

Tiger Woods PGA Tour Golf – Sony PlayStation

Developed by: Stormfront Studios (<http://www.stormfront.com>)

Published by: EA Sports (<http://www.easports.com>)

Reviewed by: Tim Maxwell

Official Site: <http://tiger2001.ea.com/playstation.html>

Genre: Golf

Number of Players: 1-4

ESRB: Everyone

Overall Rating: 7

Graphics: 7/10

Sound: 7/10

Documentation: 7/10

Getting Started: 8/10

Gameplay: 7/10

Value: 7/10

The Good Press: Excellent interface and camera work; lots of real PGA Tour pros and venues; all the gameplay modes you could ask for; you can play a full round of golf in around 10-15 minutes.

The Bad Press: Some graphical pop up and clipping issues; Tiger's between-shot comments get a little old; there really isn't much improvement over previous titles.

Supports: Dual Shock, memory card, multi-tap

Overview: The latest edition of *Tiger Woods PGA Tour Golf* is certainly the best on the PS1, but there's really nothing revolutionary about it.

Tips:

When playing in windy conditions, switch to digital mode so you have more control over the accuracy of your shot.

If you've hit the ball too hard and you have "Tiger Control" turned on, pull back on the D-pad to apply some backspin to your shot.

If there's any game company out there that really knows how to market their games, it's definitely EA Sports. I like to equate their spending habits to those of baseball's New York Yankees—who, many would argue, "buy" themselves a World Series championship every year. EA Sports employs a similar tactic and smothers their competition by signing big-name athletes to endorse and appear in their games. This motive also effectively limits the competition's effectiveness because they can't include the likenesses of the most popular athletes in their titles. For the last few years in the *NBA Live* series, it's been Michael Jordan. In this case, it's the other most recognizable sports figure around these days, Tiger Woods.

But enough about greedy capitalists, let's talk golf. *Tiger Woods PGA Tour Golf* for Sony PlayStation to be specific (this is the 2001 version of the series, but oddly enough, the year was removed from the title). TWPTG comes equipped with the impressive list of play modes and options that you'd expect from an EA Sports title. This list includes six distinct modes of play (practice, match, skins, tournament, stroke, and challenge (career) mode), eight real PGA Tour pros to control, and six recognizable PGA tour venues. Other pre-game options allow you to change out the clubs in your bag, adjust the difficulty settings, determine weather conditions, or choose which holes to play.

Once on the course, controlling the game is pretty similar to just about any golf game you've played previously. To prepare your shot, there are several handy functions to help you determine how to play the hole. If you press the triangle button, the camera zooms to the general area where your shot would land if you used full power with the selected club. You can also press the circle button to get an overhead view of the course, which is a helpful way to avoid sand traps and other obstacles. Of course there are also buttons to change clubs, adjust your shot type (punch, chip, etc.), or view the leader board at any time during play as well.

When you're ready to send the ball on its way, you'll notice a small meter at the bottom of the screen that's used to control shot power. Depending on your preference, you can either choose to hit the ball using the standard three-click approach (press the button once to begin the swing, again to determine the power, and once more to

determine accuracy), or use the analog sticks, where you press back on the stick to begin the back swing, and press forward when the line reaches the desired position on the meter. How much the ball slices or fades is determined by how straight you kept the stick when you pressed it forward. Either method works pretty well, although I thought the analog scheme more convincingly recreated a real golf swing. To further customize your shot, you can also apply topspin or backspin to position the ball perfectly on the green. Putting is handled similarly to the average swing, and you can use the R1 button to read the break and slope of the green. Thanks to the intuitive interface and logical control options, you'll have no trouble jumping right in and enjoying TWPTG. It should also be noted that EA Sports has taken steps to improve the pacing of the game. You can now enjoy a full 18 holes in around 15 minutes if you don't dawdle.

From every EA Sports title, gamers have come to expect a presentation value that is second to none. That said, TWPTG is up to par in certain areas, but falls short in others. The best aspect of the presentation would have to be the camera angles. Whereas many golf titles lock the camera on the golfer after the shot so you can't really see where exactly the ball is heading, EA Sports utilizes a terrific TV-style camera system that follows the ball all the way to touch down. In addition, the angles change constantly to give you different perspectives of how the ball is traveling (similar to the effects used on homeruns in the *Triple Play* titles). It's all really convincing and really makes a game that many consider boring, enjoyable to watch.

Where the shortcomings come up is in the areas of graphics and sound. Neither is really that bad, but extra care could have been taken to improve on them. The golfers themselves look a little blotchy and just don't seem to fit in with the backgrounds. There are also some clipping problems (i.e. the ball sailing right through trees or rocks), and pop-up occurs at a substantial frequency. On the up side, there are some great effects of sand flying through the air when you hit out of a bunker, and the water effects are impressive as well. Golf fans will also be pleased to see a good deal of Tiger's signature fist-pumping after particularly extraordinary shots.

In terms of audio, TWPTG's basic effects (the ball hitting the grass, the cheers of the crowd, etc.) sound over exaggerated and generally unrealistic. Tiger's comments in between shots also get repetitive fairly quickly, and the music (which in my opinion really has no place in a round of golf), sounds like it's straight out of some low-budget romance movie. Luckily, you can turn it off so you can play a round the way it's meant to be played: in silence.

All in all, TWPTG is a fast-paced and enjoyable golf simulation that continues EA Sports' tradition of excellence in their games. Golf aficionados will certainly appreciate all of the options, courses and real players to choose from, and there are certainly enough play modes to go around. Still, the game really hasn't improved much over past incarnations, and the graphics and sound could use some work. If you're looking for your first PS1 golf title, this is the game for you. But if you're a veteran PGA tour player, the 2001 edition of the series may not be worth the upgrade.