

# THE VIDEO GAME PAGE The latest trends, tips and reviews

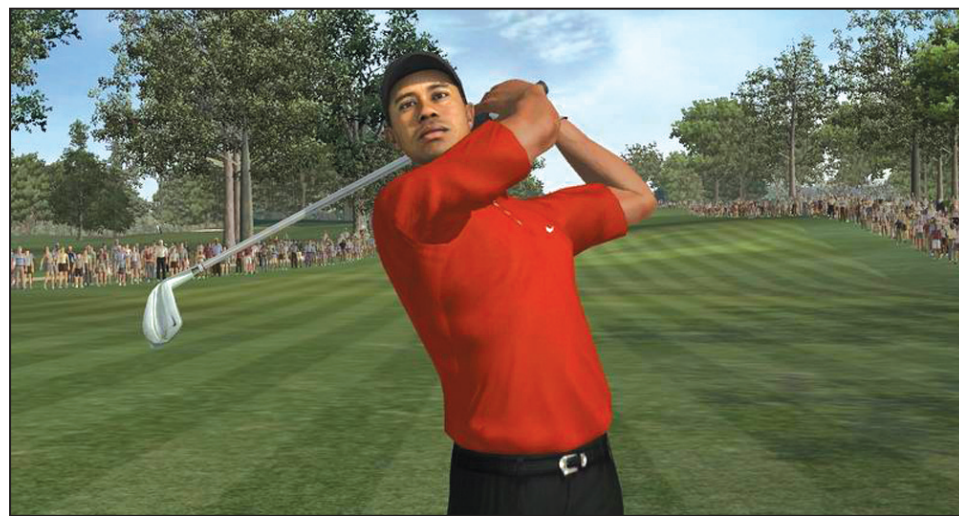
## FEATURE OF THE WEEK: "Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07"

# Go whack 'em, Tiger!

"Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07"  
EA Sports; PlayStation 2, Xbox, Xbox 360;  
\$39.99 - \$59.99  
ESRB Rating: Everyone (6+)

★★★★ Score: 4 out of 5

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EA Sports

As you'd expect from the latest installment of Electronic Arts' venerable Tiger Woods franchise, "Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07" features some new courses on which to play, some new golfers to play them and more people in the gallery to watch those new players play on those new courses. Otherwise, it's pretty much the same old, same old, which, fortunately, still makes for same-old addictive golf greatness.

The game does feature new face animations and other such dynamic minutiae; a subtle but striking improvement, especially manifest in the "create a player" mode, where the attention to detail really shines.

Otherwise, graphically, it's as lush and serene as ever; though the Xbox 360 version of the game doesn't seem quite as pretty as it could be — if you use EA

Sports' "Madden 07" visuals as a benchmark, anyway. But all versions still convey a nice walk in manicured woods quite nicely nonetheless.

And though "Tiger 07" only offers modest tweaks to both game mechanics and controller options, the essence of it all is still more golf than you'll know what to do with. You can adjust almost every aspect of game difficulty, for starters, adding, removing or tweaking in-game prompts, guides, auto-swing features and so on. Plus, there are innumerable play modes both online and offline, from a full PGA season simulator to the gloriously goofy "BattleGolf"; quick-fix/self-improvement minigames like T-I-G-E-R (h-o-r-s-e for golfers) and KP (closest to the pin) contests and a whopping 50 courses to play on, some real, some fictitious.

Notable new courses include Scotland's mighty St. Andrews and Canada's Glen Abbey on top of mainstays like Pinehurst and the notorious Pebble Beach.

It must be said, however, that "Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07" is not radically different nor much better than "Tiger 06" or even "Tiger 05." In fact, it's basically an amalgam of both (with sugar on top), each totally respectable and long-term playable in their own right, so picking up "07" is somewhat redundant. Mind you, if you don't own any other Tiger game — or if you're just a golf nut — then "Tiger 07" is everything you could hope for in a golf game, from a deep, rich simulator to a lighthearted whack 'n' duff delight — and with a huge virtual community of like-minded players always waiting for you online.

## QUICK PICKS

"NBA Live 07"  
EA Sports; PlayStation 2; \$39.99  
ESRB Rating: Everyone (6+)

★★ Score: 2 out of 5

Whether it's a rut or modus operandi over there at EA, one thing is clear: The mega-publisher's annual sports-game releases aren't too big in the improvement department.

Case in point: "NBA Live 07" adds some fresh commentary to the long-running basketball series, which remains a good looking and thoroughly competent basketball sim, just like last year. The developers also went out of their way to add the likenesses of many "lesser known" NBA players, each of whom still



EA Sports

plays like a single, stock robotic, base-model athlete with a different face pasted on top, but otherwise shooting, passing, rebounding, etc., like a single cookie-cutter character in high-tops.

Otherwise, most of the problems present in the "06" version (some of those carried over from earlier versions) remain in "NBA Live 07," and though some have

been addressed, none have been resolved. The artificial intelligence (AI) is still dreadful; computer-controlled players will run out of bounds while pining for a pass, or they'll just stand there and wait for something to happen, rather than anticipate and take a stab at probable positioning.

Although the ESPN brand integration is as catchy and robust as ever, and even though the commentators — Marv Albert and Steve Kerr — breathe some freshness into it all with realistic, often witty play-by-play banter and color commentary, it gets repetitive soon enough.

Besides which, the announcers often fall behind a good run-and-gun offense, with Albert and Kerr describing plays that happened two possessions ago.

Such incongruity is that bane of many a fast-paced sports game, sure, but exactly how many sequels does it take to fix that? At least one more, apparently. Here's to "NBA Live 08."

The ratings: ★★★★★ — Excellent   ★★★★— Very good   ★★★— Good   ★★— Fair   ★— Poor

## TOP XBOX GAMES

Top 10 Xbox games sold in September

Title	Publisher
1. "Madden NFL 07" (E)	Electronic Arts
2. "Lego Star Wars II" (E10+)	LucasArts
3. "Halo 2" (M)	Microsoft
4. "NBA Live 07" (E)	Electronic Arts
5. "GTA: San Andreas Version 2.0" (M)	Take 2
6. "NCAA Football 07" (E)	Electronic Arts
7. "Fable" (M)	Microsoft
8. "Lego Star Wars" (E)	Eidos
9. "NASCAR 07" (E)	Electronic Arts
10. "Star Wars: Battlefront II" (T)	LucasArts

Provided by NPD Group/NPD Funworld

Electronic Software Rating Board (ESRB) guide: Early childhood (EC); Everyone (E); Everyone 10 and older (E10+); Teen (T); Mature (M); Adults Only (AO); Rating Pending (RP).

## THE 411

News and developments from the game industry

### Knights who say 'Nine' on Nov. 21



If you're an "Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion" buff, you probably can't get enough of it. Knowing that, publisher Bethesda Softworks just announced plans to make its new "Knights of the Nine" content for the Xbox 360 version of the game available via download on Xbox Live Marketplace on Nov. 21. Owners of

the Windows PC version of the top-rated, best-selling "Oblivion" will also be able to get "Knights of the Nine" via download at [www.OblivionDownloads.com](http://www.OblivionDownloads.com) or as a boxed Windows PC expansion pack at retail outlets. The forthcoming PlayStation 3 version of the game, meanwhile, which reportedly launches along with Sony's new PS3 console, will already include the additional "Knights of the Nine" content.

If you're not an "Oblivion" buff, here's the lowdown: "Oblivion" is a powerful combination of free-form gameplay, unprecedented graphics and cutting-edge AI. Its characters are voiced by acting legends such as Patrick Stewart, Sean Bean, Terence Stamp and Lynda Carter, accompanied by an award-winning soundtrack. Players can choose to unravel the game's epic narrative at their own pace or explore the vast world in search of their own unique challenges.

"Knights of the Nine" adds more to all that, which is a lot. That's more than enough reason to be an "Oblivion" buff.

## TIP OF THE WEEK

Playing secrets to help you master your favorite games

In "Oblivion," horse/hero character Shadowmere happens to work as an eternally lootable tote bag.

Get him at Fort Farrgut and stock him with items. Whenever you knock him out (or temporarily kill him, as it were), you can loot his body as well as stock it.

When he awakens or respawns, he will retain all items for the whole game.

