

**GAME REVIEW**

NBA 2K17 — PICK UP THE BALL

FARDEEN ZAREEF

One of the greatest sports video game franchises, NBA 2K has made a name for itself as both Basketball's and sports' premium video game series. And as expected, this year's NBA 2K was an extremely hyped release.

Straight off the bat, let's focus on the game's MyCareer mode. Last year saw 2K introduce storylines with the infamous Livin' Da Dream. While it had a mixed reception, the game saw 2K take a new approach to their single player component. This year though, the mode was more focused on and it shows. With stellar screenplay by Aaron Covington and co-starring Michael B. Jordan as Justice Young, the season-long story is well-crafted with the right balance between gaming and storytelling. And it is a massive plus that we actually get to play the entire season this time, rather than only 8 games. The prelude that was released before the main game serves as the perfect introduction with the college games being played beforehand. Another addition to the features is the "Orange Juice" connection between Justice and your character which comes in handy especially during chasing down your opponents. The brand advertisement feature is very useful as good amounts of VC can be earned by participating in brand events. Finally, you can play 1-on-1 matches with fellow pros and strike up friendships with them including the Black Mamba himself, Kobe Bryant.

The series' presentation has always been top-notch but NBA managed to freshen things up to make it even better. With proper court-side interviews with players and the superb post-match presentation, NBA 2K17 really does have a polished look to it. This can prove to be an industry standard-setting trend. Seldom do we see sports games putting a lot of emphasis on post-match and pre-match programmes. Although FIFA 17 brought along The Journey, in which you can play as a budding pro player and direct his career the way you want, the normal manager career mode is still barebones.

One particular thing that caught my eye was how the gameplay mechanics have been tinkered with to make it more realistic. Bad shots taken by Steph Curry or LeBron James now have a higher percentage chance of getting in while similar shots by a standard guard like John Wall will miss 8 times out of 10.

One of the most important improvements comes in the form of a new way the MyTeam works. Emerald rarity cards drop at a much higher rate than they used to. This feels much better as players will have to deal with a much less punishing grind to flush out these rare cards. An interesting mechanic has been put in place to combat an oversaturation of these uncommon players. You will have to complete challenges and collect all the cards of one specific team before you can unlock the Historic Card. This results in the card prices remaining stable early on and prevents lucky players from cashing in way too much.

While NBA did fine-tune most of its spectacular list of standout attributes, for a surprising turn of events, this year's gameplay has a few bugs. One particularly annoying glitch being the help defence feature. In all matches, the ball handler gets unnecessary double-teamed. And for most rookie gamers, this is a massive issue as it makes it impossible to operate freely, while it is a blessing for

more experienced gamers as they can easily breakdown defences and rack up immense assist numbers. The help defence also makes it tough for us to defend as the A.I teammate more often than not leaves his man open to double-team when he doesn't need to.

Another let down this year is the fact that the Sharpshooter player type is broken. They can score from anywhere! And it gives players unfair advantage especially in MyCourt mode.

Overall, NBA 2K17 is a fun experience but it comes at a price. While it has indeed improved upon its core mechanics, we can only hope that the gameplay glitches will be fixed with an update. So grab your controllers and get ready to play ball!

Fardeen Zareef is sarcastic, in spirit. He is also in a war with carbohydrates and spends his free time gaming, trying to learn how to use Twitter and supporting Manchester United. You can e-mail him your love/hate at fzareef666@gmail.com

