News Letter

April 7 - 11. 2014

The pressure is on: by this time next week, we aim to deliver a rough version of all three courses to our client, Electronic Arts' Office of the Chief Creative Officer. To meet our deadlines, we focused this week on how to make the most of our limited resources.

As we mentioned previously, we have decided to deliver three, rather than four, courses. We decided to go big with a more complicated, more surreal final course. To get this done quickly, we developed an accelerated pipeline, with our artists and level designer working in parallel to build courses with as few new assets as possible and our producer picking up low-level, time-demanding Unity world building work and testing.

This week we were also able to solve two of our most vexing problems. The first was a game design challenge we had faced since we first landed on our "golf with sticky walls" premise. Until this week, this novel part of our game was fun, but confusing: most of the time players were able to launch their ball and stick it wherever it landed, but sometimes it would bounce.

Under the hood, the game was obeying a simple rule: any time the ball switched between meshes, the ball would stick; any time the ball was on the same mesh it would bounce. But players shouldn't need to understand "meshes" to play. Eliminating bounces entirely meant taking out something that felt great. Instead, we realized we could make "stickiness" a choice the player could make.

Our second solution was slightly more technical. Since we began developing our game, we had been hampered by an anti-cheating system built into our inherited system. We knew the system was finding the code we'd layered on top of the existing game to make our game, seeing this as cheats, and ending our games prematurely, but, despite days of work, we couldn't figure out how to stop it.

The answer, which we discovered in a flash, was simple: stop counting strokes. Killing this function stopped the system from being able to punish us for "cheating" and only required a small layer of code.

This weekend we head to the Silicon Valley campus Spring Carnival celebration, which will give us an opportunity to put the game in front of players who have never seen or heard of our work. While this is later than we might have liked, it will let us know what changes we absolutely must make before shipping. Next week, we'll push to deliver a rough and ready version of our last course for delivery at the end of the week.

- WEEK 1
- WEEK 2
- WEEK 3
- WEEK 4
- WEEK 5
- WEEK 6
- WEEK 7
- WEEK 8
- WEEK 9
- WEEK 10
- WEEK 11
- **WEEK 12**

We began development on our last course and solved two of our biggest challenges

- WEEK 13
- WEEK 14
- WEEK 15
- WEEK 16