

# IGN.com Reviews Madden Coin-Op



## BIGTIME MADDEN

The EA Sports franchise makes for a great arcade experience. Hands on with the big machine.

**December 17, 2004** - Arcades may be down for the count, but arcade machines are still finding their niche in bars and mini-golf and movie theater game rooms all over the country. Global VR's one of the few companies in the industry still providing a constant stream of new machines for game room operators, offering up a large assortment of recognizable licenses and titles that are much more enticing for owners to buy. And at this point, no title's more recognizable than EA Sports' *Madden NFL* brand. No football title has sold more on home systems, and it's easily one of the top five franchises in the videogame world. And after a decade and a half of dominating the console market, the *Madden* license has gone big time.

Global VR's *Madden NFL Football* takes all the action and strategy of the current generation's *Madden* franchise and puts it in a titanic arcade machine that could dwarf Jonathan Ogden. The last time a big pigskin game hit the world of the coin-op was in Midway's over-the-top *NFL Blitz* series, and though the pay-for-play version of *Madden NFL Football* has a bit of that game's flavor in its design, Global VR has pretty much kept its edition true to its roots.

A *Madden* machine in a sports bar makes a whole lot of sense. The only problem: football can be one hell of an intimidating sport for those not already an armchair quarterback. *Madden NFL Football* has all the meat and potatoes of the original console title, which means a ton of technical nuances of the sport right there at the player's control. Luckily, though, the game has been tailored not just to the *Madden* fan, but also to the casual player with a few quarters burning a hole in his or her pocket. All of the game's moves and control have been reduced to a much less daunting four button panel, and though this means many of the player commands have to be sandwiched into fewer options, the arcade version's designers managed to get all the jukes, spins and tackles available on the less versatile action panel. By default, players can jump into a casual game that keeps play selection simple without overwhelming with confusing route jargon. But for those who are already into Madden can jump into more complex difficulty modes that allow for audibles, hotroutes, and additional receivers in the backfield.



*Madden NFL Football* is based entirely on the PC version of *Madden NFL 2004*, an extremely strong foundation to build a football game upon. The arcade machine literally has strong PC hardware powering the game, offering the same impressive graphics and sound presentation that the series has been known for. The arcade unit's amazingly crisp video monitor really lets the visuals of the game shine through, and unless you've rocked out on the PC edition, you haven't seen *Madden* look as sharp as it does in this rendition. Granted, since this version's a generation behind the consoles it lacks the more detailed texture work, and there are a few PC-centric hitches in animation and framerate during specific points in the action, but overall the game looks absolutely gorgeous in its coin-op debut. The control panel utilizes the standard arcade offering of familiar, durable joystick and buttons. the analog control of the console game has been slightly altered to work on a less versatile 49-way joystick, which will definitely throw off players used to the Dual Analog sticks of the PS2. It takes some getting used to, of course, but after a few downs, you'll get it.

Because the game's made to be played in short sessions, the developers at Global VR removed a lot of the "excess" out of the football presentation. After a play, it immediately jumps into the play selection screen for the next down. There's no extraneous animations to bog down the action, offering a very quick and seamless rapid fire experience that keeps the game going. Of course, that means a lot of the gametime is reduced as well, with the play and game clocks running at "Super Mario" time. This definitely puts a lot of urgency on the gameplay, especially when the game gets down to the wire in the fourth quarter. And for those players who simply want to hone their passing and running skills, *Madden NFL Football* also features all of the training drills of the console version to teach all of the moves necessary to dominate the gridiron. Of course, you'll have to put in a few quarters to play these mini-games as well.

One of the coolest features of the *Madden* arcade version is its career mode and statistics tracking via a Smart Card. Global VR sells data cards which can be used in any Madden machine, and the tracking goes far beyond the usual "Enter Initials" when defeating records. Since these arcade machines are wired to the internet, Global VR keeps track of all of the registered players' standings and statistics and logs them right to the company's website. Any player with a registered number will have all of their data recorded so they can see how they stand up to the rest of the country. Tournaments also come into play in a big way on these machines, and Global VR constantly feeds each machine the proper data for players to compete in specific tournaments. Every Tuesday, any registered player can jump into the Monday night game and compete against other players. The network even keeps track of which NFL pros are on the injured list for these weekly tournaments. There's a pot of money to win competing on these machines, and Global VR is also giving away tickets to "[The Big Game](#)" to players who master the tournaments on the machine.



Even though the arcade version of the game is a generation behind the current Madden franchise, it's made to be updated on a constant basis. Global VR is constantly improving the game to keep up with what Tiburon's doing for the series in the current season, and when there's a trade in the league EA and Global VR will be there to make the specific changes to all of the machines connected to the network. And since the actual arcade hardware allows for full software upgrades, once Global VR's ready to update the game to a next generation it's incredibly easy for the arcade operators to install the software.

*Madden NFL Football* is a great [football](#) franchise that actually makes for a seriously fun arcade experience. Global VR has kept the game as close to the roots of the design while making it incredibly accessible for both novices and masters of the series, and if you haven't seen the units in action, we highly recommend tracking one of them down. Just bring a roll of quarters and you'll be ready to go.

-- Craig Harris

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