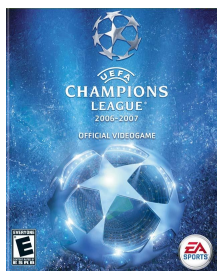


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By: Alexandru Stanescu, Editor, Gaming Reviews (Consoles)



[UEFA Champions League 2006-2007](#)

There can be only one...

Having played this title for the Playstation 2 just a week before this one, I must say that [UEFA Champions League 2006-2007](#), the PC version, is far better in all the aspects you could think of. It's not only the better gameplay or the exquisite graphics and I might as well say that we're dealing with a new game. However, when playing this on your PC, you'll easily notice its resemblance with the FIFA series. What I loved most about it? Spectacular football and to-the-last-minute fights while playing final or semifinals in the mighty Champions League. What do I hate in [UEFA CHL 2006-2007](#)? Hmm, let me think... it might be those clumsy keepers of the frustrating Ronaldinho scoring from any position, but I'll go with the player auto-switching, that's a bit off. **Concept**If you've ever played a FIFA game in your entire life, you'll be familiar with this game and feel right at home. The UEFA Champions League and FIFA games surface year after year trying to deliver the same experience that our telly does when we're watching the CHL final, knowing that there's another billion people watching it too. Before this EA-oriented period of mine, I played a lot of Winning Eleven Pro Evolution Soccer and I'll take this game as a breath of fresh air (sorry Konami). First of all, this is a simulator, so forget the arcadish PES in the favor of the "almost-FIFA" title. You might have seen this coming from the game's title, but you never know, so let me remind you that this game hosts ONLY the Champions League competition and a couple of standard league trophies. Translation: there are no national teams and you'll be able to play with the clubs from famous or a little less famous footballing nations. As you'll see in the game's beginning, the database has been updated this year and you'll find all the players that just got transferred in their teams, including Ronaldo (with hair) playing for AC Milan. This surprised me and I thought that I had problems with my memory so I played a bit of UEFA CHL 2006-2007, the Playstation 2 version and realized that Ronaldo was still playing for Real Madrid. Hail to quick updates from EA Sports, especially on the PC version. Speaking of database, you might want to know that the game has all the original stadia, T-shirts, licensed footballs, trophies, boots and usually, stuff that's available for you to unlock. Obviously, you'll be able to play a standard CHL session, with quallies and all the rest, dramatic moments, two nil-nils and penalties. Also, there's a cool Treble mode and this name might remind you of betting more than sports, but it refers to a manager's greatest dream: achieving all the available trophies in one season. While in real life you must be some sort of Mourinho (a few years ago) to win the title, the cup and the Champions League, you'll have an easier time playing this title. Small teams are no match for bigger ones and I asked a friend of mine that's a huge FIFA and UEFA series aficionado to play with Steaua Bucharest against Barcelona. You could feel the huge difference in class, as if those guys were a few divisions apart. When you'll start the treble mode, you'll take over the team and it might be one of those big clubs, like Arsenal or Lyon, or an average team struggling to avoid relegation. As a manager, you'll have to keep your eyes open for cheap transfers, players getting injured or the team spirit going down. One cool feature? The very first match of the treble mode will have you using a couple of youngsters in your team as you're plagued with injuries. Imagine an Arsenal without Henry, Toure, Van Persie or Ljungberg... Of course, it's a friendly match, so you'll obviously defeat the other team, because they'll take it slow. Another mode that's already a classic for the FIFA series is the Ultimate Challenge that allows you to recreate or alter some of the historic comebacks in Champions League. You'll have to score with 10 minutes left in the game, starting from nil-nil, having a one goal handicap from the first leg. Pressure? As high as it can get, especially if you're a small team leading one of those super teams on their home

ground and you'll have to get at least a draw. I smell lots of red cards in the last minutes... In case you get bored with playing the single-player modes, there's always the chance to play an online game or a two-player game on the same PC, if you have a gamepad and allow your opponent to use the keyboard. That being said, let's head towards kick-off, since today is Tuesday and one of those great CHL nights is awaiting. **Gameplay**The first that comes to mind when I speak about UEFA Champions League 2006-2007 gameplay is that cool feature which allows quick plays. You'll be able to press a certain button to skip some of the sequences that fragmented the game so much in the previous UEFA CHL and FIFA installments. Unless you're a football fanatic that wants to see the expression on Raul's face before he takes a free kick. Personally, being a console fan, I played this game on a gamepad and I'm not the only one to do so, since I know tons of FIFA aficionados that played it on the keyboard for years and now turned to the "analog side". You'll be able to set your team's strategy on the go, thanks to four specially assigned buttons that can put all your men in the defense or make them start a beautiful counter attack. I have to say that the AI is great, but the game has a tendency to exaggerate the great team's attributes, compared to the smaller ones. Surprises still happen, you know? That's not a major flaw, but keepers sure are, and there's not one decent player to defend the net properly. As a bettor would say, all the games played in UEFA Champions League 2006-2007 are clear "overs", that meaning that more than 2 goals will be scored...by half-time. More goals mean more goal chances and more goal chances mean more offsides. The referee is a bit strict, because this is a high-level competition and all, so he won't be indulgent and you'll see lots of red and yellow cards. If you're fond of strategies, you can spend dozens of minutes adjusting your team settings and arrangement, but usually, the original setup suits any style. You can pick a formation, change a few players and input a strategy. Those are not just numbers and letters all aligned in a table for the innocent eye. If you're a football fanatic, you'll notice that all the strategy changes are felt immediately in the team's play and if you're playing with a 5-4-1 formation and switch to a 3-4-3, you'll see the two extra men in the attack going forward to complete the new setup. Free kicks and penalties are as intuitive as ever, being a piece of cake for those that have played at least three FIFA titles before. I see that EA Sports is keen on implementing long distance goals, because I've seen a lot of those, probably more than header goals or normal shots. This can get frustrating, especially when you receive a goal, while not being able to see your keeper and defenders, because the man with the ball is too far from the net. Are there any real players capable of scoring from 40 or 50 meters? Let's get real...there's only one Ronaldinho in the world and a very frustrating one, that can make or break Barca's game if he's having a good or bad day. Another flaw of UEFA CHL 2006-2007's gameplay is the auto-change function that can be set up from the menu, but still, you'll see that the player you control is not always the one you wanted to select. This game can be blamed for anything, except the lack of realism. OK, OK, we have those keeper mistakes and long-distance goals, but the way that those keepers make mistakes is brilliant. See the balls touching the tips of their fingers and flying into the net, see those rare scissor-kick goals or the lobs that professional players use to score if the keeper risks and leaves the net. Like in the PS2 title, it's easy to commit a foul just by ... doing nothing. A simple move of the analog stick in some opponent player's direction can result in a foul that generates a potentially dangerous free kick. Luckily that doesn't happen throughout the entire game, so let's call them obstruction fouls, because you're blocking the other player's path. This is Champions League so don't expect many dribbles or tricks. Like the Italian teams' mentality, the most important thing here is winning, it doesn't matter if it's one-nil or five-nil. However, there are a couple of star players that can't help themselves and they'll offer you some nice magical moments with the ball. Since I mentioned those stars, you'll see such indicators above the players' heads, showing that those guys are MVPs so you should expect some neat tricks from them. Unlike the PES title, it's pretty difficult to get a player injured, unless you do a terrible foul that breaks his leg and gets the opponent a penalty and a red card for your player. However, the players can

get tired and if you enter the game's menu, you'll see a meter next to them showing their tiredness. It's pretty obvious that once they get tired, players start to underperform, especially if they're attackers that run a lot while trying to score. I mentioned before that this is the CHL and everyone plays for points, not for the show...well...it seems the game is more offensive-oriented than I thought, or I and my friends are very poor in defense. Scores like 6-6 or 7-4 happen all the time in multiplayer mode, but I have to say that the PS2 version was much more offensive-based than this one, at least in the single-player mode. Nothing is one hundred percent sure regarding the ball's possession, because now, finally EA Sports decided to implement a feature that allows you to hit the ball and pass it while it's moving in front of the other team's player. See a ball that's heading the wrong way? Perform a tackle-like slide and gently pass it to the attacker for a quick goal. The AI is too good, as always, when it comes to mistakes like offsides, stupid fouls, hand-plays in the penalty area or dropping the ball out. They simply don't seem to do such things, so I guess it's up to me and my fellow players to make them and a little bit of humanity to this otherwise strangely perfect game. The players' behavior was created to resemble that of their real counterparts, so you'll see Ronaldinho doing tricks and passing the ball to Eto'o, Huntelaar doing anything to score a goal, Peter Crouch using his strength to get past defenders and Totti...well...not spitting. If this is an accurate simulation, I wouldn't advise anyone to have Beckham take a penalty, although he's already playing for an US team by now and Real Madrid must be updated and without the British blond guy. **Video**The photos of this review speak for themselves and you'll have no problem recognizing all the famous players that are featured in the world's most famous footballing club competition. Graphics have never been a downside for EA Sports' games unless you talk about the eternal pixelated crowd and this is not the case. Great lighting effects bring you eye candy in the shape of players passing on the grass, with their shadow visible, because CHL is a nocturnal competition and all the lights are on. The replays are class A, making some of the apparently dull goals seem like masterpieces. Camera angles are as varied as ever, offering you the chance to watch the game like you do on telly every Tuesday and Wednesday or maybe you'll like the Action camera. UEFA CHL 2006-2007 has those never-ending sequences played after each important event during the game, stuff like big fouls, free kicks, penalties, corners, great misses. They are some sort of FMVs that show the players protesting if the referee gave them a card, or a player getting frustrated by his miss. The crowd is not horrible, but still it's not good enough to make me give this game a tenner in the graphics department. Little details make a huge difference and it always pleases me to see a player lifting his hand in the air asking for a pass, or holding tight to the opponent's T-shirt in an attempt to stall his progress. **Sound**I've never heard so many remixes of the same song like I did in UEFA Champions League 2006-2007 and you might know which song it is: the CHL anthem. Listen to the house version, the rave one, there's even a slight punk one and the best of all: the original one. These will accompany you throughout the game's menus and provide quality time while you're setting up the gameplay or controls. Other than that, the soundtrack is as good as it was in the previous games, with tons of famous artists and licensed songs. The crowd is simply beautiful, singing their hearts out and cheering for their favorite, or exploding when the home team's attack enters the penalty area trying to score. If you or the other team is leading and you'll just be passing the ball around to preserve the result, you'll feel it in the crowd's mood, because they'll start booing instantly, so unless you're Italian, offer them a decent show and a goal feast. **Multiplayer**Tough choice between the online play and the two-player game on the same computer. There's always a chance that you'll find a gamer out there that's capable of scoring 20 goals in your net, so keep this in mind while randomly selecting opponents from the online lobbies. Also, don't forget that there are rankings and a hall of fame to attend to, so we wouldn't want to "take pride" in being the last on the list. The online game is lag-free and offers you the opportunity of playing multiplayer games with players worldwide and you'll never run out of opponents. The two-player game remains our favorite, because you are able to see the other guy's

emotions and witness the way he behaves when the score is changing. There's a slight advantage for the players that have a gamepad, unless they're facing games that played FIFA on the keyboard in the last ten years and won most of the matches. **Conclusion**UEFA Champions League 2006-2007 is part of the series that we can call FIFA's younger brother, one that has plenty of potential and provides the experience that we were only able to watch on the telly on those two-day CHL derbies. It has plenty of innovations, lots of updates and what's most important, that quick play option that allows you to enjoy a non-fragmented game. Keepers and auto-change flaws aside, it's all about fun, that's why we play these games, to have fun and test our footballing skills, at least virtually.