



A Visual History of American Football Games

IGN takes a look back at 35 years of digital pigskin.

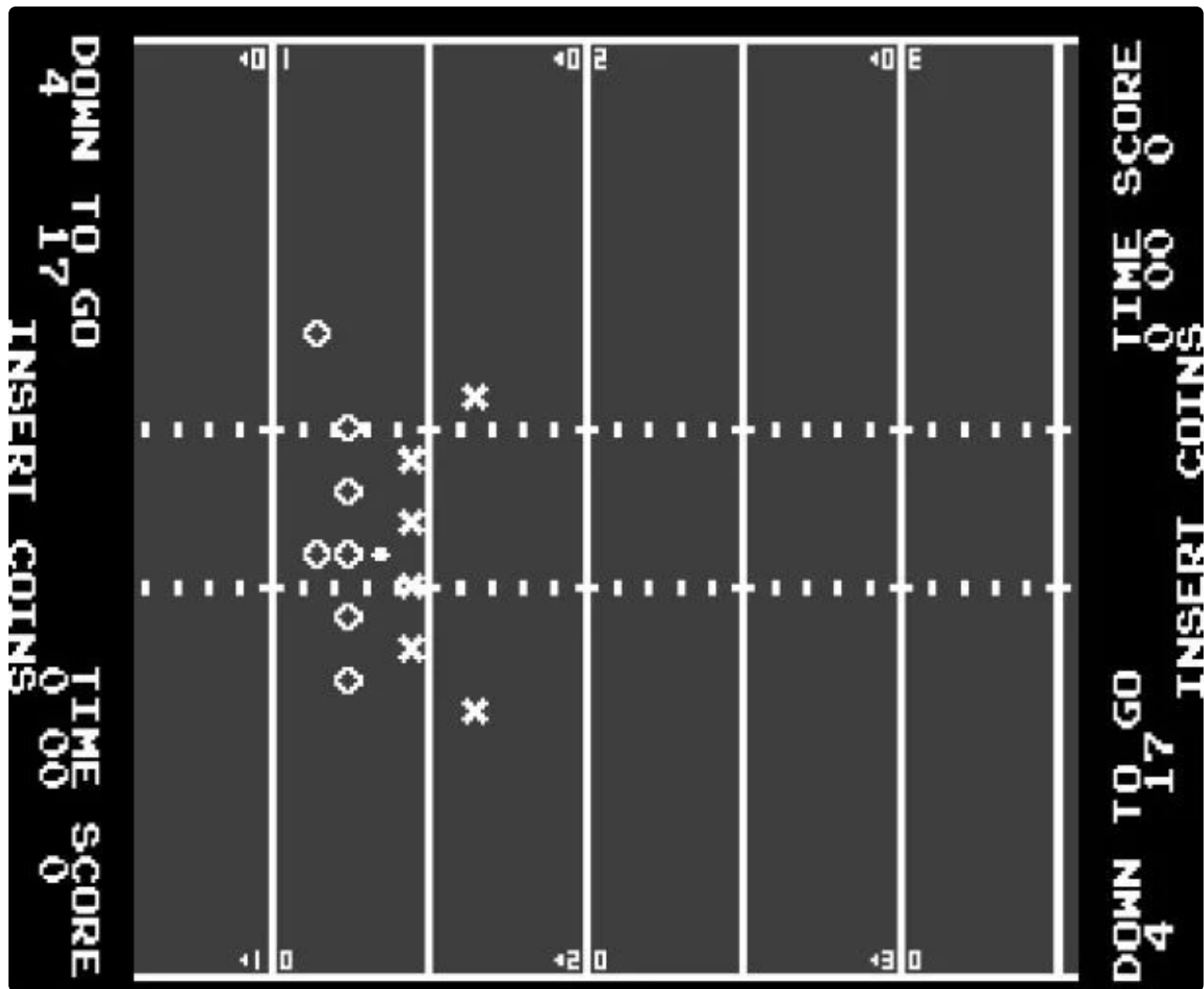
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Football video games have existed in some form for the past 35 years. Before Mario slid down his first flagpole or our little vector ships blew apart digital asteroids, gamers were able to nestle up to an arcade cabinet and simulate a game of football. Looking back at the history of these games is pretty staggering -- they've ranged from hardcore simulations to complete arcade madness. Even if you're not a fan of the sport itself, games like Tecmo Super Bowl and NFL Blitz managed to transcend their real-life analogue and become purely entertaining video games on their own merits.

Looking at these screens highlights how far the genre, and video games as a whole have evolved. Join us as we look back at 35 years of interactive football.

Atari Football (1978, Atari)



Widely viewed as the first game to accurately depict football...you know, minus the fact that players are represented by Xs and Os.

Tecmo Super Bowl (1991, NES)



Arguably the best sports game of the 8-bit era, it transformed Bo Jackson into a video game deity. Seriously, he might be the most overpowered character ever.

Mutant League Football (1993, Sega Genesis)



Portals to hell, alien invasions, and an endless supply of awful puns (Jerry Rice is called Scary Ice) made this one of the dumbest, most entertaining sports games of all time.

Madden NFL '95 (1994, Sega Genesis)



Madden '95 ushered in the series' emphasis on emulating real football by featuring NFL team logos and actual player names. Sorry, Scary Ice.

NFL Blitz (1997, Arcade)



Blitz married arcade action with the actual fundamentals of football better than any other game. It's an arcade cabinet that still demands to be played whenever you happen to stumble by.

NFL 2K1 (2000, Sega Dreamcast)



For a brief stint in the early aughts, Sega gave EA and Madden a run for their money through the fantastic 2K series. 2K1 still stands as one of the very best Dreamcast games.

Madden 2002 (2001, All the Systems)



Once Madden found its way to PS2, Xbox, and GameCube, EA managed to strong-arm its way to the top of the digital football mountain. Gaining exclusive rights to the NFL license also helped.

NFL Street 2 (2004, So Many Consoles)



Boasting a soundtrack featuring DMX, Papa Roach, Sum 41, Drowning Pool, and Ying Yang Twins makes NFL Street 2 the most 2004 thing ever.

Blitz: The League (2005, PlayStation 2/Xbox/Xbox 360)



Without access to the NFL rights, Midway created a football game consisting of steroids, prostitution, and the only/worst storyline in the history of the genre.

NCAA Football 2010 (2009, 360/PS3)



As visuals in games slowly creep towards the uncanny valley, success and failure is measured by what features are added to annual installments.

NCAA Football 2014 (2013, 360/PS3)



NCAA's Infinity Engine carry the weight of on-field physics in what could be this generation's college football console swan song...

Madden NFL 25 (2013, Current/Next-Gen)



...which brings us to Madden NFL 25, which is set to celebrate the series' historic milestone when its released later this summer.

Marty Sliva is an Associate Editor at IGN. He has terrible nightmares about Scary Ice. [Follow him on Twitter](#) @McBiggitty and on [IGN](#).



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