

The First and Last LEGO® Sports Game

LEGO video games and sports don't seem to mix, at least not much.

In its more than 25-year history of helping to make LEGO video games, the LEGO Group has only really ever made one tied directly to a traditional sport: Football Mania.

There have been more than 150 video games made featuring the LEGO Group's trademark bricks, minifigs, and system of play, but the 2002 game – also known as Soccer Mania – stands alone in many ways.

The LEGO Group brought on British video game developer Silicon Dreams Studio to capture the joy of football with the look of LEGO bricks, in time for the FIFA World Cup.



Silicon Dreams Studio made the cut because of its experience creating football games as well as LEGO Island 2: The Brickster's Revenge.

"I can only assume that the LEGO Group looked at the studio's skill set and said, 'Well, you're perfect for this LEGO soccer game,'" said David Whitehead, lead artist on Football Mania.

Mark James, who was the lead engineer on Football Mania, said that the LEGO Group was interested in attaching a new game to a popular sub theme of its sports theme sets.

The original concept was to create something that was playable by 8-year-olds. James said that required a lot of playtesting with that target group of children.

That led to a game that felt more like an arcade title than a simulation approach to football. As the team put the game in motion, it ran into its first big problem.

"Our first concerns were actually whether we could get the minifigs flexible enough to play football," James said. "There's a lot of player movement and animation that has to happen, some very tight turns. And actually, that became probably the biggest problem on the project. The LEGO Group at the time were very controlled on their ways in which you could use the minifig – the ways you could actually bend the minifig or break it in any way. So it made things like overhead kicks and tight turns very hard to do within the animation engine."

Ultimately, the developer and the LEGO Group came to an understanding that allowed a degree of twisting.

"I think it was like a 20% of a deformation on the – there was a very accurate figure, and lots of guidelines that were really established on this," James said. "and then went into the Traveller's Tales games and the subsequent games for the LEGO Group."

Despite wanting to release the game to line up with the year's World Cup, the LEGO Group didn't actually have the license to the FIFA World Cup, so instead they worked on creating a football tournament built around the LEGO Group's broader universe of theme sets.

The game's story kicks off with a pretty traditional plot. You're playing against six other teams to win a world cup. But after you succeed, the Brickster – the central villain from the LEGO Island games – shows up and steals the trophy. That kicks off the wild adventure across the LEGO theme sets as you play it out in a variety of strange settings trying to catch up to the Brickster, so you can challenge him and his team to a match and win back the cup.

Time started to run short as the development team breathed life into the story and created unusual stadiums based on LEGO theme sets. Then the team ran into a major problem – one that almost killed the game, according to James.

"There was a real interesting conversation about the goal net," James said. "The LEGO Group didn't have anything that was really a piece of string or a piece of cloth. They didn't have anything really in the place that that was like that."

"So they said, 'This needs to be plastic.' And we said, 'Well, in a football game, the net needs to move. You need to see where the net moves and see when the ball hits the back.'"

Eventually, the LEGO Group capitulated, but James said that the studio was close to walking away.

"That one was a really tense moment in the in the last couple of weeks of the project," he said.

Ultimately, Football Mania shipped with an in-game net moved, but very rigidly. And the studio managed to get the game out just as the FIFA World Cup was wrapping up.

The Silicon Dreams Studio game hit in 2002 on PlayStation 2 and Windows PC, and a Game Boy Advance port developed by Tiertex also landed that same year.

It was one of the last few LEGO video games released prior to 2005's *LEGO Star Wars™: The Video Game*, which completely changed the look and feel of all LEGO video games for more than a decade.

"We were sort of the last of the classic LEGO sets being represented in a video game, I think," Whitehead said. "I think afterwards it was Star Wars and Indiana Jones™, et cetera. So we were the end of an era."

Explore more ...

In order of appearance:

[Silicon Dreams Studio](#) - Wikipedia

[LEGO Island 2: The Brickster's Revenge](#) - Wikipedia

[FIFA World Cup](#) - Wikipedia

[Madden Football](#) - Official website

[Football Manager](#) - Official website

[Pro Evolution](#) - Official website

[UEFA European Championships](#) - Official website

[SEGA Soccer Slam](#) - Official website

[Super Mario Strikers](#) - Mario Wiki

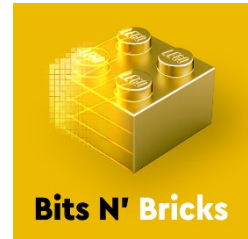
[Red Card](#) - Wikipedia

[FIFA 22](#) - Official website

Transcript

Bits N' Bricks Season 4, Episode 42: How a Soccer Net Almost Killed Football Mania

Dec. 1, 2021 • 31:04



Prologue – 00:00

Announcer

Please note that this episode of Bits N' Bricks contains instances of misuse of the LEGO trademark, which must always be used as an adjective and never a noun. As a reminder, it is never appropriate to refer to the company that designs and produces LEGO brand products as LEGO. Rather, the correct name for the company overall is the LEGO Group.

Announcer

I hope that was severe enough. Was it severe enough?

Studio Engineer

Yeah, that was great, Ben. We got it.

Announcer

Alright. On with the show.

Bits N' Bricks: Introduction – 00:39

(Child's voice announcing Bits N' Bricks)

Ethan Vincent

Welcome to Bits N' Bricks, a podcast about all things LEGO games. I'm Ethan Vincent.

Brian Crecente

And I'm Brian Crecente. Together, we look back at the rich 25-year history of LEGO games, chat with early developers and seasoned studios, who have all tackled the creation of video games for one of the most popular and respected toy companies in the world – the LEGO Group.

(Bits N' Bricks Season 4 theme tune)

Ethan Vincent

The LEGO Group has been making video games since 1995, back when Sega came to them for permission to create a video game for Sega's kids computer Pico. Since then, there have been more than 150 video games made featuring the LEGO Group's trademark bricks, minifigs and System of Play.

Brian Crecente

You know, but almost none of them feature traditional sports. In fact, if you rule out the skateboarding of LEGO Island, the extreme stunts of, well, Extreme Stunts, and race car racing, there's only one LEGO video game that's about traditional sports: Soccer Mania.

Ethan Vincent

Or Football Mania if you're anywhere but in the US, and Football Mania is what we're going to be calling it throughout this podcast.

Brian Crecente

And that 2002 gem is the subject of today's episode.

Chapter 1: Silicon Dreams Studio – 02:00

Ethan Vincent

Silicon Dreams Studio got its start in 1994 as a developer for British video game publisher U.S. Gold, which made a name for itself by importing and publishing games from the U.S. and Japan. Initially, Silicon Dreams Studio focused on sport titles, developing Olympic Soccer Atlanta (1996), Soccer '97, and snowboarding title Chill, but soon it honed in on football titles, creating 10 football games by 2000.

Brian Crecente

Then in 2001, the studio got a chance to make its first LEGO video game.

(Excerpt from LEGO Island

The good citizens of LEGO Island are donating your new home. Yes, each citizen will contribute a sturdy new LEGO brick, but first, you must deliver these delicious pizzas from Papa to the good people of LEGO Island. Good luck.

Whoa ho, I mean, thank you, sir. I'm on it.)

Brian Crecente

LEGO Island 2: The Brickster's Revenge hit the Game Boy Advance, PlayStation, and Windows PC in 2001, both opening the door for future LEGO video games created by Silicon Dreams Studio and setting the stage for the first, and arguably only, LEGO video game based on a sport: Football Mania.

(Lively tune plays)

David Whitehead

When I joined Silicon Dreams, well, they had two teams working on two different projects, one of which was a football game – a regular football game, for want of a better word – and another team was working on an adventure game called LEGO Island.

Brian Crecente

This is David Whitehead, lead artist on Football Mania.

David Whitehead

So they had this two skill sets for making football simulations and for making LEGO games. So, the project was up and running when I got there just about, so I can only assume that it was, you know, LEGO Group looked at their skill sets and said, "Well, you're perfect for this LEGO soccer game, because you can do LEGO video games and you can do football," so.

Ethan Vincent

Mark James, who was the lead engineer on Football Mania, said specifically that the LEGO Group was interested in attaching a new game to a popular sub theme of its sports theme sets.

Mark James

The LEGO Group came to us wanting an attached video game to their successful LEGO Football playset and wanted that in time for the World Cup.

(Commercial for LEGO Football playsets:

In the game of football, the rules are changing. New LEGO Football. Each set sold separately.)

Mark James

So we had a very short timeline, maybe six to eight months in development, where we were trying to package up a LEGO game for LEGO soccer as quickly as possible. They really wanted to have a usable football game for younger generation of players. The football games that were around at the time, the FIFAs and the Pro Evo soccers that were around, were very hard for young players to pick up and play. There was some other games there,

but they were quite dated, so they really wanted something alongside the World Cup that would be in the LEGO brand, but still pick up and play by, we were told by an 8-year-old at the time. So, we did some very simplistic controls, but it's really the LEGO Group who came to us and said, "Have you got time to make this?" We had previously, the group I was involved with and my team, had made some arcade-style football games for Sega – Sega Worldwide Soccer – and they liked those games, so they said, "Can you do something that's more arcade and accessible for us alongside the World Cup?"

Brian Crecente

The original concept was specifically to create something that was playable by 8-year-olds. Mark said trying to nail that down required a lot of playtesting with that target group of children.

Mark James

The original concept was to create something that was playable by 8-year-olds, so we did a lot of work, we actually went to the LEGO Group's playtesting facilities in London to actually sit down and put a controller in a child's hand and see what buttons they could actually use. So, as a child, it's very hard to understand depth into the screen, so that meant that the camera had to be side-to-side, you know, for most of the game because side-to-side is understandable by an 8-year-old, but depth isn't that much. Also, the LEGO Group said we want the game playable with one stick, one movable device, and two buttons, which was very different to the type of game that we'd done before. We'd done a lot of multiple touch scenarios with the controller. So we did a lot of initial prototype work on just getting that control scheme correct for an 8-year-old.

Ethan Vincent

For Mark, and others on the team, Football Mania was the first experience creating a children's product, rather than a game aimed at an older audience who were already super fans of football.

Mark James

There were a lot of learnings we took from the LEGO Group on how to address that. And we had a lot of feedback loop, and it was very different to the types of titles we'd worked on before. And the great thing is that we did have the LEGO Island product and that experience in-studio. And I really spoke to a lot of the designers involved on that to get that visual feedback correct to a child's market, rather than have that focus towards there. So even simple things about movement is over-exaggerated, power-ups and feedback is really over-exaggerated to make that very apparent to a younger player.

(Lively tune)

Brian Crecente

That led to a game that felt more like an arcade title than a simulation approach to football. As the team dove into the work of putting the game in motion, it ran into its first big problem.

Mark James

Our first concerns were actually whether we could get the minifigs flexible enough to play football. There's a lot of player movement and animation that has to happen, some very tight turns. And actually, that became probably the biggest problem on the project. The LEGO Group at the time were very controlled on their ways in which you could use the minifig – the ways you could actually bend the minifig or break it in any way. So it made things like overhead kicks and tight turns very hard to do within the animation engine. So, the biggest problem for us in the game was not being able to bend at the knee. So, as everybody knows, in minifigs they have a straight leg. So, being able to run with a straight leg and turn with a straight leg meant we had to do some very interesting acrobatics with the minifig. And then the other biggest problem was the twisting of the torso. So, the torso was a big kind of pain point for us because a lot of the rotations on a football game use the torso, even down to the cover art. If you look at the cover art of LEGO Football, there's a player doing an overhead kick on there, and we had to go back and forward with the LEGO Group on that cover art because they were unhappy to see a twisting torso on a minifig, because that's not how the plastic behaved. There was a happy medium. We agreed on a degree of twisting that the LEGO Group were happy with, and then we could actually still perform the animations necessary to make a turn, so off the top of my head, I think it was like a 20% of a deformation on the – there was a very accurate figure, and lots of guidelines that were really established on this and then went into the Traveller's Tales games and the subsequent games for the LEGO Group that were really established on how you could manipulate a minifig by LEGO soccer.

(Tune break)

Ethan Vincent

The team also worried about capturing the look of each minifig and giving them a bit of personality. Unfortunately, at the time, the LEGO Group wasn't willing to allow Silicon Dreams Studio to create new faces for the minifig heads. So instead, they were stuck using the existing decal expressions, which resulted in a pretty big limitation. Fortunately, they weren't forced to stick with just the football sub theme. Shortly into production, the LEGO Group soon decided they wanted this new LEGO video game to not just be accessible to children of all ages, but also tap into a much broader spectrum of LEGO themes.

Mark James

They wanted us to include as many playsets as we could, within the concept of a LEGO World Cup. So they said they wanted this theme where we could portal through to other

worlds and really have the teams associated with individual playsets. So there was the Western playset, the Space playset, and they didn't want it to just focused on the sports sets at the time, but really focused on wider, "What if the World Cup happened in the LEGO world?"

Brian Crecente

Despite wanting to release the game to line up with the year's World Cup, the LEGO Group didn't actually have the license to the World Cup.

Mark James

The World Cup kind of license was with someone else at the time. So we couldn't actually use any real World Cup players in LEGO form. Also, the LEGO Group at the time didn't really want that realism. They didn't want to have that. So they said, "OK, what about if the LEGO World Cup could happen in LEGO Worlds?" It was this early concept of the LEGO universe that all of these worlds were connected in some way, but you can easily travel in between them. So we came up with this kind of portal concept where you as a team were made to perform this LEGO World Cup, and it was initially stolen, so to get the LEGO World Cup back into the LEGO world, you had to win the tournament. So that was the story mode we put together, and it meant, as a team, you could travel to all these different worlds, and each world was a different pitch and playset, and then you played the game against that team, so you played the cowboys in the Western playset, you played the spaceman in the Space playset, and then, if you defeated everybody, you got to bring back the World Cup.

(Excerpt from LEGO Football Mania:

Here's Freddy Frick with some great news. You've won! The Bricksters' ultimate team is beaten. Here is your reward: the intergalactic trophy. Congratulations! But what's become of the Brickster? He was safely locked up in the spaceship hold, but we all know what a trickster the Brickster is. Could he already have escaped to trick again? Let's get back home for the celebrations at the LEGO Cup.)

Mark James

It was loosely linked to the actual World Cup, but really set in the universe of LEGO bricks.

Ethan Vincent

With the look and animation style of the game locked down, and the decision to open up the tournament to the LEGO Group's broader universe of theme sets, Silicon Dreams Studio was well on its way to delivering a memorable first LEGO sports video game.

Chapter 2: A History of Sports Games – 13:49

Ethan Vincent

So Football Mania isn't the sort of traditional football you might be used to if you watch the World Cup or an episode of Ted Lasso or even a game at the local high school. The LEGO-themed game is a simplified version of Association Football, aka soccer with just six players on each side. There are no offsides – Ah, that sounds delightful. Love it. – no throw-ins and no fouls. You can't kick the ball out of bounds, either.

Brian Crecente

Yeah, that sounds exhausting, if you were actually playing it. No breaks.

Ethan Vincent

Exactly.

Brian Crecente

So that simplification isn't that unusual in sport's video games. While these days there are simulations of coaching, playing, and even managing teams in a variety of sports, that wasn't always the case. Perhaps most famously, Madden Football – and that would be the American style gridiron football – was initially proposed as a game of six to seven players per side. It was John Madden himself who insisted that the game have 11 players per side. In fact, Madden refused to put his name on the game without the full roster. And while that eventually came about and Madden grew into the cultural phenomenon it is today, not all gridiron football games rely on the level of realism in detail that is Madden's bread and butter. In the realm of American football, games like high impact football Blitz, Mutant League Football, and the robotic-themed Cyberball all found success without having to lean heavily on realism, or really, any realism. Probably the most successful non-realistic sport's game to date is NBA Jam, which struck a chord with arcade-goers by marrying photorealistic, digitized graphics with absolutely over-the-top moves and just two players on either side. And while association football (or soccer) is replete with titles like FIFA, Football Manager, Pro Evolution and UEFA European Championships, there's also a long history of not-so-serious soccer games. Sega Soccer Slam, for instance, allows the over-the-top characters to get into full-blown fights. The Super Mario Strikers and Mario Strikers Charged games brought the antics of Nintendo's beloved characters into football, along with some truly crazy power-up shots. Even Red Card, which at first blush seems relatively realistic, includes powered-up special moves.

Ethan Vincent

When you step back and look at Football Mania in this light the game lands in the middle, you know, somewhere between titles like FIFA and Sega Soccer Slam. Sure, it cuts down on the rules of soccer, but you won't find any minifigs summoning up a lightning storm for

example. Instead, the game spices up its stripped-down play with a handful of power-ups like invisibility, a curve shot, and increased speed. The game also has you taking on teams from the Wild West, Knights' Kingdom, the Arctic, Mars, even pirates and construction workers. The game stadia included a pirate ship, a spaceship, and a LEGO City stadium.

(Tune break)

Chapter 3: Football Mania Gameplay – 16:47

Brian Crecente

Because the plan was to court a younger audience and deliver a more arcade-like feel for Football Mania, Mark said that including power-ups was an early decision.

Mark James

So we wanted the power-ups to make sense in the rules of football. So we definitely wanted them to be accelerators, the actions you would normally perform, but still have that kind of almost comedic value in the LEGO Group, because the – I think it's super interesting in the brand, the brand is also a lot of comedy value. There's a lot about, we had to make them entertaining for children in these actions, but also make them feel as if they were great when you grab them. So it was – one of the good examples was the kind of rocket shot.

(Sounds from gameplay)

So it was a power-up you picked up, and once you picked it up the next shot you took at goal, it was almost a guided missile into the goal. So it was like a guaranteed goal that the goalkeeper couldn't stop. So, everything we did as a power-up tried to enhance the game of football, but still have that, kind of like, almost comedy value of something that made the player feel very powerful, and yet still was funny.

(Tune break)

Ethan Vincent

The game was also designed to feature both single-player and multiplayer, which was a bit of a challenge, not in designing, but in making sure it was clear to these future young players that they were all on a team together playing towards a similar goal. The developers of the game also struggled with injecting a sense of destructibility in the game. While Silicon Dreams Studio had plenty of experience making football games, they had very little experience with making sure their footballers could, well, break apart.

Mark James

We had never dealt with destruction in any way for previous football games. It's not the type of thing you do in a normal simulation football game. You don't break apart your players. So that was a real challenge for us, because they wanted that part of the gameplay. So in some of the power-ups, the minifig actually, when they do tight turns, they actually separate, their legs turn round, and then they run in the other direction. So they wanted these kind of like clear, kind of destruction, moments in the game. That was probably, outside of the animation, probably the most difficult thing was a very much a new system we hadn't done before at the studio.

Brian Crecente

To make matters worse, the World Cup was quickly approaching, and the team was simply running out of time. Putting the traditional football theme into the game was fairly straightforward, but the game also included a growing list of playsets, each with unique visuals, lengthening the project with each addition. And David, the lead artist on Football Mania, said it wasn't as simple as slapping a pitch onto a different backdrop.

David Whitehead

Yeah, well, normally, you've got to base it on some usually real stadiums from around the world, but of course, we have a more of a free rein with it. So, the first levels I did were based on the Western sets. So, I had three levels of that to do. And I looked at the sets that were available. There's like a sheriff's department, there was a train station I think, and various other buildings. So it was trying to make ways of incorporating them around the pitch so that it would be visible, and add to the sort of flavor. And you didn't have to do the normal stadiums. You just had people sort of then cheering the players on. So it was different, it was definitely different than a simulation football game. It allowed you a lot more freedom as well, to just do silly, fun stuff as well. I thought some of the levels are fantastic, you know. Personally, I built – one point in the game there's a sequence where a space shuttle takes off, and I built that space shuttle model, which I loved doing. And then I completely copied the Apollo 13 launch sequence for that animation and popped that in. I was really pleased with that. And it was just simple things like making sure that our models looked as accurate as the LEGO sets as possible, and really nailing that I was really proud of as well.

Ethan Vincent

Silicon Dreams Studio came up with a story mode to tie all of those themes together.

David Whitehead

Putting in a story mode for a football game is quite unusual. So that was a good case of, you know, dreaming big and trying something different – and I think fairly successfully.

Ethan Vincent

The game story kicks off with a pretty traditional plot: You're playing against six other teams to win a World Cup, but after you succeed, the Brickster – the central villain from the LEGO Island games – shows up and steals the trophy. That kicks off the wild adventure across the LEGO theme sets as you play it out in a variety of strange settings trying to catch up with the Brickster, so you can challenge he and his team to match to win back the cup. All of that traveling gave David and his team plenty of opportunities to create interesting art and cutscenes.

David Whitehead

I remember, you know, just lots of discussions about how we try and make these environments as interesting as possible. That was my main focus as the lead artist – and, you know, how can we really sell them as much as possible? We had little cutscenes before some of the levels that move the story along, and trying to storyboard those and – well, very loosely storyboard those – and just come up with something that's interesting and a bit different. We tried our best. Mainly that focused around goals celebrations. If you play any other football simulation game, whenever they score, the players will often hug each other and high-five and whatnot. Well, we tried to take that core concept and go as crazy, as out there as we could with it. We had conversations just trying to come up with silly stuff: people swapping heads, and all sorts of silly actions, going, as crazy as we can make it really. So we tried our best with that. And there's some silly elements in the story mode that you play through as well.

Brian Crecente

As the development team chugged away on breathing life into the story and creating those unusual stadia, time started to run short. And then the team ran into a major problem, one Mark said almost killed the game.

Mark James

We were close to mastering. So we were in the last kind of month of the project, we are about to send the discs in. The producers turned up from the LEGO Group. There was a real interesting conversation about the goal net. So the LEGO Group didn't have anything that was really a piece of string, or a piece of kind of cloth. They didn't have anything really in the playset that that was like that. And they had a plastic back of the goal in the actual playset. So they said, "This needs to be plastic." And we said, "Well, in a football game, the net needs to move." So we said, "We can't change that goal net. That's how it is, and that's how the goal net is in all of our games." So they went away, and there was almost a, "Well, this is not going to be released under our brand." There was some heated phone calls. We were already late in trying to hit that World Cup date. And finally, you know, they conceded there, and I think it's, you know, it was one of the first, kind of like, non-plastic representations of something that wasn't on the playset. So the LEGO Group were very controlled on everything in a game had to be representable in the playset at the time. And

so, I think this is one of the first examples where the playable area was not representable in plastic.

(Tune break)

Ethan Vincent

While much of the game didn't offer up a realistic view of what football looked like in action, by design, and while it was meant to be an arcade-like title for a younger audience, Mark said the last minute request to pull the net was a bridge too far for the studio.

Mark James

I think it was maybe the final straw. I think we had conceded, at great effort, to work with all of the other restrictions, including the, you know, the very restricted minifig at the time. But I think, you know, this was really the last – we were about to submit the product, and our feeling is that if this was felt so strongly by the LEGO Group, they probably should have mentioned this, you know, months before that point. So it was really a late change. And I think that's why it was the hill to die on because we felt that we couldn't fulfill our obligations as the developer if we'd had to go back and make that change at that date.

Brian Crecente

Ultimately, the game shipped with an in-game net that did move, but in a very rigid way. And the studio did manage to get the game out just as the World Cup was wrapping up.

Chapter 4: Conclusion – 25:39

Ethan Vincent

The Silicon Dreams Studio game hit in 2002 on PlayStation 2 and Windows PC, and a Gameboy Advance port developed by Tiertex also landed that same year. The game received mixed reviews at the time, but also disappointing to David was the fact that so few copies were shipped to stores.

David Whitehead

I think the reviews were fairly middle-to-upper-end of scores. Although interestingly, I looked up on a YouTube video of the game running the other day, and it was filled with comments of people and how much they loved playing the game as kids, which was really nice to read. Some people said it was their favorite LEGO game, which I thought was great. I think one of the things that - the LEGO Group didn't make a huge number of copies of the game, when we got to the end, they announced how many copies they were going to ship, in Europe and the U.S. and it was quite small, which was a little bit disappointing, but they must have made a – because it was, you know, its manufacturing costs to each disk, so they must have taken a view on sales versus costs and decided against making too many

copies of it. It's a little bit bittersweet, because we put a lot of effort into it, and we were proud of the work we were doing, and it would have been great to get more copies on the shelves.

Brian Crecente

Mark said he remembers his work on the game fondly, but that it was also one of the more difficult titles he worked on because of the restrictions created by the LEGO Group and the way the minifigs could behave in the game.

Mark James

I still remember it fondly. I still think it's a great game for that age group. I put it in front of my kids when they were that age, and I got them to play it. And I think it's a very easy, understandable, very easy to pick up and play. I think if I was to go back and make this again, I'd make it really extendable into that kind of preteen group and maybe a bit more depth in the control methods and things as well again, but yeah, I think it hits its mark. It was a great first start on my LEGO game journey. It was – as a first LEGO product there, and I took away all of those learnings when I subsequently then – the next LEGO game I worked on was a LEGO Indiana Jones™. So some of those more movement. Indiana Jones is another person who moves. He, uh, swings on his whip, moves very fluidly. I think some of my learnings about how the minifig could be used and where they will it to concede on LEGO soccer really helped me create better LEGO games later. I think the lessons are really shown in the subsequent LEGO products. There needs to be a concession for interactive products within the restrictions of the playsets. So I think the LEGO Group after that point were a lot more open to some of these things that made sense in gameplay, but didn't make sense in the plastic. So I think, you know, what we've seen in the subsequent products, and even the subsequent products I worked on, was a much more understanding of interactive media from the LEGO Group and really a lot more flexibility within the IP to actually make it a better game outside of keeping it within the restrictions of the playsets.

Ethan Vincent

David points out that 2002's *Football Mania* was one of the last few LEGO video games to hit prior to 2005's *LEGO Star Wars*™, which completely changed the look and feel of all LEGO video games for more than a decade.

David Whitehead

I mean, I don't know if the TT team looked at what we were doing. Maybe they saw that the way that we'd rendered the LEGO sets on screen and thought, "That's good. We should do something along those lines." I'm sure they paid attention to it. We were the sort of the last of the classic LEGO sets being represented on a video game, I think. Afterwards it was *Star Wars*™ and *Indiana Jones*, et cetera. So we were the end of an era, maybe.

(Postscript music)

Bits N' Bricks: Credits – 29:53

Ethan Vincent

Bits N' Bricks is made possible by LEGO Games. Your hosts are Brian Crecente and Ethan Vincent. Producing by Dave Tach. Our executive producer is Ronny Scherer. Creative direction and editing by Ethan Vincent. Research and writing by Brian Crecente. Art direction by Nannan Li. Graphics and animations by Manuel Lindinger and Andreas Holzinger. Mixing and sound design by Dan Carlisle. Disclaimer voice is Ben Unguren. Opening's child voice is Milo Vincent. Music by Peter Priemer, foundermusic.com, and excerpts from the LEGO Football Mania soundtrack. We'd like to thank our participants: Mark James and David Whitehead. We'd also like to thank the entire LEGO Games team. For questions and comments write us at bitsnbricks@LEGO.com. That's bits, the letter N, then bricks@LEGO.com. And as always, stay tuned for more episodes of Bits N' Bricks.

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