ROSS

Case Study

EA Sports | Madden Championship Series

Section 1
Introduction

Electronic Arts (EA) is an industry-leading video game developer and publisher based in Redwood City, California.

Their sports division, EA Sports, has released some of the most popular video game titles in the world, including FIFA, NHL, NBA Live, and Madden NFL.

Most notably, Madden NFL has become North America's biggest sports game franchise with over 130 million copies sold since it was first introduced as John Madden's Football in 1998.

The popularity of the game has also extended into the competitive gaming world of esports, with EA Sports launching the Madden Championship Series (MCS) in 2017.

Section 2
The Challenge

With the entire series streamed around the world and with many of the players being brought into the productions from remote locations due to the pandemic, EA started to look at ways to push the creative limits of their show.

Since the inaugural Madden Championship Series, the competition has grown tremendously and now consists of five open circuit competitions with more than 600 players competing over 6 months.

One way to up the production value was to move away from presenting players and video game content within stacked boxes.

With this in mind, EA began to explore the possibility of integrating 3D virtual sets into their show to deliver more engaging content for their global audience.

Before
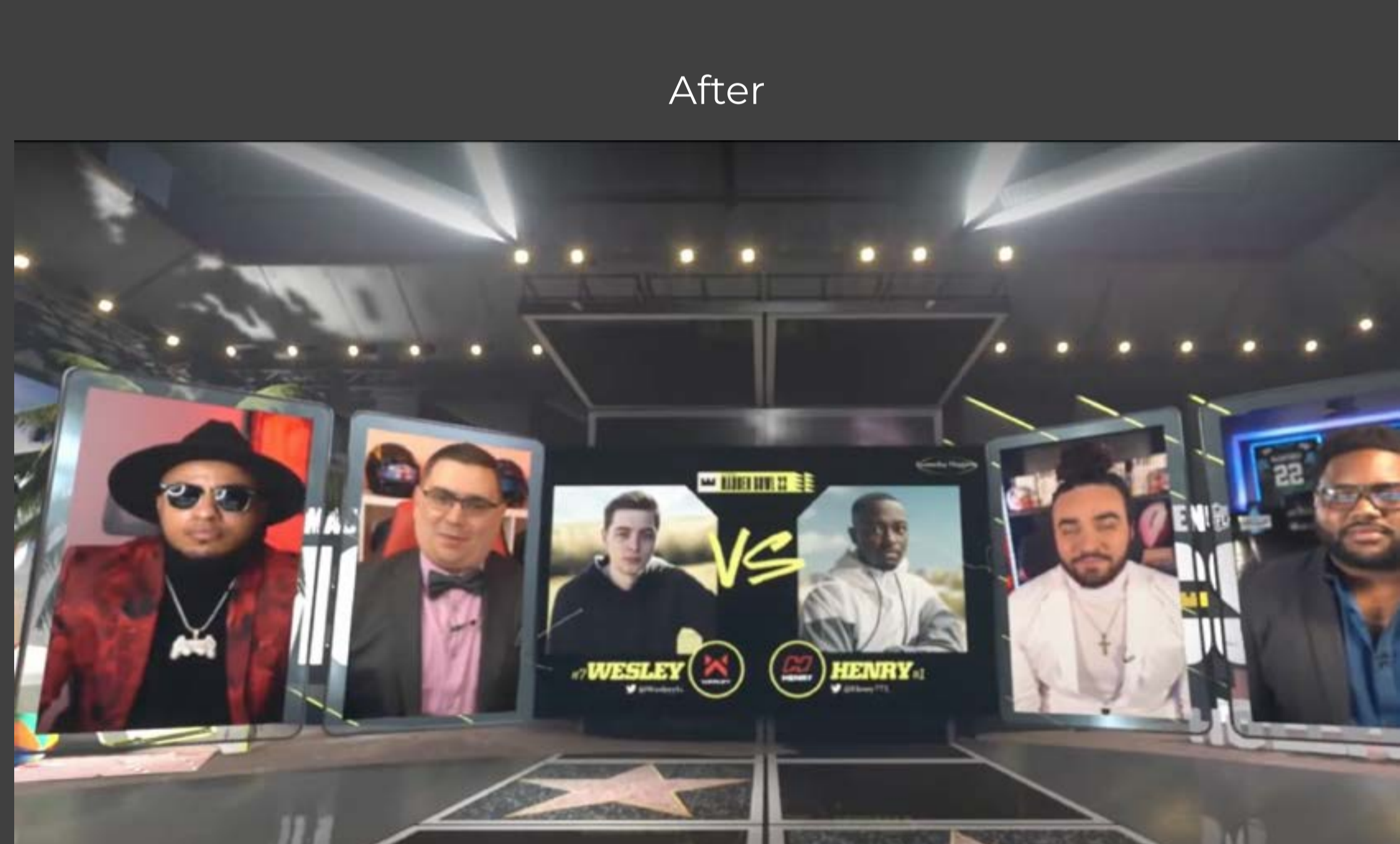
After

Section 3
The Solution

EA began their search for a virtual production solution, and after demoing several products, they landed on the **Voyager** system from Ross.

With Voyager is powered by Epic Games' Unreal Gaming engine, Alex Markley, Lead Technical Producer with EA Sports explains that, "The thing that drove us to come to Ross and leverage the Voyager solution was that we could do anything inside of the Unreal environment."

The Voyager platform, along with a suite of Ross products, has effectively enabled the EA Sports creative department to push the limits of their imaginations and to develop stunning and complex virtual environments to entertain their fans.

> **"We really loved the way that the Voyager system could intuitively take in information that we already had going into things like our XPression system. Voyager could automatically talk to XPression and the rest of our environment, so we decided it was the right solution for us to move away from presenting standard boxes on-screen,"**

Alex Markley,
Lessed Technical Producer for EA.

Virtual Production Solution includes

- **Voyager** - Unreal Based Render Platform
- **Lucid Studio**
- **Acuity** Production Switcher
- **Ultrix** Routing Platform
- **OGX Frames** with **Gator Toolbox** for Signal Processing
- **Xpression** Graphics
- **DashBoard** Facility Control System

Section 4
The Impact

The 2022 edition of the Madden Championship Series tapped into the full potential of virtual production, and with the support of **Ross Video's Rocket Surgery Creative Services** team, EA was able to turn its creative vision into a reality.

Markley admits that starting with a blank canvas was initially intimidating, but they challenged themselves not to fear the 'white space', and so they dug into the project by exploring the Ross catalogue of pre-set virtual studios.

Once the design of the Virtual Set was complete, the EA team then focused on how best to make use of the set in a live environment so that viewers could connect with the content.

To start, through the combination of the **DashBoard** facility control system and RossTalk protocol, the EA team developed certain commands to generate virtual camera movements that would closely replicate the same type of movements that a jib, pedestal, or steady camera would generate in a real studio environment.

In addition, a **Gator Toolbox** signal conversion card handled signals between the Ross **Acuity** switcher and the **Voyager** system, which enabled the EA team to time-align scenes within the virtual set. Specifically, the Gator card allowed the on-air talent to engage with each other from various locations seamlessly.

When looking towards the future of virtual production, the EA team continues to be on the cutting edge of set design and is looking to add more 3D augmented reality components to their virtual sets to add more volume to their visuals.

> **"We found pieces of the library that we liked, and we began merging them into our own set and our vision with the support of the Ross creative services team."**

Alex Markley,
Lead Technical Producer for EA.

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For more information about how Ross Video helped Electronic Arts achieve their goal of delivering engaging virtual sets, contact Phil Englert, Business Development Manager, Esports.

Explore, our end-to-end solutions for Esports, visit our application page