**DES 212 Playtest Report**

**Designer:**  Matthew Oliver **Project Name:** Steel Heart

**Date:** 3/5/23 **Project Version:** Prototype V2

**Playtest Goals**

Is the heat system something that people like.

Is it balanced.

With more work could it become a fun prototype.

**Playtest Notes**

**Test #1: Casey Bullock (bullockcasey257@yahoo.com)**

**I got a lot of good feedback from Casey, most of it was things I had already considered and so was just confirmed. Some however were things I hadn’t thought about.**

**Issues with the abilities included the laser barrage having a bad range, he said that it felt like he had to be too close to use it. He didn’t like that scald was just and insta kill (which is temporary). Stream punch is unused as the only enemy you use it against is the guard (melee) and you can kill it before it even gets to you. Even if you do use steam punch it is extremely underpowered compared to the barrage and core beam. Lastly, he said he basically just clicked 3 until ventilate worked because he couldn’t figure out how to get it to work otherwise.**

**Other issues he brought up were that he didn’t like that the numpad didn’t work because he felt that it should. It was very easy as he could just spam 2 and 5 and win every fight without really trying or ever being threatened. Also that it was too hard to tell what your heat was at to use ventilate because there’s no way to see the maximum.**

**Test #2: Kyle Oliver (**[**mandomelon1221@gmail.com**](mailto:mandomelon1221@gmail.com)**)**

**The next playtest I did was with Kyle who said many of the same things that Casey did but had some different feedback as well.**

**Starting again with issues with abilities. He said that steam punch was basically pointless as barrage is just straight up better, which is true. He also followed the same strategy of just spamming 2 and 5 to win every fight since that’s all you had to do. He also said, and I quote, “Scaled exists,” which basically is a reference to the fact that it is currently an insta kill, again, I’m planning on changing that and have not done it yet. He also said that ventilate doesn’t have enough range because even when he had enough heat to use it he was sometimes too far away. Ventilate also doesn’t have a point because 2 and 5 are enough to just kill everything so why bother with another ability. He noted that all he had to do against the ranged enemy was spam 5 because it literally could not out damage you so you didn’t even have to play optimally.**

**Other critiques he gave were that he didn’t really see heat come into play since he didn’t use ventilate and that’s currently the only use of heat. Like Casey he specifically mentioned that the melee enemy can’t even get to you if you just spam. He mentioned that he can’t really tell when he’s out of range with certain abilities and when he’s in range because he has no context for what a range unit is. And finally like Casey he mentioned that not being able to tell how much heat he currently had was bad.**

**Test #3: Tristan Pearson (**[**tristan70.pearson@gmail.com**](mailto:tristan70.pearson@gmail.com)**)**

**The final playtest was with Tristan who had some different feedback than the other two, though some similar themes came up again.**

**Abilities once again. Tristan said that he was initially confused as to how to control the abilities because it seemed that he could click on them, so he didn’t get that he was supposed to use the num keys. He was also confused because he kept trying to use ventilate and it didn’t seem to do anything, making him question whether he understood what was going on. He said that he finds it hard to read what each of the abilities do while also trying to play the game, he wishes there were a way to pause for a second. He recommends giving the descriptions their own box or something similar. He felt that laser barrage was his “basic attack,” but that it was on 2 instead of 1 which felt weird. He didn’t understand at first what “-50 heat,” on the ventilate description meant but got it after a while. He said that he doesn’t see the point of core beam, it’s worth noting that he didn’t try to use multiple abilities at once.**

**Other things Tristan mentioned. He thirded the thought that there should be some way to tell what your heat is at. He also agreed that there should be same way to tell what range your at without just spamming and hoping that you’re close enough to hit. He was confused as to what the steel heart near the top-right meant, I went ahead and told him that that was the name of the game. He said that the enemy’s health and the heat being the same color is weird and said that I should make all health green and all cooldowns blue to keep them separated.**

**Playtest Analysis**

**These playtests were all done within a relatively short window and so no changes were made in between them, I mostly wanted to confirm several issues that I figured would come up as I knew I would have to fix them already. There were however some issues that I did not anticipate which were helpful to learn. I did not expect ventilate to be something that they considered useless, same with steam punch. I also didn’t realize that the combo of barrage and core beam would be so powerful that it would be all you needed to win every fight. I did however know that being able to tell how much heat you have would be an issue and that not knowing what range you’re at would be confusing. The fact that all 3 agreed on so many things made it very clear what my priorities should be for changes in the next version.**

**My current plan is to make heat more of an important resource. I want to make it so you have to manage your heat because if it hits 100 you get stunned for a while as you cool back down. I also clearly need to balance the various abilities so they all have their uses because I want you to have to choose a different strategy with each enemy. The issue with the heat and range values being unclear is something that I’ve been thinking of ways to tackle. I did a playtest for one of my teammates and he had it so the abilities light up when you can use them, I might try to do something similar because it seemed like a great way to make things clear. Scald needs to be changed as well but that goes without saying, that was always a temporary thing.**

**As for my playtest goals it seemed like they thought the heat system could be interesting but that right now it felt boring and pointless. Once I make some of the changes I outlined above I think it will feel much cooler and more important. It clearly isn’t balanced because the use of two abilities should not be that powerful and 2 other ones should not be completely useless. I’ll have to take some time to carefully balance everything to make it feel good. As for whether it could be fun all 3 seemed to like the concept and looked forward to seeing what I did with it so that gives me confidence. I feel like if I implement more of the features that I’m planning then I can really make something cool.**