THE EYE OF THE HURRICANE

This was week 9, the longest week of the semester so far. Team joined back after a much deserved spring break, started a 2 week sprint, had our second play test and for the icing on the cake we had our halves presentation on Friday, March 22nd to end the week on a high note. Hold on to your horses, each of these in due time.

A New Sprint

After a week long spring break, the team regrouped again Monday morning to plan the course of action for the week. To set the goal for the overall project till the end of the semester, I have set forth this plan which will help us track our progress and keep us better organized since now we have a much better understanding of the scope and the challenges we can anticipate to face on the way. Keeping this plan in mind, we set our target to get a play test done during the week before our halves presentation. For this we focused on implementing additional gameplay elements, plan for expending the support for the mobile app to iOS for the play test and further polish the mobile application to keep it flexible.

Gameplay Expansion

From the main gameplay perspective, we added quite a bit of elements targeted towards our play test. Major addition was inclusion of conflict rule system which would be responsible for determining when two countries are at war, which of those two would be victorious. Not only this but to support these elements in the game we added art work and little bit of animations to reflect conflict areas. We also included art work for icons indicating the territories population statistics and their level in the game. Overall simplistic art work was highly appreciated by the players as easy to understand.

iOS Support

For this play test we wanted to cater to both Android and iOS players. For this we looked deeply into TestFlight and HockeyApp. Both have a really good framework for collecting crash reports, reading live player statistics and distribution of betas to potential players/testers. Unfortunately, both these are still bound by Apple's restrictive process of installing beta apps on any mobile or tablet device. For this we need to first collect UDID (unique identifier) for all our potential players using iOS devices, send these over to Steve Audia to get a new provisioning certificate generated. Using this certificate we would be able to generate a new build of the application and distribute this to the play testers. Since this is a really cumbersome process and requires back-and-forth we are exploring into using Apple's Enterprise

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Account which allows to by-pass this limitation. Till the time we have our first app published on the iTunes market, this would cause us the biggest problem in truly having an open play test.

Play Test

We conducted our second play test this last Thursday, 21st March at 6 pm. And we had a really good response with 18 play testers playing the game. We got really extensive feedback from these play testers. Our previous focus was to nail down the calibration process and overall this time the players were able to use the application on the devices pretty well with few issues which we will focus on polishing the next week. From the gameplay's perspective, the players overall really enjoyed the whole game concept of having to battle other teams using only their voice. But they also highlighted that they did not understand what each icon and number associated with a territory meant. Since this version of the game did not have an "introduction" to the gameplay system and elements in the game, this we will focus on adding as part of next week's efforts. A comprehensive list of feedback and suggestions is available in this document.

Halves Presentation

As I mentioned earlier we also had our halves presentation on Friday, 22nd March. For this the team rehearsed a lot. The complete presentation is also accessible here. We covered all aspects of our project during our presentation right from inception of the concept to our most recent play test. Four of us, Ben, Stephanie, Brian and Scott presented this time with the intention that the remaining half of the team will be presenting at the finals. We got some good feedback from faculty and will be taking that into account while planning for future development.

GDC Week

Next week everyone from the team will be at GDC and we will also meet Emily. This would be another action packed week but unfortunately we will be not be able to make any progress from the project's perspective. Not to worry, this was already accounted for in the plan mentioned above so we should be good for our deliverables as long as we keep hitting our interim goals on our way to the end of the semester.

That's it from Week 9. It was definitely a fun and a long week. Have a wonderful weekend and good luck for GDC. See you all next week!

Mayank Grover