Last year, I published my *"guide for a quality franchise experience in Madden 07 PC"* and I'm glad people out there found that it helped them to create a more sustainable and enjoyable Madden PC franchise experience. With 08 now out and about and a few seasons under my belt, it's time for me to update my guide.

Not a whole lot has changed with 08 compared to 07 so likewise my guide is quite similar, although since publishing the 07 guide I did make a few changes that I posted somewhere deep within the 07 guide's original thread that have carried over for 08 so it should be slightly more refined. Anyway, to keep things organized, from now on I will headline each component and offer some key points and a description to outline and explain the recommendations.

**First thing's first**You'll need [my latest editor](http://web.archive.org/web/20081007015729/http:/football-freaks.com/forums/index.php?act=Downloads&do=search&type=do_search&author=Nza) and [MaddenAmp](http://web.archive.org/web/20081007015729/http:/football-freaks.com/forums/index.php?download=1564). Just to be on the safe side, I also recommend you install every .NET FrameWork package you can - V1.1, V2.0 and V3.0. If you're using Windows Vista, it has been claimed that uninstalling any .NET package and reinstalling all of them should make your PC compatible for the editors. Please note, any issues using the editor in general and not specifically related to a function used in this guide should be directed in the appropriate threads and not here. Also, I don't author MaddenAmp so any Draft related Q's may also need to go elsewhere.

**Please be aware, that ANY time I mention editing a franchise below, it is to be done AFTER you have quit the franchise in Madden, either back to the main menu and alt-tabbing to the desktop, or after quitting Madden entirely. NEVER edit a franchise that is currently loaded in Madden.**

**Sliders**This is a good place to start your journey to better 08 franchises, as it is easily the most important when it comes to actual gameplay. Slider choice obviously comes down to your personal preference so I can't recommend a set that will work for everyone. As far as 08 goes, I've found a home with this All Madden 12min ACC on set:

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| --- |
| QB Accuracy 45    45 Pass Blocking                     13    13 Receiver Catching                 50    50 Running Ability                   50    50 Offensive line Run Blocking       19    19 Defensive Awareness               48    48 Defensive line Knockdowns         17    17 Interceptions                      7     7 Defensive Break Blocks            12    12 Tackling                          35    35 Fieldgoal Length                  39    39 Fieldgoal Accuracy                36    36 Punt Length                       51    51 Punt Accuracy                     43    43 Kickoff Length                    53    53 |

I won't go into lengths on my choice of AM, I just find it a far better long term challenge in franchise mode than AP, and games also feel less predictable to me on AM, but it's totally personal preference. It's only important you find a set that YOU feel will offer a realistic challenge. Be warned though, sliders can change a bit from Exhibition mode to Franchise mode so I'd recommend testing any set in a dummy franchise first.

As for simmed and in-game injury sliders, I set both to 102. If you have a in-game setting you like better, use that, but it isn't a good idea to change the simmed injury slider from 102 as injury occurrence is directly related to the simulated stats and the coach slider adjustment function mentioned below is built for a value of 102.

**Roster choice**The roster is the 'parent' of your franchise so using a good one to start a franchise is vital. I don't just speak of accuracy with transactions and what not either, but it is very important you choose a roster that has been tested for stability with franchise mode years into the future, either by the author or yourself by simulating a few years before commiting to a roster. There's nothing worse than starting a franchise only to find the roster you used to initiate it falls apart during the first offseason with crash causing oddities, so make sure yours is ok.

**First step - file creation**So you've got a slider set and roster you want to take into franchise mode. Now is the time to start the franchise file. Choose to start a new franchise in Madden, and then select the team you want to use for human control, leaving every other team as CPU controlled.

Once you've done this, you will be presented with a training camp screen. Personally, I don't do TC at all since I feel it gives human teams an advantage so I just skip this. Once done with TC, you're at your first pre-season. Save here. This is where you make your first edit using my editor, namely the amount of progression points. I recommend 1 progression point after week 17 (so untick every current point except the week 17 one including the preseason progression point). I always prefered the old time Madden style of one progression point per season after week 17 and it continues to work well in 08. This is an important step as progression directly influences your franchise's long term health. If you feel 1 is too low, I definitely wouldn't want to go past 2 as then you're looking at potential +6-8 OVR gains per season for some players. With that said, I really do recommend 1 - it really keeps player ratings in check from year to year but it's still good enough (combined with my AWR boosts, discussed below) to progress worthy players into stars.

**The yearly routine**You only have to set progression points once per franchise, so once this is done, you're set in that regard. From here, I do the following, and this routine applies for the initial starting season, and every future season, from the preseason to the final part of the offseason:

1. Deal with preseason, either simmed or played. If simmed, I like to do it with injuries on and a Sim Injury slider of 30, so it creates a few somewhat random preseason injuries but not too many.
2. Save the file at Week 1 of the regular season and open it in my editor. Apply CMP66's recommended coach slider adjustments to make simulated stats more realistic, and gain control of all 32 teams. Go through the coach list in the editor team by team checking each head coach and record (in a notepad window perhaps) which teams are 3-4 based. This last part isn't really necessary in the 1st season as rosters are mostly already tuned for their scheme, but once coach changes happen after the first season, it's important to keep on top of which teams have which schemes.
3. Go through CPU rosters and depth charts in Madden. This can be tedious and time consuming, but I feel it is very important to keep CPU teams on top of their game. What I do is go through each position quickly team by team and make sure the players are in their best positions. Example - a 83 OVR Rookie LT behind a 95 OVR veteran LT when the team has a gap at RT. By shifting him to RT using the in-game player edit screen, the team will have their best chance and the rookie will have his best shot for progression. Same goes for a lot of other positions, like OLB, S etc. While doing this, keep that list of 3-4 teams handy making sure whenever you come across one, they are ready for the 3-4. This could mean making sure MLB depth is good, to reshuffling the DL, not only for realism sake (i.e. to try and create a 3-4 DL with big strong DE's), but also in case the team has 2 good DT's. Say the Jaguars went to 3-4 in your chise' - Obviously you'd want to move either Stroud or Henderson to DE. On the other hand, if the Broncos did and they have Jarvis Moss at DE, maybe you'll want to move him to OLB for the 3-4. Whenever I do this, what I do is record the DE's OVR, move him to OLB in Madden, and then use the editor to edit him to that OVR again by changing AWR and TAK.  
   Anyway, once this is done for each team, I then go through each team in the depth chart editor in-game and first do a “Auto-Reorder” so it re-arranges based on OVR, and then quickly make any necessary manual changes, such as a younger lower rated player who should be starting over a vet etc.
4. Once the CPU rosters are cleaned up, you can start the season. This can be done two ways. The first way is to leave the coach slider adjustment active from week 1 to the end of the probowl. The up side to this is you have more or less no reason to use an editor at all during a season, but the down side is your games you play \*may\* be influenced by the change in coach sliders. Personally, I've never noticed a difference, but if you believe coach sliders influence the in-game gameplay and not just simulated games, then what you'll want to do every week is this - apply coach slider adjustment in editor once, make sure your game is checked in the Madden weekly view, choose "Simulate Week" in Madden, save franchise, open in editor, revert the coach sliders, play your game in Madden, and start from the "apply coach slider adjustment in editor once" step again for the next week and every other week. Basically, you want to simulate every CPU game while the coach sliders adjustment is applied, and revert them just before you play your game, which should be the last one in the week to be played at all times otherwise you'll simulate CPU games while the adjustment isn't active.
5. Whatever you chose to do in step 4, do this until the Pro Bowl. Once the Pro Bowl is over, the game will ask you if you want to head into the offseason. Do NOT head off into the offseason yet. This is where I save the franchise under a new name. For instance, if I started a 'Ravens.fra' franchise, I'd save it as 'Ravens2.fra' for my first time, ‘Ravens3.fra’ for the next season etc, and this new file will now be my main file. What this does is it keeps an individual fra for each season you play, and a good backup point before any offseason.
6. Take this newly saved franchise and open it in my editor. You want to first remove control of the 31 CPU teams leaving only your team under your control. Now, if you chose to play the entire season with the coach slider adjustments active and didn't activate/deactive them every week, this is where you revert them. In any case, you want to make sure the coach sliders are back to their original pre-edited state before entering the offseason. Finally, run the "Advanced AWR Boost" in my editor. This function will grant small AWR boosts to 1 year or rookie QB's based on how much they sat (the more sitting the more AWR since they wouldn't have progressed otherwise). It will also grant AWR to HB, OL and WR rookies and 1 year pro's based on how much they played and started, although this time the ones who played more get more since even with progression, AWR for these positions for young players is tough to come by in Madden. Finally, for every other position, it grants small AWR boosts for rookie and 1 year players who, like the QB's, didn't play enough to get normal progression. It is basically designed to firstly reward young players for riding the bench, and secondly to fix the game's stingy AWR progression for some positions.
7. Now you can enter the offseason. Go past the owner and coach stage at your lesuire and save the franchise at the "Player Retirement" stage. Open the fra in my editor and head to the "Draft Class" tab. You should now import any draft class you want to use. If you want to use the generated draft class, I recommend heading to the "Misc" tab under the "Draft Class" section of my editor and applying the "Rookie ratings fix". This will "re-shape" the ratings of the class in many areas that I feel creates a far more balanced and realistic class. Once this function is done, head to the "Body" tab still under the "Draft Class" section of the editor and apply the "Body Fix" for ALL players. This will adjust body sized based on weight and height.
8. Do your offseason in Madden until the end of the "Player Resigning" stage - i.e. make your resignings, but don't advance past it yet. Save and open in my editor. Apply the "AWR regression fix" found in the "Progression" tab of my editor. This will fix players who regress in Awareness because their team has a "Team Distraction" on it, a "feature" I think is very silly and counterproductive to a healthy franchise (I've seen -15 AWR for all players on a team before, ouch!). You could also choose to fix all offseason regression including the regression found with aging players here in the editor, but I personally keep that and just fix the AWR regression specifically.
9. Go to the first Free Agency period, but don't advance past it. You can go through until 0 days are left, but don't go to the draft yet. Save and open in my editor, and regain control of all 32 teams. Why do this? Because since we're using MaddenAmp's Draft feature, we have to simulate the in-game draft, and to avoid CPU teams trading with each other and therefore screwing the order up, you need to be in control of all teams. With 32 team control and the 1st free agency period over, you can now simulate the offseason in Madden until the "Rookie Signing" period. Do this, and save the FRA here.
10. Open the fra in MaddenAmp and choose to enter the draft. From here, select your team and proceed. MaddenAmp will give you a review of the class strength and will offer to re-rate the class. I choose "No" here and then proceed past the warning message. I find with 1 progression point per year, the average ratings of a Madden generated rookie class after going through my editor's ratings fix function is more than suitable for usage. Also, if you chose to import a class before, chances are you don't want anything to mess with its ratings. Now, I know this is going to make the draft logic in MaddenAmp a little screwy because it wasn't designed for classes like this from what I understand, but it's still going to be 100 fold better than Madden's draft logic. You may see the occasional quirk here and there, but then again you do in real life :)
11. Once you're done with the draft in MaddenAmp, save and quit and open the fra in my editor. Here you can remove control for the 31 CPU teams, and if you're using a custom Portrait DAT, you'll need to apply the function in my editor that changes any cartoon portrait to a blank portrait so the new rookies don't have portraits of players who overtook the cartoon ID's in the DAT file.
12. Open in Madden and sign your rookies you drafted in Amp. However, don't worry what you sign them to because it won't matter, just sign the rookies you want to keep to dummy contracts. Proceed to the 2nd Free Agency period (but don't sign any FA's yet) and save. Open the fra in my editor and apply the "Rookie contract fix" based on the year you're currently in. This will completely redo every contract for rookies who were signed based on their draft position. Just make sure to do it AFTER entering the 2nd FA period and not during the resigning period, otherwise it won't process it for rookies that CPU teams signed since that isn’t done in-game until you advance to the 2nd FA period.
13. You're done. Complete the 2nd free agency, go past the depth chart and training camp screens, and you're back at step 1. Make sure to import the future traded draft picks file in MaddenAmp at the Training Camp stage if during your draft any trades were done involving future picks.

With the introduction of the Amp draft logic, quite a few more editing steps are needed per offseason compared to the 07 guide but it's well, well worth it. The impact it has even when dealing with classes it isn't designed for is great for long term franchises as opposed to the poor drafting AI in Madden. Anyway, here is a brief outline you may want to keep handy so you get the hang of it:

1. If it's a first time franchise, edit progression points. I recommend Week 17 only.
2. Go past preseason to week 1 regular season however you like.
3. Apply coach slider adjustment. Take control of all 32 teams. Record 3-4 teams so you make sure their personnel is setup right.
4. Redo CPU depth charts.
5. If you wish, do the weekly coach slider apply/revert steps so no CPU games are simmed without it and no Human game played with it.
6. Save after the Pro Bowl but before entering offseason as a new franchise file. Remove 32 team control, apply Advanced AWR Boost in editor.
7. Do the coach signing stage etc as normal, go to Player Retirment stage and do draft class tasks (import, rerate etc).
8. Save before going past "Player Resigning" stage and fix AWR regression in editor.
9. Save before going past 1st FA period and regain 32 team control so CPU picks aren't traded when simulating the draft.
10. Simulate franchise until "Rookie Signing" period. Save.
11. Open in MaddenAmp, do draft. I tell it not to fix my class (whether imported or rerated by my editor).
12. Open in Madden Editor, remove 32 team control and apply blank portrait mass edit if needed (if you use a custom portrait DAT).
13. Dummy sign rookies in Madden. Move to 2nd FA period. Save. Open in Madden Editor and apply rookie contract fix. Finish the offseason and head back to step 2.

**Franchise roster management rules**So we've covered the routine, but now it's for the house rules. To try and keep roster management challenging, here are my restrictions/guidelines for human controlled teams:

* For the salary cap, start at $90M for the 1st season and add +$3M to the allowed team salary of your team for every season after that (starting in the 1st offseason, where it increases to $93M). Monitor spending by manually checking the “Team Salary” regularly in Team Management. It should never go over the self imposed human team cap limit. Remember, this is NOT a league wide salary cap edit, simply a self imposed limit. CPU teams NEED the excessive cap space cause' their GM'ing skills are lacking.
* Do the RFA stage how you please.
* Any player being re-signed who is 80 OVR and better must be signed to their demanded contract, years and $ wise.
* Any free agent must be signed to 3 years like the CPU to avoid long cap friendly back loaded contracts.
* 1 restructure per season (where a "season" is the first stage of the offseason until the pro bowl), whatever contract is acceptable is allowed \*except\* you must not lower the signing bonus as there is an occasional bug where a restructuring player will accept a $0 SB.
* If you franchise a player and trade him, don't make the trade before finishing the "Player Resigning" stage. The first stage I trade a franchised player is the 1st Free Agency period. If you franchise a player and use your 1 restructure on him, do the restructure at the start of the new season at the earliest, i.e. keep him franchised the whole offseason. These two franchise tag rules are to prevent using the franchise tag without concequence. This way it counts towards your cap in vital offseason situations so if you don't have the space to keep a player on the franchise tag during the offseason stages, you can't use it. Remember, if you franchise and then trade a player, you should restructure his contract to a long term deal for the CPU team you traded him to at the start of week 1 where you have 32 team control so it makes their trade worthwhile and not just a 1 year deal.
* Sign free agents how to wish during the season.

**Gameplay tips**Besides the sliders, I have a few guidelines and rules I stick to when playing in classic mode as well. These are only subtle but they can help balance out human teams with CPU teams.

First of all, I try to listen to Madden with offensive play selection as much as possible. I feel this way it helps eliminate money players and the temptation to use them. The only exceptions here is if he chooses a really stupid play (like a draw on 4th and 14 with 23 seconds to go and no timeouts), or if he chooses a play I just did shortly before. In the case of the latter – if he chooses a player I just did shortly before – I try to reselect a play of my own that is of similar nature, like if it was a run up the middle, I’d try to find another run up the middle.

Secondly, still on offense, I don’t control receivers after they make the catch, which also means I don’t control receivers to make the catch. My theory of good Madden classic gaming is to try and eliminate as many balance issues as possible, and I consider using human intelligence to run routes and then run after the catch as an imbalance as it more or less throws out the AWR rating for your WR’s. The only exception here is screen plays and short flat routes as under CPU control, your WR’s seem to be really dumb after the catch.

On defense, I don’t switch control of defenders after the snap. I choose who I want to control, and don’t switch off him during the play no matter what – if I’m the RDE and get pancaked out of the play, then it’s up to the CPU controlled players on my team to make the tackle. This is a vastly underrated way of creating balance in Madden, almost to the point it can feel like coach mode on defense.

To go along with this, I also try to control the defender with the most awareness. My theory is, if I’m controlling a player with 95 AWR, he’d be the most likely to act like a human controlled player on defense by himself anyway. If I controlled the guy next to him with 70 AWR, then that would be like having two guys with human like awareness on D. It’s not a strict rule I use, just something I’d probably use as the tie breaker on deciding who I was going to control on defense for a particular team. For instance, on the Ravens, you have a bevy of high AWR players to choose from so it isn't a big deal but say on the Texans, you may want to control Ryans as he's clearly the best defender and closest to human like quality.

**Conclusion**  
That about wraps it up I think. If I missed anything I'll make sure to update it and put an update log down the bottom to keep track. As for proof of this system, right now I'm in season 9 of a Ravens franchise and I'm only just starting to come back as a good team after quite a few years of poor play - I think after the first season I didn't have a winning record until now, drafting 1st, 3rd and 4th overall in the process amongst a few other top 10-15 placements, where I picked up the next Randy Moss and the next Eric Dickerson. Defense is kinda flimbsy though, and the team salary right now is only just squeezing under my 9th season cap limit of $115M. I'm not sure if this guide will achieve a realistic "cycle" effect where you can go from good to bad to good to bad in one franchise, but it's still definitely keeping it challenging and interesting so far.