

Be A Pro: Co-op Season Blog

FIFA 08 CG

By Paul Hossack – FIFA 08 CG Line Producer

Hi guys.

I'm looking forward to the imminent launch of FIFA 08, and wanted to tell you more about our new game mode this year "Be A Pro: Co-op Season", how it came about, and some tips for playing it.

What is Co-op Season?

Be A Pro: Co-op Season is a new way of playing FIFA 08 – as one footballer. Instead of controlling all 11 players on your club, you play through a whole season with your friends where each of you controls one footballer on the pitch. It feels much more like playing football yourself.

Playing Co-op Season feels a lot different than traditional FIFA games. You have new controls, like when your CPU-controlled team-mate has the ball you can ask for him to pass it to you or encourage him to have a crack when he's in a good shooting position.

The way Co-op Season works is you pick a club to play a season with. At the start of every match, you get a specific task (e.g. attempt three shots on goal), and your friend, or friends, you're playing with also gets a task. On top of that, you get a Team Task to accomplish as a group (e.g. win by two goals). After each game you earn XP points based on how you played and if you accomplished your tasks.

Getting XP lets you level up and boost your player's attributes every couple of matches. The more tasks you accomplish, the harder the next ones will be, but don't worry ... the pay-offs get better too. In the end, the gamer who grows his player the most wins the season! It's a really fun mode to play with your friends. When we first showed an early prototype of Co-op Season to a focus group in January, it was interesting to see that the gamers who responded most positively to it were those that played football in real life. They really appreciated the concept of playing one role for the full match, understanding all the skill it takes to play football when you don't have the ball

So where did this mode come from?

At the start of the design phase for FIFA 08, we knew people played FIFA games a lot with their friends on the same couch. We all do this – your buddy comes over and you play match after match head-to-head. I challenged the team to figure out a new way we could encourage people to play together – a new offline co-operative game mode.

Last fall, we started prototyping what it would be like to play FIFA 08 only controlling the mid-field, while your friend controlled the strikers (like with foosball or table football). When Neil, our AI engineer, and Marcel, our AI producer, set up the prototype, they also included the ability to play as just one player.

I still remember the first time I played locked to one player at Neil's desk. It was fun, but it became a lot more fun when Marcel jumped in on my team also locked to one player. A couple days later in our weekly team meeting, we got four people playing on the same club locked to one player and they had a blast. That's when we realized the core of the mode was to have multiple people playing on the same club playing each as one footballer.

From that point, there were two big challenges in creating Co-op Season: 1) coming up with a simple yet compelling mode to wrap around this experience, and 2) adjusting the gaming experience so that it was fun and rewarding playing as one footballer. Just preventing you from switching players is not enough. We needed to create the whole XP/player growth system, the

gameplay mechanics for when you didn't have the ball, adjust the camera to keep you on screen more of the time, add the set piece mini-games, and tune the AI specifically for this mode. We decided on making the mode around one season as that it was long enough to be fulfilling, but not so long that it felt endless. I'm really glad how it turned out.

Any tips in playing Co-op Season?

Having played quite a bit of Co-op Season now, I have a couple tips for you:

- Definitely create a player instead of picking your real-world star. All created players started as 60 rated. While you may think low is bad, it's actually the opposite. Since the goal of the mode is to grow the most possible in one season, starting a 60 gives you a lot more room to grow than if you started at 87.
- When you first create your player, you get 20 Attribute points to assign to your player. Put a good chunk on Stamina and Sprint Speed. Stamina because you are controlling one player for the whole match (he will tire out, especially if you sprint a lot). Sprint Speed because if you're like me, you want to be part of the action, and being able to get around the pitch quickly helps a lot.
- When playing with your buddies, talking your strategy amongst yourself as you play helps a lot. "Knock it onto the wing!", "Cross it far post!", etc. It will not only help you win, but also accomplish your individual and team tasks.

That's it. Hope you have a great time with playing Co-op Season with your friends.

Cheers.

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