



fifa 17 DEMO

First Impressions

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One of the biggest video game franchises of all time, it's no surprise that the newest installment in the FIFA series is a highly anticipated release. But the hype around FIFA 17 has been surreal. For a franchise that has lasted 22 years straight with yearly releases, this is actually saying something. 13th September saw the release of the game's demo as EA gave gamers the chance to experience the changes they have brought in this time. Here's a run-down of the new stuff:

First off, the Frostbite engine looks beautiful. It's a massive relief to see that the players look much more realistic than ever before. The atmosphere in the pitch is electric with the chants being more organic and the home team advantage is visible too. While everyone had questioned whether or not EA could handle the transition to a new engine and was this decision a rushed one to edge its rivals (hahahaha) in sales, it seems like EA knew what they were doing because the fluidity of the gameplay is amazing.

The physical play feature is a standout as the game feels more grounded and realistic now. No longer do we have to challenge for the aerial ball and pray that

a teammate is in position to get the rebound. Players can now head the ball down to their feet, although it depends on the player's strength and heading ability. Strength matters more now and the art of defending has been revamped with tackles now being more important with timing playing a huge factor. Players can now fight for the ball as one-on-one close situations are now like their real life counterparts. The players jostle to win the ball and you cannot simply swarm through. And following the trend from FIFA 16, the defenders and their pace play a huge role as they can track back if they get darted past by an attacker.

The AI in the game is much smarter than the installments preceding it. Once on the ball, your teammates don't just run for the sake of it anymore. Team mates now support you by being in the right places. The beauty of it is, suppose you need space to break through, then you just pass it to a team mate and he positions himself in such a way that when you receive the ball, you can open up space by dragging the ball away and by using the one-two pass, the other player has now burst through the space and is open for scoring. The AI now makes aggressive runs towards goal and makes non-controlled

players feel like proper team mates. The improvements in the AI system mean that each and every player now has their own important roles to play. After playing a handful of matches, I realized how important time is in this game. Every chance matters. But the low shot is the new OP factor in the game as 9 out of 10 one-on-one opportunities can now lead to a goal thanks to it.

While the new AI system and the physical play approach are brilliant, EA have brought in a new feature named "Set Piece Re-write". Set pieces have always been a standout feature of the FIFA franchise but while focusing on the areas it had lacked in, EA has totally destroyed one of its key strengths. The revamped set pieces make up for a miserable experience. The fun free kicks have now been replaced with complicated features. We now have to take a run up, adjust our players before taking the run and while shooting adjust the spin of the ball. Too many variables to consider in a short amount of time. The same thing now goes for penalties. We have to take a run-up and then, while the player is running, we have to direct the ball while focusing on the shot power. While penalties can be managed when you are playing alone, the target system has to be turned

off during matches with friends which is a bummer as you don't know where the ball is heading off to. While corner kicks now have a cursor which allows us to decide where we want to place the ball before taking the kick, the cursor is very twitchy and keeps moving which makes it extremely difficult to control the ball.

Although this is a demo and the gameplay experience is likely to vary when the main game comes out. One can only hope that EA fixes these issues or else, the installment will suffer in the long run. I wouldn't be surprised if an early patch of FIFA 17 comes out if the gameplay stays similar. All in all, the demo gives us a good idea of how much the Frostbite engine has put the franchise forward and the future really looks bright. But EA's focus on its weak points has come with a price. The set piece issue really needs to be fixed.

FIFA 17 comes out on 24th September. Are you ready?

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