**SWOLE Team 6 Playtesting Reports**

By Mitch Regan

**Test 1**, 10/2/15, Jesse Lozano

* He spent time looking through all of the screens on the main menu before proceeding to gameplay.
* On level select, he jumped straight into more advanced levels rather than the first.
* I noticed that we have a bug in our game where selecting level 3 jumps straight into the gameplay level, bypassing the power select screen. Jesse can’t use any scroll powers right now.
* Took over a minute before Jesse could figure out how to slash, even after looking through the instructions. Not good.
* He’s visibly annoyed by screen shaking from wall collision due to velocity based movement.
* I restarted the game back to the level select screen so that he could see the Power Select screen before going into gameplay.
* He clicked every power slider on the Power Select, even though they did nothing. I clarified that they don’t do anything in game yet.
* He’s having a very hard time building combos on enemies with slash, so he couldn’t use power attacks.
* Doesn’t think to use slashing to get around the level. Stuck trying to jump to a ledge out of reach.
* He found the bug where you can continuously slash without having to land. Fell out of the map. I really need to have a kill zone.
* Took about 5 tries to understand what to do when activating a scroll. After that, he had no problem completing them.
* It really looks like Jesse prefers to use basic attacks over slashing.
* Jesse spent a while looking around for the level objective when there wasn’t one. Not sure if I should have chimed in earlier or not, since we only have a sandbox for testing mechanics at the moment.

General Thoughts:

* “The instructions in the ‘How to Play’ screen need to be a lot better.” As a note, this screen was empty about 5 minutes before I asked Jesse to play. It didn’t need to have anything in it besides the back button for the presentation, so I forgot about it. It only had basic text without images in the version Jesse played. My fault.
* “The buttons need to be responsive when you mouse over them and click. I had no idea if some buttons were responding to the mouse or if they just didn’t do anything.”
* “It took me a while to figure out how to do the slashing mechanic, but once I did, it was a fun way to get around.”
* “I didn’t like how I had to rush around to keep my energy high. I thought it would stop going down when the meter hit one of the bars, but it didn’t.” This is my fault. We were initially going to have our energy bar be divided into segments so that once a player charged a full segment, it remained full until used so that the player wouldn’t be pressured into using all of it. However, this was changed after I met with Prof. Ellinger and he highly suggested that the energy should always be falling so that the game keeps up a fast pace. Since our goal is fast-paced berserker rage hack-n-slash, I made the change, but didn’t update the UI.
* “When I tried using the scrolls, my instinct was to press the buttons from right-to-left, not left-to-right, so it took a bit to work.” I’m not sure why he would think this way, because most people in our target demographic (Jesse included) read from left-to-right, so that’s how I designed the scrolls. The scroll buttons to hit are also all greyed out and unresponsive except for the starting point at the far left which is larger. Unless I see more playtesters respond with this complaint, I’m going to write this critique off to user-error.
* “When I first started using the scrolls, I didn’t know that they had a timer attached to them. There should be some way of conveying that to the player.”
* “Have the camera follow the player without parenting it so that you avoid the screen shaking horribly.”

Thoughts on Slashing Mechanic:

* I asked Jesse if he thought it was a more useful attack than the basic attack: “No, the slashing was pretty much only useful for moving around the level. The basic attack seemed more powerful.”
* “The mouse slash is interesting, but I constantly have to reposition the mouse around the screen. It’s not *that* big of a problem for me, but I think you may want to consider turning it into an optional thing.”

Conclusions and Actions to Take

* I need to change the energy bar UI to not show segments so that players don’t get confused by it. I’ll probably still keep some small tick-marks to give a small reference as to how full it is.
* The “How to Play” screen needs to be worked on so that it’s helpful. It really isn’t at the moment.
* I need to fix the bug where level 3 goes directly into gameplay. It needs to go to power select first.
* The camera should be unparented from the player sprite. I could either just zoom out to show the whole level (probably not), or follow the player whenever they move further than “x” units.
* The buttons in game need to have actions for highlighting and on-click events. They’re very dull and unresponsive at the moment.
* After the presentation and this playtest, I’m starting to get worried that our mouse slashing mechanic might not be all that great. I’m going to keep testing to see what others think, but I might need to alter the prototype so that the mouse just shows the direction you can slash, and the player just presses a button to do it. This would be kind of how Hotline Miami uses the mouse cursor to show where the player’s aiming.

**Test 2**, 10/2/15, Randy Totah

* Immediately clicked on the “How to Play” screen before anything else.
* Didn’t bother with other screens after instructions, just went straight into gameplay.
* On the power select screen, Randy messed around with some of the power sliders until he realized they did nothing, and then only chose 1 scroll to use.
* Once in the gameplay level, he took the time to press every button he could think of. However, he still completely forgot all of the instructions and asked me what the controls were.
* Took a few minutes to figure out how to do slashes before I told him.
* Whenever he slashes, he takes a lot of time to position the mouse on the screen for each and every slash. This isn’t really the fast-paced movement I was hoping for.
* Randy seems to just be focusing on using the basic attack on all enemies. Either he doesn’t know that the slash does damage, or he would rather attack normally.
* Has spent about 5 minutes to try platforming around and trying to reach a specific platform he can’t get to. This whole time, he hasn’t thought of using the slash mechanic for mobility at all, and I didn’t chime in since I wanted him to figure it out on his own.
* At this point in the test, Randy hasn’t used the scroll once, and all of the enemies are dead, so he can’t get energy. I chimed in and used a developer cheat to give him full energy to test it out just for the sake of getting info.
* It took Randy several attempts to figure out what the scroll does and complete it, but he knew exactly where to start, as opposed to Jesse. Once he got everything down, he could complete the scroll easily.
* After trying for a few more minutes to get to the same platform from earlier, I asked him what was going through his mind. “How do I get to that platform? My jump isn’t going high enough, but it seems like I can get some extra height from this ramp tile.” He still isn’t thinking of using the slash at all, so I’m thinking we should highlight this use of the slash in a tutorial level.
* I chimed in that there was no level objective, so there wasn’t anything to complete once Randy started looking around the level.
* He finally figured out that he could slash up to the platform, but he still takes a while to position the mouse perfectly each time.

General Thoughts:

* “I really liked the mechanics and the art you guys have.”
* “I know that it took me a while to figure out how to get to platforms, so you might need some kind of indicator or tutorial for that.”
* “I don’t know what the dragon does when I use my ability.” I clarified that this mechanic isn’t finished, which is why nothing happened upon completion.
* “I don’t think that the ‘How to Play’ screen tells you how to use your powers at all.” It does, but only the bare-bones and absolutely needs a lot more explanation.
* “The pause menu needs a button that goes to the ‘How to Play’ screen.”

Thoughts on Slashing Mechanic:

* “I like the slash a lot, mainly because it’s simple and reminds me of One Finger Death Punch. I can clearly tell that I’m doing a slash, even though there’s no animation to indicate it.”
* I asked him if he would prefer to not have the slash be controlled by moving the mouse, and would rather have a button control it instead. “I’d have to try it out with the other controls first, but I think that the slash lends itself to the mouse movement best.”

Conclusions and Actions to Take:

* Need something in the Power Select screen to tell players that they can pick up to 3 scrolls.
* I really need to fix the pause menu so that players can go back to level select and look at the controls. These are more things that I left out since we didn’t need it for presentation, and it’s now biting me in the butt for tests.
* I’m still very unsure of how to handle the slash mechanic and if it’s the right direction we should be heading for this game.
* Need to make a tutorial level for general use, but also highlight the fact that the slash mechanic is awesome for movement as well as damage.

**Test 3**, 10/2/15, Matt Mulligan

* Checked all of the options in the Main Menu before proceeding to the level select.
* Confused by the incomplete power sliders on the Power Select screen.
* Only chose 1 scroll. I really need to tell players that they can pick 3.
* Seems to only be using basic attacks for everything.
* Focusing on exploring the level instead of using mechanics.
* As of 2 minutes in, Matt still hasn’t done the slash attack at all. I’m worried that he forgot about it, or just skimmed over it in the “How to Play” screen.
* Matt is the only playtester so far that has noticed the level timer, but he said that he only noticed it when it was almost at 0. I clarified that it doesn’t do anything right now, and that there’s no objective he needs to be completing.
* “I really don’t know what the energy bar does at all.” This is a bit problematic.
* “The jumping is very finicky. I’m not liking it much at all.”
* Matt is having the same problem that Randy had, where he keeps trying to out-of-reach platforms and doesn’t think to use the slash mechanic.
* Matt is very visibly annoyed by the camera shaking from velocity collision.
* It took Matt 5 minutes to remember that he has a dash ability. I’m thinking that I should put this on the UI, complete with a recharge time on it.
* I went ahead and flat-out told Matt how to do the slash mechanic so that I could get his input on it.
* Matt eventually realized that he could use the slash for moving, but he doesn’t seem to want to use it for attacking. He keeps using the basic attack, while only slashing to get around.
* Matt fell out of the game as soon as he found out that the slash didn’t really have a cooldown.
* We closed and re-opened the game to go back to the power select screen so that I could show him that he could have more than 1 scroll selected.
* The moment he opened a scroll for the first time, Matt instantly knew how to use it, so that’s a very good sign.
* Matt is frustrated with the short timer on the scroll.
* We found a glitch that I haven’t seen before, where Matt has 2 scrolls that are duplicates.

General Thoughts:

* “Jumping is very weird. I don’t like it at all”
* “The dash mechanic is completely pointless when you could just use the slash mechanic. It not only accomplishes the same thing, but does damage, goes further, and doesn’t have a cooldown.”
* “The ‘How to Play’ screen is horribly incomplete”
* I asked what his thoughts were on the scrolls. “It took a while to figure out how to use them. The time limit needs to be tweaked a lot. I also thought that I needed to keep my mouse within the line that connected the dots at first.”
* I asked if it was clear where to mouse over on the scrolls. “For the most part yes, but the ones on the Crane scroll were hard to see. White-on-white is very bad.”
* “I thought that the basic attack looked like a laser shot with the particle effects that you guys are using, so it was hard to tell if I was hitting an enemy or not. The enemies also need to be a lot more reactive when hit.”
* “You should really zoom the camera out a lot. It’s far too close right now. It also moves too quickly when slashing and is making me a bit motion sick. I’d suggest not parenting to the player and pan out.”

Thoughts on Slash Mechanic:

* “It’s by far the easiest way to maneuver.”
* “I didn’t think of it as an attack at all, just as a way to get around.”
* I asked if the slash would work better without having to move the mouse. “It might work better if you had a mouse reticle which indicated the direction that you’d move to, then have a button that slashes you in that direction. Right now the mouse movement feels like it causes issues. People usually have the idea that moving the mouse faster will make them move faster, but that doesn’t work in your game.”
* I asked if the dash mechanic would be better if the slash had a significantly longer cooldown. “The dodge should only be slightly faster than basic movement with a shorter cooldown and just be used to get out of an attack right on top of you.”

**Test 4**, 10/13/15, Joel [last name missing]

* Highly confused by the level powers on the power select screen
* Took Joel a while to find the “Start Level” button on the power select screen. Might need to make it stand out more.
* Took a bit to discover the slash mechanic, but once he found it, he immediately discovered the ability to fly.
* Joel immediately fell out of the level and can’t find the map. I had to restart the game because the “Restart Level” button doesn’t work yet.
* “How do I get energy?” When Joel asked this, he was only dashing around the level and not attacking the enemies at all.
* After moving around for a while, Joel finally started attacking enemies. He started out using the slash attack, but he kept falling off of platforms, so he quickly changed to attacking with the basic attack.
* “There aren’t enough enemies around to do anything.” At this point, Joel had found and killed all of the enemies in the level, but since we didn’t have transitions to different levels, the game was pretty much stuck.
* Ended the playtest quickly, since players physically can’t finish levels and we’re not done implementing changes/fixes that we learned from previous playtests. This one was just rushed because Nolan wanted playtesters in Playtest Club to have something to do.

Thoughts on Slash Mechanic:

* “The basic click attack just felt like I was firing a laser, not slashing at all.”
* “Click and drag mechanic shot me off in a general direction without control, so I just used the laser attack.”

Conclusions and Actions to Take:

* Add kill boxes to the outside of the level to prevent players from falling out and not being able to get back.
* Have a “Reset Level” button in the options screen for faster resets.
* Make enemies do something so they’re not just sitting there.
* NOT RUSH PLAYTESTS when we know there are a ton of things that we are only partially finished implementing fixes.

**Test 5**, 10/31/15, Mark Rowland

* Mark immediately went to the “How to Play” screen first.
* Checked out the flavor text for all of the abilities and powers on the “Power Select Screen” and noticed that some of them just have filler text. I need to remove it.
* Mark only picked one scroll (dragon) before going into the level, not any more than that.
* He had a hard time jumping, especially on inclined surfaces. I think there might be a problem with the player collision checks returning the incorrect grounding distance.
* When Mark attacks the enemies, he just clicks furiously, only doing the basic attack. He sometimes slashes short distances instead, so I’m thinking that it might be accidental.
* He quickly discovered the scroll mechanic, but had a bit of a hard time completing it. After several tries, Mark was able to finish the scroll in time, however it currently doesn’t have an effect. I’m not worried that this was too hard to complete in time, because the Dragon scroll is supposed to be the most powerful scroll, and the hardest to use. Players would normally only get it after completing most of the game and getting more practice with the easier scrolls first.
* Mark is voicing that he doesn’t like how the scroll uses up energy even when you don’t complete it. I see how some people wouldn’t like this, but I’m going to wait until we have a more feature-complete game experience before changing this “detriment”. The reason being is because I don’t want players to be able to continuously use the scroll without penalty for failure. To prevent this, the scroll eats up some energy when failed, but not nearly as much as is used on completion.
* “For the scrolls, I think it would help if you showed the path that you need to go for the points. That, or put numbers on the points so players will know what order to go in.” I actually tried removing the path points since the previous playtest since a few people were saying that it covered up the art on the scrolls. Apparently this wasn’t the best course of action. However, I’m planning on changing the art for our scrolls so that they’re an animation that fills in the image as the player hits the points. This way, I can keep the path points showing players where to go and then delete them as the art is filled in so nothing is covered.
* Mark never used the slash mechanic on purpose to move, only jumps. I’m unsure if he even knows the mechanic exists.
* The player object can’t climb low stairs well, even with the capsule collider. I’ll need to look into it and see what’s going on there.
* When the timer ran out for the level, Mark was pushed to level 2 and something really weird happened to it. The player object became HUGE, couldn’t jump, and every time he attacked, it crashed the game. I have no clue what’s changed on this level, but I need to fix it.
* Nolan pointed out that even while the scroll is active, the energy still depletes at the same rate on the HUD level as it does when gameplay is running. This is an error on my part, because the HUD level is in charge of depleting the energy, not the gameplay level, and the HUD level isn’t paused during scroll activation.

General Thoughts:

* “This seems like it’s intended to be a fast-paced action game, which is awesome. I can really get behind that.”
* “You guys should play the game STRIDER for references and mechanic ideas. It seems really similar to what you’re going for.” I’ll need to check that out. Hopefully I can try to capture some of the tone of the gameplay to improve ours.
* “The scrolls are a nice change of pace, but they need some flashy stuff when completed. Maybe a sparkly particle effect or text so that the player knows they did well.” I actually did implement a flashy particle effect for the scrolls when completed. However, I had to cut it out of the prototype for presentation because there was an error with how the game space was paused. Whenever a scroll was completed, the gameplay would continue as normal while the flashy scroll animations would keep playing on top of it, obscuring what the scroll actually does.
* “I didn’t know you could pick more than one scroll. You may want to point that out somewhere.” I had to tell Mark about this after he finished playing, even though he restarted the first level a couple of times with multiple scrolls loaded out. I feel like the problem was that he didn’t know he could switch the active scroll, not that he couldn’t have more than one loaded out.

Thoughts on Slash Mechanic:

* I asked Mark if he even noticed the slash mechanic at all. – “No, I just thought the enemies were hitting me and shoving me over when I was near them.”
* “I didn’t really read the ‘How to Play’ screen when I started, just skimmed it real fast.” – This might be the reason why he didn’t notice the mechanic at all.

Conclusions and Actions to Take:

* Need to pause the HUD level while scrolls are active so that energy isn’t going down.
* Need to go back and check player collision checking so that the player is grounded at the right times.
* Check and see what’s going on with Level 2 having super huge player characters and game crashes.
* Bring back the path points for the scrolls so players can know what direction to go, and make the completed points fill in the image.
* Play STRIDER for reference material that might help out our gameplay.

**Test 6**, 11/1/15, Andrew Langley

* Andrew looked through all of the menus before doing anything in the gameplay.
* Picked 3 scrolls immediately in the power select screen. This might have just been on accident while seeing what each of the descriptions were.
* Andrew looked at all of the power descriptions before going into the level.
* Knew how to do the slash attack instantly, although this might be from furiously clicking on enemies. Either way, he learned fast.
* “You can use the slash attack to jump? Awesome” This is the kind of feedback I love to hear.
* Andrew asked if the dash move didn’t work when he tried pressing Q and E. I told him that it was removed since the slash was better. However, I forgot to remove the text from the “How to Play” screen, so I should do that after this test is over.
* He seems to be using the slash mostly for just getting around and doing the basic click attack for damage. He does use the slash for some attacks though, so that’s promising.
* Andrew used the scroll wheel and noticed that the scrolls in the upper right corner shifted, but he doesn’t seem to know that R-click activates them. He might have just missed the instruction in the “How to Play” screen.
* “Is having a high amount of Energy a good thing?” Since Andrew isn’t using any of the energy on scrolls, it’s just sitting there in the HUD. I told him that it’s a good thing, but I didn’t specifically tell him what to do with it. I wanted to see if he could find out on his own.
* “Does dashing reduce energy?” I told him that hitting enemies with attacks increases energy and that it goes down slowly over time.
* I eventually told Andrew how to use the scrolls since he wasn’t able to figure it out on his own. However, the moment he activated it, he was able to figure out exactly what to do to get the scroll to work.
* “I guess I just missed the R-click part in the instructions. I normally don’t hit that button when playing other classmates’ games, because sometimes it screws something up” Interesting reason why there was such a delay on figuring out scrolls, but that makes me wonder what’s going on in other peoples’ games.
* Andrew pointed out the glitch where he could fly by constantly slashing upward, so it’s good that he at least noticed it.

General Thoughts:

* “I like how the game feels overall, especially the attack mechanic.”
* “I got caught on the terrain a lot when moving and jumping, so you might want to look at that.”
* “The slash movement sometimes felt a little weird, but I can’t quite put my finger on what exactly was wrong, but I overall enjoyed it.”

Thoughts on Slash Mechanic:

* “I REALLY love slashing stuff in games like this, so that’s awesome!”
* I asked if he preferred using the slash to damage enemies or would rather use the basic attack. “The slash was cooler. A lot cooler. I also like that you can move around with the slash too.”
* Since he didn’t notice it before, I briefly opened up the game again and told Andrew about our new basic attack mechanic where you could just hold down the L-click and make slashing movements over enemies. Once he tried it out, I asked what his thoughts were on it. “This way of attacking is a lot better than just clicking on enemies.”
* “I think it would be better if you made the damage of the mouse-over attack scale based on the length of the slash so players don’t just scribble around really quickly and make small slashes to kill enemies fast.”

Conclusions and Actions to Take:

* Still need to mess with the slash movement so that it feels better. However, this playtest did make me feel a lot better about the mechanics overall.
* Still need to fix the ability for players to fly using the slash mechanics, but that should be an easy fix now that I’ve reworked the player’s collision detection functionality. We can link the number of times players can slash in the air to when they were last grounded or clinging to walls.