

The logo for 'A Whole Different Ball Game' is a stylized, blocky font in shades of blue and yellow. The words 'A WHOLE DIFFERENT BALL GAME' are arranged in three lines. Below the main title, the subtitle 'PLAYING THROUGH 60 YEARS OF SPORTS VIDEO GAMES' is written in a smaller, red, sans-serif font. The logo is decorated with various icons related to video games and sports, such as a tennis ball, a soccer ball, a basketball, and a video game controller.

# A WHOLE DIFFERENT BALL GAME

PLAYING THROUGH 60 YEARS OF SPORTS VIDEO GAMES

## EXHIBITION OVERVIEW

### ***A Whole Different Ball Game: Playing through 60 Years of Sports Video Games***

**Exhibition dates:** September 14, 2018–March 10, 2019

**Location:** Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35 Ave, Astoria (Queens), NY 11106

**Summary:** Ever since the first video game, *Tennis for Two*, debuted at the Brookhaven National Laboratory's public exhibition in 1958, video games have sought to recreate, adapt, and build upon the games Americans most regularly encounter: sports. *A Whole Different Ball Game* presents a selection of 44 playable sports video games spanning the last six decades, examining the complex relationships between game, sport, media, and culture. The exhibition considers what it means for full-body sports to be transposed to screens and controllers in the service of realism, who is or is not represented in sports video games, the ways broadcast sports and video games reflect one another, and the primacy of statistics in professional sports and sports simulators.

**Contents:** The exhibition is organized in seven sections (see below for details and game list) plus a new video installation, an interactive experience, and a video screening area with bleachers. There are 44 playable games, including hand-held devices, arcade games, console and PC games played on monitors and wall projections. Additional games that are not playable are included for historical context. In addition, there is video content in the exhibition for documentation of game play and comparison to televised sports.

**Curators:** Curator of Digital Media **Jason Eppink and John Sharp** (Associate Professor in the School of Art, Media, and Technology at Parsons School of Design at The New School). The two previously organized the exhibition [\*Spacewar: Video Games Blast Off\*](#), presented at MoMI December 2012–March 2013.

**Presenting Sponsor:** Psyonix, Inc.

**Direct URL:** <http://www.movingimage.us/exhibitions/2018/09/14/detail/a-whole-different-ball-game-playing-through-60-years-of-sports-video-games/>

**Museum of the Moving Image (www.movingimage.us)**

**Advisory for parents:** Most content is appropriate for children ages 8 and older. Some video content may contain mature language and scenes of cartoon violence, particularly in the esports section. Among playable games, parents are advised to review ESRB ratings ([www.ESRB.org/ratings](http://www.ESRB.org/ratings)), e.g. *Fortnite* is rated T for “teens” and *Super Smash Bros.* is 10+.

## SECTION DESCRIPTION AND GAMES LIST

### **Lobby installation: *Wide World of Sports Video Games***

2018. Created by Tim Szetela, with Jason Eppink and John Sharp. This 50-ft-wide video installation just inside the Museum’s entrance presents screen recordings from 120 different sports video games from around the world, from Aerobics to Zumba.

### **Interactive: When Is a Game a Sport?**

All sports are games, but not all games are sports. Definitions of “sport” vary and can depend on athleticism, scoring systems, competitive structures, and other criteria. In this interactive, at the entrance to the exhibition, visitors are asked to place a set of activities (auto racing, bowling, curling, Quiddich, tag, waterskiing, etc.) along a continuum indicating whether or not that activity is a sport.

### **Installation: Seeing Sports**

Media and the news help us make sense of the importance of sports to our communities, our identities, and the stories we tell. The opening corridor of the exhibition is a series of short video clips of iconic moments from television, film, advertisements, and magazines.

### **Section 1: Early Adaptations**

Video games were not the first entertainment products to translate the appeal of sports to other kinds of games. Leisure technologies introduced in the early twentieth century sparked a period of experimentation around sports-themed play experiences.

***Tennis for Two***, Donner Model 30 analog computer (presented as a playable replica)  
1958, William Higinbotham with David Potter and Robert V. Dvorak

***TUDOR Tru-action Electric Football Game***, Tudor Metal Products Corp., 1949 (in case)  
***Electric football***, electromechanical tabletop game (playable), 2017, Tudor Games

***Magnavox Odyssey***, Home video game console. 1972, Ralph Baer with Bill Harrison and Bill Rusch, Magnavox

***Pong***, Arcade video game. 1972, Al Alcorn, Atari, Inc.

***Super Pong***, Home video game console. 1976, Atari, Inc.

**Milan European Foosball Table**, c. 2018, Playcraft

**Football**, LED Handheld electronic game. 1977, George Klose, Richard Chang, and Mark Lesser; Mattel, Inc.

**Electronic Baseball**, LED Handheld electronic game. 1978, George Klose and Mark Lesser; Mattel, Inc.

**Coleco Head to Head Baseball**, LED Handheld electronic game. 1980, Eric Bromley and Thomas Helmer; Coleco Industries, Inc.

**Coleco Head to Head Basketball**, LED Handheld electronic game. 1979, Coleco Industries, Inc.

**Tomy Tennis**, VFD Handheld electronic game. 1980, Tomy Corporation

**Bambino Basketball Dribble Away**, VFD Handheld electronic game. 1979, Bambino, Inc.

**Tandy Championship Electronic Golf**, LED Handheld electronic game. 1983, Tandy Corp.

**Electronic Baseball**, LCD Handheld electronic game. 1988, Tiger Electronics, Inc.

## **Section 2: From Sport to Video Game**

No video game can perfectly recreate a sport. Most translate kinetic, full-body actions into button presses, keystrokes, or otherwise minimized gestures. This section contains some of the more unique and memorable attempts by game designers to transpose the experience of sports into video games.

**Atari Football**, Arcade video game. 1978, Steve Bristow, Atari, Inc.

**Track and Field**, Arcade video game. 1983, Konami Industry Co. Ltd.; Nintendo of America, Inc.

**Wii Sports**, Nintendo Wii. 2006, Nintendo of America, Inc.; Nintendo Co., Ltd.

**Tony Hawk Shred**, PlayStation 3. 2010, Robomodo, Inc.; Activision Publishing, Inc.

**World Class Track Meet**, Nintendo Entertainment System with Power Pad controller. 1988, TRY Co., Ltd.; Bandai America, Inc.

**NHL '94**, Sega Genesis. 1993, High Score Productions, Electronic Arts, Inc.

**Michael Phelps: Push the Limit**, Xbox 360. 2011, Blitz Games Studios, Ltd.; 505 Games S.R.L.

**QWOP**, Flash. 2008, Bennett Foddy

**Shawn Johnson Gymnastics**, Nintendo Wii. 2010, Zoo Games, Inc.

### **Section 3: Represent**

Like all media experiences, sports video games provide an incomplete picture: not everyone who plays sports is visible, and not everything that happens around sports is included. Many factors—economic, social, political, gender, racial, and more—influence which elements of sports are represented in sports video games, and which are excluded.

***NCAA Football 14***, Xbox 360. 2013, EA Tiburon, Electronic Arts, Inc.

***Jennifer Capriati Tennis***, Sega Genesis. 1992, System Sacom, Renovation Products, Inc.

***NBA Live '19***, Xbox One. 2018, EA Tiburon; Electronic Arts, Inc.

***Tiger Woods PGA Tour 14***, PlayStation 3. 2013, EA Tiburon; Electronic Arts, Inc.

***FIFA 16***, Xbox One. 2015, Electronic Arts Canada, Electronic Arts, Inc.

***NBA Street Vol. 2***, PlayStation 2. 2003, Electronic Arts Canada and NuFX, Inc.; Electronic Arts, Inc.

***One on One***, Commodore 64. 1984, Eric Hammond, Larry Bird, and Julius Erving; Electronic Arts, Inc.

***Backyard Baseball***, PC (Windows 98). 1997, Humongous Entertainment

***WNBA mods of NBA 2K (2009-13)*** (documentation only)

***Mod of NCAA College Basketball 13*** (documentation only)

### **Section 4: Playing Sports on TVs**

Top-selling sports video game franchises go to great lengths to simulate the experience of watching their professional sport as televised. Everything from the stadiums to the players to the television camera angles and motion graphics are simulated in basketball video games. In turn, televised sports take their cues from video games. Here, footage from MLB baseball games from the 1994, 2006, and 2017 are paired with contemporary video games.

***World Series Baseball*** (1994, Sega Genesis. Blue Sky Software, Inc.; SEGA of America, Inc.): [Mets vs. Phillies, August 11, 1994](#), Veterans Stadium, Philadelphia, PA

***MLB 2k6*** (2006, PS2; Kush Games; 2K Sports): [Mets vs. Phillies, August 14, 2006](#) Veterans Stadium, Philadelphia, PA

***MLB 17: The Show*** (2017, PS4; SCE Studios San Diego; Sony Interactive Entertainment America, LLC): [Phillies vs. Mets, April 8, 2016](#) Citi Field, Queens, NY

## **Section 5: Playing with Data**

Computers are information age tools that allow us to calculate, simulate, and predict the world around us. These tendencies to mathematically model the world extend into sports and sports video games and allow us to zoom out and focus on them as living systems instead of moment-by-moment actions.

**Topps 2018 baseball trading cards** (display only)

**Baseball score card** (display only). Mets vs. Nationals, August 25, 2018

**Strat-o-Matic Baseball** (display only), Tabletop game. 2018, Strat-o-Matic

**Football Strategy** (display only), Tabletop board game. 1959, Avalon Hill

**Computer Football Strategy**, Commodore 64. 1983, Microcomputer Games; Avalon Hill Games Co.

**Championship Manager: Season 00/01**, PC (Windows ME). 2000, Sports Interactive; Eidos Interactive

**MLB Front Office Manager**, PlayStation 3. 2009, Blue Castle Games; 2K Sports

## **Section 6: The Era of Esports**

Even though esports lack the historical legacies and physical affordances of traditional sports, they require immense skill, training, and teamwork. And like other sports, they fill stadiums with avid spectators and can command competitive salaries for their athletes.

**Super Smash Bros.: Melee**, Game Cube. 2002, HAL Laboratory, Inc.; Nintendo of America, Inc.

**Killer Queen (2013)**, Arcade video game. 2013, Bumblebear Games

**Rocket League**, PC (Windows 10). 2015, Psyonix, Inc.

**Fortnite: Battle Royale**, Xbox One. 2017, People Can Fly, Sp.; Epic Games, Inc.

Documentation only: **Starcraft, DOTA 2, League of Legends, Counter-Strike, Call of Duty, Streetfighter 2**

## **Section 7: Sports Speculated**

Not all sports video games strive for verisimilitude. Some simplify and exaggerate sports to create cartoon-like play experiences, while others use science fiction strategies to imagine futuristic and violent games.

**Mutant Football League**, Sega Genesis. 1993, Mutant Productions; Electronic Arts, Inc.

***Cyber Stadium Series: Base Wars***, Nintendo Entertainment System. 1991, Konami Industry Co. Ltd.; Ultra Games

***Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe***, Sega Genesis. 1995, The Bitmap Brothers; Renegade Software

***NBA Jam***, Arcade video game. 1993, Midway Manufacturing Company

***Wayne Gretzky's 3D Hockey***, Nintendo 64. 1996, Atari Games Corporation; Midway Home Entertainment, Inc.

***NFL Blitz 2002***, Xbox. 2002, Midway Games, Inc.; Midway Home Entertainment, Inc.

**Mini-stadium screening area: Sports Video Games Considered**

A selection of ads, news reports, game highlights, and short documentaries about esports and sports video games. This 52-minute compilation is projected on the wall with bleachers for seating.

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