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[Football Manager 2006](#)

If you despise soccer, you may start learning it through Football Manager

After Eidos and Sports Interactive Games mutually decided to end their partnership, the much-appraised Championship Manager changed its name into Football Manager. Eidos does still invest in its brand and game but, to be realistic, CM is far from being a match to SIG's masterpiece. Some would probably think that it is a good thing to have not one but two titles that compete for the ruler ship of the same genre (2D football management simulation), but we all know that gamers will never spend their money on two similar games but of different quality. There is no need to be a rocket scientist to realize that, even with all its flaws, SIG's manager is unmatched at what it does. **History** First released in 1982 by Addictive Games, and lasting until the mid 1990s, the Football Manager series was revived (in 2004) by Sports Interactive to replace the name of their Championship Manager series. The original series (FM in 1982, FM 2 in 1988 and FM World Cup Edition in 1990) is credited as being the first ever computer game to use the concept of managing a football team. The creator of the series, Kevin Toms was not involved in the last title of the series, however. FM 3 (1990) was seen by many as an attempt to cash-in on the previous successes with a sub-standard game, and as a result, the series ended. While the U.K. version's name is Football Manager, the U.S. and Canadian ones are known as Worldwide Soccer Manager, derived from a football game series on the Sega Saturn and Dreamcast. This was no coincidence, as the new publisher of SIG's games is SEGA. There could be another reason though, with something of preventive flavor: to avoid confusion between American football and European football/soccer. **Concept** I believe there is no other game to match the tactical gameplay value of FM. In short, the game is about managing a football/soccer club in almost all its aspects. However, the beautiful aspect of the game is the tactical approach only. The player has to find the perfect balance between his tactics and how much can handle his students. Having the best players has nothing to do with victory, but having the right men, does. Those of you who never played a football manager before, should bear in mind that "RPGish leveling up" has nothing to do with it. Firstly, a player may suck at everything but that field you need him to excel. Secondly, depending on his personality, age and natural fitness, some of his stats may suffer improvement while others may show severe degradation. All that matters is your ability to use the best of him. **Gameplay** FM 2006 preserves its pen and paper approach, therefore assuming a serious criticism from those who would wish for something with the looks of EA's Total Club/Fifa Manager rather than 22 numbered tokens spinning across a green screen. There is some truth in this, as not only the matches may wear down a player but also the terrible interface which can be utterly confusing at times, especially for those who get in touch for the first time with the game. There are some cases when the player is required to navigate through a series of vaguely named menus to receive some vital information about the club or players and staff. These slipups and the lack of organization of the huge player/staff encyclopedia of the game may prove more challenging than Chelsea may. On the other hand, preserving the 2D representation of the matches should not be viewed as a lack of improvement. Thanks to their simplicity and their well written side-comments, the gamer may better concentrate, therefore can have a better view of what is happening on the field. 3D graphics have the ability to impress the player. Unfortunately this may have too some drawbacks. Firstly, they leave little space for imagination, and secondly a 3D graphic engine must be carefully developed to avoid even more problems than it should solve. Short loading times, clarity, dynamism, precision, good physics and mechanics, well-drawn portraits should be the strong points of such engine. And this is something that even

shooters fail to accomplish, what are the chances a studio like SIG (with no experience in this field) would manage it? While the interface and the field (which could at least have variable colors according to the club's budget) did not suffer notable improvements, the FM's gameplay surely did. There are three notable additions, amongst numberless others, and they manage to offer more substance to the game. Team talks, an improved training module and a closer manager-club relationship are just some of them. Team talks are very useful in times of peril but not only. At half time or after the match, a manager may choose from several lines that express his state of mind (disappointment or delight, happiness or anger, content or disbelief) towards the overall evolution of the team or of a specific player. Their role is to set a specific mod to the team but its success depends on the player's ability to choose the right thing to say. Team talks may help a charismatic manager snatch valuable points against overwhelming odds. But they may also lead the team to a resounding defeat when misused because players tend to get cocky if things go to well. (Read more here: <http://www.sigames.com/downloads.php?type=view&id=358>) For rich, elite clubs where there are many valuable, professional players, team talks matter less as good tactics are everything. Otherwise, when playing with poor, small clubs where players usually do anything but what they are told to do, this feature may prove invaluable. Furthermore, small clubs do not afford a large selection of players, therefore, it is somewhat inevitable to get to know all your players' personalities; thus, team talks should be easy to use. The basic idea is to speak highly of a player and encourage the rest of the team to do the same. Choosing more players to praise or scowl may end in diluting the effect of your words. The relation between the manager and the club feels more or less natural. In FM 2006, a manager is able to negotiate with some success for better transfer funds and player wages, improved training facilities and bigger arenas. However, even with several major cups won, there is still a good chance to be rather sacked than listened. Moreover, better coach wages cannot be negotiated. This is a major drawback as training is very important for the overall value of a team. It is a shame to lose veteran players because there aren't capable coaches to keep them match fit. Training has suffered great improvement but it is still chaotic, thus inefficient. The basic idea is to hire the best coaches and develop the best training formulae for each individual player. Training schedules can be saved but there is no option to organize them in order to be used more efficiently. It is sick to keep up to three training schedules for each player in your squad and not to be able to find it fast. The training schedule has nine sections: strength, aerobic, goalkeeping, tactics, ball control, defending, attacking, shooting, set pieces, where each of these cover for a set of corresponding player stats. For example, a central midfielder needs to have high passing, stamina, work-rate and jumping stats therefore its training schedule will focus on strength, aerobic and attacking. However, a midfielder may become even better if he improves his decision-making stats, therefore he will need a tactical training. There are invaluable consequences to this structured way of training. For example, if you play against a team that stays in defense and waits for a counter attack, you will surely need players able to hold up the ball and these kinds of players need excellent strength, dribbling and technique stats. Using a training schedule that concentrates on these stats will surely come in handy. The drawback is that all the other stats will suffer greatly if left untrained. And this is why more than one schedule is needed for every player (as usually, there aren't two players alike that can successfully undertake the same training program). There are many tables and schematics that help the manager keep an eye on his students. However, they do not clearly explain why and how does a player improve or weaken. Do not worry, the whole game is more or less confusing. The game's manual and help menu doesn't help a bit. They seem rather written by monkeys in an alien language and then translated by some aliens who knew monkey. Well, fortunately, there are enough fan-sites and helpful FM fanatics that can help you out with everything you need to know to be able to be a decent manager and gain some satisfaction in the process. Besides team talks and training schedules, there is another important addition that consists in player preferred moves and position indicators.

Position indicators do not resume just to what they mean: showing whether a player can play or be trained in a specific position. Besides position indicators, there have been added other specifications like explosive, flamboyant or cultured. Although these "titles" may sound special, they mostly show in short, which set of stats of a player are better developed or can be better improved, thus which should be his playing style. For instance, explosive wingers should be better used as target men rather than playmakers as this reflects the player's thirst for goal rather than his ability to create goals on his own. Preferred moves' purpose is to individuate some of the players: the way they like to play the ball, their influence over team mates or supporters or even their attitude towards coaches or the referees. However, their influence over the overall feel of the game is rather low, mostly because there is just a small percent of players given this; moreover, the range of preferred moves is rather low. I believe their true purpose is to spice up the gameplay that can become a little tiring at times or just to content some of the gamers who did not take well their favorite player reduced to a hand of figures. Referee profiles and league tables also improve the tactical value to the game. Some referees will not understand why your Sol Campbell takes striker ankles as trophies. On the other hand, scouts' reports are as lame as ever, instead of giving some - even the vaguest - information about a player's play style, fitness, motivation or ability. Something like "the striker, John Doe, played well for Mars United, but without support from his team, he would never managed that sensational hat trick. His strength and the lack of defensive skill of his direct adversaries sealed the faith of the match. His lack of mobility and creativity should be a warning to you as he will stand no chance against valuable central defenders" is what I would have loved to hear from my scouts. Instead they give me "this player will add depth to your squad" or "it has no future in professional football" as if I was managing Real Madrid or something, not a second divisionary team... tough! Next time I'll test my managerial abilities with Arsenal or A.C. Milan. Maybe this way my scouts will earn their colossal wages. Read more here: [Scout's Honour](#).

Copyright Issues Some of you will probably believe that Khan is missing from the game. This isn't true. He is still there and as fitted as ever, but under a different name, Jens Mustermann (the German correspondent of John Doe). This is because Oliver Kahn does not allow his image or name in certain computer games. This could be a light-hearted dig at the German goalkeeper if the subtle meaning of Jens Mustermann is "the other, unknown, Jens Lehmann". The German, Dutch and Japanese national teams never pick 'real' players and instead only ever use 'grayed-out' fictional players. The names of all French league teams do not have their full names, but simply the name of the city they represent. (Paris instead of Paris Saint-Germain, Lyon instead of Olympique Lyon). All the names of Japanese league teams are fictional, such as Niitsu Unicorn and Katano Blaze. The Japanese J. League appears under the name of N-League/Nihon League. The names of the major European trophies are also fictional. The European Cup or UEFA Champions League became the Champions Cup, the UEFA Cup became the Euro Cup and the UEFA Intertoto Cup became the Euro Vase. However, due to the way these data changes have been made (using simple instructions in plain-text files called EDT files and LNC files), many of them can be removed by simply deleting the appropriate file. The correct data does actually exist, but it was "hidden" (therefore, most of the above changes can be easily reversed) in order to avoid eventual legal problems of copyright nature. For those of you who like an accurate FM, there may be [something worthwhile here](#).

One more thing (though of less importance). FM 2006 is highly skin-configurable. I, however, do not find this exhilarating. I could ask myself what is with skin diversity when there is only one set of grass?

Some System Specifications and Other Issues The loading times are absurd as usual, the interface is poorly organized, and the terminology can be misleading (Although a player is flagged as unhappy, he has no morale penalties as if a man can feel sorrow and be content, all the same. It seems that professional soccer has nothing to do with professional psychology). The generous encyclopedia of the game could be as good as missing, as the search system has been strictly limited in order prevent eventual exploits. However, searching for a

particular type of coach or a specific type of player is as easy as finding a cure for game piracy. The learning curve of the game can make games like X3 Reunion weep with envy. Do not get me wrong, this is a part of the game - non-stop learning - as there isn't any perfect team or perfect tactic no matter how much some would like to. **Multiplayer**Football Manager can be played either in LAN games or on-line. A good thing is that the computer may substitute you for as long as you wish. Therefore, multiplayer games keep a reasonable high tempo especially when there are many players involved.**Conclusion**A masterpiece nevertheless, even with all its drawbacks FM is a terrific game. For those of you who exploited the possibility to transfer players from a team to another by using multiple managers, FM 2006 brings grave news. Some of the elite football-players will stubbornly refuse to leave their favored team. I waited so much for better-implemented psychological criteria like this. And this is not the only major effect of loyalty and morale in the game. Player moods will give you headaches. Unfortunately, SIG didn't implement better ways to explain what is happening in a player's heart and why. But hey! There is always a next time. What is important is that the simulation value of this game has reached heights prohibited to any other game in this genre. **RELATED LINKS**[The Duggout](#)[CM Frenzy](#)[FANBASE PATCH](#)