



# News Letter

February 10 - 14, 2014

After seeing a proof of concept for our “golf meets MC Escher” game for connected TVs last week, our client pointed out that we had missed the emotional core of the game. Our sample demonstrated the most novel aspect of our idea—a way to turn what was a wall into a floor—but lacked the excitement, hope, or disappointment of a good golf game. This week, we attempted to develop a true sample level that delivered emotionally and technically.

Our first step was to improve the scale of the level design. Our proof of concept was little more than three intersecting planes imposed over a golf course from the base game we’re modifying to make our game. The walls were so close together that the player never had a chance to watch his ball sail through the air or nearly miss getting into the cup. Little wonder that we were missing the emotional core of the game.

To quickly correct this, we decided that our first true course needed to approximate the proportions of a real golf course. If a real golf course is at least 250 yards and a real golfer is around roughly two yards tall (roughly), we knew the course we built in Unity needed to be about 175 units at it’s greatest length (if the player were one unit tall).

With a scale in mind, our level designer set about building a three-hole course. This course was decidedly not a first level. It featured impassable gaps, out of bounds chasms to all sides, vertical walls, and waterfalls as hazards. It was far too hard, even for developers familiar with the concept of our surreal physics game.

In this case, too hard was a good thing. It game our team a vertical slice of what we wanted to do. Watching his fellow developers struggle with what he hoped was a simple puzzle—learn to cross this gulf by driving your ball into a wall and using it as a bridge—gave our designer a sense how just how much we had to teach our player. Hacking together approximations of the features needed to make this level work revealed the limitations of our starting code base and the features they would need to write to make the game function smoothly. Building even rough versions of the floating islands on which our game is played helped our artists develop a style and understand the pipeline under which they would work. All of this helped our producer get a better sense of what the team could accomplish in the course of the remaining 11 weeks of the semester.

As we wrap up the week, we know we have a long way to go. We’ve improved greatly and the prototype is on it’s way to being fun, but we still haven’t hit the emotional core of our game. Moving into next week, we’ll prepare for our Quarters presentation (a 15-minute introduction to our work to date and Q&A) and polish a demo we hope to show alongside it. With this complete, we can begin working on our first level.

WEEK 1

WEEK 2

WEEK 3

WEEK 4

WEEK 5

We developed a prototype that reflects the feel our the game and gives us a sense of the scale of our work ahead.

WEEK 6

WEEK 7

WEEK 8

WEEK 9

WEEK 10

WEEK 11

WEEK 12

WEEK 13

WEEK 14

WEEK 15

WEEK 16