

FIFA 08 NG Blog
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FIFA 08 NG -- Skill Moves

Joe Booth, Lead Producer

Unlike Leeds United, in FIFA Soccer 08 you will actually be able to pull off skill moves on the pitch.:) We listened to everyone on the forums and we made it a priority this year. Our vision this year is to deliver a really next-gen experience and it's only through our new animation engine that we are able to blend from one move to the other to provide you with this 'building block' concept for creating your own skills moves. This year you have the ability to learn to execute any combination of skill moves, giving you an infinite number of potential moves to beat you defender. Aaron McHardy worked on this feature and will go into more detail below.

As we developed the skill moves feature I noticed that everyone has developed a go-to move. That is, when they are under pressure, the one move that they have really practiced and honed and will always go-to. It's the move they are most confident executing. For me at this moment it is the roll but for others on the team it is 360s, or fakes and an exit move.

The other element of our game this year that has evolved through skill moves, and only made possible with our new game engine, is this notion of enabling you to express your creativity on the pitch. When we saw the results of people performing skill moves in our test beds we saw some pretty amazing moves . We felt like we had to find a way to enable you to share these moves with your friends so we came up with the idea for video uploading your highlights. This year you will be able to show off your skills and the goals you score. You can upload the highlights to our website and email them to your friends. It's pretty cool and something we're having a lot of fun with in the office.

Aaron Mchardy Assistant Producer, Gameplay

One of the things that users felt was missing from FIFA 07 was the ability to perform great skill moves to beat defenders so this was moved to the top of our priority list for FIFA 08.

When we set out to create this feature, we looked at how skill moves have been executed in past football titles and decided that we wanted something more intuitive. Traditionally skill moves have been implemented by a couple of button presses that have triggered a pre-determined skill move animation. In keeping with the idea of a free ball, and the freedom to create and express your own style of play we implemented a skill moves system where you could create almost any type of move you wanted, rather than choosing from a couple of preset moves.

This year we've filled the right stick with a number of linkable skill moves. We have base moves likes step-overs, reverse step-overs, body feints and ball rolls as a starting point. Once you are able to master these you can add more difficult moves to your repertoire and perform them in any combination.

The idea behind this intuitive linkable system came from the real world application of moves. When you look at a move performed by a professional player, he may step over the ball, roll it to the left and spin past a defender, not because that's all he knows how to do, but because that is what was needed for that particular situation. The next time it will likely require a different move. So if we just gave you a couple of button presses to perform a 360 degree spin we haven't really given you what you need to express yourself on the pitch and perform the moves necessary to break down defenses. What we have done in FIFA 08 is give you all the tools you need to beat players 1v1. With the linkable 'building block' system you have the ability to execute moves like step-overs, body feints, ball rolls, spins, heel flicks, chops, rainbows, etc. in any combination.

Take for example Nigerian midfielder, Jay-Jay Okocha. He does a move where he rolls the ball to the left, and does a step over to the right with his left foot while exploding back to his left. This move completely throws his opponents off balance while creating space for his attack. At first we thought about

putting that move into the game as a specific move on the right stick but when we looked at it closer and broke it down, it was really only a ball roll, followed by a step-over and an exit. With our building block system you now have the ability to recreate moves like these and even expand on them by adding your own personal bit of flair.

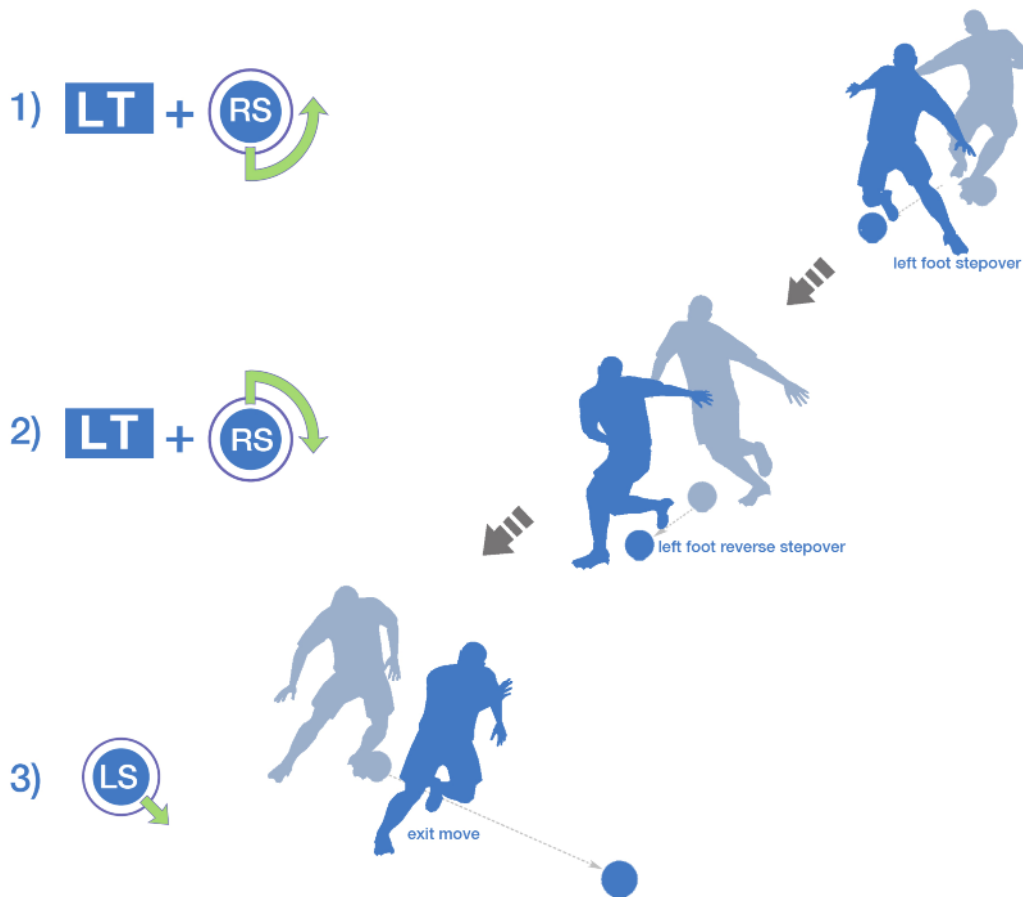
The cool thing about the system is, even though there are a seemingly endless number of moves you can do, the controls are very intuitive and actually easy to pick up. For example, if you want to do a right foot step-over you make a sweeping, arcing motion with the right stick in the same fashion that you would if you were swinging your foot around the ball. So if you are on the pitch and visualize a move or series of moves you want to make we now have an intuitive system to perform them.

The following moves assume that your player is facing up
 The following moves can only be executed while holding the left trigger



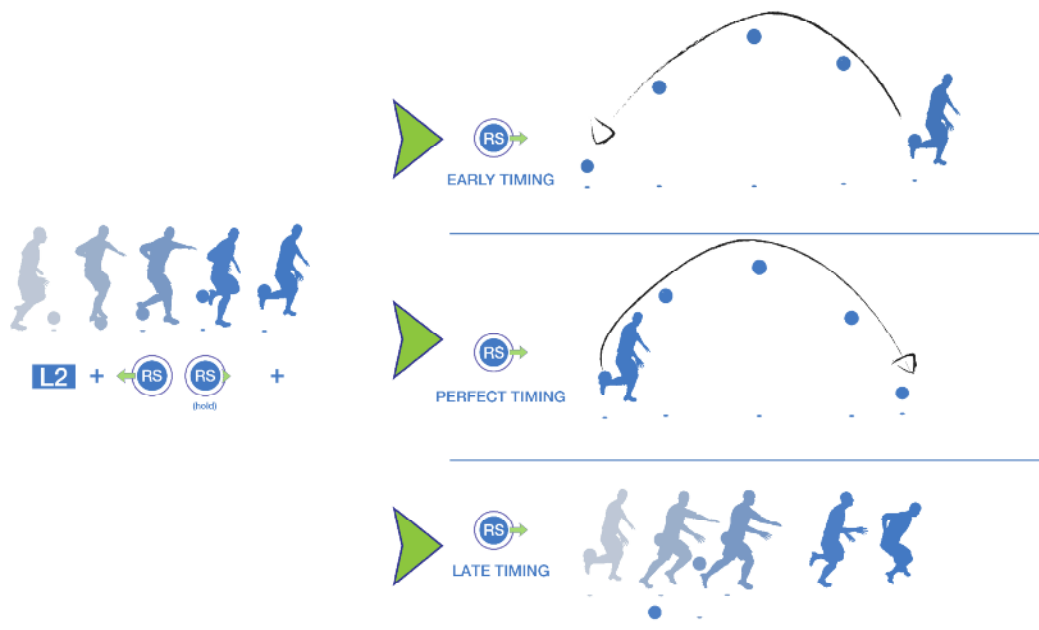
On top of the base system of fakes and feints, we've developed what we call 'exit moves'. If you are on the pitch and perform a step-over you may fake out the defender, but if you don't go anywhere you are not going to beat him. Beating players on the pitch comes from a change of pace. After a step-over, reverse step-over or body feint, if you release the left trigger and move the left stick you will perform an exit move. You'll explode out of the skill move back into dribbling in an instant – heading off in the direction of the left stick.

The combination of base moves and advanced moves plus the added depth of exit moves multiplies the number of possible skill moves exponentially.



In addition to simple base moves we've also put in some of the major moves that you see stars around the world perform. The Cristiano Ronaldo move where he chops the ball behind his standing leg while on a full sprint, the Blanco hop where he picks the ball up with both feet and jumps forward and Ronaldinho doing his flip flop where he touches the ball to the outside and then the inside with the same foot are just three of the moves available. You have controls for all these as well as more on the right stick. Of course not all the players in the game can do all the moves; the more agile, and better dribbler the player is in the real world, the more moves he will be able to do in the game.

In previous FIFA games the rainbow has traditionally been one of the easier moves to execute. I thought it was way too easy and therefore way too effective. In real life it is one of the most difficult moves in football to pull off, especially on the run in a match situation. This year we have broken the rainbow down into two building blocks you'll need to master in order to perform it. If you pull back and forward on the right stick you'll flick the ball up into the air, but you need to flick the right stick forward again at just the right time in order to heel it successfully over your head. If you flick too early the ball may go behind you and you won't complete the rainbow, and if you flick too late you may hit it into your back or not even make contact at all. It's up to you to get the timing perfect so the ball will sail over your head, and it's up to you to practice these moves to know the right situation to use them on the pitch.



Another thing we focused on this year is the gameplay balance. When you create something like skill moves that are designed to break down defenses and create space for yourself, you have to make sure these moves are not too powerful. It wouldn't be authentic to the game if you can just dribble from one end of the pitch to the other any time you get the ball with a good player, so we don't want it to be that easy in our game. These moves are easy to learn but will be difficult to master, just like in real life. To be a very good player, and dribbler, it takes practice to get things right. In our game it's easy to be able to trigger the skill moves but it is up to you to learn the time and place to use them in order to perfect the art of beating defenders.

We've studied the real-world moves to understand the different scenarios when these moves are performed and how they are executed. There is a major timing element to successfully using skill moves. You have to learn which move is right for which situation. If you are going to pull off a move too close to the defender you'll get tackled. If you perform it too far away you won't get by him and he'll continue to mark you the same way. It is up to you to use these moves at the right time to create space for your attack.

I think my favorite part about this feature is the creative element and the fact that almost any move is possible. Football is a game of expression and creativity and the thing I'm most excited about is the addition of video upload so you can capture your moves and show them off to the world. From your instant replay you can upload a section of your video straight from the game to www.easportsworld.com. I know people are going to pull off some sick moves and I can't wait to see all the crazy videos. For me that's going to be the most fun.