



BackTalk

JOHN MADDEN

Football season's over, but you'd never know it from the legions of gamers who've made EA's *Madden NFL* a year-round obsession. Jamie Sorcher recently talked to the man behind the videogame about his Sirius talk show, the shortcomings of TV football, and what he does for fun in the Madden Cruiser.

Do videogames and TV broadcasts do a good job of capturing the reality of a football game?

We're still in the dark ages when it comes to the sounds of football. I remember what it sounded like from when I was coaching. The biggest adjustment I had to make when I went into broadcasting was being detached from the game. When I got to spend some time back on the field, I said, "Holy Moley! We're missing the whole deal here." If you go stand on the sidelines, you'll be amazed by how it feels and sounds. On TV, we can get any picture we want — we can look at the hair in a guy's nose — but we just can't capture the sounds.

Will interactive TV — letting the viewer choose what he wants to see — heighten the experience of watching a football game?

Yeah, yeah, yeah! If we want to get younger people really involved in watching football, it has to be interactive because that's the way everything is for them now. Their thumbs just keep going all the time, whether it's at a game controller or typing up e-mails or using an iPod. We can't tell these kids to put all their stuff away and just sit down and watch TV. The day is definitely coming when you're going to be able to watch the game the way you want to.

It's well known that you're afraid to fly, so you travel the country in the 45-foot Madden Cruiser. How is it set up for entertainment?

Well, I have three plasma screens — one in the bedroom and two in the living/dining-room area.

What do you watch in your downtime?

I usually watch tapes of the most recent game of whichever two teams we'll be covering on the next *Monday Night Football* broadcast. And I watch a lot of ESPN.

So it's all sports, all the time?

Yeah, that's it. I never take a break from it.

What's the best football movie ever made?

It hasn't been made yet.

Where do they go wrong?

Well, the closer you are to something, the more you realize that the way it's portrayed in the movies isn't real. Football has been my life — it's all I've ever done. So when I see it portrayed in a movie, I just don't buy it.

What have you done to make *Madden NFL* more realistic?

We started on this before there even were videogames. It was going to be a computer program for teaching football at high schools and colleges. So the first thing was that the game had to be real — 11 guys on each team and 22 players out on the field. I didn't want five guys playing against five guys.

What was it like hosting the tailgate show on Sirius's NFL Radio?

The great thing about Sirius is that you get all the games. So, when someone has the freedom to pick any game, you can talk about which ones will be good and help people decide what to listen to. Maybe someone doesn't know much about Pittsburgh or their rookie quarterback. So I talk a little bit about it, and they think, "Geez, maybe I want to listen to a little of the Pittsburgh/New England game" even though they're from, say, Dallas.

Do you have a Sirius radio?

I have two in the Cruiser — one up front and one in back.

Last question: "Just win, baby" or "Commitment to excellence"?

Commitment to excellence. Your whole life should be about committing to be the best. Just win? Well, you're not going to win every game or in everything that you do. But you can commit to being the best all the time.

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