

# MADDEN VS ESPN NFL



**WHO'S GOT THE WINNING HAND ?**

**MADDEN NFL**

**ESPN NFL**

# MADDEN NFL 2005

**Publisher : EA Sports, Developer : Tiburon**



Never before have football gamers had it so good, two powerhouse football titles going head to head with the same desire and enthusiasm as a battle between Dallas and San Francisco would be on 'any given' SuperBowl Sunday. But who comes out on top you want to know? Which is better? Okay, well we're coming to that but wait a minute. Games, and more importantly whether a game is good or bad is a very subjective matter. What one person sees as a realistically modelled NFL defensive lineman might be a Frankenstein monster to somebody else. The 'war' between these two football games has often been fought out on internet message boards as the real life battle has been a consistent and overwhelming victory for EA over recent years. Which brings me to the inevitable boxing analogy. The one about how Sega and their NFL 2k series keep picking themselves up off of the canvas and coming back for more year after year. No references to Mike Tyson please, that would be unfair. However, this year Sega have put a ton more effort into the game and produced a genuine contender. Far from being the forbidden fruit here at Madden Planet, we've put NFL 2k5 through it's paces and here is our breakdown of who comes out on top in the critical areas.

Now, before we start just to confuse you we've come up with a totally arbitrary but entirely worthwhile scoring system upon which we will rate both games at the end of which we will add up the scores and in the style of Bob Barker on the Price is Right tell the winning game to 'Come on Down'.

So here goes.... we've taken the press releases from both games indicating their 'key' big features for their 2005 Xbox games and assessed ten of them one by one. Both companies have had a year to produce and implement these new features so it's a fair comparison to make given the similar timeframe they have had to do it in. You might consider that we left out something very important, gameplay being the most obvious, but this is our criteria and we're sticking to it. Here goes....

**Hit Stick** : EA have implemented what many people would automatically just consider as a gimmicky feature in a very useful risk-reward type way. It actually adds a lot to the gameplay and might inspire folks who don't usually control their DB's to pick up the thumbstick and do some jockeying. Score : 5/5

**Defensive Playmaker Controls** : Never before has it been possible to change so many elements of your defensive play 'on the fly'. That means after you've broken the huddle you can change the assignments of individual players in a highly effective way. Score : 5/5

**Storyline Central** : An immersive addition to franchise mode, but not without the odd repetition especially early on while position battles are playing themselves out. It might just deter some folks from sticking with it but rest assured later in the year it becomes much more varied and unique. The radio show element is very cool. Score : 3.5/5

**Player personalities** : Bringing cyber athletes to 'life' has been a key element of the football games from EA this year, not simply Madden but also NCAA. It's not over the top, it's not stupid, it's integrated extremely well and it throws another element into the game that folks have never had to consider before. Score : 4/5

**Franchise progression** : Players change over the course of a season, in some cases they improve while in others they decline. Progressions aims to take care of this by altering their ratings over the course of the season and accounting for those changes. However, they only change and are assessed every 4 weeks whereas a player can change every game or even during the game and you could argue the ratings should reflect that. Score : 3.5/5

**Create-a-fan** : Similar to the create-a-sign feature in NCAA, and while you can only see 3 'virtually' real fans in the crowd at least you can dress them however you like. There are a wide variety of things you can do with your fans, from putting a hat on them to deciding which shirt they wear and stuff like that. There isn't the same range of choice you have when creating your golfer in Tiger Woods – adjusting the height of their eyebrows definitely isn't one of them – but it's good nonetheless. Done effectively if not spectacular. Score : 3/5

**EA Sports Online** : A similar interface to last year but with a score ticker, very cool... tourneys are back along with some new features like the mini games and a so-far unannounced feature. More importantly, it's stable and reliable. Score : 5/5

**New gameplay** : but we're picking out the running game for this one since it's where the real improvement lies. This is where Madden excels, some might say on the field is where the game is really made or broken anyway. Thankfully then it really is where Madden excels. The running animations are even nicer than before and there's the whole planting-foot deal when the player turns and changes direction. Score : 5/5

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# ESPN NFL 2K5

**Producer : Visual Concepts**

**Publisher : Sega/ESPN Videogames**

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**Stadium presentation :**

graphics in the stadiums are much improved with lighting effects. I really like the fact that the glass front of the corporate boxes shines now in a highly realistic way and perhaps that is down to the new lighting system that EA advertised. It does what they said it would though and it scores high. Score : 5/5

**New commentary :** well apparently there is new commentary every year, and we believe EA when they say that. But... it doesn't feel like it. Score : 2/5

**Total : 41/50**

**VIP :** a very cool addition, not only tracking your own playcalling tendencies but the tendencies of your opponents. Throw in the ability to actually download the thing and play against somebody else's VIP and we like this feature. Score : 5/5

**Crib Celebs :** now the crib is nice but here's the problem with having celebs calling you on the phone. First, most of them flat out suck. And secondly, I don't really want to play them at video game football. Past, retired or even current NFL players would have been a different deal altogether. Score : 1/5

**New gameplay features :** for this one we've picked out maximum tackle and QB evade, both of which are neat and cool additions to the gameplay and it's a fair comparison to what we discussed in Madden. QB evade is certainly useful although you have to be quick to pull it off, however if you do it's a very neat move. Score : 4/5

**Online gameplay :** this is the biggie for ESPN, and where things really shine. The online leagues are extremely impressive and sure enough there are going to be inevitable glitches early on but the thing is detailed and so deep there are going to be teething troubles with anything so complex. It's ridiculous the extent to which you can play around with the stuff online. Score : 5/5

**ESPN presentation :** again, this is another area where ESPN excels and they have replicated an ESPN broadcast very accurately and very comprehensively. Score : 5/5

**ESPN 25th anniversary mode :** similar to the mode in NCAA 2005 that allows you to play classic games. Some of these games chosen are highly suspect as 'greatest' games but in terms of 25 years of ESPN coverage they're a decent job. Score : 3/5

**Always online :** Utilising the Xbox Live facility to be permanently connected and therefore giving your buddies the opportunity to contact you whenever they see you playing the game whether that is in your franchise mode or against an opponent online it's pretty cool and a very useful addition. Score : 4/5

**Franchise :** the franchise mode as such is solid but has some very disappointing issues, especially in terms of free agency and the draft with teams making odd choices not only in who they pick in the draft but in their trading with other teams. However the new feature is weekly preparation, and while it's a good idea again it seems suspect in certain areas with players frequently losing points and there being no real sense of what the right and wrong preparation is in order to achieve the best outcome for your players. With more polishing up next year could be a very good feature though. Score : 2/5

**Customise in game music and sounds :** This is the area where sports games should be headed, the ability to put your own music in the game and the harddrive of the Xbox makes it ridiculously easy. Score : 4/5

**Breakthrough Moves :** The official text is "dazzling animations such as back of the end zone catches, quarterback evasions, all-new runs, and slips, falls and trips due to real weather changes." ESPN does this nicely, and does them well by and large. Score : 4/5

**Total : 37/50**