

## ESPN NBA 2Night – Sega Dreamcast

**Developed by:** Konami (<http://www.konami.com>)  
**Published by:** ESPN The Games (<http://www.espnthegames.com>)  
**Reviewed by:** Tim Maxwell  
**Official Site:** <http://www.espnthegames.com/nba.shtml>  
**Genre:** Basketball  
**Number of Players:** 1-4  
**ESRB:** Everyone

**Overall Rating:** 3

**Graphics:** 6/10  
**Sound:** 4/10  
**Documentation:** 4/10  
**Getting Started:** 2/10  
**Gameplay:** 2/10  
**Value:** 1/10

**The Good Press:** Decent graphics, that's about it.

**The Bad Press:** Abysmal computer AI; crappy commentary; slow as molasses gameplay; laughable free-throw mechanism; no franchise or player creation feature; clipping problems abound; outdated rosters; player ratings are way off, and I could go on...

**Supports:** VMU, Jump Pack

**Overview:** *ESPN NBA 2Night* is quite simply the worst game of hoops I've ever played.

### Tips:

A simple pump fake will get you around your defender nearly every time.

Keep your receipt.

When it was learned that Sega was unable to sign on sports game juggernaut EA Sports to develop for the Dreamcast system, many gamers (myself included) were skeptical about whether or not the system could succeed without such a key player in the industry. Concerns, however, were relieved almost instantly at the Dreamcast's launch when Sega and Visual Concepts teamed up to release the awesome *NFL 2K* and, a few months later, the equally impressive *NBA 2K*. Without the likes of *Madden* or *NBA Live* breathing down their necks, Sega and VC have enjoyed little competition thus far. This was poised to change when Konami joined forces with ESPN The Games to deliver a new line of sports titles featuring all the camaraderie, presentation, and broadcast talent of the "Worldwide Leader in Sports." The duo sounds like a match made in heaven on paper, but if *ESPN NBA 2Night* is a sign of things to come for the other upcoming titles, Sega and VC will have the sports game market cornered for a long time to come.

I really wanted to like this game. I kept playing and playing hoping to find just one or two redeeming qualities that might make it worth it. Instead, all I found was more reasons why this game should be avoided at all costs. First on the long list of problems is the interface and feature set. After ensuring that the boring "now loading" screen hadn't permanently burned into my television after the unreasonably long boot-up time, I found the number of options and gameplay modes in *NBA 2Night* to be pretty sparse. Exhibition and season modes are present as expected, but franchise mode, which is becoming a norm in most sports games released today, is nowhere to be found. You can also create or trade players and make other roster adjustments, but the unruly interface made it difficult to accomplish these rudimentary tasks.

As unintuitive as the interface is, things really hit the fan once you take the court. For starters, the animation is absolutely atrocious. The game seems to have a hard time deciding how fast the tempo should be. On one hand, players run around, pass the ball, and shoot as if in slow motion. But go up for a dunk, and it looks like your man has been shot out of a gun. The game also tries to portray a sense of realism by using some motion captured dunks and other movements, but really botches the execution. If your player launches into the dunk animation but a defender impedes his progress, the animation doesn't change—he'll basically dunk the air and the ball will just appear under the net as if it went in. Obviously, this looks absolutely ridiculous and happens so often that you'll wonder if anyone bothered to test the game before it was released.

Clipping is also an area that was obviously completely overlooked. I just had to shake my head every time I saw players jump through the backboard for a slam, or magically join together with the ref (creating an interesting two-headed creature) on inbound plays. Again, if these quirks didn't occur at such an alarming frequency, I'd be able to look past them. But seeing them happen over and over is simply inexcusable, again making you wonder if anyone at Konami actually tried the game before its release.

If you think the artificial intelligence might be *NBA 2Night's* saving grace, you can forget about it. Apparently, the words "defense" and "strategy" are not a part of the developers' vocabulary, because neither are present in the game. There is no offensive or defensive strategy whatsoever. Want to call for a pick? No dice. Want to set up a low post play? Sorry. Want to call for a full-court press? Forget it. Luckily, since the computer opponents are so completely inept, you won't have any trouble trouncing them every game—even on the highest difficulty setting. I was literally able to walk right around my defender for a lay-up every time down the court if I wanted to. Things don't get any better when you're on defense, since the computer usually just dribbles a few times before launching outside jumpers. Needless to say, I won every game I played by at least 30 points, and that was on the all-star difficulty setting with my team being the lowly Denver Nuggets. 'Nuff said.

If I were chained up and tortured until I came up with one decent aspect of *NBA 2Night*, I would probably choose the graphics. Still, they don't compare to *NBA 2K1* in terms of detail. The players don't look too bad, nor do the fans or the arena graphics. There just isn't anything there to make it stand out, and the sluggish animation really brings it down. As for sound, veteran ESPN hoops announcer Brent Musburger and *SportsCenter* funny-man Stuart Scott handle the play-by-play and color commentary respectively. And although I enjoy their talent in real life, they couldn't be more boring (Musburger) or annoying (Scott) than they are in this game. Scott's constant "boo-yah's" and other cheesy one liners really get old fast, and Musburger's commentary seems very limited as well. The crowd is also basically non-existent, and there isn't much in the way of on-court ambience either.

The bottom line is this: *NBA 2Night*, for a game that has been in development for quite some time, looks and plays as if it was severely rushed. It's really too bad, considering they had the pieces in place for greatness. Konami is still one of my favorite game companies, and ESPN is still one of my favorite television networks, but the two really screwed the pooch on this one. Do yourself a favor and stay as far away from this title as you possibly can.