



**INFO**

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**LIVE**

FEATURES:  
TWENTY PLAYER,  
10 VS 10 MATCHES...

# FIFA 09

## A WHOLE SIMILAR BALL GAME...

**I**n the history of Xbox World 360, no game series has been more divisive than *FIFA*. Loved by half the team, loathed by the other, the competition between *FIFA* and *PES* has heated up in recent years thanks to a lot of hard work on EA's part and, dare we say, Konami getting slightly complacent. As *PES* code has yet to surface we'll sadly have to save our take on this year's battle for another issue, but

after delivering an impressive football sim last year, and then a second to coincide with Euro 2008, EA has upped their game once more with 2009's instalment...

### LOOK FAMILIAR?

... but only just. Despite bringing a new producer on board who promised to revolutionise the series, *FIFA 09* is incredibly similar to *UEFA Euro 2008*. There's no sign of the sweeping changes promised, no hint of any gameplay overhaul. Considering the world-moving enhancements we've been promised, *FIFA 09* is initially underwhelming and a bit disappointing. League teams, a handful of on-the-pitch changes, 10 v 10 online matches and

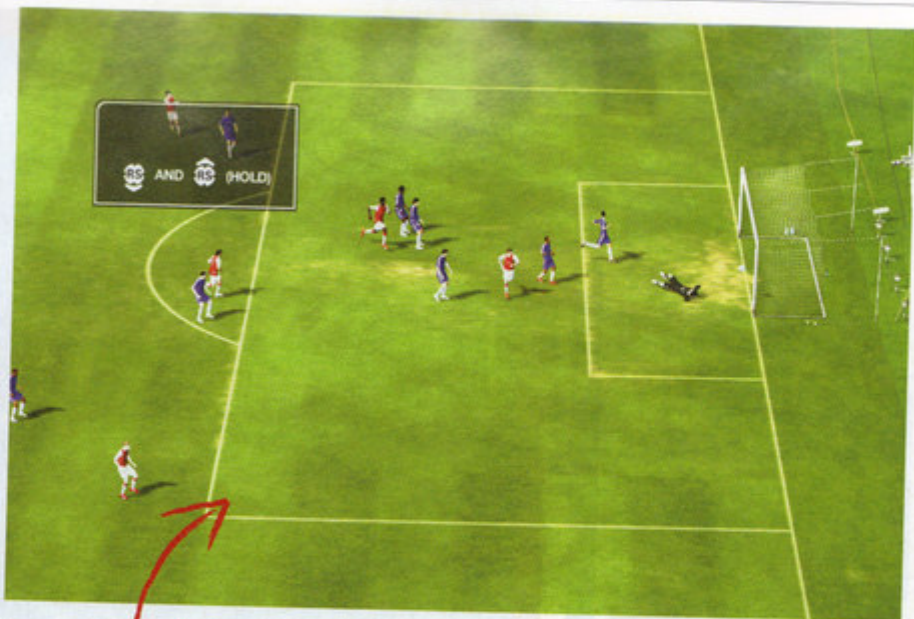
### 10 SECOND REVIEW

**Pitch:** The closest simulation of the beautiful game man has ever seen...  
**Verdict:** A bit too close for our tastes, but a good game of footy regardless.





Frank Ribery, that is. Be grateful it's not Rooney again.



Be A Pro Seasons Mode; that's what your fifty notes are paying for and not a whole lot else. Runners will now point to where they want the ball passed and players will tumble over outstretched legs, but that's about as far as the positive changes stretch.

Strangely, running speed have actually slowed slightly too. Our dreams of FIFA hitting the pacing sweet-spot lying halfway between '08 and PES 2008 go unfulfilled once more, and the sluggish movement and responsiveness of even the fastest players is frustrating.

Even more bizarre is the 'improved' goalkeeper intelligence. We've been told this ensures keepers position themselves better and react more realistically to shots, but all we've noticed are fewer saves, more Robinson-esque flapping, a terrible one-on-one save ratio and a tendency to let the ball trickle inches past their feet instead of scooping it up. The new animations sure are impressive, but the goalie is no longer the infallible shot-stopper of previous iterations.

**E=MC<sup>2</sup>**

You can in part thank the physics for that. We dread to think how much time

**MUST SEE!**

UEFA Euro 2008's goal celebrations return, although mercifully the button prompts have been toned down somewhat. There's no better way to rub your friend's - or better yet, a stranger's - face in it than by running up to their keeper and doing 'The Robot'. Try it at home.

Robinson: the fattest FIFA player in the history of the series.



was spent perfecting the ball and player behaviour, but the days of questionable collision detection are long behind us. Sprint towards a steadfast defender and you will be bundled over when the ball's stolen from you. Tangle your

and bumps will send you sprawling to the turf if your player's not quick enough to correct their footing, and as a result your zippiest players are much more prone to injuries.

The system is so robust that even the best keepers are at risk. A goalie charging into a throng of players for an in-swinging ball is no longer guaranteed to catch it. If he can't get past the crowd he definitely won't be able to pass through it, and if he's lucky enough to clutch the ball there's still work to be done. The most amusing goal we netted came from a caught ball which soon became loose when the head of a rising defender collided with the keeper's arms. One fumble later and we rolled the ball into the back of the net and proceeded to perform the DIY celebrations with glee.

When shots cannon off outstretched legs it feels like they could go anywhere, which is extremely exciting if you're the attacking team but of course massively unsettling if you're trying to keep a clean sheet. Whether it's the sight of defenders stumbling about or just the increased likelihood of penalties and own goals, action within the eighteen

**THE PHYSICS REALLY HAVE BEEN CRANKED UP... THEY FEEL A LOT MORE ROBUST NOW**

legs when running for the ball and both players will stumble over, taking anyone in the path of their fall along with them. Whether accidental or not, trips, tackles



The new Team Tactics option lets you tweak every aspect of your team pre kick-off.



## LIBERO GRANDE

BE A PRO TACKLES FOUR SEASONS...



As well as season-wide goals you'll be given match-specific targets to aim for. Fulfill these and your player will gain extra Experience, which can then go towards beefing up stats for a better performance next time.



The Be A Pro mechanics are the same as last year, but the Season mode is designed to ready you for the 10 v 10 matches online. It's all about knowing your role as a single player this year. If you're not into Be A Pro, this FIFA really isn't for you. You have to like football too, mind.



We did spot one problem. Pick up an injury and your player will suffer. Time to request a substitution... or not. The game penalises you for coming off the pitch, so even if your femur's poking out of your leg you'd better carry on.



### DEFINING MOMENT

As great as the full game is, we're addicted to the pre-match warm up. Not only is the practice session the perfect way to waste a few seconds during the loading, it's the ideal place to hone your skills with the Trick Stick and fine-tune your shooting. Masterful.

» yard box is a cut above any other football game. Seriously.

### TWO HALVES

This tech works both ways though. While goalmouth scrambles are infinitely more exciting, it's all too easy

of two defensive teams whose strikers couldn't score in Amsterdam. Normally we'd say a dull match is the fault of the players involved, but in FIFA's case the frequency of loose balls and midfield skirmishes is counter-productive to the more exciting aspects of football.

Those seeking proof need only consider Be A Pro Seasons. Is it a work of genius, and the closest you'll ever get to stepping out on the most famous turf across Europe? Or perhaps it's a boring exercise in waiting around - especially online where everybody is a total Mr Selfo - which should have died back in 1998 on the Playstation?

After sticking it out for the best part of the four seasons on offer we concluded the latter is probably nearer the truth. We're disappointed to see so much focus on Be A Pro nowadays; the 'classic' match-ups are what have always kept us coming back, and it's a mode which has been improved but never perfected. Running, jockeys and

## AFTER FOUR SEASONS OF PLAYING BE A PRO, WE'RE UNCONVINCED



for the ball to become bogged down in midfield and trapped between a succession of block tackles and clumsy feet. When the ball's popping about no man's land it's every player for himself, and well-rehearsed tactics soon fly out the window in favour of a playground melée. The price of a faithful football simulation is obvious; for every derby thriller there's the boring midfield battle



Xbox 360/PS3, FIFA 09? £50. Beating Man Utd as Hull City? Priceless.



better close control are steps in the right direction, but sluggish response to moves which require split-second accuracy undo a lot of the hard work.

And speaking of improvements we're aching to see, where's the incredible Player DNA mode and daily in-game real sports updates like you'll find in this year's NBA game? Or the chance to re-watch the key match highlights - goals in particular - post-game a la *Football Manager*? Well, not here.

### GOAL DIFFERENCE

It's tough being the best, but it's even tougher when you're in a race for the top spot. All of *Euro 2008*'s successes still apply here, and for all its problems *FIFA 09* is a very, very solid football game. But the difference between 'very

Missed it? Arsenal's Alexey Ivanov's 85th-minute chance wide! Then it's a 0-0 tie! So... how realistic is *FIFA 09*?



## TEAM GAME

FIFA OR PES? OR WHAT ABOUT UEFA? TEAM XBW DISCUSSES THE HIGHS AND LOWS...



### TIM 'ARSENAL' WEAVER

**PRE-MATCH** Well, I've always been more of a PES fan, even though that series has been coasting for three consecutive seasons... However, last year's *FIFA* - although still a tiny bit 'mechanical' - was extremely impressive, and this summer's *UEFA* was even better. Close run thing.

**POST-MATCH** Er, isn't it EXACTLY THE SAME GAME AS LAST YEAR? I've got to say, I'm disappointed by the fact that this hasn't pushed on much in the last twelve months. There's small changes, but after glimpsing this year's improved PES, I fear a bit for *FIFA 09* now.

### ROB 'LIVERPOOL' TAYLOR

**PRE-MATCH:** *FIFA*, well *UEFA* anyway, almost, almost managed to win me over last season. It was, finally, a genuine, viable alternative to a visibly sagging PES. Surely Seabass and team couldn't sit idly by for yet another season and watch *FIFA* make up more ground... could he?

**POST-MATCH:** Having not played PES yet, it's hard to give a definitive answer, but in my opinion this *FIFA* looks like an almighty missed opportunity - it's simply treading water. Taylor says: put your readies on a revitalised Konami to steal a march again this term.



### RICHARD 'LIVERPOOL' HOOD

**PRE-MATCH** The office is divided right down the middle, between the PES fans (Tim, Rob) and the FIFA fans (Matt, Mike). I've always been somewhere in the middle, playing both equally as much. So, this year: I'm hoping for improvement in *FIFA*, and a total overhaul for PES.

**POST-MATCH** Have to wait on PES, but this year's *FIFA*... well, it's a bit disappointing. It's still a great football game, but it's not a greater football game. In fact, I'm struggling to see where the improvements and changes have been made. Ah well, at least I've got a great expression.

### MICHAEL 'BRISTOL ROVERS' GAPPER

**PRE-MATCH:** In spite of missing all the club teams, *UEFA '08* was a fantastic footy game, and a massive improvement on *FIFA '08*, with a little more speed and a little more fun. All *FIFA '09* needed to be was *UEFA* with club teams and a bolstered online mode and it would be golden...

**POST-MATCH:** Oh dear. It's still better than the recent updates to PES, but so little has changed between *FIFA '09* and last year's revision they're virtually indistinguishable. EA make the best footy game on the shelves, but it's not *FIFA '09* - it's still *UEFA '08*.



### MATTHEW 'LIVERPOOL' PELLETT

**PRE-MATCH:** PES is dead for me (Fair enough - pick up your P45 at reception, Pellett - Ed). *UEFA Euro 2008* on the other hand was an outstanding game of footy marred by the occasional *Invisi-player*... something which *FIFA 09* just won't get wrong.

**POST-MATCH:** Hmm... It's good. Very good in fact. But just not as good as I'd hoped and prayed and wept for. It's my new football game of choice, but I'd feel quite let down if I'd bought both *Euro 2008* and then this at the full retail price.

good' and 'incredible' is what will decide this year's eventual football game of choice, and it's here that *FIFA* ever-so-slightly falters. All that remains to be seen is whether the next *Pro Evo* offering can nick a victory or continue on its

road into obscurity. The stage is set; the floodlights are on. Over to you, Konami... ■ Paul Randall

**XBOXWORLD**  
**360**  
**VERDICT**

**FIFA 09**  
+ BEST PHYSICS YET  
+ IT'S 'REAL' FOOTBALL...  
- ...WARTS AND ALL

*EURO 2008* owners need to think long and hard before making the purchase. Everyone else? Buy.

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