were extremely fun games, but did not capture the true feeling of professional football like Madden. One of the biggest reasons for this gap in the quality of game play was the input that NFL coach John Madden added to the game. EA Sports brilliantly found ways to take full advantage of the SNES controller in its game play. Of course, Madden 93 brought back all of its key controls from the previous year. You were still able to sprint, spin, dive, jump, and choose your receiver with simple commands of the controller. These controls were fun, but other games had followed suit and incorporated similar controls into their game. After witnessing these other titles produce similar products, EA Sports had to step up their game. In 1993, for the first time ever, you were able to command a no-huddle offense with the press of a button. In all other games, you could only perform actions like this through the start menu. Madden 93 also enhanced the running

game, which had previously been the gamers second choice in play calling. In previous football titles, the



passing game was heavily relied on, making games more exciting and usually resulting in inflated scores. John Madden decided to keep his video game as realistic as possible, making the running game a valuable weapon for gamers. The introduced lead blocking and gave halfbacks bigger holes to run through. These were some of the biggest achievements in sports game history, and

would eventually lead to a vast amount of controller-based commands.

Although I am jumping quite far ahead, Madden 2001 for Playstation 2 was another big title for enhancements in controls. In the previous years, many new features had been incorporated into the Madden Series including jukes, stiff arms, and the ability to control a player without the ball. The Madden franchise was on a tear, leading all sports games in sales each year. In 2001, it introduced the ability to call an audible from the line of scrimmage. This new feature changed the way people played the game. If you get to the line of scrimmage and do not like how your offense is lined up against your opponent's defense, you can simply pull up a screen and choose a new play. If the defense is lined up in a cover deep, you can now change your pass play to a halfback run. With the ability of the audible, you hold a huge weapon against your opponent. EA Sports didn't stop there. They also introduced the defensive audible, allowing you to do the same thing on defense. Also added to the Madden series in 2001 was the utilization of the right analog trigger. "Analog" passing was a huge addition to the game, allowing you to choose where, how hard, how long, and how high you want to pass the football. By simply pressing the analog trigger in the direction of the intended receiver, you could either hold down

your receiver's button for a bullet pass or lightly tap the button for a lob pass. The analog stick was also



used on defense. You could now dive or jump in any direction with a simple push of the analog in the direction desired. Madden 2001 was the first football game to use an analog trigger for passing. EA Sports would build on this in the future, making analog sticks a vital control in their games.

Last but definitely not least, Madden NFL Football 2007 for Xbox 360. Control features are bountiful in the newest installment of the Madden series. You are able to do almost anything that goes down in the real thing and more. EA Sports took full advantage of the analog stick in its newest title. The biggest feature of all is the new "Highlight Stick." This allows you to perform endless moves with your running back, including cut-backs, side-steps, hurdles, jukes, and of course many different power moves. You also have the option of spinning, diving, stiff-arming, and all of the other original moves from previous games. This feature allows you to run by the best defenses in the game if you perfect the highlight stick. If you try to perform a move at the wrong time, you are more susceptible to a big hit or even a fumble. On the other side of the field, you have the defensive feature, "Hit Stick," giving you the power to deliver punishing hits to your opponent. Another new feature that was improved from the Madden 93 title was lead blocking. You can now cycle through your linemen at the line of scrimmage and adjust their blocking assignments, opening up a bigger hole for your running back. A strategic

feature that was added to this game was the enhancement of the "play challenge," in which you can throw the red flag after any play and challenge the call on the field. In previous title, you could only challenge certain plays that seemed reviewable at the time. This is a great new control. With the



addition of the new Highlight Stick, I find it hard not to run every play because of the entertainment I get from running over defenses when using the new feature.

The Madden NFL Football series continues to produce top quality games year in and year out. We have seen the improvements in game controls over the years, starting from the revolutionary running game in 1993 and continuing with the highlight stick in 2007. EA Sports has been able to utilize the controllers of today's consoles to their full extent. Over the past 18 years, Madden has been the number one sports game on the market because of their yearly enhancements, and I am excited to see what they have planned for the future of video games.