

**The
David Perry
Challenge #1**

By: Edgar Parente
www.killerkorp.com
eparente@killerkorp.com

XBOX

**What impressed you, what would you change,
how could it be better?**

Halo: Combat Evolved

Genre: First Person shooter

Dev/Pub: Bungie / Microsoft

Intro:

- No intro movie, straight to the menu.
- Simple top down menu, with profile selection.
- Good choice of options, and demos for other games

Getting Going:

- Right into the fray after the intro movie.
- On normal and lower settings there is a little tutorial on how to control the character.
- Checkpoints after every major encounter/section. So if you die you don't usually restart very far.
- Triggers in your HUD display your next objective on plus of it being communicated to you.

Fun:

- The levels are pretty linear with the bulk of the game being waves after waves of enemies in a wide area.
- It's interesting to outsmart the enemy, especially when there are many of them you can't stay put, so devising various plans of action is satisfying.

Visuals:

- The graphics are pretty good, but what really makes the visuals impressive is the extras. Blood on the wall, bullet holes, and other details.
- When outside the viewing area is quite far, making you able to see enemies at a great distance.
- Most special effects come from the gun projectiles which use many particle systems.

Intelligence:

- Enemies hide, use cover, change weapons, use grenades.
- When coverless they run from side to side to avoid being hit
- The different characters have different styles. Some will run when hit, other will rage.
- Your own team mates are pretty good, except when on the gun of the vehicles. They don't tend to see the enemies, and only shoot in bursts

Immersion:

- The game is continuously intense, with wave after wave of enemies.

- Strong story, and you feel like the main character because you learn the story at the same time as he does.
- Very redundant levels, the waves of enemies become tiresome after a while

Cameras:

- Standard FPS camera.
- When in a vehicle the camera switches to 3rd person. Provides a good view of the environments while enabling you to see the other characters in your current team. Possible to rotate around the vehicle.

Controls:

- Standard FPS controls. Left stick to move, right to look, and shoulder buttons to use weapons.
- When in a vehicle the controls stay the same. Not intuitive since the standard driving controls dictate left/right on the main (left) stick to turn. In this case it's the right analog stick to control direction.
- Crouching should be toggle is would facilitate moving while being crouched.

Ideas:

- Unlike standard FPS, here you have members in your team at certain point of the game.
- Realistic play: you can shoot your own team mates.
- Can only carry 2 weapons at a time. An interesting twist to FPS that enable you to have 10+ weapons at once.
- Other members of your team never drive vehicles. It would be interesting if they do since they aren't very good gunners.
- 2 players can play the story mode together.

Memory:

- Total excitement during the game, but the level design bores.
- Too many waves of enemies in the same location without story building.

Halo 2

Genre: First Person shooter

Dev/Pub: Bungie / Microsoft

Intro:

- Like original Halo, no intro movie.
- Menus are easily navigable with plenty of customisation of character for multiplayer games.
- Simple top to bottom menu with profile selection

Getting Going:

- Much faster loading times than the first game.
- Pretty long initial movie sets the setting of the game.
- Obligatory tutorial is short but manages to explain the necessary commands.
- Display has the available options for weapon picks ups or exchange
- While playing the game you are in communications with a character which explains your next goal.

Fun:

- Same excitement s the first game is present, but the amount of enemy waves has been reduced. The repetitive level design style was also changed slightly.
- The game is shorter, but also less boring since the level and challenges are more interesting.
- You play both sides of the war.

Visuals:

- The engine was changed to incorporate more bump mapping.
- During cinematic sequences (which are engine based) certain maps appear after the general image. Even during game play this glitch can sometimes be seen.
- The outside environments have a long viewing distance and are very nice.
- Most of special effects have to do with projectiles where many particle systems are used.

Intelligence:

- All enemies act differently, even different ranks of the same type of enemy act differently.
- Your team mates act believably with different personalities and comments. They also use different attack tactics.
- Generally improved AI for both parties, with more enemies aswell

Immersion:

- More excitement than the first give. Fewer waves, but the amount of enemies is crazy.
- Depending what vehicle/weapons you have at your disposal, you will have to adapt your combat style.
- Story which involves both sides of the war, so you get to understand the complete story better than the initial game.

Cameras:

- Standard FPS camera
- When you enter a vehicle the camera switches to 3rd person. Adequate since you are able to see your surroundings and the other members of your party.

Controls:

- The controls compared to the first game are a little hard to use. Since you can dual wield weapons the different weapons for changing/ picking up weapons is complicated; especially when you are in the middle of an intense battle.
- When dual wielding hitting someone with the butt of your weapon will make you drop the other.

Ideas:

- 2 players can play the story in co-op mode.
- dual wielding weapons
- not much was added to this game except for some new enemies and Xbox live.

Memory:

- Much more interesting story than the original.
- Much less redundant level design.

Star Wars: Knight of the Old Republic

Genre: 3rd person RPG Adventure

Dev/Pub: BioWare / LucasArts

Intro:

- The intro is almost like a Movie trailer. With pre-rendered images as well as game footage.
- Menu utilising Panes, with top to bottom selection within the panes. Adequate for all the amount of information that needs navigation. Also has different sorting systems

Getting Going:

- A pop up window appears on all first times. So you can clearly understand how something works when it is the first time you try it.
- The initial part of the story initiates you to most common commands. While still having it be integral to the story. It doesn't feel like a tutorial.
- All your quests and updates are enumerated in the menu, so you can always refer back in case you get lost.

Fun:

- The game has a main story, but added to that is a whole bunch of side quests and mini games.
- The story is interactive as you have to make many decisions concerning your actions and communication.
- Even when not following the main story directly communication between the current team members unfolds backgrounds to the world and the characters

Visuals:

- Except for unique Non player characters, the amount of different facial characters are very limited. The clothing differs.
- No big special effects: Some particle systems for electrical shorts, or the blaster shots.
- Viewing distance isn't very great, you can often see the horizon appear as you run.

Intelligence:

- Enemies follow a simple shoot / attack pattern. Usually not doing much else than attacking.
- When multiple enemies are present they will usually converge to attack a single character.

- Some enemies with multiple weapons, when within a certain radius with use close quarters weapons.
- The important characters in the game all have different personalities, and those can be seen through in game communication. All depending on your responses they react differently
- Other non player characters usually only say a select few phrases.

Immersion:

- For anyone who appreciates the world the game is based on this game is great.
- Strong story with a lot of background to learn.
- Plenty of stuff to do. Go anywhere do anything type of game.

Cameras:

- Always 3rd person camera.
- Camera is easily rotated, and centered.
- Important elements are explicitly shown, and can be cycled using a button.

Controls:

- Game makes extensive use of the white and black buttons, a little hard to get accustomed to.
- As you move around sometimes the other players in your team will block the way.

Ideas:

- Star Wars RPG. Most games based on the SW universe are action based games. It's interesting to see something fresh.
- Quick transport feature to bring you back to your hideout from anywhere in town.
- Non combat related random encounters.

Memory:

- Huge amounts of side quests.
- Mini games.
- Interesting story line, with good voice over.

Burnout 3: Takedown

Genre: Street Racing

Dev/Pub: Criterion / EA

Intro:

- The intro video gives a good feeling of the action that will be seen in the game.
- Profile management based opening menu, simple top to bottom architecture. The intro movie plays in the background while in the menu.
- Various play modes, and you are able to get in the game very quickly
- Custom soundtracks, possibility to change audio preferences (turning off DJ).
- However the options menu is hidden in the Driver Details; where you see records and the like.

Getting Going:

- The first time you play you must watch a tutorial video (which cannot be skipped).
- Very easy learning curve, the game begins quite easy and builds gradually.
- Track very easy to follow because of large lines showing where the turns are.

Fun:

- One of the most exciting games I have seen in a long time.
- Fighting against other racers brings a new dimension to the street racing genre.
- Well distributed tracks and progression, plus more Crash course.

Visuals:

- Incredible sense of speed.
- When boosting a blurring effect is put on place.
- Car damage is excellent with parts falling off or trailing.
- Large amounts of well detailed vehicles on the screen at once.
- Good particle systems for grinding and explosions

Intelligence:

- Cars do not follow a predetermined path, and push you to make a proper turn.
- They are good at avoiding object and generally hard to predict. They will Attack you as you attack them.
- No cheating AI (driving faster, perfectly)

Immersion:

- Proper Progression in vehicle classes.
- A Music announcer at the bottom of the screen distracts from the racing action.

- Different challenges available at the same time, So if one is too hard, you can try another.

Cameras:

- 2 camera views are available: bumper or far behind.
- bumper cam is very limited in this game since it is usually necessary to see directly beside and behind the car to see if there are any rivals approaching.
- No mirrors. In either camera mode
- Takedown camera where you can see a crash as it happens.

Controls

- Only 1 control scheme. No customisation.
- The controls are very responsive, and provide good feedback of the game.

Ideas:

- Different types of races. Crash, last man standing, Takedown. of good ideas...
- No replays!! Crash mode has very limited replay, but no other mode has it.
-

Memory:

- Crashes, Crashes and more crashes.
- No other game provides such a sense of speed.

Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell

Genre: 3rd Person Espionage

Dev/Pub: Ubisoft

Intro:

- Mixed intro with equal part story, equal part game play footage. The essential feeling of the lone badass is present.
- Stylised top to bottom menu to complement the in game menu.

Getting Going:

- The mandatory tutorial explains clearly all the necessary manoeuvres.
- The menu is constantly updated with new info as the game progresses.
- Someone is always communicating with you to update you on your next goal.

Fun:

- Hard, long levels. Certain limitations add to the difficulty of the missions.
- Because of the difficulty, the game is also more rewarding when completed.

Visuals:

- Smooth animation with extensive use of dynamic shadows for players and objects.
- Fire effect (particles) is a little strong. Blinds the player.
- Interesting grainy night vision, but black and white instead of green.

Intelligence:

- Enemies react to vision and sound.
- Most enemies don't go for cover; they just shoot you in the open.
- Bystanders usually drop to foetal positions, when shots are heard around them .

Immersion:

- An espionage, which predominantly has you moving through shadows.
- Hide bodies, and be unseen. Shoot lights, destroy cameras.
- Levels are pretty straight forward, but not being found is the immersive part.

Cameras:

- Fully rotative 3d camera. When collides with an object it moves to accomodate.
- Camera angle changes for better aiming when gun is handled.

Controls:

- A little bit of a learning curve, but the controls do provide for flexibility.

- The switching between gadgets is well done.

Ideas:

- Many gadgets: small camera, lock pick.
- Interesting concept of hiding in shadows.
- Interrogating enemies, hacking computer.

Memory:

- No feeling of openness, the levels are very linear.
- Some good memories and passing through unnoticed. Turning off the lights and taking the guy out.

Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow

Genre: 3rd Person Espionage

Dev/Pub: Ubisoft

Intro:

- No intro. The intro is shown after the start screen, but before the menu.
- Highly stylised menu with small video clips to represent the various game modes.
- No options except for initial difficulty setting.

Getting Going:

- Before the start movie you are initiated at picking a lock.
- Start movie is intrigue builder.
- First levels has pop ups on which command are necessary to progress.
- Every pop up or communication gets a log in the in game menu so you can go back to it.

Fun:

- Slow and progressive style of play.
- Every puzzle has many solutions.
- Many destroyable elements, and ways to distract enemies

Visuals:

- Viewing distance is not very long, and even worse with night vision or infrared. Even binoculars don't increase viewing distance.
- Excellent models and textures, some off key animations (like up and down stairs)
- Not many new animations from the previous game.

Intelligence:

- Enemies will give chase and wait you out when they know you are in a closed room.
- Enemies are sensitive to sights and sounds. If they hear something coming from elsewhere, they will investigate.

Immersion:

- The terrorist stories are starting to get a little stale.
- The levels are very straight forward, still the design is interesting.
- Very strict rules concerning missions: No killing, not being seen.
- Most of the immersion comes from trying to go about unnoticed.

Cameras:

- Fully rotative 3D camera. Hindered by objects, but it moves to accommodate, it never gets stuck.
- Camera changes to shoulder when you handle a weapon, as to better accommodate aiming.

Controls:

- No crawling, I've always thought that infiltration uses crawling. You can run crouched however
- No close combat, so you are pretty much a standing prey if you sneak up to someone and make too much noise.
- Item navigation was changed to the D-pad, making it easier to navigate.

Ideas:

- The menu changed from a Palm, to a Sony Ericsson.
- Multiplayer was added, but apart from that the game is essentially the same.
- More weapons.

Memory:

- Very well balanced between stealth and combat.
- Interesting level design where element on the ground produce different amounts of noise.

Project Gotham Racing 2

Genre: Racing

Dev/Pub: Bizarre Creations / Microsoft

Intro:

- The intro movie is especially boring. It's more like bad credits for a movie. No action, just a few city names while a camera glides over a Ferrari at close range.
- The demo is not bad, but looks just like replay.
- The menu is fairly well executed; however as you cycle through some options, the previous disappear.

Getting Going:

- Good amount of different available racing events.
- In career mode some focus more on precise driving, some are races, some are fastest laps...
- The principle of Kudos is fairly well executed. As you gain more kudos by doing different manoeuvres in the races, you get tokens to purchase more cars.

Fun:

- As racing games go it is fairly enjoyable, however their difficulty levels need a little touching up. It's either too easy or too hard... there isn't much that provides the right amount of challenge.
- All cars are stock, with on upgrades. Upgrades are fun, as some people prefer a car in particular and want to keep it by upgrading it.
- The game progresses in car classes, so you won't see SUVs racing against Muscle cars.

Visuals:

- your car has shadows, but the others don't. The shadows are dynamic however.
- The night driving is interesting. And the lighting effects are interesting.
- The car textures are just colours, so nothing extravagant there.

Intelligence:

- Often times you feel like they are following a predefined path, and as such they will push you if you intervene in their path.
- The difficulty settings seem to be put mostly at what angle and speed a corner is taken. As you increase the difficulty the other vehicles start drifting through corners, making the turns much faster

Immersion:

- Since this game emphasises drifting, having a bumper cam, makes control somewhat difficult.
- Though with good progression of the game, you can not see the time pass by.
- You just go through the races and increase the difficulty levels.
- Though there is some redundancy, as there is with most racing games.

Cameras:

- 4 different cameras angles are available. Low bumper and high bumper cams are difficult to use since you usually drift a corner.
- The 2 other cams are behind the car, either close or far. And do a good job at always point in a straight line towards the direction of the car.

Controls:

- Standard L and R racing configuration, with a few other presets to choose from.
- No manual configuration available though.
- Support for a variety of different racing wheels with their own specialised controls.

Ideas:

- The replay doesn't automatically come on, but you can watch it if you want.
- Custom sound tracks are available, and on top of it you can pick songs from the game, and your own playlists and combine them into one playlist.

Memory:

- Not the best, not the worst. It's just a racing game.
- You'll remember the nice drifts through a corner if you're lucky, but you'll probably also remember how hard some of the events are.

Ninja Gaiden

Genre: 3rd person Adventure

Dev/Pub: Tecmo

Intro:

- The introduction is a simple history video about how the sword was stolen, and you are going back to get it.
- The menu is simple, with only a few options.. nothing extraordinary

Getting Going:

- The first level starts off easy, but the difficulty sky rockets by the time you reach the boss.
- At the beginning you learn some jump manoeuvres, but you really don't learn to fight. As such when you reach the first boss you are incapable to even touch him before he kills you.

Fun:

- This game is fun; you enjoy jumping around walls and experimenting with the possibilities.
- This game is somewhat difficulty misbalanced. 30 minutes into the game you'll feel like throwing the game out the window.

Visuals:

- Excellent and smooth animation, something that is expected by Team Ninja.
- Some interesting effects are also used, such as when you slash, there is a distortion done in the colours.
- Particle systems when there are clashes of weapons.

Intelligence:

- A challenging AI. When fighting a pack of enemies all at once, you will be flanked, some might stay back and use projectiles.
- The boss AI is Crazy!!! I wasn't able to beat the first boss. They are unpredictable, and don't follow much of a pattern...Except beat on you.

Immersion:

- Though this game will you have very well immersed in no time, it will also break that immersion in no time.
- The major fault that I have to give this game is its learning curve and Boss difficulty. You can get immersed during the level, and the boss is just too hard that the immersion falls out.

Cameras:

- camera play is very good, and the only way to shift the camera is by re-centering it behind the character.
- It would have been nice to have a free cam as to better navigate some areas, but it is understandable to not have one since there are a lot of indoor and close quarters battles, a free cam would have been problematic

Controls:

- Though mostly intuitive, the controls don't allow you to press many buttons at once. As in pressing block to always be blocking, and then pressing attack. As the attack finishes the characters goes back to blocking.
- Very responsive controls.

Ideas:

- It was a great idea to finally revive this franchise, and most of the game follows well with the excitement that you used to have playing the original trilogy.
- The added the Special feature of unlocking the original game is a great idea.
- The mismanaged the difficulty in the game will turn off many players will be turned off by it's Boss difficulty

Memory:

- I mostly have a bad memory for this game, but that is because I wasn't able to pass the first boss, or create any sort of convincible damage to him, after some 30 attempts.
- This game falls short is the difficulty configuration.

ESPN NFL 2K5

Genre: Sports – Football

Dev/Pub: Visual Concepts / Sega

Intro:

- Though slightly long, the introduction movie depicts varied gameplay and appropriately shows the kind of game you will be playing.
- The main menu is fairly large. There are varied amount of things in there, but in this kind of game it is necessary.
- You can quickly find all the available types of game, options, and even a rule book with glossary.
- Standard sports Menu top to bottom with panes.

Getting Going:

- The tutorial helps a lot to learn how to properly play this game. In an attempt to make this game extremely realistic, the button sequences seem very daunting at first, but after a few games you start to get everything down pat and you can enjoy the game more.

Fun:

- Even for someone who is not an extreme sports fan, this game is very well executed, and fun to play; even more enjoyable with friends.
- The career mode is very complete. You can make a complete training schedule for the week prior to a game with speeches and everything.
- They also have a Crib where you put down all your stuff, and the more furniture you purchase you can unlock cheats and such.

Visuals:

- The animation is smooth, and the crowd is very well done.
- Not many extravagant special effects, but the engine does a very good job of having many well developed characters on screen at once.

Intelligence:

- The game is fairly difficult, but realistic.
- The AI is well developed and adapts to many similar plays.
- For the inexperienced players, the game will be fairly hard, but after a bit of play you start to be comfortable with the different plays, and can outdo the AI.

Immersion:

- for the football fan, this is as good as it gets.

- Even for someone who is interested in Football management many things can be done in this game.
- From prepping the team to exchanging players, many things keep people interested even if it's not actual game time.

Cameras:

- The camera is always facing towards the owning players goal. So if you are on defense you see the front of your players. You get a bullet time effect when the ball gets intercepted, so you are facing towards your goal.
- Close camera, but it shifts left and right to enable you to better see the wide receivers.

Controls:

- The controls are a little complicated.
- Tapping a button or holding a button do different things. It takes some time to get used to them but as soon as you do you can do many different things within the game.
- The controls respond very well, so the experienced player has a lot of manoeuvrability.

Ideas:

- First person mode. It makes you feel like you are really part of the game.
- Gameplay is very difficult because your field of view is very limited, but it goes to show how the real players do it.

Memory:

- The main memory I have is of much time you can spend just doing things out of the game; reading the rules, making plays, etc.
- But a lot of good memories come from playing the game. You feel like dancing around like they do in the game when you intercept, and score a touchdown.

Panzer Dragoon Orta

Genre: 3rd Person Shoot-em up

Dev/Pub: SmileBit / Sega

Intro:

- No intro. Straight to the title screen.
- Standard top to bottom menu, but the “unlockables” section of the game uses a 3d menu with nice special effects.
- Selectable Tutorial from the menu.

Getting Going:

- Tutorial is non obligatory, but is very useful in learning all the control options.
- Goals of the game are fairly easy to understand since the levels are pretty linear, however sometimes you need to pick a path.
- 2 goals for every level; finishing the level and getting a high score to unlock stuff.

Fun:

- Seems like a pretty simple shooter at first but the 3d environment makes the levels pretty intricate.
- Enemies can come from anywhere (front, back, up, down)
- You have to dodge various elements as you navigate the level using special abilities.

Visuals:

- Ripple effects and dust particle effects in the unlockables section.
- Excellent rain effect.
- Good animation with believable wing flaps and morphing effects.
- Other special effects include speeding up and slowing down.

Intelligence:

- The characters always appear at the same spot every time you replay the level.
- Bosses use a certain pattern, but change attack style various times during the battle.
- Bosses must usually be attacked by different sides.
- The difficulty of the game stems from battling multiple enemies at once.

Immersion:

- The story is portrayed in text and visuals. There is sometimes communication during the level as well.
- Larger than life bosses with increasing levels of complexity.

- You get to fight against the Empire; that's always good!!!

Cameras:

- 3rd Person cam always focussed on the aiming recticle. Similar to Star Fox.
- Easy to rotate camera around to see all around the camera.

Controls:

- Reversible Y axis.
- Easy to learn controls.
- HUD accommodates to display different information depending what form the dragon is in.

Ideas:

- 3 dragons in 1.
- Original Panzer Dragoon unlockable.
- Extra missions when the initial game is finished fleshes out the world and develops other characters of the game.

Memory:

- Nice graphics with good sense of speed & strategy elements for bosses.
- Interesting twist to the standard shooter.

Madden NFL 2005

Genre: Sports – Football

Dev/Pub: EA

Intro:

- Intro is a cameo of NFL players (or cheerleaders, or fans) giving the usual EA sports slogan.
- The menu has very little change from previous versions, but the same options/game modes are available in different sections of the menu.

Getting Going:

- Various Mini games serve as an introduction to the game.
- Video Tutorials are just movies, so you don't learn as much as you could. They also serve to push away new players as the movies make the game look very complicated.
- Video tutorials only display advanced features.

Fun:

- Repetitive voice over. Not much added voices from previous versions.
- Play selection is easy to follow and the display can be changed.
- The play can be seen on field before the snap with the touch of a key.
- Good play mechanics

Visuals:

- Poor graphics, looks like PS2. Jaggies.
- Animation not smoother than previous versions of the game.
- Better crowds than previous iterations, and to copy ESPN NFL 2K4, a select amount of fans will be in 3D.
- Many characters in screen at once.

Intelligence:

- Ask madden often calls the same plays with very little variety.
- Opponent will pull some fakes, and varies plays.
- Opponent will use timeouts and time retention techniques when necessary.

Immersion:

- Improvements to the Franchise mode. Player feelings, and news.
- Training camp (same as mini games) during franchise mode for player improvement.
- Tournaments.

Cameras:

- As like previous versions, Camera is a little close; makes it difficult to see wide receivers.
- Various camera modes, but none work as well as they used to in previous versions.
- When the camera is too high, you don't have a good depth on the field. Limiting your passing plays.

Controls:

- Same controls as previous games, and the buttons are still mapped to improper actions.
- Depending if you are attacking or defending the same action is mapped to different buttons.
- A few special moves, but they are not very much used.
- Complicated to call audibles, and change plays on the field.

Ideas:

- Create-a-play/player/team/fan.
- Historic teams.
- Coach mode (you only call the plays and audibles. The in game playing is all AI.
- Ugly cheer leaders.

Memory:

- Many recycled animations, and madden comments.
- Not many significant changes done to the gameplay mechanics. Though various exterior elements were added (cheer leaders, fans)

NFL 2k3

Genre: Sports Football

Dev/Pub: Visual Concepts / Sega

Intro:

- Intro explains the ESPN Sega connection, followed by game footage. Interesting intro.
- Top to bottom menu with plenty of options and sliders.

Getting Going:

- Play choosing can be a little difficult, but after a while feels better because the effect is seen directly on the field.
- You can practice, but there is no tutorial.
- Easier controls, and more options than Madden of the same year

Fun:

- Gameplay is more unpredictable than Madden.
- More varied plays.
- Slightly more challenging than Madden.

Visuals:

- Camera has focus, with background blurring during replays.
- Very smooth animation, and more plentiful than Madden.
- Nicely detailed characters
- Nice reflections on the helmets.

Intelligence:

- Opponents use many varied plays.
- Team members adapt well to changing plays and circumstances in the field.
- Never the feeling that your characters are walking about aimlessly.
- Can't always use the same tactics, the opponent will catch on.

Immersion:

- Very complete franchise mode.
- No real unlockables.
- More voice overs than Madden.

Cameras:

- Similar to Madden (a little close). But the camera tilts to the side to better see the wide receivers.

- The camera zooms out after the snap.
- Many camera configs.

Controls:

- Similar actions all mapped to same button even if stance (defence, attack) is different.
- Good variety of dodging moves. From spins, to head-ons.
- Very responsive.

Ideas:

- You team, and your character, can foul.
- No unlockables
- No play suggestions.

Memory:

- Better graphics, smoother gameplay.
- Multiple special moves that are better adapted to different characters.
- Solid NFL game, better than madden

World Series Baseball 2K3

Genre: Sports – Baseball

Dev/Pub: Blue Shift / Sega

Intro:

- Intro with game footage of hits, outs, and pitches.
- Menu is same as other Sega sports games.
- Top to bottom with steps instead of panes.

Getting Going:

- No training, but game is pretty straightforward.
- Controls can always be seen through the in-game pause menu.
- Certain options can be changed in game, so you can adjust various play elements if you are unsatisfied.

Fun:

- A variety of options keep the game at the right challenge.
- Side game (Big League).
- Various game modes, from exhibition, to Sega Challenges.

Visuals:

- Dynamic shadow affected on the characters.
- 3D animated sprites for fans (well done).
- Moving clouds in the background.
- No dust lifting when characters run or slide on the sand.
- Some animation are choppy, but generally complete.

Intelligence:

- When the ball is hit the cursor goes directly to the appropriate player, though that player isn't always the good one.
- Every player has a different hitting profile.
- Opponent uses varied amount of pitches, pertaining to your hitting zones.

Immersion:

- Characters Chew; add realism to the game.
- Franchise mode, where you can choose the different coaches.
- Many options to deepen Franchise mode.

Cameras:

- 3 Different Batting cams. Only change being elevation

- 2 Different Pitching Cams: Telecast, or like batting cams.
- When play is in the outfield, fixed camera that zooms a little too much on character.

Controls:

- Simple and effective controls. Everything though possible can be done.
- Some buttons could have been mapped better. (jump to L??).
- Diving for the ball

Ideas:

- No unlockables.
- Plenty of uniforms, even classics.
- All star Teams, Create Players

Memory:

- Solid Baseball game with plenty of in game options to keep players entertained.

ESPN NFL Football 2K4

Genre: Sports – Football

Dev/Pub: Visual concepts/ Sega

Intro:

- Only live footage intro. Portrays the excitement of the game.
- Very inclusive menu, Top to bottom.
- Plenty of control over options, many sliders.
- Help text at the bottom of screen.

Getting Going:

- Basic Training teaches every important aspect of gameplay plus special moves.
- Easy to get right into the game with quick play mode.

Fun:

- Defensive plays decided in 3 steps instead of usual 2 in Madden. More options.
- Easy to call audibles with pop up menu.
- Plenty of play control, and easy play mechanics

Visuals:

- Some jaggies, though not much.
- Many more animations than Madden. Smoother gameplay.
- Nice crowds with team colours.
- Well executed replays.

Intelligence:

- Your team follows play very well; Executing sacks, and interceptions.
- Opponents use various plays, and use plays accordingly.
- No lag time between player reactions.

Immersion:

- Franchise mode allows you to run your own team from the ground up.
- Fouls are executable by both teams, and your own player.
- The Crib allows you to customize a house to your liking with trophies and other items.

Cameras:

- Close camera, but zooms out after snap.
- Camera tilts to whichever side you are directing the player, allowing you to see the wide receivers.

- Customizable camera.

Controls:

- Properly mapped buttons.
- Fluid animation, responsive controls.
- Easily executed moves.
- To make the game easier, some moves are also executed directly by the cpu (jumping tackle)

Ideas:

- Feature video showing new elements to the game.
- Manual for the Game, reference manual (rules).
- Coach mode, where you only call the plays and the AI plays both sides.
- Cheerleaders
- Many items were that were added here, were added in the Madden of the later year.

Memory:

- It is clear that this game is much more polished than Madden.
- Crib is a fun element, with soundtracks and some mini games.

The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind: Game of the Year Edition

Genre: 1st Person Role Playing game

Dev/Pub: Bethesda Softworks

Intro:

- No intro, straight to the start screen.
- Only menu is for loading or starting a new game, all options are controlled in game.
- Very long loading times. (30sec+). Compensated by some changing background screens depicting game characters and controls.

Getting Going:

- The basics of the game are explained through the story.
- Once the initial part of the story is done, you are let loose. Which can be confusing since the game is very open ended, and you might not know what to do.

Fun:

- Much talking to various characters to learn new quests and get new items.
- Deep story with the possibility of doing anything you want.

Visuals:

- Not the greatest of graphics, colours are a little dull, very brown. Not very detailed textures.
- Nice particle systems for spell effects and fire; among others.
- Viewing distance isn't that great.

Intelligence:

- Differently skilled enemies react differently. Enemies with long ranged weapons will always try to keep a distance.
- Characters you interact with all have rating of how much they like you; which influences how you can influence them.
- Characters will react differently to you depending on your actions.

Immersion:

- Very complex game. Endless amounts of things to do.
- A journal depicts your next quest or assignment, but the game is open ended.
- It's enjoyable to just talk to people, and wander.
- Auto map.

Cameras:

- First person camera. Some what unlikely for the style of game.
- Some problems when aiming to shoot, with crosshairs straight on, you miss, a little to the right and you hit.

Controls:

- Fairly easy to use controls, with good quick picks, and changes.
- Can't cast spells while your weapons are equipped, you need to disarm yourself for that.

Ideas:

- A Journal keeps a log of everything you have done and should do.
- Many races, custom classes, plenty of choices for starting characters.
- Extreme loading times. Can be aggravating if you are in a difficult part of the game and die often.

Memory:

- The attacks seem a little unrealistic; anyone with a sword would be better than those starting characters.
- A love it or hate it kind of game, with many interesting elements that are not seen in other games.
- Open ended.

Crimson Skies: High Road to Revenge

Genre: 3rd Person Shoot-Em Up

Dev/Pub: Microsoft

Intro:

- The introduction movie depicts the background of the world, and some in-game play.
- Intro lacks the excitement needed to push the game.
- The menu is of the most simplistic, but delivers what is necessary.

Getting Going:

- Extremely low learning curve.
- The story progresses in a way that you are taken through a quick tutorial on game controls.

Fun:

- Very entertaining setting. A sort of open ended story.
- You can shoot anything, or anyone flying around.
- Game progression is done so you get a good feel of different weapons and vehicles.

Visuals:

- Fire and jets from the engine particle effects.
- The viewable distance is very good, the projectiles are well defined.
- The water is also very well demonstrated.
- Dynamic Shadows are even present for your plane.

Intelligence:

- AI for this game is adequate; ships don't fly in formation to attack, but the dogfights are pretty intense.
- The attacks mainly fall in passes or follows. So either the enemies come from afar and shoot, or they are behind you and shoot.
- Both air and ground attacks.

Immersion:

- The dogfights are very intense, having you pull many manoeuvres to one-up the competition.
- When using stationary weaponry you feel just like it is real life: looking around frantically to find the enemy.

- The progression pace also keeps you addicted for quite a long time.
- The open ended sequences of the game allow you to wander around and explore to find hidden items.

Cameras:

- A behind the ship camera is all that is necessary for this game. Though you can look to the sides using the d-pad.
- The camera follows very well.
- During special manoeuvres the camera zooms out to show you the move.

Controls:

- The controls are shown at every loading screen
- Very easy to use, and even special tricks are easy to use.

Ideas:

- Game based on a not very successful paper and pen RPG.
- Interesting ship design and locations.
- Ship selection requires a little tuning; you need to scroll through large amounts of empty spots to get to the vehicle you want.
- A lot of voice-overs but no subtitles – Bad.

Memory:

- Interesting levels with increasing challenge.
- The dogfights are also very intense, something not many games can provide.

NHL 2K3

Genre: Sports Hockey

Dev/Pub: Treyarch / Sega

Intro:

- An all game footage intro; clearly show the good animation.
- Top to bottom menu, but second step is usually done in panes: with no indication of the total amount of panes.

Getting Going:

- No tutorial for special plays or even basic commands.
- Fairly simple redundant game with simple play control.
- Few different modes including quick play.

Fun:

- Many possibilities for in game action. Impeccable Line control.
- Realistic control; since you are on ice you can't always make quick turns.
- Seems extremely hard to tackle an opponent, who always seems to dodge.

Visuals:

- Nice reflections on the clean ice. As you play the ice becomes less reflective.
- Fans with appropriate colours.
- An Offside display appears when you or one of your players is offside.
- An arrow underneath your player shows his current direction.

Intelligence:

- Opponents and your own team members sometimes seems to just be standing around, not going to for puck when it is loose.
- Character switching is also a little off, not always going to the character that is closest to the puck.

Immersion:

- Tournaments, Seasons, and Franchises.
- Franchise mode allows all the generic elements such as player trading.

Cameras:

- Few different camera angles, though it is hard to determine which is better since the change isn't real time. Not allowing you to compare.
- Standard cam is well done with $\frac{3}{4}$ view.

- Face-off cam is top down.

Controls:

- Analog stick cannot be used in some menu commands.
- Generally easy to use controls in the game.
- Slightly tricky shooting which has to do with the length of time a button is pressed.

Ideas:

- Good commentary with player names, though slightly simplistic.
- Custom players.

Memory:

- Commentary voice is very fast.
- A good set of options.
- The reality of the game makes it a little hard to get used to sometimes.

Rallisport Challenge 2

Genre: Rally Racing

Dev/Pub: Digital illusions / Microsoft

Intro:

- Excellent intro, maybe slightly too long. It shows the sense of speed and hectic driving necessary in this genre of game.
- Pressured to sign on to Xbox Live (instead of choosing to sign on, you choose to not sign on.)
- Easily navigable menu which uses many icons and has a controls at the bottom.

Getting Going:

- There are many play modes, and the game is easy to learn.
- By playing “single race” mode it is the only way to have more than 1 car on the track in point to point races.
- The game puts you straight into the thrill of racing, and you can choose between many different events

Fun:

- Realistic gameplay makes for an exciting game.
- There are many car choices (and specific ones depending on the event) and they all drive differently.
- There are four different events on a multitude of courses.

Visuals:

- engine provides very nice environments, but it’s detail radius is very small.
- Elements only appear very clear when you are close, and when you’re going very fast you will often miss them.
- Some elements (cones) often appear late making it hard for you to anticipate the corner.
- Very nice damage models and dust.

Intelligence:

- The difficulty levels are apt; however the races where you race against opponents only constitute half of the game.
- Your opponents are rated about the same as you in the trial. So the races are pretty tight and entertaining.

Immersion:

- Each car has a different feel and sound. They put very good detail to the sounds of engines, and other engine parts.

- many different tracks and environments.

Cameras:

- Many different Camera views, however none have a mirror.
- The cockpit view is the most interesting, but also the one which seems to lack the most. There is no interior: no dials, no steering wheel, and no hands turning it.

Controls:

- Easy to get controls. I think they are very realistic, but other might say they are very arcade-ish.
- Car damage doesn't seem to effect driving at all. An option for damage control change could have been interesting.

Ideas:

- Career mode could have a few point to point races with other racers; not just time.
- Possible option to make the game more realistic (one bad crash and you're out.)
- While the level loads you have access to tuning your car; this is an excellent idea because you won't even feel the game loading.
- A garage could have been nice though, where you could have tried out the new car settings.
- They should add a Rewind during replay, so you have more control of the replay.

Memory:

- Cool Drift turning, Very nice graphics, and the game is challenging enough to bring you coming back for more even if you don't always finish first.
- Main memories are cool replays, and manoeuvring tight courses.

Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3

Genre: Tactical Squad Combat

Dev/Pub: Ubisoft

Intro:

- Very long all pre-rendered intro with no in-game footage.
- Full set of menus, top to bottom. Not much of descriptions for options

Getting Going:

- Training mode explains well how the game works.
- Tactics are learned the hard way.
- Mission objectives are clear.

Fun:

- Good feeling of being there, real life effect.
- Difficult game, must manage the team and yourself at the same time.

Visuals:

- Shadows are not fluid; some 3 stages (lit, regular, dark). Lag time for shadow to be affected.
- Nice, grainy night and thermal vision. Though some objects don't seem to reflect properly (looking at a light with night vision doesn't blind you.)
- The bright colours are very saturated.

Intelligence:

- If you order them they go; always positioning themselves strategically.
- You can shoot your own team mate, though potentially your player would have shot beside him to hit the enemy.
- Opponents are always in the same spot, so playing the level over and over you can anticipate.

Immersion:

- You can use voice commands with a headset, but the commands aren't listed in the manual.
- Very difficult game. Not many hits before you die. Realistic.
- After dying in the mission a few times it becomes easier and easier since the enemies are always at the same spot.

Cameras:

- Standard first person shooter

- Complete HUD with map and team status.
- No clipping or other bugs.

Controls:

- To scroll down the text L and R are used. Could have been the right analog stick.
- Voice commands to your team mates.
- Standard FPS controls.
- Quick switch between weapons, and also a selection panel; very effective.

Ideas:

- Head set can be used for commands.
- Good tactical commands.
- 3 saves per mission.
- Though limited, there is a story.

Memory:

- Real life feel.
- Being able to control team just by voice.

The Chronicles of Riddick: Escape From Butcher Bay

Genre: First Person shooter

Dev/Pub: Starbreeze / Vivendi Universal

Intro:

- No intro. Straight to start screen.
- 3D menu, based on a cube. Long to navigate since it is very animated.

Getting Going:

- The initial part of the story serves as a tutorial with command pop ups.
- The game is pretty linear at first.
- Riddick speaks to himself as to remember what to do next.

Fun:

- Many loading times impede on gameplay.
- Exact voice acting.
- Interesting design with the ability to accept challenges and speak with other characters.
- Though the challenge process seems to be non-linear, you have to perform all the challenges to continue.

Visuals:

- Heavy use of bump mapping. Though some areas of grid seem to not exist until you get real close. The detail radius of the engine is very low.
- Some triangulation problems on the character models, but not very noticeable.
- It actually looks like Vin Diesel!!
- Night vision isn't very good. It looks like there are light reflections on the walls when there aren't.
- Animation for character dragging isn't very good.

Intelligence:

- Enemies react to you differently depending if you are carrying a weapon or not.
- You can also disguise yourself.
- Guards get hostile if you hassle them too much.
- Opponents' tactics are pretty good; they hide behind walls and such.

Immersion:

- Though things happen in a prison, the story is solid.

- Communication between characters makes the interactivity interesting.
- A lot of slang from the Riddick world is used, so you might be hard pressed to understand what some people say.

Cameras:

- Standard FPS camera.
- Camera changes to 3rd person when talking to people or using other world objects (climbing ladders.)

Controls:

- A lot of fist fighting is involved in this game. Hard to judge distance of fists.
- The way hand combat works uses the left stick, so though you are trying to hit, you character moves about and you get disoriented.

Ideas:

- Cigarette packs unlock production material, and movie sets.
- Mixing the FPS genre with a more adventure game.

Memory:

- Interesting game, but with hard to manipulate hand combat.
- Good level progression, but difficulty quickly rises.
- Fake feeling of open ended-ness.

NBA Street Vol.2

Genre: Sports – Basketball

Dev/Pub: EA

Intro:

- Plenty of game footage in the intro. Good hype.
- Top to bottom menu where all the options are selected prior to game mode.

Getting Going:

- Street School shows how to play the game. Everything is explained.
- Easy pick up and play kind of game.

Fun:

- As an Arcade type game, is it much more action based than technical.
- More enjoyable to the casual player than the hardcore NBA fan.

Visuals:

- Nicely modeled characters that actually look like the players.
- Animation is smooth, but the switching from 1 animation to the other is a little glitchy.
- Particle effects for special moves, but there could be more during dunks.

Intelligence:

- The opponents always seem to pull off moves your team mates won't attempt.
- Opponents will perform plenty of combos and tricks.
- Your team mates don't try to block, and don't usually place themselves in positions to perform interesting moves.

Immersion:

- There is a career mode, where you create the players in your team and develop their skills over time.
- Tournaments, plenty of teams, and plenty of courts.

Cameras:

- Side cam is the standard camera, but there are a few others.
- The default cam makes you unprepared for some long passes since that part of the court is unseen.
- When close to the box, the camera angles so you have a complete view of it.

Controls:

- Easy to pick up controls with well placed turbo buttons.

- Intuitive buttons (y for jump/block)
- Some of the special moves require you to press 4 buttons at once. Both turbo buttons and clicking the analog sticks at the same time. Very hard to do.

Ideas:

- Whole bunch of movies explaining what is new in the game.
- Create players/ Teams, unlockables.
- 70's theme to the game, which is when street basket ball started.

Memory:

- Cool moves.
- Players actually look like the players
- Fast paced action, and with a 2 point differential, games can be quite long.

Top Spin

Genre: Sports - Tennis

Dev/Pub: Power and Magic / Microsoft

Intro:

- gameplay video as intro. It's a good display of things to come.
- The menu is easily accessible, but the loading times are excruciating, into the menu and out of the menu. Top to bottom
- The menu displays a movie in the background, which is not really necessary if it add too much to loading times.

Getting Going:

- Tennis school is just a video explaining the controls. Pretty useless.
- Easy to pick up controls.
- The career mode is the main game, but there area also exhibition matches and custom tourneys.

Fun:

- Most of the fun part comes from playing a career.
- You can make your own character, outfit him, and take him through his career as a tennis player, bringing up statistics and purchasing better equipment, even acquiring sponsors.

Visuals:

- Nothing extra ordinary here. The PS2 could have done just as good a job.
- The only special effect is when you hit the ball real hard, there is a little warp.
- The cut scenes (the player cursing because he missed for example) are well done, but they used a technique where every character uses the same mesh. I made my character the tallest and slimmest possible, but during the cut scenes he looks about 1 foot shorter and at least 30 pounds heavier.
- The animation is very good, with fluid animation for large amounts of situations and hits.
- The shadows are very well done.

Intelligence:

- I was able to defeat all my opponents using the same exact technique over and over, none of them adapted.
- Seems that if you are serving, and you serve well you will win that set. If the opponent is serving, you will have to get the serve, because that's where they gat the most points, by acing you.
- Even at the hardest difficulty I could use that same technique and win.

Immersion:

- The game is fun, and you are entertaining moving your character through his career.
- The AI breaks that immersion because of the lack of difficulty.
- Progression through career mode is well done.

Cameras:

- 3 types of camera are available.
- Zoom, which is usually the preferred angle: Close to your character, but always behind, Even on court changes.
- Far, the default for doubles: Almost bird's eye view, you are either on top or below the depending on what side of the court you play.
- After having played Zoom for a while you might confused as when you are on top of the court, your controls (left right) are inversed.
- Adaptive is the third available camera, the same as far, but with a tilt to emphasize curve balls and others.

Controls:

- Fairly simple play control.
- They adopted a risk factor for 2 types of hits. Using the shoulder buttons a bar appears and you need to release at the right moment.

Ideas:

- The career mode is well thought out. There are Sponsors, many tournaments, and even coaches so you get better at certain aspects of the game. There are also Skills, which give you an edge such as precision.
- Random button, but it doesn't do anything. It just lets you pick from all the venues instead of just a select few (parks, clubs, minor pro tourney areas)

Memory:

- Game is way too easy against the AI. Just this pushes you away from continuing to play.
- Interesting career mode with varied challenges.

Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath

Genre: 3D Platformer,

Dev/Pub: Oddworld Inhabitants / EA

Intro:

- No intro, straight to the start screen.
- Simple top to bottom menu. All options are also available in game.

Getting Going:

- Tutorial at the beginning of the game explains all the necessary elements.
- The goals are clearly explained by the character talking to himself, and the radar pointing to where you must go next.

Fun:

- Levels are mostly linear with large areas for bosses.
- Some platformer puzzles are extremely.
- There are sometimes a lot of enemies at once.

Visuals:

- A lot of foliage.
- Nice particle systems.
- A warping effect when you spin the character.
- Some problems with the dynamic shadows. Sometimes you can see 2.

Intelligence:

- Many different enemies with varied attack styles.
- Even the towns' people will react differently to your actions. If you attack them, they will fight back and forever be hostile.

Immersion:

- Oddworld is odd. The ammunition is creatures that you hunt.
- It's interesting to see what they will be coming up with next.
- There is a background story, but it's very slow progressing.

Cameras:

- The game can be played in 1st or 3rd person. But some commands can only be don't in 1 mode.
- You can only shoot your crossbow in 1st person. You can only bounty enemies in 3rd person.
- 3rd person cam is hindered by world objects.

- On certain occasions the camera is fixed for cinematic reasons.

Controls:

- The controls are standard for both types of views.
- Because there are actions that can only be performed in a certain view, in a heated battle it can be hard to manage both.

Ideas:

- Western style game with good voiceovers.
- Health & Stamina. So you need to manage both to stay alive.
- Critter ammunition.

Memory:

- Well affected western style.
- That's a crazy crossbow.

Beyond Good & Evil

Genre: 3D Adventure

Dev/Pub: Ubisoft

Intro:

- No intro. Straight to the start screen.
- Stylised top to bottom menu (looks like an F1 starting grid).
- Almost no options.
- In game menu follows a circle pattern where you direct the stick to the element you want to access.

Getting Going:

- They throw you right into the fray, but they have some text explaining basic commands.
- Open ended feel to the game with some mini missions.

Fun:

- The open style game play allows for plenty of mini games.
- Using a camera as a weapon (you are a reporter) is a refreshing idea. Plus a major part of your income comes from taking pictures of animals.

Visuals:

- Nice dynamic shadows and coloured lighting effects.
- Very nice water reflections.
- Nice explosions and strike particle effects.

Intelligence:

- A lot of communication between characters and you need to choose what you will say to potentially uncover secrets.
- Most enemies are pattern based, though the damage dealt and the amount of hits necessary to destroy the enemies will change.

Immersion:

- A solid story with sparkles of humour.
- Interesting level puzzles which have to do with your sidekick.
- Sneaking missions (a la MGS)
- A good variety of different elements to keep players entertained.

Cameras:

- 3rd person camera, fully rotative, but hindered by world objects.

- Camera sometimes is fixed to better sway character in 1 direction of for cinematic emphasis.

Controls:

- Standard control fro 3rd person adventure game. Similar to Zelda.
- Automatic jump.
- Special controls are very easy to use.
- Some more complex fighting buttons can also be used for special moves.

Ideas:

- Subtitles aren't the same as voiceovers.
- Extras: Trailer, making of stills.
- When close to an exit there is nothing that says you will be exiting the room (to a loading screen)

Memory:

- A game which incorporates various elements to keep the player interested.
- The reporting concept is fresh.

Moto GP 2

Genre: Motorcycle Racing

Dev/Pub: Climax / TH*Q

Intro:

- Live footage intro with racers names showing.
- Top to bottom menu with profile selection.
- Menu has live footage in the background.
- When playing multiplayer, the different players can choose a different profile.

Getting Going:

- Training and challenges on every track provide all the necessary skills.
- The challenges are pretty hard, but your skill greatly increases because of them.
- At every race, you can see what is missing to achieve all the unlockables.

Fun:

- Various modes of play including a stunt mode.
- Realistic play mechanics and good progression.

Visuals:

- Nice bump mapping on the track.
- Varied textures for the drivers and the motorcycles.
- Nice heat and blur effect when going fast.
- Unlockable visual modes (Toon, wireframe).

Intelligence:

- Different opponents have different driving styles, from breaking early to late and following different lines.
- Game isn't very hard at the early stages, with no qualification it is still usually pretty easy to finish first.
- Opponents react to your reckless driving by raising fists

Immersion:

- Create a player, perform training to increase your stats. Win the Moto GP.
- Many modes, and easy game to just pick up and play.
- Nice progression.

Cameras:

- Many different camera views. Non customisable.
- When going at top speeds camera retracts a bit.
- Cockpit cams take some getting used to, but really show the physics of the game.

Controls:

- Simple buttons mapping, and simple controls.
- For deeper control of the vehicle you can use separate breaks (front and back) depending on the effect you are trying to achieve.
- Character positioning to the bike.

Ideas:

- Plenty of unlockables and it is described how to unlock them.
- A movie description of the next circuit and highlights from the real Moto GP.
- Nice replay functions

Memory:

- A nice twist to the regular racing genre.
- The Physics being different than for a car, the pick up and play aspect might be a little harder, but the game stays enjoyable throughout.