



News Letter

March 3 - 7, 2014

At best, we will have three minutes to sell our player on the our game.

This is what our client (Electronic Arts' Office of the Chief Creative Officer) reminded us when we showed them our first complete level at about the halfway point in its production cycle this week. Since they will not have paid and will not have waited to download anything—our game is designed to stream over set top boxes and will likely be free to play for initial trials—they'll have little invested and little reason not to toggle over to another game or a TV show. To this end, we spent the past week focusing gameplay on the most novel gameplay elements and look more immediately engaging.

Focusing on the most novel element of our gameplay—finding the shortest path through a golf course where you can play on floating walls and ceilings—means making everything else as simple as possible. To help achieve this, our engineers implemented a simplified user interface and a shot preview. Both should make it easier for players to hit the ball where they want so they can think about where they want the ball to go, instead of whether it will go there.

As our engineers worked on features that made our world easier to play in, our artists worked on making our MC Escher-inspired world easier to understand visually. Players need to instantly know that this is not like a traditional golf game. Given our limited man-hours, we knew we couldn't afford to remake the hundreds of assets we had inherited. We could, however, make fast gains by playing with the color palette of the world. And so our green golf-like world developed pink and white hues, something more like a cherry blossom dreamland and less like the back nine of your local country club.

As we head towards weeks of interrupted work (Spring Break, followed by the Game Developer's Conference), we better understand three of our biggest challenges. First, we must ferret out and remove a recently-discovered piece of inherited code that is apparently causing our game to crash frequently. Second, we must develop an improved camera system, since the one we have is built for traditional golf on one plane. Finally, we must learn to design levels that let players take advantage of our premise, rather than merely impeding them.

If we can solve these three problems, we'll be in a strong place for Halves, our halfway point presentation. We should by then be able to hand our game to a truly naive player and get their feedback. With this, we'll be able to spend the rest of the semester iterating, designing additional courses, and polishing.

WEEK 1

WEEK 2

WEEK 3

WEEK 4

WEEK 5

WEEK 6

WEEK 7

WEEK 8

We wrapped up our first level and worked on features and designs that make it easier to play.

WEEK 9

WEEK 10

WEEK 11

WEEK 12

WEEK 13

WEEK 14

WEEK 15

WEEK 16