

Dev Diary #2 - Game Design

Hi Everyone, Yasuhito Baba here! I'm the Producer on *Super Monkey Ball Step & Roll*™ and I'm here to talk to you about the overall design for the game!

Since we already succeeded in making the iPhone version of the game, we could foresee another successful iteration using the Wii Balance Board™ as it offers fun and intuitive controls. The style of the game seemed to compliment the nature of the Balance Board perfectly, so we set out to make *Super Monkey Ball Step & Roll*. For the iPhone version, the game was controlled with the hands, but this time we wanted to see what it would be like controlling with the feet instead.

So while we were designing the game, we had to figure out the optimum level of difficulty by fine-tuning the controls to perfectly match the skill level of the player and the increasing complexity of the game as you progress. We continued to make adjustments to this until the very last moment of the game's programming. This was the hardest part in the development of the game that I recall and it was indeed the most important part in the process of the overall design. We definitely wanted to make sure that the game was thoroughly well balanced throughout.

It's always great to be presented with a "new challenge" but we are primarily concerned with if it is realistically achievable or not. As a game designer and creative artist, whenever I imagine some kind of new gameplay element based on new peripherals, I instantly think of lots of things I want to try. But you have to do more than those details to make a really playable game that people would want to buy.

So as a team we sat down and brainstormed, exchanging a number of ideas, and evaluated the following points from all angles. We initially came across many issues that we had to address such as:

- What is the basic gameplay flow?
- Could players feasibly get better at it?
- Is there a way to play well and play poorly?
- Can we guarantee improvement through effort?
- Are the controls intuitive? Do the rewards match the risks and challenges?

For the upcoming *Super Monkey Ball Step & Roll*, there were two major issues:

1. Will it be a truly refreshing and engaging experience to control the characters with the Wii Balance Board as it now will be controlled with the feet?
2. How do we reduce the difficulty gap between the two control methods of the Wii Remote™ and Wii Balance Board as the former allows precise control compared to the latter due to controlling the game with your feet becomes slightly more challenging?

Considering the above, we conducted various tests over and over and finally managed to perfect the game as it stands in its current state. We feel that it is now extremely enjoyable and we hope that you will like it!

In addition to thinking about the game design, there are other things that a Producer needs to think about and of course I am always thinking about games! There is a ton of inspiration hidden in daily life. Whether or not you realize what that inspiration depends on how much you can integrate what you see in to your job and whether you seriously think about these aspects all the time. In my case, since my hobby is horseback riding, I would say I could utilize my personal experience through my

hobby to improve the controls of *Super Monkey Ball Step & Roll* by balancing the body and moving your torso.

My advice for anyone who is interested in game development is that working in the games industry is pretty tough. You will often encounter hardships, because it is not always easy to please or entertain other people. But I don't think we can create fun and engaging entertainment unless we're having fun ourselves. So what becomes important here is that you have something which you can completely enjoy and that is close to your heart in order to keep on working on the project. In other words, you will have to have a positive mindset and be optimistic. Along the way however, you will need to listen to others and from time to time you will have to face moments where you must summon all of your courage to make decisions that might not necessarily be the right ones. To be prepared for such moments, it is very important for you to gain a lot of knowledge through experience that in turn allow you to enrich your outlook with a range of diverse values. As long as you have diverse interests and can be the kind of person who is both aggressive and yet rational enough to make your own plans, acting on these qualities to realize your ideas, will ensure that your true message and sense of fun will be conveyed to the end-user.

Thanks for reading and I hope you enjoyed this blog! Until next time!