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GAT-110 F13

Week 1 —Original Game Design: A Snail’s Pace

"A Snail's Pace" is an original game design that I've had floating around as an idea in my head for the last couple of months, ever since learning of my acceptance at Digipen. Essentially, the objective of my game is to get from start to finish as quickly as possible. However, while most racing games emphasize speed, by letting you race as a fast car or a gravity defying plane, in my game you are racing literally as slow as a snail. Being a slow and defenseless snail also adds a unique twist to this racing game by adding a survival mechanic. More than just another racing game, "A Snail's Pace" is about surviving from start to finish as much as it is getting there as quickly as possible.

Make no mistake; "A Snail's Pace" does not involve racing a snail with super speed, the ability to leap tall buildings, or extraordinary powers of any kind. As nothing more than an ordinary snail, the world is bigger than you, quicker than you, and infinitely more threatening than you. Without any advantage of size, speed, or survivability, racing as a snail challenges the traditional aspects of racing games. Racing as a snail involves accepting you are smaller, slower, and very squishy, so you must make smarter choices early, before it is too late. Such decisions like do you take the longer path in the shady area where it is safer or do you take the exposed shorter path where it is more dangerous? When you do make bad decisions, and you will make plenty, there is not much you can do except watch the tragedy unfold as your poor snail inches towards its doom.

Guiding your snail through a level in "A Snail's Pace" is slow, but there's a lot you can do with your simple little snail. Levels are a 2D environment where you starting on the left side of the level and traveling to the finish on the right. Using a controller, holding the joystick right makes your snail slide along to the right at a standard slow pace, while holding the joystick left makes you very slowly slide backwards. Double tapping and holding the joystick right performs a short dash where the snail decelerates briefly, tucks in, and then lunges forward for a short distance. Holding the joystick at an upward angle makes your snail stretch upwards in that direction as far as possible for that snail, allowing it to reach areas that are above. Holding the joystick down makes the snail stop moving, duck into his shell, and hide from enemies. While the shell doesn't offer much protection, ducking into your shell is beneficial in allowing you to do advanced movement, such as rolling down a hill faster than you could slowly sliding down. The tradeoff in an action like this is the time saved rolling down a hill versus the control of slowly moving down a hill being able to choose a path at will, as you cannot leave the inside of your shell until you come to a stop. This variety of movement should allow for a complex series of decisions that a player can make playing the game.

I imagine that a lot of the enjoyment from "A Snail's Pace" will come from the visual aesthetics involving the game's environment. As humans we are used to viewing the world from our own eye level through simply living our everyday life. Since "A Snail's Pace" involves playing as a snail, this is an opportunity to experience the world in a way we don't usually get to see it. Suddenly tiny blades of grass tower overhead, tiny puddles become lakes, and a dozen yards seem to stretch for miles. As you inch through the world as a snail in the game, seeing the world in a new way will be visually stimulating and a lot of fun to experience.