

FOOTBALL, TACTICS & GLORY

A round peg in square holes

All the best management games of the 1980s came on cassette tapes, usually picked up from your local newsagent for €2.99. Alas you can't slot a cassette tape into your PS4, but FT&G feels like a nod to that era: a game you'd grab alongside a Marathon and four packs of Panini stickers, then enjoy non-stop for an entire school holiday. It offers fictional players in editable teams¹ playing out matches where you control every kick, but in a very different sense to FIFA.

Fixtures take place on a 12x7 square pitch, where your turn lasts three goes: you can dribble, pass, shoot, or move a player with the ultimate objective of scoring in the opponent's net. It's more board game than traditional sports sim.² Dribbling past, or passing through, an opponent triggers a stats-based face-off straight out of an RPG – win it to beat the man, lose it to concede possession. Shooting is similarly tactical, with every player in the line of your shot decreasing the RNG percentages of a goal. Basic in theory. Oh-so-moreish in practice.

Nuance comes from special moves which don't use up one of your three goes (Rainbow feint! Olympic kick!) and the sense of challenge in deciding how to spend in-game credit. Success brings riches, but it's not always wise to splurge it on players – investing €14K in a youth academy limits transfer options, but guarantees a promising youngster every six months. Which sounds like a long wait, yet at seven minutes per match seasons fly by in evenings just like those dugout sims of yore. This time with no threat of the tape wearing out. **Ben Wilson**

