

Necom News

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The Legends Game Is Coming!

After far too long in discussion and development, I'm delighted to say that the League Soccer Legends game is now ready for launch!

Have you ever wondered how the stars of the 80's would get on against a team of players from today? Wanted to pick your own favourites from the past 25 years against someone else's favourites? Well now you can – with League Soccer legends!

It already has a game number – 86 – and quite a few managers have said they want to join. If you do, then just send an email to me – neil@necomgames.com and I'll add you to the list.

The basic idea of the game is that you get to pick a squad of players from any time at all during the life of Necom Games – so that is pretty much anyone who has played professional football in the last 30 years. Take your pick – you might have Rinat Dasayev in goal, Paolo Maldini and Franco Baresi amongst your defenders, maybe Maradona, Zico and Danny Wallace working together at the top. It'll be totally up to you. You will be able to pick the players you want in our online draft – and then play them up against everyone else's dream legends XI on the usual League Soccer system.

For more information check out the Necom noticeboards or email me...

Newsletters Are Back!

Yes, it's been said before – but with some exciting guest columnists, Necom News is returning on a weekly basis. Look out for your copy every Thursday morning!



Ancient History

A long – and often rambling – look at the history of Necom Games...

There are some questions I get asked reasonably often by League Soccer managers, and quite a few of those involve the how, when and why of the whole thing. When did Necom Games start? Do you run (or have you ever run) any other games? That kind of thing. In a very large number of parts this part of the newsletter will hope to answer a few of the questions you might have been interested in, and far more of those that you probably never dreamed of... but I've started now so I might as well stick it all down. Here comes part 1.

The whole inspiration behind League Soccer comes from two eccentric bearded gentlemen. Along with so many others across the UK, on Christmas day 1983 I was overjoyed to find myself the proud owner of the amazing Sinclair Spectrum computer. Coming in 16K or 48K varieties and with a squelchy rubber keyboard, this was part of the biggest revolution in home entertainment ever. 12 months earlier I'd received an Atari 2600 console, and games like Asteroids, Breakout, Ms Pac Man and the magnificent Circus Atari were magnificent and introduced me to home video games. I also had hand held versions of Pac Man and Space Invaders, but the Sinclair ZX Spectrum offered something different. One of the many brilliant features of the Spectrum was the fact that it came with a programming language built in from the start – and the commands you needed to use that language were actually printed on the keys. Press "L" and the word "Load" would appear on screen. That one feature must have encouraged kids all across the country to take up programming.



Sir Clive Sinclair

So as these fantastic, reasonably low priced, computers took off, so software started to be produced for them. And software producers quickly discovered that the Spectrum was a brilliant games machine. Well, when I say brilliant, you had 8 colours, and a screen resolution of 256 x 192 pixels. But actually though, those limitations meant that a single programmer could indeed produce games of fantastic quality. I got Jetpac and Atic Atac with my Spectrum for Christmas, and a short while later bought Sabre Wulf from WH Smith in Stockport on the weekend it came out! These games – produced by the enigmatic "Ultimate Play The Game" in Ashby De La Zouch (later to become Rare and make some of the best console games) – were fantastic, with brilliant graphics and superb gameplay... but weren't surpassed in game playing time by one other amazing creation – Kevin Toms' Football Manager.

Spectrum owners could choose from a number of magazines – those specifically for their machine like Your Sinclair and the far cooler Crash, and those that covered multiple ones – PCG and C&VG (Computer and Video Games). In all these though 1983 you'd find an advert for a ridiculously addictive game, featuring a large picture of the guy who created it. This was Kevin Toms and this was Football Manager. Obviously the game is still going in some form, with Eidos or whoever having taken on Kevin's name for their Championship Manager games years ago, but when this came out there was nothing like it at all. The game was incredible – pick your line up and then watch the little stick men pass the ball around and fire in shots on the big green pitch. Hours and hours were whiled away playing the game, before I discovered one very useful feature. You were able to hit 'BREAK' during the game – and access the program. This then gave you access to the game code, written in Spectrum Basic, and the opportunity to alter the values of different arrays. Basically you could cheat and alter all your players ratings! Soon I had that brilliant screen telling me I'd won the FA Cup!

I'd also for years been a bit of a Subbuteo addict – organising leagues for friends and myself – and the two things came together very nicely – a league for Football Manager. Friends at school could manage teams and actually play against each other. There was far more at stake when you were playing your school mates than against a simple computer. My Basic programming skills, which I'd actually developed writing long programs on paper long before I'd got the computer itself – were up to the challenge – and in a reasonably small amount of time I put together my very own system to play a match between two teams... with goalscorers, times of goals, injuries and sendings off. I called my game League Soccer.

