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Cosmic Duels: Post-Mortem

What did you do and how did you do it?

When tasked with producing a prototype for a quick and simple game, we immediately looked into possible themes, including dueling wizards and pirates. We eventually settled on our initial idea of dueling pirates in space with a title of "Cosmic Duels." We decided on the theme while working on the initial mechanics, which always included a deck of cards and player health but was refined to include the various card types and the simultaneous turhs. As we came up with the game mechanics and received feedback with the initial game design, we realized that pirates were not necessary and so our theme was simplified to soft sci-fi space. Our next steps included the creation of physical objects including the health trackers and game box. We integrated our game mechanics into the health trackers. In addition we designed detailed concept art that would align with the space theme, and ensured that the game was playable through multiple iterations of playtesting. Overall, we are extremely proud of our game *Cosmic Duels*.

How was the final public play-test?

The public play-test consisted of three players who have never played *Cosmic Duels* before. We were able to see our game in action as spectators--no advice and no clarification, but just observation--and really see if our game works. The start of the game was a bit slow, but we expected this because the players were unfamiliar with the rules and mechanics of the game. Once the initial confusion was gone, the game play became much more smooth as the mechanics became clearer. The players understood what a round consisted of, the properties of each card type, and the health tracker system. Our game guide (which consisted of the game rules and clarification concerning card resolutions) was vital in the success of this play-test as it was written and formatted in a way so that players would be able to easily understand how the game worked and refer to clarification rules regarding the card types.

One important detail to mention is that the overall play was very intense and quiet as the players were focused on their goal to win. We imagined a game play that was more loud and competitive, but still intense. This may be due to the fact that the players were in front of an audience versus a more intimate setting.

What went well with the overall process?

Since the beginning of the class, our group's motivations to build a player versus player card game allowed us to easily cooperate and brainstorm many ideas that would later be implemented inside the game. Consequently, the initial design process and collaboration went very well and led to further analysis and discussion about our design. During the overall process of creating this game we found working together during class periods to be most efficient. Here

we were able to effectively communicate and provide feedback to the likes and dislikes of each other's ideas. This communication was key throughout the overall process, and allowed us to gain various perspectives from everyone.

In addition to the excellent communication throughout the overall design process we also individually provided a unique skill set that made the design process very smooth. Some design characteristics that we thought went very well are the concept art, game mechanics, and rule creation. Beginning with character art, we believe the design art established an aesthetic that well captured the theme of our game. In addition to the concept art, we believe the functionality of the game and its mechanics proved to be very smooth once you figured out how to play. We initially wanted the game to be fast paced, and that is exactly what we created. After you surpass the learning curve of card resolution order, and the basics of gameplay this game allows for a quick and fun experience. Lastly, during the overall process we believe the rules in which this game was built upon was very strong. There are no ifs, ands, or buts, because the rules are clear and concise. Not to mention we made them short enough that players do not have to spend tens of minutes learning how to play.

What did not go well with the overall process?

A hardship with our process was developing a theme and determining the target audience for it. We had designed the game mechanics before ultimately diving deeper into these steps, but it soon all came together with the concept art. Another hardship with our prototype was the final printing of the health tracker. There are three components of the health tracker: the top, the bottom, and the pointer. The dimension of the bottom components was not in spec to connect properly with the top part. The pointer was still able to work but it did not work as planned. We saw in the public play-test that one of the players simply just placed the pointer on top of the health tracker which was a great alternative and allowed the game to run smoothly.

How would you improve Cosmic Duels? What would you advise future students to do?

Improvements of *Cosmic Duels* include the incorporation of more cards with varying effects that allow for greater skill and strategy by the player, expansion packs for different themes, a compelling game box with detailed art, better health tracker prototype that works more smoothly, and a game board that would allow for component placement.

We would advise future students to choose a theme and concept that they are passionate about as it would make the entire design process more fun for themselves and hopefully it would translate through the final product. It would also be a great idea to develop the target audience early on with an adequate amount of research, rather than fitting a target audience into the final product.