Playtesting

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1 Playtesting Session

1.1 Set & Setting

As our game is supposed to be a party game, we needed the right setting for this scenario, so we organized a home party for the playtesting session to make sure we have enough people and beverages. The playtesting part itself was supposed to be a rather small part of the evening, but it went better than expected and the game became the highlight of the party.

We had around **15** people who playtested *Pizza War* in groups of two to four people over the course of the whole evening, which meant for four hours straight.

The only drawback of this "party-setting" was that all the people fell more or less into the same category: age 21-26, mostly male, student, and nearly all of them had quite a bit of gaming experience.


1.2 Pizza War Tournament

To motivate the people to play, we set the whole playtesting session up as a competition, the **Pizza War Tournament**. The prize for the first place was a cinema coupon, but the testers didn't care as much about the prize as they did about winning.

Each player got a card with his/her name on it and had to win five matches to qualify for the final. To distinguish which player won with which pizza topping, we used different post-it colors and we wrote a number on the post-it to track against how many other players this player won. It was interesting to see how the players tried out different pizza toppings or chose to stay with the one they won with.

This cards were used to create an analog leaderboard that we had to update against each match. This was pretty exhausting because there were around 80 matches played in total. People who already had won five
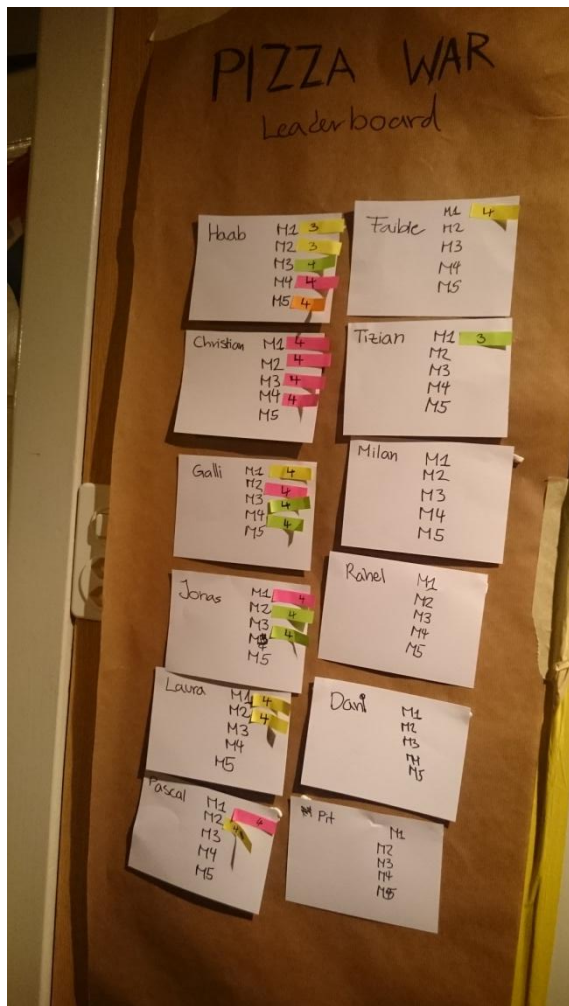
matches, could still play, but we no longer tracked it on the leaderboard.

8 out of 15 people made it into the finals, where they had to play 1vs1 against each other. A player who lost a match dropped out of the finals. When only two people were left, they had to play three matches instead of only one to decide the true *Pizza War Champion*.

Impression from the finals:

1.3 Playtesting the AI

After our testers learned that they could play against a really hard AI, they took the challenge and tried it. We made some changes to the AI and also to the overall game before the playtesting started (see the Changes section for more information), which actually allowed humans to win against the AI. Some of our players managed it, but those who lost had to take a shot.

They lost.

2 Questions and Feedback

2.1 General Observations

- **The Underpowered Salami:** Playing as the salami was not very satisfying for the players. It was squishy (easy to push down) while it was flying and could only attack in a flying state. Another problem was that it had only one attack, while the other characters had two. Only one player managed to win a match with the salami and all other players avoided it.
- **The 1vs1 Mushroom:** Our testers noticed that the mushroom was a character that was strong in an 1vs1 match, but equal to the tomato and the olive in matches with more people.
- **The fun aspect:** Overall, the game was really fun to play and also quite addictive, as our testers played the whole evening. Also, vivid emotions and strategic discussions proved that we somewhat reached our goal of making a fun party game.
- **The mirror matches:** Testers really liked the idea of playing as the same characters, by choosing for example only olives. This game mechanic was not planned for the final

game, as one should not choose the same topping another player already has. But because they liked it so much, we will leave that feature for the final game.

- **Balancing is important:** We observed our testers the whole time they played and one thing we noticed was that they said often things like: "this attack should be stronger!" or "this topping is too squishy!". To figure out whether these things were real issues or only spontaneous shout outs, we tracked which toppings the players liked best, and the mushroom, the olive and the tomato were equally played, while the salami was rejected.
- **The base toppings:** In the finals and against the AI, the players really looked out for the base toppings as it was important to search for cheese and avoid tomato sauce. In "lower ranks", these base toppings were mostly ignored.
- **The attack spammers:** The "punishing sound" when pressing an attack before it was ready was not enough to keep the players from spamming the attack. We think that the problem here is the "global punishment" – you hear the sound even if it isn't you that attacks too early. We don't have a solution for that problem yet.

Emotions!

2.2 Questions

Below we list the questions we prepared for the playtesting session and a bunch of answers we collected from our testers.

- **What was your overall impression of the game?**
    - Funny game.
    - A game with a simple mechanic but well-suited for a party.
    - It's not cool when the other players are better than you!
    - Nice graphics!
- **If you could change one thing of the game, what would it be?**
    - Remove the salami.
    - Improve the salami.
    - The olive should be stronger.

- o Make skins for the characters (black olive, etc).
- o Add an indicator for which player plays which topping.
- o Add a delay in which the player is invincible when he respawns.
- o Make different sounds for different characters.
- o Make a death animation.
- o Show who pushed a character down.
- o Add screen overlays for double kill etc.
- **If you would recommend the game for someone, for whom?**
  - o People like us.
  - o Lonely widows (?)
  - o Students
  - o Pizza Bakers
- **What are the fun aspects of the game?**
  - o The sounds are funny.
  - o You can hit other players.
  - o You play as funny little mushrooms, that's good enough.

2.3 Feedback

Overall, we received a good feedback, the testers liked the game and had a lot of fun at the party. They liked the idea and the graphics and we overheard a lot of discussions about the toppings, its strengths and weaknesses.

We even received fan art, what more can a game developer wish for?
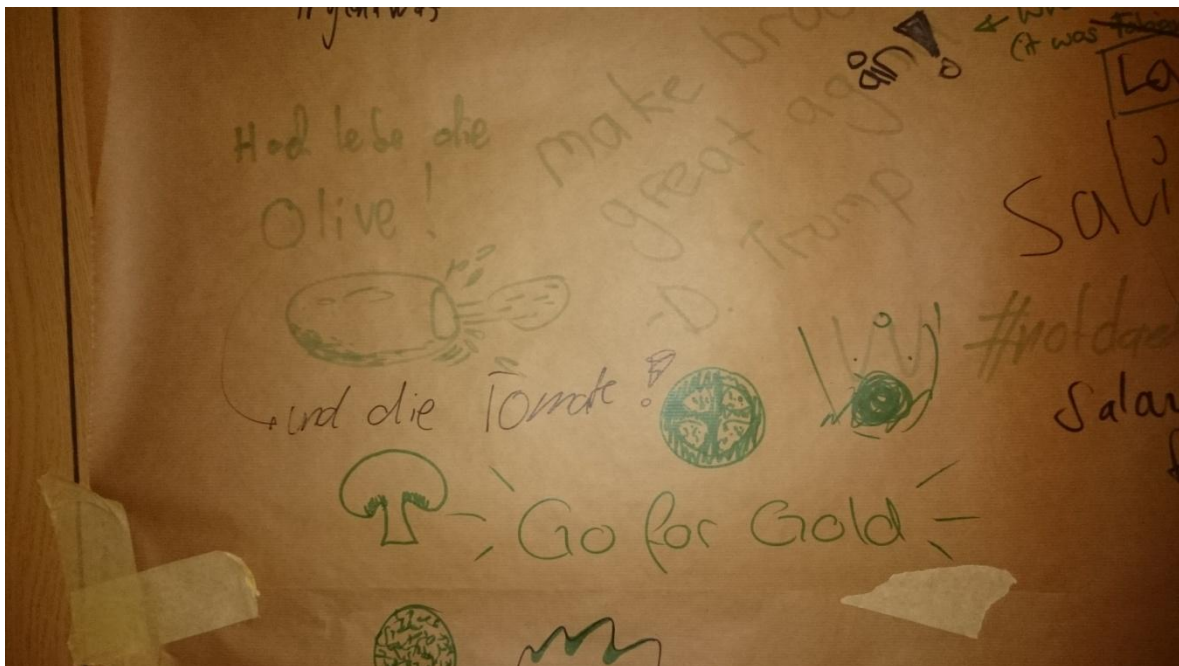
3   Changes

3.1   Changes made before the Playtesting Session

- The keyboard player was removed from the game
- Animations for toppings and the Oven were debugged and finalized
- The olive and the mushroom got a second attack (spin/meelee attacks)
- To make the game more interesting and the AI beatable, we implemented the "Super Smash Bros" mechanic that increases the damage multiplier of a character every time it gets hit
- The debug hitbox of attacks was removed
- The friction on the pizza was increased to increase a rounds' duration
- Small balancing changes for the attacks

3.2   Planned Changes after the Playtesting Session

- Add a second attack for the salami (falcon attack, which lets it shoot down onto another player when it's in the air)
- Make the olive a bit heavier and the tomato a bit lighter
- Remove the global cooldown for the two attacks and replace it with a cooldown for each attack
- A respawn delay where the player is invincible but can't attack as well