



# NCAA FOOTBALL 2005

GREAT AS USUAL...BUT WHERE'S THE WOW?





#### FREAKY FANS

NCAA includes tons of celebratory fan cut-scenes like this one. It's funny to see Gator diehards do a mock tomahawk chop as they feast on Florida State, and you'll often see disappointed home fans decide to head home. (Too often, actually.)



#### THE SIMMED SEASON SAYS...

According to our simulated college football season using *NCAA Football 2005*, it's going to be a great year for Ohio State. The undefeated Buckeyes will hand the Oklahoma Sooners their third loss of the year by completing a perfect season. A few other interesting notes for the year:

- Kansas State's HB #43 (don't dare call him Darren Sproles) wins the Heisman Trophy after rushing for 2,280 yards.
- North Texas shocks the world, going 11-1 and finishing No. 12 in the nation.
- LSU follows its championship season by finishing unranked at 7-5.

**NCAA Football 2005 is awesome.** I knew that going in. You probably knew it, too, before even reading this review. Once again, it tops what it did last year. Once again, it's easily the greatest college football game ever made. Once again, it's my new favorite videogame of all time.

But, **despite some really cool additions, not once again do I feel entirely wowed by it.** Mostly wowed, yes...but not *entirely*, as I always have been in the past.

And there's actually quite a bit included to add to the "wow" established in the last three PS2 games. Most apparent is what EA dubs the "match-up stick." Using the right analog stick, you can see how your players stack up against your opponent's. With so many teams in the college game—not to mention so many players of varying skill—you'll probably find yourself using this feature at least three or four times a game.

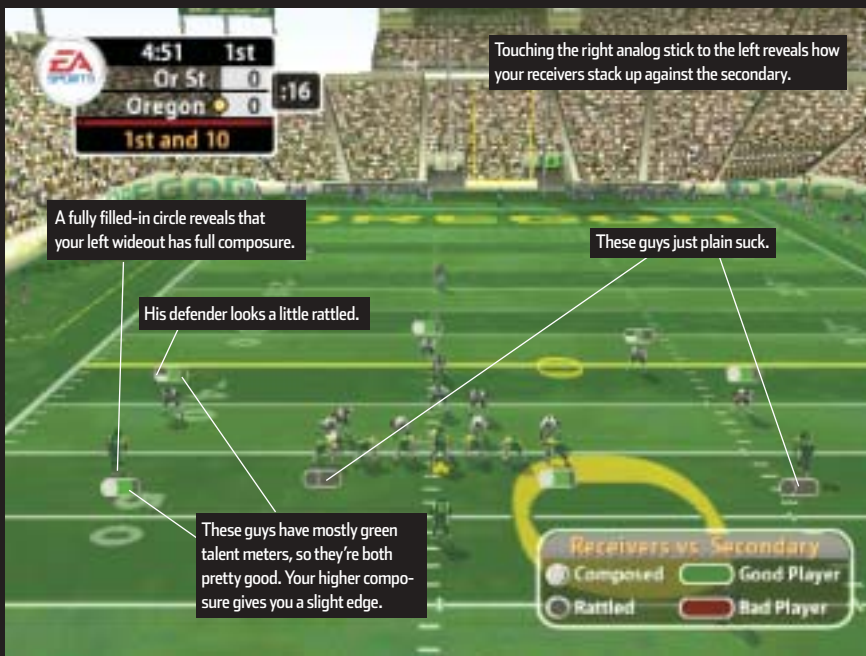
Beyond showing a player's ability, the match-up stick also displays his composure. Remember when, back in the day, *Super Tecmo Bowl* told you how a player was feeling—good, average, crappy—and his performance reflected that? It's that same basic idea—you kind of have to wonder why it took so long for a modern football game to institute it.

Home-field advantage plays a major role in affecting composure, and it does so in a big way. If you're a visiting team, a rowdy crowd can really get to your guys. In some of the noisier stadiums, you're best off not calling audibles because there's a very good chance your receivers will mishear you and run the wrong routes. You might even see the screen shake, a symbolic representation of the pressure your team is feeling (just turn it off if it bothers you). As the home team, you can help frenzy the crowd, both by kicking ass on the field and by hitting L2 at the line on defense. Just don't start sucking—fans can be fickle, you know.

You can also rattle a player's composure by hitting L2 at the right time to deliver a crushing blow. If this sounds anything like *Madden's* "hit stick" to you, there's a good reason for that—they're essentially the same thing. (Apparently, "hit shoulder button" isn't catchy enough of a marketing term.) Much like seeing "user pick" or "user hit for loss" appear onscreen, **knowing you've walloped someone hard enough to get recognized for a "user big hit" is one of the true "hell yeah!" moments of gaming.**

Not so exciting—but equally welcome—are the new hot routes available. Now, you can call for slant routes or even change the direction of a running play without moving anyone around. The subtle nature of the latter move is particularly handy, especially when playing against someone.

And now that playing online involves organized tournaments, you might just find yourself challenging *lots* of people. I'm especially happy to see the option to play with "equal teams"—now you shouldn't hesitate to play as your beloved Tulane Green Tide against the punk kid in Maine who beats you only because he insists on picking USC or Oklahoma. Online could really use some



# COLLEGE ATMOSPHERE SHINES IN NCAA 2005.

## THE 25 LOUDEST STADIUMS

Home-field advantage is a big deal in *NCAA Football 2005*. Not satisfied with where your school sits on EA's pre-2004 ranking of loudest stadiums? You can change it by succeeding in dynasty mode and ensuring the presence of more and more diehards attending every Saturday in seasons to come.



1. Ben Hill Griffin Stadium, Florida
2. Neyland Stadium, Tennessee
3. Ohio Stadium, Ohio State
4. Tiger Stadium, Louisiana State
5. Autzen Stadium, Oregon
6. Husky Stadium, Washington
7. Kyle Field, Texas A&M
8. Camp Randall Stadium, Wisconsin
9. Memorial Stadium, Nebraska
10. Sanford Stadium, Georgia
11. Kinnick Stadium, Iowa
12. Michigan Stadium, Michigan
13. Lane Stadium, Virginia Tech
14. Doak Campbell Stadium, Florida St.
15. Notre Dame Stadium, Notre Dame
16. Clemson Memorial Stadium, CU
17. Beaver Stadium, Penn State
18. Oklahoma Memorial Stadium, OU
19. Jordan-Hare Stadium, Auburn
20. Carrier Dome, Syracuse
21. Bryant-Denny Stadium, Alabama
22. KSU Stadium, Kansas State
23. Mountaineer Field, West Virginia
24. Martin Stadium, Washington State
25. Miami Stadium, Miami

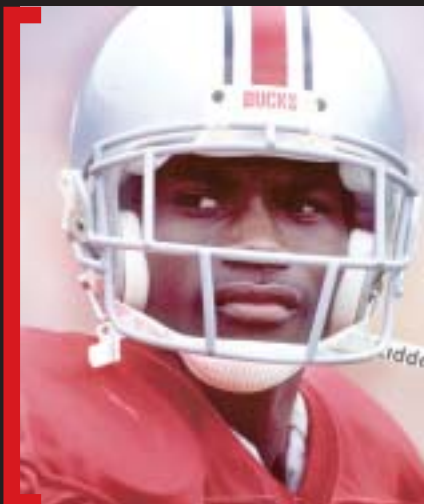
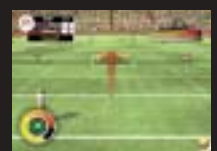
### ROWDY CROWDS

Any Wolverine knows that Michigan Stadium can get mighty loud when the rival Buckeyes are in town. Here, the quarterback tries desperately to change the play at the line. But it looks like the running back and receiver are having a hard time hearing him. There's an awfully good chance one of them might screw up. Much to the delight of 111,000 strong.



### BENCH HIM

One of *NCAA's* cooler features (aside from again being able to name your players, as we did here) requires you to manage players who break rules. See that *NCAA Team Interest* meter? Better discipline anyone deserving punishment, or it'll grow, and your team will face tough sanctions.



### ALL THE GALLOWAY

About to begin his 10th year in the NFL (and his first year as a Tampa Bay Buccaneer), you'd think Joe Galloway would favor *Madden* as his football game of choice. The wide receiver is more of an *NCAA Football* man, though—and he's one of the best. If you remember peering at last year's top players, you may have seen "GWay" among the elite. That's him.

"You have to play people," says Galloway, on what it takes to get to his level. "It is crazy when you get online because you have to play a different person each time, and then it takes at least a quarter to figure out a strategy and get a feel for what they are going to do. You have to figure out what they are doing as quickly as you can, and then you can be successful and unstoppable on offense—which I have been."

The Ohio State alumnus started playing football videogames with *Tecmo Bowl* on NES—and he doesn't shy away from discussing his superiority to a former Buckeye teammate/current *NCAA* announcer. "Me and Kirk Herbstreit have been going at it since college," Galloway tells us. "Each year, he goes down to help make the college football game with the idea in mind of stopping what I do. He goes down and says, 'OK, Galloway ran with the quarterback this whole year—we are going to put a stop to that.' He then comes back feeling pretty good about himself, walks into my house, and says he's got the stuff for this year. I kill him every year. You could call him up today, ask him who's the best college football online player, and he will say me."



### HOME-FIELD ADVANTAGE

As the home team, you can actually control the vehemence of the crowd using L2. Tiburon recorded three crowds of varying sizes to better depict the different audio levels you'd hear between bigger and smaller stadiums.

full-fledged league action, though. Why can't EA step up with that?

For that, you have to engage in good ol' dynasty mode, which features the same degree of depth we know and love, along with some *supersubtle* enhancements. My favorite: As part of your off-season preparations, you can change players' positions—something that happens quite a bit in real life. The setup is awkward, but it's a fine feeling once you've discovered a current outside linebacker who's ranked six points higher as a defensive end. It's also cool that you can draft general athletes whom you assign a position from scratch.

Throughout the season, you might have to bench your players for infractions like bad grades, missing curfew...or other more serious, carefully phrased infractions ("HB #34 got busted for using heroin" wouldn't make the NCAA very happy with EA, now would it?). Failing to do so draws attention to your program from the NCAA, which might eventually enforce sanctions as severe as the death penalty. Ouch.

**The action during an actual game remains as sweet as ever**—cool new running moves and tackling animations only help—but a few things need to be addressed. Like ball physics: I understand the desire to make the game fun with lots of tipped balls, but the physics of it all just looks ridiculous. And it's not uncommon to see the ball tipped up to four times in one play. Also, you'll find yourself avoiding draw plays because the onscreen icons meant to fool your opponent actually work *against* you when they cover up your runner. And Brad Nessler, please shut up about the crowd noise! If I hear you say, "I don't know if they'll be able to hear his cadence in the midst of all this mayhem," one more time....

Little issues like those don't bug me too much—they really do little to lessen the wow factor for *NCAA 2005*. So what does? It's hard to say, to be honest, but I think you need look no further than its pro-based big brother. *NCAA* has looked the same since 2001, and **its age is starting to show**—why can't, aside from nicer-looking skies, it get the full graphical upgrade? And why not add cool gameplay devices like Playmaker control? Why no mini-camps?

"That's *Madden's* thing" is the line I get from anyone I ask at EA. Fair enough. It's definitely a way to make more people see differences between the two games so they won't just refer to *NCAA* as *Madden: The College Edition*. But I should hope that the gameplay and atmosphere—the option, the wishbone, the school spirit, the mascots—would be enough to accomplish that in themselves. « *Chris Baker*

## OFFICIAL U.S. PlayStation RATING MAGAZINE

**TDs** Awesome gameplay, fantastic atmosphere, incredibly deep dynasty mode  
**FUMBLES** Lots of little things (Nessler!), *Madden* proves that *NCAA* can be better

Pub. EA Sports Dev. EA Tiburon ESRB Everyone MSRP \$49.99



# LARRY FITZGERALD

## PROOF THAT GOOD THINGS DO STILL COME OUT OF PITT



### LARRY: THE STATS

Birth date: August 31, 1983

Height: 6'2"

Weight: 223

40-yard dash: 4.42

Games played: 26

Receptions per game: 7.3

Total yards: 2,677

Consecutive games with a TD catch: 18

Total TDs: 34

Points received in Heisman Trophy vote: 1,353

**Larry Fitzgerald rocks**—anyone who saw him play for the Pittsburgh Panthers certainly knows so. It's no wonder the Arizona Cardinals used their first pick in the draft to snap up the talented wide receiver. He's also a natural choice for the cover of *NCAA Football 2005*.

**OPM** What was more important to you: Going early in the draft or going to one of your favorite teams?

**LARRY FITZGERALD** Neither's a priority for me, to be honest. I [knew I was] gonna get picked. I'm just looking to contribute.

**OPM** Home-field advantage is a big deal in *NCAA 2005*. What are some of the loudest stadiums you played in?

## "NOT TO BE COCKY OR ANYTHING, BUT I'M PRETTY GOOD."

**LF** Virginia Tech is pretty loud. West Virginia's pretty loud. Syracuse is real loud, too. They'd bring out these really noisy speakers to make it loud in practice [so we could prepare].

**OPM** Could you ever just not hear?

**LF** Well, as a receiver you usually use hand signals, so you know what the quarterback is saying. You know what the snap count is on.

**OPM** Was it difficult to leave school early?

**LF** No. It's tough to leave your teammates and the guys that you've grown to love and stuff, but everybody goes to college to earn a better living, and I was able to do that with only two years. I'm fortunate. Very fortunate.

**OPM** Did you play *NCAA Football* a lot with your teammates?

**LF** All the time. Definitely. That's all we did

play, man. Missed many classes, man [laughs]. We played *Madden*, too. We played *NFL Street*. And I used to be a big hockey guy. [But now] I'm pretty much all NFL. Not to be cocky or anything, but I'm pretty good.

**OPM** Cool! Who's your toughest competition?

**LF** My roommate, Reggie Carter—he played cornerback for us. He's pretty good, but I'd beat him probably three out of five games we'd play.

**OPM** Do you think you'll play any of your old Pitt teammates online?

**LF** Oh, yeah, definitely. I really wanna get into online more. That's something I do wanna do in the future.

**OPM** Was there one game that you guys played more than any other?

**LF** I think *NCAA* and *Madden* are right there, head to head. Recently, I've been playing a lot more *Madden*, though [laughs].

**OPM** Makes sense! Of course in *NCAA*, there are no "real" players, but many are based on actual guys. Do any players get upset at how the game portrays them?

**LF** Oh yeah, you always get these guys who are frustrated about their speed and all that. But I thought it was always funny how those guys would be all angry and upset. The only one way to prove [the game wrong] is action—go out there and show 'em.

**OPM** Were you always happy with "you"?

**LF** Yeah. I wasn't on there the first year, but the second year I was extremely happy.