



GAME REVIEW



THE EVOLUTION OF A FRANCHISE

SHAHRUKH IKHTEAR

Another year, another FIFA game. Usually, it's always small improvements that accompany every new release of the franchise. This year is no different, however, the changes might just be too subtle to notice for casual players.

Firstly, players will notice the lighter menu colour pallet in lieu of the flashy animations, the new menus are reminiscent of the FIFA titles of old. Upon starting the first match, an indicator on the currently selected player will be shown. This indicator is known as FIFA trainer a new way for novice and veteran players to hone their skills. The trainer will show appropriate button prompts and passing direction as the game goes on. While it is meant to be unintrusive, the trainer might detract a player's attention from the flow of the game.

Then, we have the graphics; FIFA games have always been plagued by mannequin-esque players. That problem has been alleviated in FIFA 16. The realistic reflection of light from the players' skins coupled with actual facial animations (which do a decent job of conveying the players' emotions) have given the players a much more life-like look. Stadium exteriors are given the same amount of love as the rest of the graphical assets in the game and they look absolutely gorgeous. Some abnormalities aside, the animations of FIFA have always been top notch. This year, they look even more natural and free. The animation changes are not primarily aesthetic either. Power shots do not look like tame lob shots anymore. Jumping for the ball to win a header requires precision and, of course, height.

There are several gameplay changes across the board. Pacey players with strength are not as overpowered as before which means no more blazing past defenders with Ronaldo. In last year's FIFA, lob through passes could dismantle even the most organized of defences. This year, lob through passes have been effectively neutered through fine tuning of defender AI. No more will

defenders allow an attacker to slip in behind them easily.

Speaking of defenders, it is much easier to intercept passes but this is probably due to the new "no touch dribbling" feature which allows players to carefully adjust their position and running patterns prior to receiving a pass. It might also be because seem a bit too tame at times. No doubt, their offensive power has been nerfed; thus players will need to pinpoint gaps in the defence and aim carefully before letting a through ball loose.

FIFA 15 nerfed crosses beyond measure thus alienating a whole section of their playerbase who relied on crossing to score. FIFA 16 reaches a balance with crossing as it is not as weak as FIFA 15 but not as blatantly overpowered as FIFA 14. Early crosses into the box to a tall player do not guarantee you a goal, at the same time, a well-positioned player receiving an excellent cross will score if he is not cut off by an opposing defender.

While the crossing aspect of the game has been balanced, corners have been changed for the worse. Play the ball anywhere near the middle of the box and the opposing goalkeeper will charge at it faster than Messi, jump higher than the tallest player on the field and punch it away. This has led to corners becoming extremely awkward as anything short of a charged cross into the box will result in nothing.

A plethora of additions accompany career mode, this year. First of all, pre-season tournaments have been incorporated. Here, you can play against randomly drawn opponents in one of three tournaments. It provides managers with a good way to gauge their squad performance levels as well as give purpose

to preseason matches. Not only that but winning the tournament will add the prize money to your transfer kitty.

Managers can also train individual players' traits in the

new training mode. Simply select a player and assign a drill. You then have the choice between completing the drill

yourself and simulating it. Drills are separated by categories such as shooting, defending, passing etc. In each of these categories, there are four drills of different difficulty levels. This new mode allows managers to shape their players the way they want to. Want to make Alexis Sanchez a fearsome striker? Set him up with shooting drills every week. Your centre back needs more intercepting ability? Not a

problem.

Career mode as a whole feels more like a living world than before. A lot of pre match stories are shared through the commentary and the "news" panel of the menu. I was surprised at the level of detail

the presentation can reach at times. I transferred in Mario Götze to Arsenal and on his debut match the commentators discussed how his versatility might have been the reason he struggled to find a place in Bayern which prompted his move.

This year, EA Sports have finally added in women's national teams in FIFA. While EA does claim that there are completely new animations for the women players, I always noticed re-used animations during various instances of play. Thus, playing women's teams isn't a vastly different experience from playing men's teams. Nevertheless, it is a step in the right direction and hopefully, we'll see women's clubs and better animations in the future.

There are numerous changes to FUT as well. For more information on that, read Fardeen Zareef's analysis on the new FUT on our 24 September issue.

The revolution of FIFA that everyone expects each year is not here this year. However, this does NOT mean that the game is still the same. The game is not completely overhauled but the numerous changes have incited a positive evolution for the franchise.

Shahrukh Ikhtear is a gamer who doesn't rage. A writer who doesn't read. A musician without a teacher. Full time procrastinator. You can reach him on twitter @sr_ikhhtear and email: shahrukh.ikhhtear@yahoo.com

