

review: PGA Tour Golf II

by Don Henson

Type: Golf Simulation

Publisher: Electronic Arts (800/245-4525)

Retail Price: \$59.95

Street Price: \$40.00

Requires: Mac SE/30, Color Classic or higher. 1-4 MB of RAM depending on whether played in B&W or color and if using System 7. System 6.0.7 or higher. 4MB of RAM and System 7 or higher recommended.

Protection: One time manual lookup

GA Tour Golf II will be very familiar to those that have played the original PGA Tour Golf. The original was long considered the best Mac golf simulation and this new enhanced version makes it an even more enjoyable way to pass the winter hours and rainy days. Besides, you can pick from up to ten pros included with the game to go play any course or tournament with you.

I have played golf on the Mac since the black and white days of the first MacGolf by Practical Computer Applications, Inc. in the mid 1980s, and things have progressed a long way. The original version of PGA Tour Golf added color and the ability to select from many clubs and four courses. In PGA Tour Golf II we have three additional courses to select from and the original four have had some detail added to them.

Tee Up. Once you have installed the game you can start by double-clicking the icon like any Macintosh application. The first time you do this PGA Tour Golf II asks you to look up a yardage distance in the manual and enter it. Once this is done you are never again asked for numbers, which is a great improvement over having to keep a manual around for those times that you might get the urge to play a round. This should work well for people with Powerbooks, who are traveling or otherwise being more portable. Carrying and keeping track of manuals at such times can be a real pain.

Once you have chosen your preferences and options at the club house, you can go to the Driving Range, Putting Green, Practice Round, or Tournament. There is also a new Skins

game selection. Once at one of these locations, you will notice that the graphics are now full screen. At the bottom are the controls for hitting the ball. If you chose the Caddy option in your player setup, your club will be selected for you, although you can disagree with the caddy and select another from the popup menu on the left. In the center is the stroke meter and this is how you control the swing of the club. You click the mouse button to start the swing and then click it again when you think the percentage is about right. Now the meter goes back toward zero and you click a third time to hit the ball. If you are above zero (accuracy point) the ball will hook and if you are below it will slice. The more above or below zero the more the effect on your shot.

find that when the yardage you need on a pitch shot is say only 10 yards and the full club swing is 40 yards, that controlling the stroke meter is more like an arcade game than golf. It moves so fast between the starting click, the 25 percent area (in the above example) then back to zero, that you are hard pressed to have less than a teenagers' reflexes and be able to control the swing. A great improvement to the stroke meter would be an adjustment to the speed at which it operates. This would allow people with coordination of my level to have some hope of being competitive in the game, yet the more dexterous could set it even faster if desired. There seems to be quite a random factor of how a shot will play out, even if the wind and stroke meter are all "perfect" anyway, so I can't see how this would make the game anything but more desirable for us that less fleet of finger. There are also keyboard controls for those so inclined.

A new addition to the swing controls is a Draw/Fade setting. This can be adjusted before your swing and more accurately control the balls path than trying to stop the right distance above or below the accuracy point on the stroke meter to get the same effect.

The ability to pick one or more of ten pros to play a practice round with you is a nice touch. The pros however could seemingly have better artificial intelligence in the program. It gets a little old when Bruce Lietzke hits the trees to the right of the fairway on the first hole at Sawgrass 9 out of 10 times. This is especially frustrating when his second shot is not much better, but the third almost always stops a few feet from the hole, hits the flag stick or even holes out much too frequently. Mr. Lietzke was the only pro that I found would play down to my level consistently enough to enjoy having along however.

I really like the addition of the skins game because it makes life quite a bit more enjoyable for the very erratic player like myself. If I go in the dumper (or water) on one hole, I still have just as much chance on the next hole to play way over my head, rather than being cumulatively behind the rest of the game. This allows me to once in a while win a little money and inspires hope that I may someday make the cut for all four days of a tournament and finish in the money. That is without the cheat of saving when one does well on a hole and starting over if you have a bad hole or two.

There are more stats in PGA Tour Golf II than in the original. There are some problems seemingly with this aspect of the program however, as sometimes the pros don't accumulate statistics and sometimes they do. Your saved player's stats are viewable only during a game that they are playing in, or at the clubhouse. For some reason they aren't always available at the clubhouse either and you have to go back to a practice round or somewhere and come back to the club house again to see how you are doing.

There are several new features that make it fun to play TV director and/or cameraman. The EA SPORTS Hole Browser™ lets you guide the camera up down, forwards, and so forth for those flyby aerial shots of the hole. This is also a good way to explore the hole before your shot. The EA SPORTS Ball Cam™ is a replay feature that is available after any shot and allows you to run the replay from the balls point of view.

If all else fails to make one competitive, a cheat exists to get a driver that is effective for 500 yards plus (John Daly, eat your heart out). I believe this was called a "woodie" in the original program, although I don't remember how it was acquired. At any rate when you are on the tee type on the key board "abbacab" without the quotes. You will hear whatever sound you have your Mac's "beep" set to and the distance in the club menu after the driver will change from 270 yards to 500 yards. Don't let this ruin the competitive fun if and when you don't need it. It can be turned off by typing "abbacab" again or when you restart PGA Tour Golf II the driver will have reverted to normal power.

Pros

- Nice simulation of golf
- Full screen graphics
- The skins game and to be able to play with a pro or make a foursome of your choice
- The almost non existent one time copy protection manual lookup

Cons

- The graphics are quite similar to the four year old program. These were good in 1990, but I doubt if they will inspire too much praise in 1994
- Several minor bugs
- Stroke meter method of hitting the ball not flexible for the arcade challenged user