



Final Hurdle

by Brad Buchanan

Happy holidays from team BarrelEye! Great news: We are done! On Monday afternoon we submitted Torch to our client for review, and now we get to leave for the holidays. Okay, that's not entirely true. We submitted our game, ready for review, but of course we have a whole list of additional changes we would like to make before soft open next week. But I'm getting ahead of myself...

We just had the most intense weekend of our semester. Our programmers had a couple of late nights fixing bugs and making sure we caught any pesky bugs left in the game. In particular, we continued to struggle with the limited memory available on the TV and with a network synchronization problem that showed up at the last minute.

The TV's memory limits weren't apparent to the artists until here,

at the very end of the project. Because we delayed in putting animations onto the TV until the last week or so, we hadn't realized that the large sprite sheets would quickly hit the TV's video memory limits. As a result, art found themselves compromising by downscaling sprites and condensing images into a single texture atlas as often as possible.

On the network side, we started to discover some instability that was revealed by our cutscene process and the load time for large images on the TV. Before, when the phone and TV each timed their own events there was no issue because they were mostly synchronized. Once we added these artificial delays to the TV, however, we realized the phone was timing events differently and this was introducing network bugs that we hadn't anticipated. We needed to adjust our code to get the two systems back in lockstep,

which took more time than we expected.

Once we had these issues under control we headed home and got a little sleep before making some final tweaks Monday morning and turning the game in Monday afternoon. After handing it over (with installation instructions of course) the team was happy to head home a little early, and Tuesday was mostly a formality before the holiday.

We do have plans for a couple of changes before our soft opening next Wednesday, but every member of BarrelEye is taking a well-deserved five day weekend now. We're glad to have finished the biggest part of our project successfully, and we look forward to ending the semester strong. Thanks for keeping up with us. We'll see you next week!