

Nintendo prepares to set new Wii gizmo into motion

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In this video game screen image released by Electronic Arts, a digitized version of golfer Anthony Kim is shown in a scene from "Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10." (AP Photo/Electronic Arts)

(AP) -- There's nothing all that charming about Nintendo's latest gadget.

It's not as zany as a zapper or as sexy as a steering wheel. It doesn't even tell you whether you're losing weight. However, the game maker is hoping a small cube-shaped device called Wii MotionPlus will take the Wii's motion-sensing controls to a new level of precision.

It's no secret the wrist-flicking Wii Remote's lack of accuracy has long been the console's clunky downfall. The Wii MotionPlus, available beginning June 8, successfully defeats that dilemma by using gyroscopic sensors to exactly mimic gamers' hand movements, making such activities as sword fighting, disc throwing and golfing look seamless on

screen.

"The great thing about this particular new technology, which isn't always true for other new technologies, is that we immediately saw the benefits of it," said "Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10" senior producer Jason Shenkman. "Before I even touched it or got my hands on it, I knew exactly what having a gyroscope in our possession would do for this game."

Electronic Arts' "Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10" will be the first game bundled with the Wii MotionPlus. Shenkman insists the increased sensitivity doesn't boost difficulty because instant feedback helps gamers before their shots.

Nintendo has been pairing cute peripheral gadgets with games since launching the Wii, such as the Wii Wheel, Wii Zapper and Wii Balance Board, the scale-ish device packaged with "Wii Fit." Just how Nintendo plans to market the obscure Wii MotionPlus accessory is unclear. Nintendo executives declined to be interviewed for this story.

Only five games have so far been confirmed to employ the new functionality. The most prominent is Nintendo's own "Wii Sports Resort," a beachy follow up to the popular "Wii Sports." Besides "Tiger Woods," the other games are Electronic Arts' "Grand Slam Tennis," Capcom's "Virtua Tennis 2009" and Ubisoft's slice-and-shoot-'em-up sequel "Red Steel 2."

Though the original "Red Steel" was one of the most anticipated games to debut alongside the Wii in 2006, the first-person samurai shooter's wonky fidelity left many gamers feeling let down. Creative director Jason Vandenberghe promises Wii MotionPlus technology will remedy that in "Red Steel 2."

"One of the cool things is that with Wii MotionPlus, we know how hard you have swung the remote," said Vandenberghe. "That means we can ask the player to have a more physical experience, like having enemies who are wearing armor that players will have to hit harder with their sword."

If the blockbuster sales of the Wii Balance Board with "Wii Fit" are any indication, gamers want the new contraption even if it's not compatible with their old titles.

Wedbush Morgan game analyst Michael Pachter believes Wii MotionPlus' price - \$19.99 for one, \$49.99 if bundled with "Wii Sports Resort" - is right for cash-strapped consumers. He anticipates that over 30 million Wii owners will pick up the new accessory in the first year.

"Some people will find Wii MotionPlus really appealing, and some people won't understand it and will wait until they're told by their friends they need it," said Pachter.

Nintendo is likely to promote [Wii](#) MotionPlus and announce new games that use the technology at next month's Electronic Entertainment Expo, where the gadget was first unveiled last year. Rumors have been circulating that Nintendo competitors Microsoft and Sony may announce their own motion-control technologies for the Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 consoles at E3.

On the Net:

<http://www.nintendo.com/wii/>

<http://tigerwoodspgatour.easports.com/>

<http://www.redsteelgame.com/>

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