A Game Analysis Based on Game Systems

The game *EAFC 25* has sparked a mass controversy over the year of its release based on the overall game systems and the way in which the game operates. *EAFC 25* is football simulation game published by Electronic Arts that serves as the latest instalment of the EAFC series, released on the 27th of September 2024. The aim of this game is to create a football experience that is realistic and captures the true essence of the game of football mainly through graphics, innovative and immersive mechanics, strategy and a game presentation that gives the impression that the players are playing or are part of a real football match. This game analysis will critically evaluate the systems of *EAFC 25* while also delving into the mechanics, gameplay, themes and design choices. This analysis will be centred around the Understanding of Games as Systems, which an analysis lens from the *Ludoliteracy* framework by José Zagal.

Depth of Analysis

EAFC 25 contains core mechanics, such as shooting, passing, sprinting, dribbling and defence, which are all mechanics that are meant to interact with each other for gameplay and engagement to progress. These core mechanics are all influenced by other game elements such as the stats of the team or players in use, players' overall stamina, and the positioning of the players in the game based on planned and adjusted formations. Based on the framework provided by Jose Zagal, when analysing a game system, we must be able to recognize how the game elements interact with each other and how these interactions contribute to dynamic and evolving gameplay. For example, for a game players that want to dribble through opposing defences with a specific player in the game, it is essential that the player has a minimum of four-star dribbling skills to ensure that dribbling works effectively.

Genre Analysis

The game genre is a simulation video game, which is defined as a broad category of video games that are designed to mimic real-world activities and processes. To be specific, it serves as a sports simulation video game which its main premise and conventions are to focus on realism and emphasize on skill-based gameplay systems. Just based on the genre alone, it is immediately evident that the game operates on complex and more detailed systems that require strategic planning. The main target audience that this caters to is strategic game players, football fans and people who love attention to the finest of details.

Another prominent example that plays a crucial role in the game systems is the stamina system. To emphasize, the stamina system determines the length at which players can maintain their top performance and attributes in a match. According to MMOPixel.com, the players in FC 25 with an efficient level of stamina can keep up high energy levels during the game which allows for continuous pressing, running and involvement in high intensity scenarios during the match all without an effect on player speed, energy and overall ability. The stamina system for what I have observed and understood, can be considered as a feedback loop. If a player decides to take the approach of high intensity during the early stages of the match, the more likely players in the entire team lose energy resulting in slowness of the team and a lack of accurate execution of actions and mechanics such as attacking defending. Based off this alone, players are prompted to think about strategically about how they will approach the game in an attacking and defensive sense. Game balance is achieved as players to critically think about keeping their energy intact whenever taking on intense attacks. There is a balance between offensive attacks and energy conservation. Players must keep in mind that the earlier they engage with offensive attacks, the less energy they will have towards the end of the match leaving the opposing team an opportunity to attack.

The tactics and formations are a critical gameplay system that emphasizes dynamism. The players can change the team formations before and during the game, impacting the strategies that players aim to make when playing the game. The team tactics creates a form of fluidity as the adjustments have a direct impact on the team's performance. It is important for players to understand what type of tactics to utilize, and this should accommodate for the players' strengths. If you aim to play with a counter-attack system, players will play a defensive line of football and drop back to defend and when they have the ball, they can break the defensive lines of the opposing team. This is a style that is less centred around ball possession and highly focuses on quick counter attacks that are a result of successful defensive line. A system that the counterattack will thrive well against is a high-press system where players press heavily for the ball and pressure players in possession. The player's choice in tactics is an important determining factor for the gameplay experience.
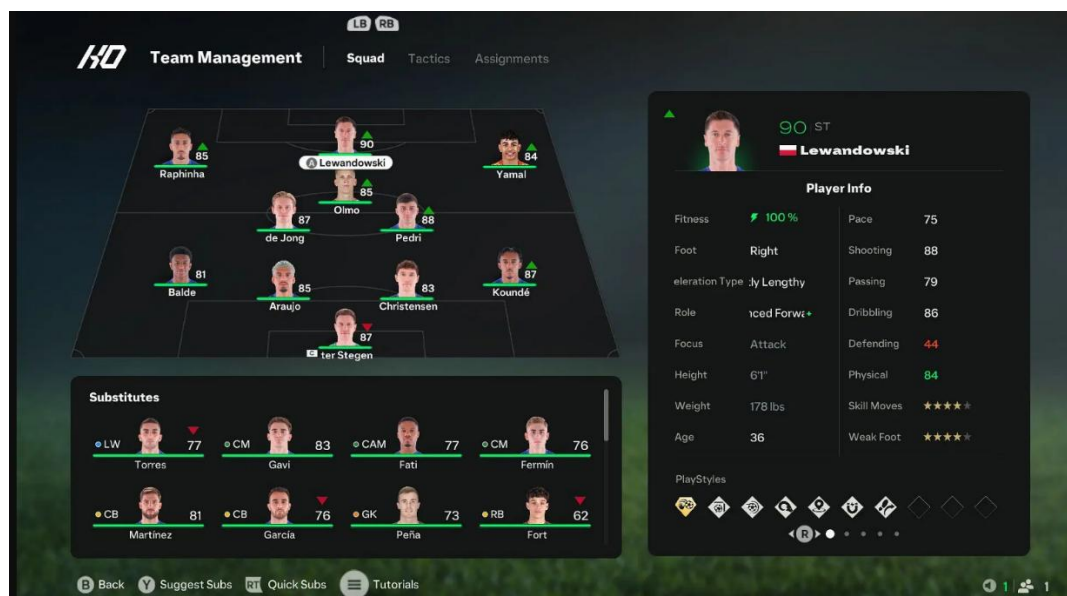
Critical Engagement with Themes

Moving onto the themes, it is easy to declare that EAFC 25 does not have any prevailing theme since it is a sport/football simulation game, but there are multiple themes that are explored in this game, specifically on the concepts of teamwork and adaptability. The theme of teamwork is especially prevalent in the gameplay of EAFC 25, as players must make decisions for the team and finalize tactical decisions that would work well against opposing teams. This can only be achieved through team players that can adapt to each other's styles of play and contribute well to the tactical plans in place. The AI that the game uses is an interpretation of the way that real football teams would engage in actual matchday conditions where the AI makes sure to adapt to the different team styles, and different player experiences. Football is an unpredictable sport and each of the matches require a uniqueness to them. Not knowing the way that the opponent will approach play and not fully understanding how to get through minute 1 – 90 can become very pressuring as this is where I got to understand that resilience and perseverance are important themes. Players must push thorough with the aim of completing the match in a winning position. That requires patience, and consistency teaching players the importance of sticking to a gameplan under pressure and changing it if the odds are against you.

Engagement with Gameplay

As mentioned earlier, EAFC 25 contains a game loop which based on the idea of having control over opposition by making sure that the tactics that you use enable a great deal of control over game's proceedings. Other thematics that the game loop revolves around are based on strategic gameplay and with this comes the initiative to make crucial tactical decisions and adjustments to team formation and personnel. The idea that players can adjust their formations and tactics in the middle of the game while also make crucial substitutions replacing personnel that have probably used up their stamina or serve as non-effective to the initial team plans that they had. This is an important emphasis on player agency especially within a game system where the output is displayed in the game's dynamics based on the input of the player. Systems in overall game analysis provides a way for us to identify how choices and feedback are essential for what Zagal describes as a nuanced playing experience. A good instance of engaging gameplay comes about even when in advantageous positions, where players can decide to change the tactics from more offensive to more defensive to maintain the winning position.

Impact of Design Choices

As explained previously, the game's relevance in the sports simulation industry is its attention realism and how the game aims to imitate a real-life football game/atmosphere. On the PlayStation 5 version of EAFC 25, a motion capture technology called HyperMotion V has been implemented and according to trustedreviews.com, it explains to us that the V stands for 'volumetric' that is an indication of volumetric data that has been collected from more than 180 football matches with the aim of capturing realism and accuracy. The HyperMotion V technology is what influences the movements of players in the game and incorporates signature running styles designated to different players. The physics in the game provides realistic visual effects of collisions while kicking the ball and incorporates real like ball control and ball momentum physics. The realism provides a sense of immersion as players feel connected to the choices that they make as they seem to be real choices that affect the real world. Incorporating UI elements such as action heatmaps and player location arrows are a perfect way to grab attention of players that allow for quick and necessary adjustments to be made. One thing that I also notice while playing EAFC 25 was just the attention to detail when it came to the design of the atmosphere, from the crowd reactions and commentators to the stadiums that the games take place in, the game work very well and successfully achieves the feel of a realistic football atmosphere.

EAFC 25 is a game that breaks the bounds of just being a football game, it is more than that. The constant dynamism and player agency contribute to the gameplay experience. Jose Zagal's *Understanding Games as Systems* offers a wider perspective. Game systems focus mainly on the interconnectivity of game mechanics and feedback and the system in EAFC 25 provides challenges in the form of a football match against an opposing team where if players are able to score against AI opposition and maintain a lead for the duration of a match they are rewarded with a win. The game's system allow for realism and strategy to coexist in the game world.

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