

## Halves Feedback and Visitors

We received halves feedback from the faculty this week. The faculty were happy with the iterations we had made to the dog design and our balance and speed mechanics. They felt that a lot of the playtest suggestions we had received for additional features (such as unlockables and more variation in terrain) were great ideas that they hoped we would keep in consideration. The faculty were anxious to see more of the art for the upcoming environments and we were encouraged to make a strong push toward Softs.

Two visitors came by our project room after halves. The first was Rafael Bidarra, a visiting scholar with a specialty in content generation and adaptive gameplay. He was intrigued by our gameplay and method of slope assembly, and with the blessing of our client, we've worked out an arrangement to give Rafael and one of his PhD students a copy of our project files to do a short research project with. While we don't know if any of this will come back into the game as part of our deliverable, we are happy to contribute to their research and learn about this interesting area.

The second visitor was Anna Roberts, the Director of the Working Examples project. As her background is in branding and marketing, she was able to give us a terrific crash course in these areas. She was very encouraging of our lightly branded approach. Anna also told us that advertising is really education, so it's important to know your message. In our case, she said the message is: Here is what Seven Springs has to offer, and it's fun! Therefore she suggested focusing on the activities that people can only do at a resort, such as skiing or ziplining, over activities that may be terrific but are possible in other places, such as golfing. As we have been trying to decide on a last environment to replace an earlier idea, this was well-timed advice that has encouraged us to pursue the zipline. She also gave us the great idea of naming the levels after specific resort locations that have game-like names, such as Lost Boy for the ski slope.

## Obstacle Entanglement

This week the team focused its efforts on implementing the obstacle entanglement mechanic. When the snowball rolls over an obstacle, the obstacle is picked up by the snowball, and Seven has to jump over the rotating obstacle in order to keep from getting knocked off. At first we had the obstacle set to spin around the snowball for three rotations, with it gradually smushing into the snowball and disappearing. But ultimately for the sake of difficulty we've reduced it to just one rotation per obstacle.

So far this new mechanic seems to be a good way to add a new spike to the interest curve for the game. Our main thing to keep in mind is that it is difficult to concentrate on balancing and on jumping over obstacles simultaneously, so we shouldn't have obstacles so frequently or on such complicated slopes that the game becomes unplayable. Since this is an endless game, it is meant to become relatively difficult as it progresses, so that the player gets the challenge of trying to survive over a longer distance and the sense of accomplishment that comes with improvement. But of course there's a fine line between challenge and frustration, so we're being mindful of that in our playtests, such as the one we will have this weekend at the Carnegie Science Center.



## Ad System

We've built a basic system to allow Seven Springs to more easily update ads and to specify which ones should show during which season (winter, summer, or both). We've also started working on allowing the resort to set a desired frequency for each ad, so that if the resort would like to place extra emphasis on a certain activity or event, they can set that ad to appear more frequently during the random selection of an ad upon loading the game. Due to some shortcomings with how the Unity engine relates to Xcode, we so far have not found a way to allow Seven Springs to change these parameters without rebuilding the game (which would then need to be submitted as an update to the app), but we're trying to make the rebuild process as painless as possible.