Story Modes in Sports Games
Essential or Redundant?

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We have often wondered how it would feel to play out story modes in sports games like *FIFA*, *NBA*, *NHL*, etc. Imagine getting the chance to relive a tale like that of Santiago Munez in the *Goal!* movies. Sounds great, right?

Story modes can actually help sports games to reach an even wider audience. I, for one, became a huge fan of the *Fight Night* series after playing the amazing story mode EA developed in *Fight Night Champion*. Andre Bishop's story line was an engaging experience and the climax was beautifully utilized in creating a mesmerizing scenario for the final battle. The beauty of incorporating story modes is the fact that we can live out our fantasies of playing our favorite sport with the tension and drama rather than just playing match after match, which makes it a very monotonous experience after a certain point.

NBA 2K16's Livin' Da Dream, a venture by Spike Lee, was another story mode that really took the entire intensity of the game to a whole new level. However, the story felt rushed because the writers had to cram the entirety of it into a season of 8 matches only. But, the whole experience was a rather innovative one and helps to prove the point that, if given the time and proper tools, story modes can really help usurp sports game to break the consumer barrier.

It's about time that developers plan to actually create story modes for games like *UFC* or *FIFA*. Plot-lines, scenarios and the intensity can make it an invigorating experience like the one EA managed to capture with *Fight Night Champion* and Spike Lee and the *NBA 2K* team were very close to capturing the right feel as well. Maybe, in a few years, we actually might get to play a *FIFA* game with a captivating story mode but till then, we can only hope.

Fardeen Zareef is in a war with carbohydrates but his love of Doritos overwhelms him. He also does not know how to use Twitter and loves to game. Message him your love/hate at https://www.facebook.com/fardeen.zareef

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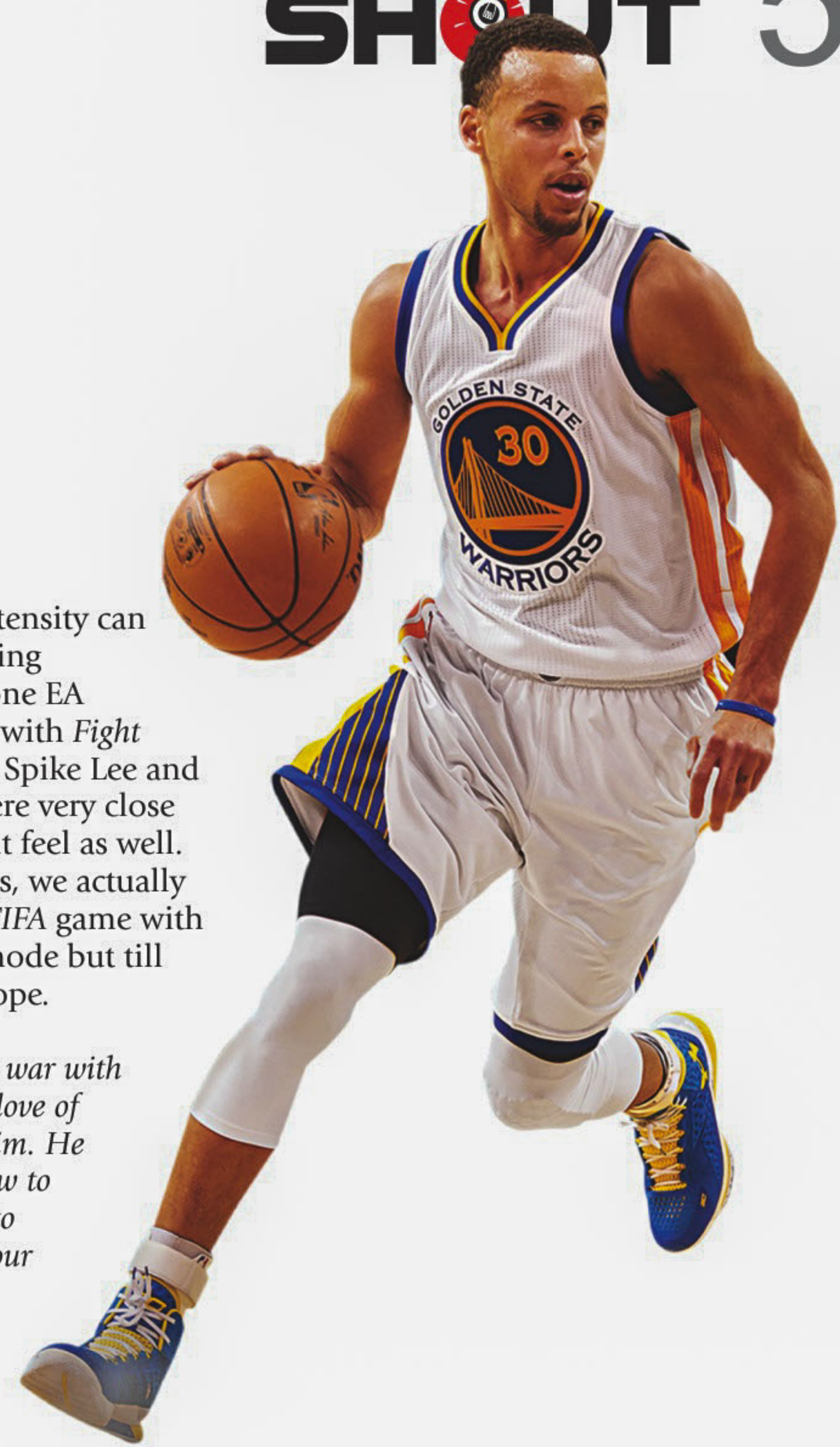
GAME REVIEW

PONY ISLAND (IT'S NOT ABOUT PONIES)

SHUPROVO ARKO

Platform: PC
Runtime: 2-3 hours
Developer: Daniel Mullins Games

Don't be fooled by the colourful menus and the cheerful music, there's more to Pony Island than what it seems. Soon enough the colour will dissolve away and the music will turn ominous and dreary. In *Pony Island*, you're trapped in a game designed by the Devil. Only problem is, the Devil isn't a very good game designer.

Pony Island is the name of the game you are imprisoned in and as you can guess it is very heavy on fourth wall breaking and being meta. The game itself is mainly a puzzle platformer with some point and click mechanics, but adding generic tags like this would be doing it an injustice. *Pony Island* is a surreal, atmospheric experience that is perfect for its short runtime and it is recommended that players finish the whole thing in one sitting.

Your main role in the game is to systematically take it apart, much to the dismay of the Devil. This game has one of the most memorable and original depictions of the Devil I've seen in a while. He is insecure about his work and doesn't take criticism very graciously. He is rude and passive-aggressive, and doesn't react kindly to you fixing (or as he would like to call it "tampering with") his game. All of this felt like the developer lightly poking fun at obnoxious artists who act like this (if lightly poking fun means comparing them to the Devil.) Pony Island is genuinely clever and funny. There are moments where you want to laugh out loud and also moments where you actually feel creeped out.

The level and story design is linear, though there are numerous "tickets" you can collect along the way. You get these tickets by doing random things in the game and it is quite difficult to get them all in one playthrough, so there is incentive for completionists to do multiple playthroughs. The soundtrack does its job but it is nothing special and the platformer levels can get tedious for some players. But all things considered, it's a fantastic game.

It's hard to keep a straight face when saying that the best game you played this year is named *Pony Island*. Released January of this year by an independent developer, *Pony Island* joins the ranks of numerous indie titles which show that raw creativity is really all you need to make an extraordinary video game. Get it on Steam now!

Shuprovo Arko copes with the soul-crushing amount of studying he has to do by trying to be funny. He writes about movies, video games and music normal people don't listen to. Contact him at shupro.arko01@gmail.com