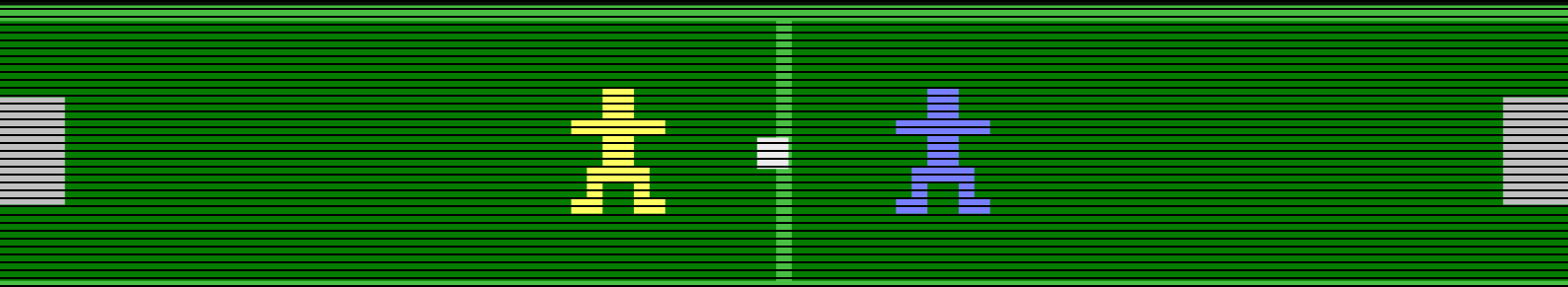


FM2600

FOOTBALLMANAGER

USER MANUAL



LON MAN LIV BIR LEE NEW SHE NOR

ATARI 2600 - 8K - ONE JOYSTICK

USER MANUAL

This manual covers the English edition of the game, build/fm2600-en.bin. The German edition is called fm2600-de.bin and has the same manual in German.

8

CLUBS

14

MATCHDAYS

20

IN THE SQUAD

8K

ROM

TAUSCHKE INTERACTIVE

Drawn from the ROM. Every screenshot and the cover come out of fm2600-en.bin.

What this is

01

FM2600 is a football manager for the Atari 2600. You take over one of eight clubs and steer it through a season: 14 matchdays, home and away, everyone against everyone. The other seven clubs play their fixtures on the same matchday, and you cannot interfere.

You do not play football yourself. You pick the team, choose a formation, decide on training – and then you watch. A season takes about 30 to 45 minutes and is played in one sitting: the game cannot save, because the console has nowhere to save to.

■ Everything in six characters

A line of text in this game is exactly six characters wide – the hardware gives nothing more. That is why the champions are CHAMPS, the fixture list is FIXTUR and the final whistle is END. You get used to it faster than you would think.

Controls

One joystick in the left port plus the two console switches. The game needs nothing else.

INPUT	EFFECT
Joystick up/down	Move the cursor
Fire	Select, confirm, continue
Joystick left	Back – from every submenu, without exception
Select	Back; on the title screen also the debug display
Reset	New season (asks first)

■ The one move to remember

Joystick LEFT always takes you back. Whenever you are not sure where you have ended up: push left, and you are in the matchday menu again.

Holding a direction does nothing. The game only reads the moment a control is newly pressed – two seconds of holding is exactly one step.

A matchday, step by step

02

Title screen



The title screen. The wordmark and the ball at the top, below them your chosen club and its seeding.

Pick your club with the joystick and start the season with fire. RANK 1 is the strongest of the eight clubs, RANK 8 the weakest.

■ The choice is not cosmetic

The club determines your squad. At the strongest club every one of your twenty players gets four strength points more; at the weakest, five fewer. RANK 1 is the easy setting, RANK 8 the hard one.

The matchday menu



The starting point of every matchday. The bright line is the one under the cursor.

The matchday at the top, five menu entries below it, and two numbers at the bottom that stay visible everywhere:

- PLAY – the matchday gets played.
- LINEUP – your team, four pages, one per position.
- TACTIC – formation and training level.
- TABLE – the league table.
- FIXTUR – the four pairings of this matchday.
- ATT and DEF – your attack and defence, each 0 to 10. They move as soon as you change anything in the lineup or the tactics.

■ The shortest path

The cursor sits on PLAY every time you enter, and after each matchday the game puts your team back together by itself: injured out, filled up to eleven with the strongest fit players. If you want to do nothing else, alternating fire and fire gets you through a whole season.

Your team

03

Lineup



The defence page. The colour tells you the state of each player.

Twenty players across four pages – goal, defence, midfield, attack. The cursor turns the page by itself at the edges. Fire puts a player in the team or on the bench.

Every line shows four letters of the name, then two digits: strength and fitness. Strength runs from 0 to F (that is, up to 15), fitness from 0 to 7.

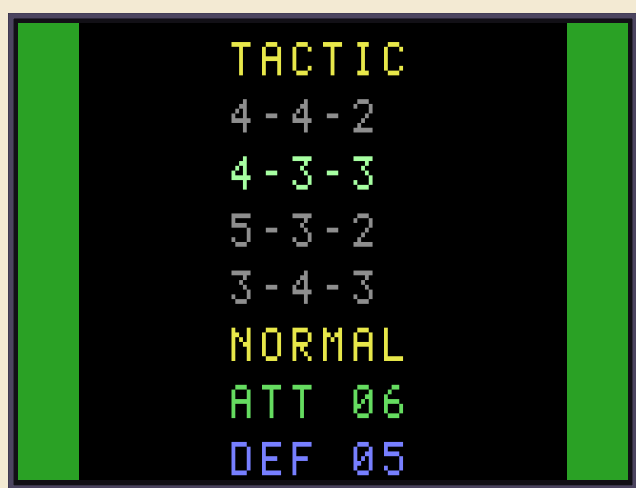
COLOUR	MEANING
Green	Playing – in the eleven
Grey	Bench
Red	Injured – can only be taken out
brighter	The line under the cursor, six steps brighter

The header names the position on the left, then how many places are filled and how many your formation asks for. Green means it fits. Red means somebody is missing, or there are too many.

■ What happens with an invalid lineup

Choose PLAY with an invalid lineup and you do not get an error message – you land straight on the lineup screen, at the group that does not fit yet. Eleven players and no injured ones are required. If fewer than eleven are fit, all available ones will do.

Tactics and training



Four formations, below them the training level and the effect on attack and defence.

The four formations at the top. The green line is the one being played; fire on a formation line selects it and leaves the screen at the same time.

FORMATION	GK	DEFENCE	MIDFIELD	ATTACK
4-4-2	1	4	4	2
4-3-3	1	4	3	3
5-3-2	1	5	3	2
3-4-3	1	3	4	3

Every formation has eleven players – it only spreads them differently. That is exactly where the difference between ATT and DEF comes from: a 3-4-3 raises the attack and lowers the defence, a 5-3-2 does the opposite. When you change formation the game rebuilds the team at once, so that formation and eleven cannot drift apart. You get the same choice once more at half time.

The bottom line is not a list entry but a switch: fire moves the training level on by one step without leaving the screen.

LEVEL	FITNESS WHEN PLAYING	RECOVERY	INJURY	DEVELOPMENT
LIGHT	-1	+2	4 in 256	none
NORMAL	-1	+1	8 in 256	normal
HARD	-2	+1	16 in 256	double
YOUTH	-1	+1	8 in 256	double, only below strength 10

■ There is no correct level

Every level costs something. HARD doubles development but halves fitness per appearance and doubles the injury risk. LIGHT keeps the team fresh but makes nobody better.

The matchday

04

The match



Your own fixture. The pitch above; below it the pairing, the score, the minute and the current event.

After PLAY, a roughly thirteen-second animation of your own match runs. The yellow figure is your team, the blue one the opponent, and the ball drifts to wherever the pressure is. When it sits in front of the right goal, you are pressing.

Fire or select skip the animation at any time and take you straight to the result – past the half-time break as well.

EVENT	WHAT IT MEANS
KICKOF	Kick-off
CHANCE	An opening for your team
DANGER	An opening for the opponent
CORNER	Corner kick
GOAL	A goal – the line flashes white
HALF	Half time
END	Full time

■ The result is decided one half at a time

Everything is computed before the first picture appears – but only up to the break. The animation merely rolls the minutes in which the goals fall and cannot contradict the result. The second half is recomputed during the interval, with the formation you pick there.

Half time



The score at the top, below it the four formations and what they make of the team.

The referee blows for half time in minute 45 and you go to the dressing room. The score is at the top, below it the same four formations as on the tactics screen. The green line is the one being played, and that is where the cursor starts.

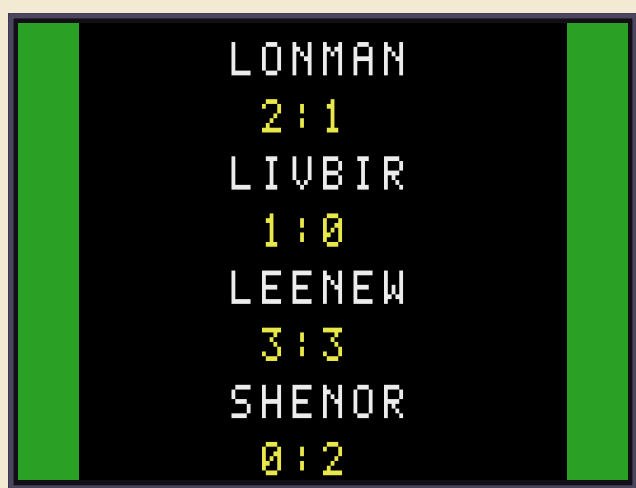
Fire picks a formation and kicks off the second half. Select or joystick left kicks off without changing anything. There is no other way out of the dressing room – a half cannot be declined.

The training level is missing here: training is a matter for the week, not for the interval.

■ The change really does something

Whatever fell before the break stands. Everything after it is rolled again – with the ATT and DEF values shown at the bottom of the half-time screen. Being behind is thus a reason to strengthen the attack, being ahead a reason to close the defence. Skip the animation before minute 45 and you never see the dressing room; the result rolled beforehand stands.

Results

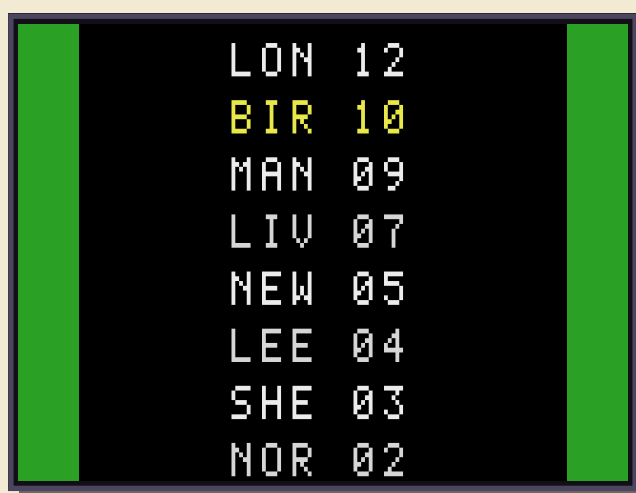


LONMAN	2:1
LIVBIR	1:0
LEENEW	3:3
SHENOR	0:2

All four fixtures of the matchday, one line per pairing with the score below it.

A pairing is six letters: the first three are the home side, the second three the visitors. Below it the result as home:away.

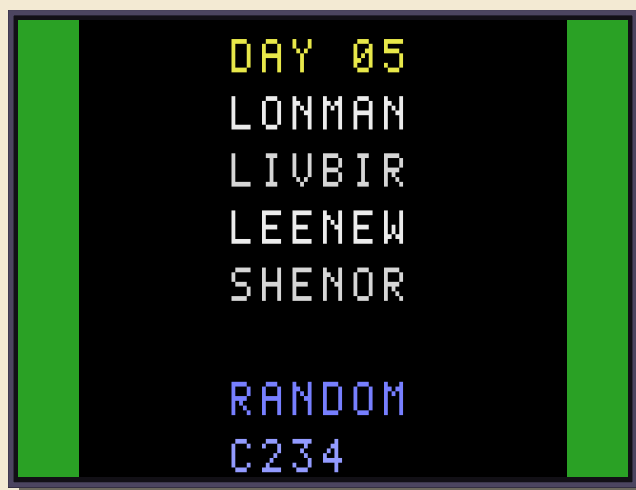
Table and fixtures



LON	12
BIR	10
MAN	09
LIV	07
NEW	05
LEE	04
SHE	03
NOR	02

The league table. Your own row is yellow.

The club abbreviation on the left, the points on the right. Sorting is by points, then wins, then the seeding. The game keeps no goal difference – there is no memory for it.



The four pairings of the current matchday.

Any key takes you back from either screen.

End of season



After matchday 14: champions and bottom club.

Fire takes you back to the title screen, and the next season starts with a fresh squad.

Strategy

05

The game has few levers, but they pull on each other. Everything below can be checked against the numbers the game itself shows you.

Fresh legs beat big numbers

The strength on screen is not the strength a player takes onto the pitch. The game combines two things – nominal strength and fitness. And the difference is larger than it looks:

PLAYER	STRENGTH	FITNESS	ACTUALLY WORTH
The star, drained	14	0	7
The reserve, fresh	10	7	9
The star, half rested	14	3	9
The regular, fresh	12	7	11

A drained fourteen is weaker than a fresh ten. Play the same eleven for fourteen matchdays and you finish the season with a worse team than you started with – even though the numbers on screen never changed.

■ What follows from that

Rotate. A player on the bench recovers each matchday; a player on the pitch loses. Twenty players in the squad are not a luxury, they are the answer to this problem.

Whoever does not play does not improve

Development depends on appearances, not on the squad slot. A talent on the bench stays what it is. That is the second reason to rotate – and the reason a reserve you bring in early is a different player by matchday 14.

Development also works harder the weaker a player is: an eight makes visible jumps, a fourteen barely moves. That is why HARD does almost nothing for a finished team and still charges the full price.

The formation is a decision, not a coat of paint

The match engine rolls separately for both sides: your attack against their defence, and the other way round. Switching to 3-4-3 therefore does not simply buy you "more success" – it

buys more goals for AND more goals against.

- Against a clearly stronger side, 5-3-2 is sensible: a 0-0 is a point, a 1-4 is not.
- Against a weaker side, 3-4-3 takes the win that 4-4-2 might only have turned into a draw.
- After changing formation, look at the lineup. The game does fill up automatically, but it takes the strongest fit players – not necessarily the freshest.

Home advantage and opposition

The home side is given two strength points – on the attack and on the defence. A home match is therefore not a detail but half the job: between two evenly matched teams, the home side wins about 50 per cent and loses about 19. Across a whole league, 52 per cent of all matches go to the home side and 29 to the visitors.

You can see it on the pitch as well: at home the ball settles further forward, away it settles further back. Playing away means defending more, even against an equally strong side.

■ What that means for the fixture list

Every club plays every other twice, once at home and once away. A point away at the league leaders is worth a lot – at home against the same side you may play for three. The fixture list is under FIXTUR.

CLUB	STRENGTH	CLUB	STRENGTH
LON	13	LEE	8
MAN	12	NEW	7
LIV	11	SHE	5
BIR	9	NOR	4

These numbers are fixed and do not change during the season – only your own team develops. That is your advantage over a long season: the AI clubs stay exactly where they are.

Injuries

Every appearance can bring an injury. Across a season on NORMAL that is around five of them. Injured players heal by themselves, but they are missing while they do, and you cannot field them.

■ When LIGHT pays off

LIGHT halves the injury risk and doubles recovery – at the price that nobody improves. If your team is strong enough already and you only want to get through the season intact, that is the right call. On matchday 13 in a title race it almost always is.

A season plan that works

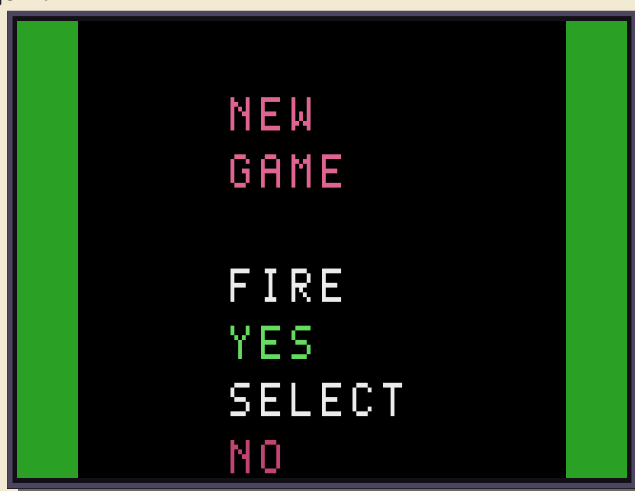
06

If you do not know where to start – this is a usable default, not an obligation.

- Matchdays 1 to 4: YOUTH. Your weaker players catch up while the first eleven is left alone. Rotate generously.
- Matchdays 5 to 10: NORMAL, and the formation chosen per opponent. Check FIXTUR before each matchday to see who is coming.
- Matchdays 11 to 14: LIGHT, best available eleven, no experiments. Only fitness counts now.
- Always: glance at the lineup before PLAY. A 2 behind a name is a warning.

The debug screen

Select on the title screen opens a screen showing the raw result data and the lineup mask as hexadecimal numbers. It is there for development, not for playing – but it breaks nothing, and any key gets you out again.



Reset asks before a season is thrown away.

The reset switch does not restart immediately, it asks: fire for YES, select for NO. After half an hour of play that is not fussiness, it is a rescue.

TAUSCHKE INTERACTIVE