



Mickey DeLorenzo has lost weight and gained global attention by playing a new Nintendo console.

By Fred Durso Jr.
REVIEW STAFF WRITER

And you thought Mario and Luigi got a workout. Those Italian plumbers — who placed the video-game behemoth Nintendo on the map with their computerized jumps, leaps and sprints — don't hold a candle to Mickey DeLorenzo. While Mario is still rotund, DeLorenzo found a way to slim down the Wii way.

Like many gaming fanatics across the globe, the resident of the 1300 block of McClellan Street immediately snagged a Nintendo Wii (pronounced "we") when it debuted in November. The system has a special remote that allows the user — through a series of physical movements and a special sensor — to control characters' actions on the TV screen.

A Nintendo aficionado since a tyke (the original eight-bit *The Legend of Zelda* is still a favorite), DeLorenzo had no doubt he would love the new console. What he didn't

expect was to get an exerting exercise.

DeLorenzo knew he was onto something when he and his fiancée sweated profusely after playing the game *Wii Sports* one day. While commenting about the system on his blog, the idea dawned on him: What would be the physical effect if I kept at this?

The *Wii Sports* Experiment was born.

Without leaving his living room, the resident has boxed and bowled his way to a slimmer waistline. Whacking a tennis racket and swinging a baseball bat also are featured on *Wii Sports* — a game DeLorenzo attributes to losing nine pounds (golf, he said, wasn't "cardio-friendly").

Even before documenting his results at www.wiiworkout.net, DeLorenzo's project has been a hot topic for media outlets across the world. Appearing on a New Zealand radio show once the project ended, he received quite the compliment from the announcer: "On behalf of all the blokes out there, we want to thank you for allowing our girlfriends and wives to accept video games in our houses," the gamer recalled.

What is the 25-year-old multimedia developer's opinion of his project's popularity? "It's really taken on a mind of its own at this point," he said. "It's really grown beyond anything I've ever expected."

THE SIX-WEEK PROJECT seemed simple enough: DeLorenzo would include 30 minutes of *Wii Sports* into his daily routine. No dieting, no calorie counting, no additional exercise.

Starting at 181 pounds (a weight he has maintained for two years) Dec. 3, the 5-foot-11 gamer attempted to intensely play four virtual sports during each session (10 minutes of boxing were typically included and he rotated the remaining games). He weighed himself three times a day and constantly calculated his body-mass index, calories burned per session and game, body-fat percentage and heart rate. The information was recorded in a private journal.

Companies who heard about the finished project via his blog sent DeLorenzo freebies, including a calorie-counter and body-fat caliper. According to his data, boxing burned 126 calories per 15-minute session — the highest of any of *Wii's* virtual sports.

The experiment ended Jan. 15 and DeLorenzo, who took before and after photos, was astounded.

"You can see a thinner neck, smaller chin," he said. "You actually saw muscle coming through. I was a bit surprised. I thought that I would look the same."

In addition to losing nine pounds, DeLorenzo shed more than 3 inches from his waistline and his body-fat percentage went from 19 to 17.2 percent.

After 21 hours of playing in front of his 42-inch high-definition TV (bought specifically for the *Wii*), DeLorenzo also noticed another result: his *Wii Fitness Age*, a term created by the company that determines skill level and is calculated after playing three games consecutively, plummeted from 43 to 20 in about four weeks.

Mickey DeLorenzo managed to slim down through virtual sport.

PHOTO BY MEREDITH EDLOW

Not bad for a person who has an exercise room in his rowhome — equipped with a stationary bike and a Bowflex "ripoff" — that is barely used.

"The system itself pretty much costs less than any gym equipment I can think of," DeLorenzo, who purchased *Wii* for \$250, said. "Half an hour, when [the exercising] is over, you don't even know the time has passed."

DeLorenzo also had a gym membership, but stopped going last summer. "For about five months, I wouldn't do anything except walk around the city," he said.

However, it wasn't DeLorenzo's intention to drop the pounds through this endeavor.

"I never thought of myself as wanting to lose weight or [as] overweight. I strictly did this to put data to what everyone was talking about," he said of the workout from game-playing.

Though his weight loss has sparked others to attempt his success, DeLorenzo offers a caveat.

"To be completely honest, the *Wii* is not a fitness replacement," he said. "At most, it's a way to conveniently and easily work out. I would suggest [to] add this to your daily routine. If you already go to the gym, I wouldn't suggest quitting."

Although Nintendo commends DeLorenzo's actions, he personally hasn't heard anything from the company.

"*Wii* is all about experiencing video games in a whole new way, and this man has obviously taken that to a new, creative level," Beth Llewelyn, senior director of public relations for the company, said via e-mail. "We hope he keeps it up."

Regarding contacting DeLorenzo, Llewelyn said, "that's always a possibility."

Nevertheless, the gamer's project apparently is spurring both feedback and sales. His site now has more than 400 comments. "If I had 20 comments on my site talking about it, that's all I ever wanted," he said.

After reading his e-mails and blog postings, he has inadvertently convinced more than 40 people to buy the console. "I'm a sales rep not getting paid," DeLorenzo said jokingly.

Since the media blitz surrounding his project, the resident hasn't had time to keep up with the 30-minute routine, but is still playing *Wii Sports* on a regular basis — as well as eight additional video games.

In a surprising turn, DeLorenzo might merge the literary and gaming worlds (considered archenemeses by some) with a book about his project. He already has signed an official agreement with an agent, who is scoping out writers for this venture.

Some might compare DeLorenzo's get-in-shape attitude to Rocky. On his site, he even reenacted the film's famous jogging scene through the Italian Market (with a *Wii* remote in hand). But the gamer has another celebrity in mind.

"I'm like the Richard Simmons of the *Wii*," he said with a laugh. **SPR**