



Introduction

As the dog days of summer pass by, one can't help but think of football. Whether you're an athlete or a fan, you just can't beat the passion found in collegiate football. There's something about watching your alma mater defeating a long-time rival; the NFL just doesn't come close.

With the latest edition of NCAA Football out, IGN Guides is here with an excellent guide to lead you and your team to the NCAA Championship. Grab your helmet and jock, and let's hit the field!

In this NCAA Football 08 Strategy Guide, you'll find:

- Expert tips for both offense and defense.
- Advice which will take your alma mater to a national championship contender.
- Pointers to take your freshman prospect to a campus legend.

Guide by: Jim Chamberlin

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NCAA Football 08 Basics

EA Sports has made sure to include more than one game mode. Like its big brother, Madden 08, NCAA Football 08 is a very complete football game. Below, you will find brief descriptions on the primary types of game play, which will help you out when navigating the menu screen.

Play Now

Using the "Play Now" mode, you will be taken to a screen where you can choose the team you want to play and which you wish to play against. Whether you're playing against the CPU or a friend, this is the quickest way to get right into a football game. You can even customize the weather conditions before you play.



Play Online

Just as it sounds, you can play against a friend or stranger if you two are connected to the internet in this mode. If you've mastered beating the crap out of the CPU, step things up a notch and take on someone on the other side of the country.

Dynasty

A favorite mode of ours, Dynasty allows you to become the head coach of any team you wish. Play each game while recruiting high school athletes as you prepare to take your team to the championship game. We will be covering this mode more in-depth in another section in the guide.

Campus Legend

In this mode, you are given the possibility of either creating a player or taking over a player and taking him from high school and through the collegiate football system. Play football, go to class, and make the right extracurricular decisions, and you'll find success. We will be covering this mode more in-depth in another section in the guide.

Practice

Take the time to practice your game before you rush right into playing. It'll allow you to get a feel for the controls and gameplay before you get schooled against a human player (for instance).

NCAA Football 08 Offense

Because the bulk of the points you will score will be by your offense, a lot of emphasis is put on it. A balanced offense is required to effectively move the ball down the field.

The best advice we can give you is to vary your offense. Do not call the same play over and over; the defense will learn what you are doing and will quickly shut down your offense. The same playcalls are not the only thing you should vary. You have to vary the play formation and the type of play (run vs. pass). Mix it up often, and do not hesitate to use the occasional play-action (PA) pass. This is an excellent way to confuse the defense. While the defense is thinking run, a wide receiver or tight end will have time to get open, possibly for a big gain.

Running the Ball

We can discuss strategy all day, but for a running game to be successful, your team must have quality athletes at the right positions. Any longtime football fan will be able to cite at least one instance of watching, for instance, a team with a great half-back/running back being unable to do much of anything because the offensive line is terrible.

When running the ball, you will require an opening in the line. If you do not see one, take it to the outside as quickly as possible, for it will just be a matter of time before the defense breaks through your offensive line and tackles you for a loss of yards.



If you are fortunate enough to see an opening, consider taking it. Hold down the sprint button and prepare to evade the middle linebacker and safety. Juke your way past them and take it to the house!

The juke button, when timed correctly, can make great defenders look like this is the first time they've been on the field. We have witnessed some sick-looking moves on the field.

While at the line of scrimmage, you may have noticed the defense has stacked the line, favoring one side over the other. Perhaps the defense has correctly guessed you were planning on performing a HB Smash, for example, to the right. Well, before the ball is snapped, consider calling an audible. This new play may confuse the defense and will force them to change their formation and play call. Also, you could simply choose to flip the play, so that the HB Smash runs to the left.

One common mistake we see by rookies is holding down the sprint button as soon as the quarterback hands off the ball. Sprinting too soon can get you into trouble. Let your blockers do their job. Going too fast too early may result in you either running into your own linemen, or even running right into the linemen that your offensive linemen were trying to block. Either way, nothing good can come from this. Timing is very important.

Passing the Ball

Once you call your play and are approaching the line of scrimmage, take a look at the defense. What formation are they in? Are they in 4-3, possibly thinking run, or are they in Nickel, Dime, or Quarter, possibly expecting you to pass? If they are in Nickel, Dime, or Quarter, their defense will have more defensive backs and will make completing a pass more difficult. Although you could consider changing the play through an audible, it's rarely necessary to do. You could, instead, use the hot route feature and have one of the receivers run a short curl route for a short pass completion.



When it comes to actually throwing the ball, make sure your quarterback has his feet planted. If he is on the run, his passes will be inaccurate, resulting in either incomplete passes or possibly even interceptions.

Balls thrown in the middle of the field to a receiver on a slant route will be picked off often because of poor timing on the behalf of the quarterback. Zone coverage by the secondary can make middle-of-the-field passes a dangerous thing to try. Watch the routes your guys are running and watch the movement in the secondary. Sometimes, the secondary will make a mistake, allowing you to get the ball into the air and complete the pass. A pump fake can help out, as well.

NCAA Football 08 Defense

<p>General Tips</p>	<p>Formations</p>
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There is often a great deal of emphasis put on offense, but we believe a defense is equally as important. Offense may win games, but defense wins championships, or so the saying goes.

For a defense to be successful, you don't necessarily have to stop your opponent on each and every play; just stop them from scoring. This is a much more realistic goal, after all. When it comes to offense versus defense, we prefer to play defense. Although it's a lot of fun to rack up points, it's great to shut down the other guy and run a fumble recovery or interception back for a touchdown.

Tips

A base defense like 3-4 or 4-3 is a good place to start yourself when it's first down. Both can effectively be used to stop both the run and the pass.

When you're certain the offense will run the ball, don't be afraid of using the line shift. For instance, pinch the linemen in if you think it'll be a run to the inside. We've used this a number of times to great success.

If you are controlling a person in either the position of linebacker or defensive back, don't get too anxious when trying to pick off a pass. Although putting your hands up and jumping for the ball is the right thing to do, consider your timing. Positioning and timing can result in either an interception or a big gain. Going for the ball is a bit of a gamble, and we've all seen guys lose as well as win in this.

Although you may prefer to dive at your opponent in order to tackle him, a diving tackle won't work 100% of the time. Truth is, there is no guaranteed tackle. That said, don't be afraid of simply running into the guy. You won't need to dive at a guy to take him down.

Speaking of tackling, become familiar with the hit stick. Used properly, a big hit can result in just about anything; everything from a missed tackle and hard tackle to a forced fumble and a player injury. If it works in your favor, a big hit can be a game changer.

General Tips	Formations
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Formations

Below, you will find a brief description of most of the general defensive formations, which includes the advantages and disadvantages of using each particular formation.

4-3	One of the most commonly used defense formations, the 4-3 involves four linemen, three linebackers, and four defensive backs. This is a great overall formation, but it is best for defending the run. If you are forced to defend an offense which is using three or more receivers, call a different formation.
3-4	The 3-4 defense is much like that of the 4-3 formation, and also very popular. It uses three linemen, four linebackers, and four defensive backs. With the additional linebacker, you will be able to better defend the short pass and the outside runs, compared to the 4-3.
5-2	The 5-2 defense uses five linemen, two linebackers, and four defensive backs. With the large number of men up front, it can be an effective way of stopping a run play. If the offense uses more than two receivers, however, you could be vulnerable to a pass play.
46	The 46 defense is similar to that of the 4-3 defense, but not very popular in today's game. It involves four linemen, three linebackers, and four defensive backs. This formation is good for stopping the run, as one of the safeties will be close to the line of scrimmage, providing speed and agility. With that speed, you will also be able to blitz, providing additional pressure on the quarterback. If the quarterback is able to find a receiver open deep down the field, you may find yourself in trouble.
Nickel	The Nickle defense typically uses four linemen, two linebackers, and five defensive backs. With the additional Dbs, you will be able to provide a better defense against a passing attack. This defense is, however, susceptible to a running attack.
Dime	The Dime defense uses four linemen, one linebacker, and six defensive backs. With all of the defensive backs, you will be able to provide a better defense against a passing attack. However, like the Nickel formation, the Dime formation is not good against the run.
Quarters	Typically using three linemen, one linebacker, and seven defensive backs, the Quarters formation focuses entirely on a defense against the passing attack. Because of the limited number of men up front, the offense would likely have some success should they audible to a run.
Goal Line	The Goal Line defensive formation uses several linemen and linebackers with just a few defensive backs. This formation should really only be used when your opponent's offense is in a short yardage situation and running the ball. Although the formation gives you a few Dbs, they won't be able to cover a whole lot, and is why this defense is usually only used when the offense is 1-5 yards away from scoring.

NCAA Football 08 Dynasty

Introduction	Preseason Recruiting	In-season Recruiting	Off-Season
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Like the franchise mode in Madden, the dynasty mode in NCAA Football is one of the primary reasons fans continue to buy the game, year after year. The dynasty mode puts you in the shoes of a coach of any NCAA football team. Whether you wish to take control of a big school like USC or go for a smaller, local college, the goal is the same: win the championship.

This section of the guide is designed to help you do just that!

Note: This section is specific to the features found in the Xbox 360 version of the game. Other versions may have slightly different features.

Pick Your School

The very first thing you'll get to choose is your school, of course. Perhaps you want to take the easier route and take a great school like USC or Florida. Or, perhaps you want to play as your alma mater, which is a much smaller school. Make your choice and move on.

Create A Prospect

You are not required to create a prospect, but it can be an interesting way to get a great player into your school. Before you create the prospect, take a look at your team's needs. Each position on the team is ranked from A to F, not unlike a paper would be graded in class. If you could use a half-back, for instance, consider creating a great half-back. Whatever you decide to do, keep in mind that this doesn't guarantee the player will sign with your school, but it will give your school a good shot at getting the prospect.

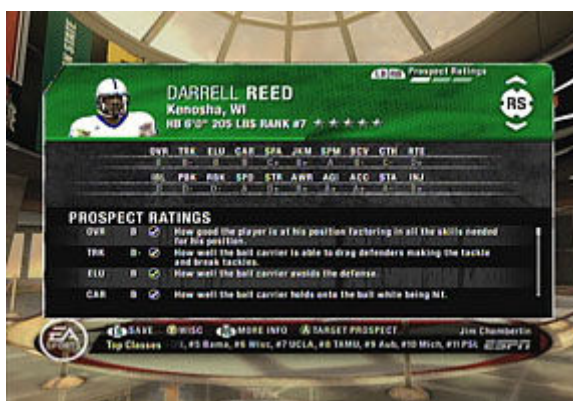


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Preseason Recruiting



Now that you have created a prospect (optional), it's time to recruit him and others. Once again, pay careful attention to your team's needs. When those seniors graduate, you will need to find replacements for them. Also, some underclassmen could either transfer to other schools or even enter the NFL draft, leaving your team in trouble.

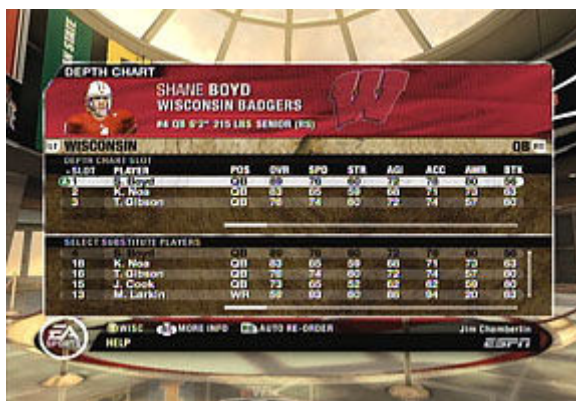
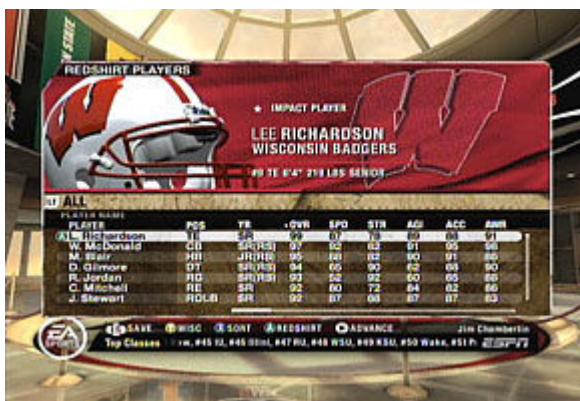


Your school will start off with 35 scholarships to give away. Don't offer them to just anyone; take a look at all of the information available to you to determine if he is right for your school. This, by the way, includes looking at the interest he has in your school. It is pointless to try to recruit guys who have no interest in your school. It's a waste of valuable resources.

Red-shirt Players

Once you have added the 35 recruits to your recruitment board, it's time to red-shirt a few players. The most common reason to red-shirt a player is because of the depth at certain positions. Having four quarterbacks, for instance, is overkill. Those guys won't likely all get much playing time.

Since players only have four years of eligibility, sit down the freshmen. During their time on the bench, the freshmen will train and improve their skills. Plus, he'll still be a freshman and will be good for four more years.



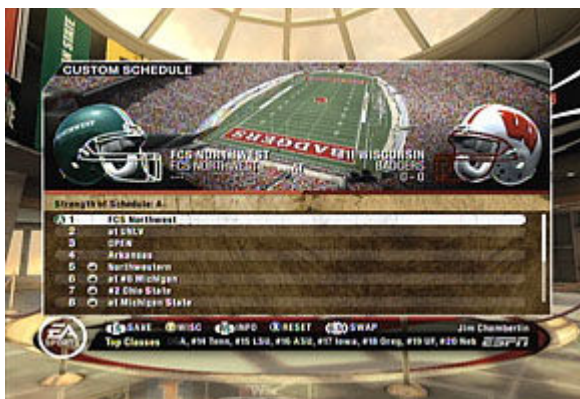
Depth Chart

Continue your roster management by re-ordering the roster if you feel it to be necessary to give some players more playing time than others. In our opinion, this is rarely ever necessary, but we'd probably complain if EA Sports didn't include it, wouldn't we?

Custom Schedule

As coach, you can even customize your team's schedule. Not all games are changeable, however. You will likely notice that some games are locked. The other games, on the other hand, can be changed. You can choose your bye weeks and change the teams you intend to play against in others.

Whatever you decide to do, keep "schedule difficulty" in mind. Teams are rewarded for playing and defeating highly ranked teams. If you want to make it into the big bowl games and the national championship, do not make your schedule particularly easy.



Start Season

With your pre-season tasks complete, it's time to begin the regular season. Here, you'll play games and continue to recruit prospects for your school.

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In-Season Recruiting

Although you have filled your recruiting board with prospects, it's unlikely any of them have already made a commitment to your school. These things simply take time.



To help recruit players, you are given ten hours of time each week to spend talking to prospects over the phone. You can only call those players on your recruiting board. Also, you can only call them once during that week. If you hang up, you'll have to talk to them next week.

Should you decide to call a prospect, you will be given three options:

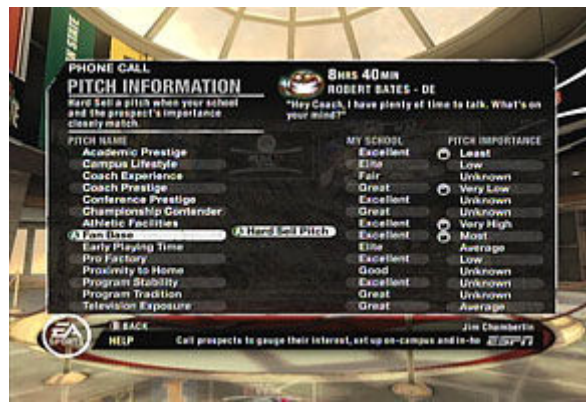
1. Talk to prospect
2. Offer a scholarship
3. Hang up

Choose the first option and you'll be taken to a menu offering quite a lot of information. This menu tells you about how the prospect feels about certain subjects. Perhaps he feels academics are very important for him. To find out, ask him. This will give you his grade, ranging from Least to Most important. If your school is ranked highly in the particular subject, you could consider "hard selling" him on it. This will likely result in the prospect being impressed by it. This will be displayed by the facial expression on the football at the top of the screen. The expression displayed is important in determining the feelings the prospect has about you and the school.



Do not spend too much time talking to any recruit. Too much jaw-jacking will anger the recruit and only make recruiting him more difficult. Take things slowly! You're not going to get someone to commit to your school immediately.

As a prospect's interest level increases, the player will be available to visit your school during one of your home games or during a bye week. You will then be able to choose the activities for that day. If you have learned a lot about the prospect, you should be able to make these decisions easily. Those guys who find academics important, for instance, should be able to visit with one of the professors.



Always keep an eye on a prospect's interest meter. If your school loses favor with the prospect, you should consider either hard selling him on a favorite subject or dropping him from your recruiting board. If you do drop him, replace him with someone who has some interest in your school.

Over time, prospects will begin committing to your school. Typically, very few will sign up early in the season. They tend to join towards the end of the season. Just be patient.

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Off-Season

Now that the regular season is over, commitments will pick up. You have to keep up the pressure and play in the bowl games if you've been invited to one.

Depending on how well you did, you may receive job offers from other schools. Review the various offers and make a decision. You may even receive an extension from the current school you are coaching.

Players Leaving

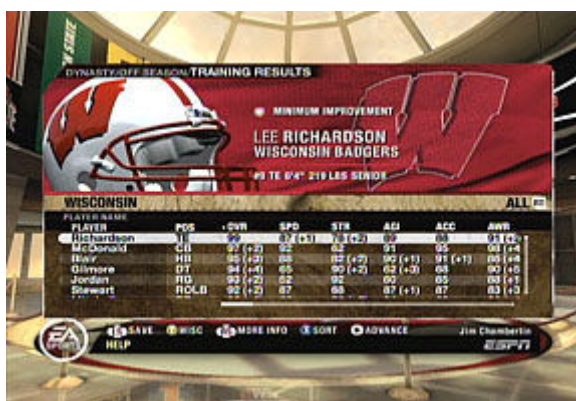
Once a player has gone through his four years of eligibility, he will be forced to graduate. If a player is leaving college early to be in the NFL draft, you can convince him to stay. We only recommend doing this if losing the player would significantly impact the team for the worse. If he can be replaced with someone, let him go and don't worry about the loss. Just remember that any time you spend on convincing the player to stay will be taken out of the ten hours of recruiting time for the week.

Recruiting

By now, a new option will have been unlocked for certain interested prospects. You have previously invited the prospects to the school for a visit. Well, this time, you can sit and visit with them at their home. A good in-home visit can be very effective in convincing the recruit to commit to your school. Just be sure to select the proper topics for discussion like you did earlier when he visited the school. Finish your recruiting and fill your roster.

Position Changes

Some of the players you drafted had the position ATH, which isn't a firm, specific position. Change these guys to an actual position. Select the player's name and scan through the positions available. Keep an eye on the OVR rating. Whatever position you decide to give him, make sure it's a high rating.



Training Results

Your players work their butts off in the off-season, some more so than others, of course. In this section, you will be shown just how much that training has paid off. Some guys will improve greatly, while others will have just minor improvements. Those who did well could end up having a breakout season.

Cut Players

Before you can begin the pre-season, you will need to make sure you don't have too many players on your team. If you need to trim down your roster, cut the lowest ranked players in the positions where you have plenty of depth. Usually, the walk-ons aren't very good, so consider cutting them.

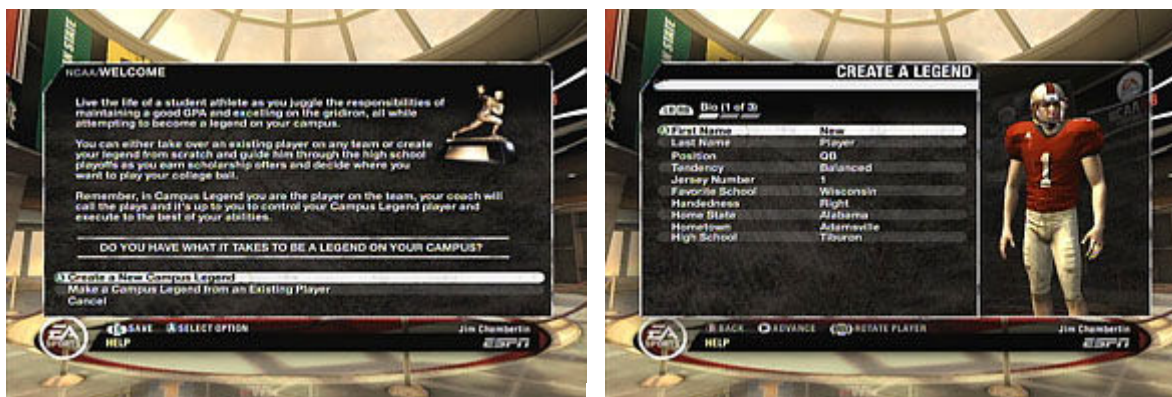
Start Pre-Season

You can now begin the pre-season again. Refer to the top of this section of the guide if you need any assistance. Good luck!

NCAA Football 08 Campus Legend

Introduction	High-School Playoffs	Practices	Post-season
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In the new campus legend mode, live the life of a student athlete as you juggle the responsibilities of maintaining a good GPA and excelling on the field. This mode allows you to either create a new student or take over someone else. In the example we lay out below, we will be creating a new student, but the process should be very similar if you were to take over a current collegiate student.



Note: This section is specific to the features found in the Xbox 360 version of the game. Other versions may have slightly different features.

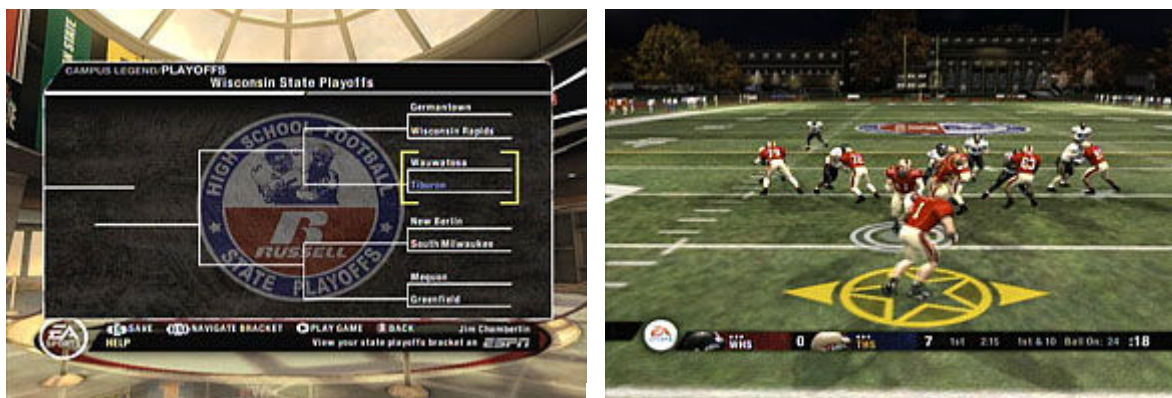
Create A Legend

If you've ever created a player in the game, you should find this process very similar. Choose the person's name, height, and weight. You will also get to customize his accessories such as elbow pads and shoes. There are a lot of things you can customize.

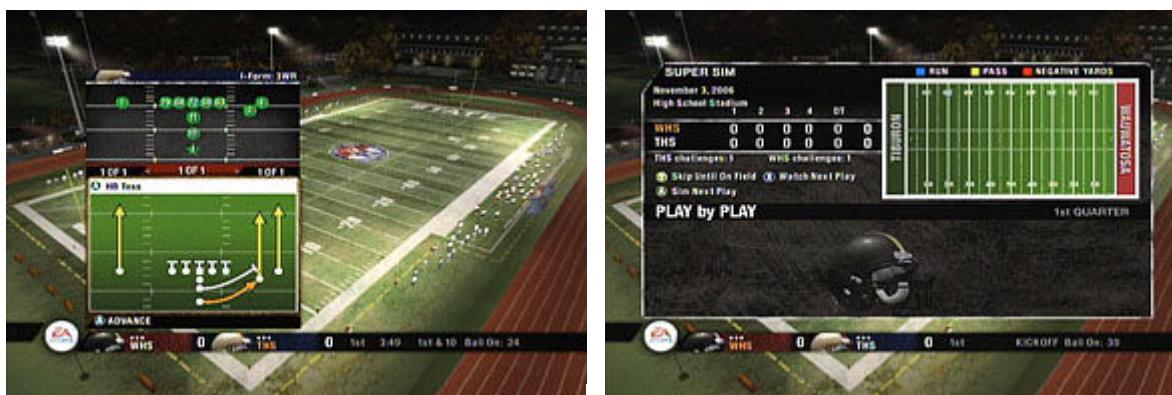
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High School Playoffs

With your legend-to-be created, you will need to show the college scouts what you've got as far as talent. You will be placed in a tournament-style bracket, where you will lead your high school team through a series of four games. Each game offers you plenty of time to show off, so be sure to impress the scouts.



If you never played this type of mode in Madden 07, you should take a little while to get accustomed to the new camera angle. The camera angle is a bit more realistic, and some will find it a little strange, coming from the traditional camera angle used in regular games.



Keep in mind that you are not the coach anymore. You do not get to make the calls. You just have to go with whatever the coach calls or the quarterback audibles. Since you don't get to play every down, you can use the new super-sim mode, which allows you to ignore all of the plays and just see the field when you are involved in a play. This really speeds up the game time!

After each game, you will see your rating (up to 5 stars), your stats for the game, and a list of which scouts were in attendance.



Once you have won all four games, you will be shown a list of scholarship offers from various schools. You will also be told where you would be on the depth chart, should you decide to commit to the school. Some may have a particular school in mind, regardless of the position, while others may just want to start immediately. Whatever route you go, you'll have plenty of opportunities to become a legend on your campus.

On Campus

Now that you are settled into your new school, you can begin preparation for playing. On weekdays, you will be able to practice and do an evening activity.

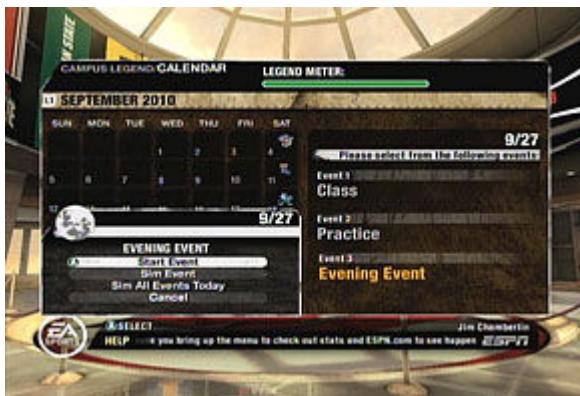
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Practices

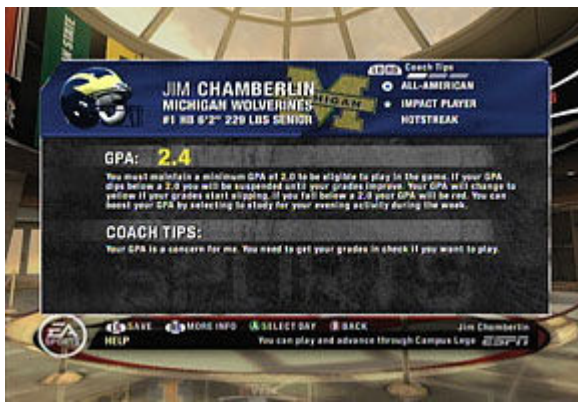
Practices give you ten repetitions to score points. The requirements to score points depend on what position you play. Playing as a half-back, for instance, you will score points for things like making receptions, making first downs, breaking tackles, and scoring touchdowns. As you score points, you will earn attribute bonuses and work your way up the depth chart. Depending on where you are on the depth chart, it could take a while to get there. Just plug away at it.

If you've earned the starting job and are content with your attributes, you can sim these. They're rather repetitious after a while.

Evening Events



Evening events are quite random as you never know what will happen. You may stay in and cook a meal or even help another person at college move his things in. Some events give you options. You can do option A or option B, but something good or bad will happen because of the decision you make. You may get an attribute bonus for stamina, for instance, or a pick up game of basketball could end up giving you an injury.



Although you could sim evening events, we don't recommend doing it for a long period of time. Your GPA may drop dangerously low, so make sure your grades are up by doing the events yourself as often as possible.

Game Day

When game day comes, suit up and get ready. Even if you aren't a starter, you may get a little playing time towards the end of the game. When we started our legend, we got to play late in the blow-out games. It served as not only a way to hone our skills, but to impress the coach. Do the same.



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Post-Season

When the regular season ends, bowl games will be played. Depending on how well your school did, you may or may not get invited to one of the bowl games. Bowl games are always exciting to play, perhaps because you play against another good school.



When all of the games are played, awards will be handed out. This includes the legendary Heisman Memorial Trophy. It'll take quite an effort to walk away with that piece of hardware.

Next, the school will begin recruiting players for next year. They will also red-shirt players, cut players, etc. If you've played the dynasty mode before, you know all of the sorts of things one has to do in the off-season to gear up for next year.

If you have filled your legend meter at the end of three years at the school, you may export your legend so that you can play him in Madden 08. If, however, you wish to play your senior year, you can certainly do so. Once you have graduated, you can export your legend for Madden 08. We can't wait until that game comes out!



Congratulations on becoming a legend!