Title: Football Manager 2007
Developer: Sports Interactive
Format: PC, Mac, XB360, PSP
Genre: Sports Management
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Developer blog # 1.a

New features and improvements for Football Manager 2007

Miles Jacobson, Managing Director of Sports Interactive:
Football Manager 2007 is evolution, rather than revolution, however, a lot of the new features are revolutionary not just for the game, but for the whole genre. And there are a lot of them…

The most new features we've had in one of our games were the 40 in last years *Football Manager 2006*. This year, there are over 100! I gave up counting at 106, and the dev team keep putting other new things into the game whilst playing and noticing ways to improve it, particularly based around the "user friendly" mantra that's been a big part of the development process this year. We have had many comments about our game being overwhelming, and seeing features being lost in the mass of screens, so whilst we've added more to the game than ever before, we've also made it easier to use, navigate, control and all options should be more obvious to the user. You can still ignore things if you want to, and still get your assistant manager to help out with some of the more advanced and complicated features, but at least they are easy to spot if you do want the full football management experience.

Now, I'm not going to ruin everything by just giving a list of the entire myriad of new features in the game and a brief description because, well, I don't want to ruin the game for when you start playing it. So what I'm going to do over the next 4 weeks is go through a few of the new ideas inside the game, well, quite a few actually. The other features will be for you to discover for yourselves…

So, where's a good place to start? One of the internal mantras for this year's game has been "user friendly, user friendly, user friendly". We've seen with our PSP game that making the game easier to use is a good thing, although obviously our PC (not forgetting Mac and the new format, Intel Mac or even the Xbox 360 version) game is a lot more in-depth, and there is no interest from us to dumb down the game. So we've worked very hard to keep everything, and more, but present it better to the user.

USER FRIENDLY

The main starting point for this was with the user interface team and the way that the new skin was designed and works. Adding in icons that were used on the Xbox 360 game was the first thing done, and we've added the dialogue boxes and polygon graphical player stat view from that version too, but these soon got expanded upon to include a vidi printer, currently dubbed "Football Manager Live!" (wip name) which shows news and other important info, with the ticker bar now showing interesting stats about active leagues.

There are also hints & tips throughout the game, but rather than just a handful, we've got over 300. This should suit both the new users and advanced users, and tell them about things that they can do in game, and how to do them, along with the updated tutorial which has been worked on by the team at www.footballmanager.net The hints and tips have come from a variety of different people to ensure that all people's style of play is covered, and even I've learnt things about the game that I didn't know before.

Add to that the introduction of player bios, photo's, club bios, logo's and other important information to news items which should all certainly save a few mouse clicks. Easier positioning, naming of icons and options, plus the addition of quick links (icons), as well as the Flexion skin being the best looking and easiest skin to use on a Sports Interactive game to date are further features included for ease of use.

The snapshot screen has been massively under-utilised since its introduction, so we've made this appear more often, added more options to be displayed and also made it user configurable, so it's a great way to see the info that you want to see, all on one screen. Add to this customisable bookmarks and keyboard shortcuts, and we're giving you power to make it easier to navigate.

Balancing between new features and the speed of the game is really important so for those that do have speedy computers, more sections of the game are now multi core optimised and hyper-threaded. For those that have older machines, the "detail level" option in option menu is a good place to go – all levels of matches are now configurable to play out with the full

match engine (with visible highlights) or the quick match engine (without visible highlights). So you can now have more leagues active in the game, so more jobs to get across the world, without it slowing down the game much at all, or just keep using the same amount of leagues as in previous SI games, working with the other optimisations to actually speed the game up considerably, despite the 100+ new features. We have tried to cater for those with both the latest machines and those with older ones, and obviously the older the technology, the slower the machine will be with higher detail settings, so it's nice and easy to tune the speed of the game to what you're happy with on your PC or Mac, much like you can with detail settings in FPS games.

Other new features in the user friendly area include lots of extra stats being displayed inside the game, particularly in news items, to give more info to the user, better feedback from your assistant manager, agents recommending positions for exchanging players in transfer deals and the option to back up saved games before a new one is saved.

Oh, and let's not forget the basic and advanced set up modes for starting a new game and adding a manager, with easy to use wizards for those who get confused by any kind of menu. Or the ability to take screenshots just by pressing one of the function keys – they save into your saved game directory (check out the "shortcuts" option in the preferences screen, which can be found in the option menu to see which button is assigned, and let's you completely configure keyboard shortcuts).

The database editor is also easier and quicker to use for those who like to edit such things. We've added multiple database support into the game, so there's no need to wipe over older databases, meaning that if you try an unofficial update to the game and it doesn't work, you can easily switch back to the original database. Or choose to start a new game with data from the first transfer window, or the second window when we release our official data update around February time.

For those who play network games, there's been some optimisation made to make the experience easier, also the addition of screen remembering, which means that having the "continue game timeout" option which stops you from being kicked out of making transfer bids and return to screens that you don't want to be on.

There are more things for advanced users, with new advanced game modes, including the possibility of the ultimate challenge, with random team selection where the computer chooses which team you should manage as well as the ability to have dual nationalities, just like the players inside the game.

But my personal favourite for both old and new users alike is the addition of the capability to select multiple players and perform multiple actions on said players, much like you would do with any software you use day to day. Want to get rid of your youth squad? Easy, just select the first player, then the bottom one whilst holding down shift, and they will all select. Right clicking on the mouse then gives you the multiple action options. You can use this on virtually all screens, so it makes it a lot easier to do scout searches, as well as managing your squad, managing player searches and the like.

Football Manager 2007 is scheduled for release across Europe on PC, Mac, XB360 and PSP during Christmas 2006. For more information please visit www.footballmanager.net or www.sigames.com.

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