

Assignment: Board Game Design
ITGM 121
Professor Gilbert
11/10/2016
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The Infestation of Mercer Base

Initial Concept

Our project began with ideas sprouting from our heavy backgrounds in video games of the MOBA genre. At first we were heavily considering translating the MOBA genre into a board game with heroes, spells, minions, and towers. We realized soon after that such a game would not work due to the lack of real time tactics and execution which were such core aspects of fast paced MOBA games. Therefore we shifted our perspective and decided to move towards a more strategic and tactical game based on turns and critical thinking.

We did not completely scrap our MOBA idea however. We decided to keep the 2v2 aspect, with one side being humans and the other being zombies. A zombie survival game; a theme full of suspense, excitement, and difficult choices. The question was what kind of direction would we take the game?

Early Iterations

We looked to other zombie survival board games and quickly found that there were countless other board games based around zombies. This was somewhat of an issue because there were so many iterations of what essentially is the same game over and over with different numbers and names. However, some games stood out such as *Zombicide* with its interesting leveling system. *Dead of Winter* also interested us with its incredible in game scenarios as well as its traitor-based coop, allowing for intense moments at various stages of the game. While we took inspiration from these games, these were quickly thrown aside in order to reshape our perspective to incorporate a more macro scale game. We wanted something completely different from all the scenario-based zombie games with RPG elements.

We then looked to Eurogames and found many elements that helped us transition away from the RPG. We took the card draw based gameplay of *Ticket to Ride*, the randomized board from *Settlers of Catan*, and mashed it together with the strategic capturing elements of traditional Chinese *Go*. While we did take inspiration from other games, it's hard to pinpoint exactly what games our game is most akin to, as we took small elements and pieced them together to create a new experience.

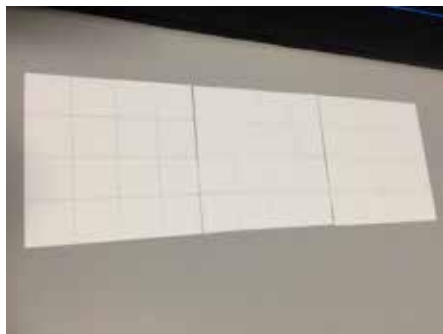
Our first iteration was created using bristol board paper, foam core, and note cards. It featured 2x2 sized board pieces in a 5x5 layout to create the whole board. This immediately proved to be problematic during production as there was simply too many pieces to put together a proper board. The setup process was extremely long and tedious with pieces often falling apart from each other and ruining the board. Therefore we adjusted the sizes of the tiles to be 4x4 in a 4x4 layout, meaning each individual board pieces were much bigger in size, but with more overall tiles on the board to play with. We felt that this enlargement would allow for easier setup and more strategic opportunities as the board would be able to accomodate much more action.



Playtest and Update Log

11/3/2016 - Initial playtests using the larger pieces were successful. We used a 3x3 formation for the board pieces due to lack of players and as an early stress test of sorts. The game ended with an extremely close score of 56 Humans to 51 Zombies. Took roughly 1 hour and 30 minutes to complete.

11/3/2016 - Justin then took the game with him to playtest with his friends. This time with the full 4x4 formation, the game felt extremely long and dragged out. There were too many objects on the playing field and so the strategic qualities felt muddled. Game was never completed as the play session was dragging on too long.



11/3/2016 - Temporary Rule Sheet

11/4/2016 - Board pieces were edited to be 4x4, in a 3x3 formation, meaning 12 squares across.



11/5/2016 - First playtest with a full 2v2, and with fresh players who had never played the game before. There were many exciting and high moments for both teams, and the playtest went relatively smoothly. There needed to be a lot of explaining however, as players often forgot what the rules were. No proper rule sheet existed however, so that was somewhat understandable. The game ended in a surprising 48 Humans to 48 Zombies. The balance may be in a good spot. Some issues may have been that the game in the last few minutes felt dragged on. There may be too many cards in the deck. However, the more cards there are, the more opportunities there are for the Zombie team to catch up. Judging by how the game ended in a tie, some other methods for speeding the game up may be needed.



11/6/2016 - Added a few special tiles on the board: Green tiles for faster movement and circle tiles for card draw. Added additional natural walls to help the Humans out against the now faster Zombies. A fixed center tile with a specific wall formation added in order to help Humans start their wall off.

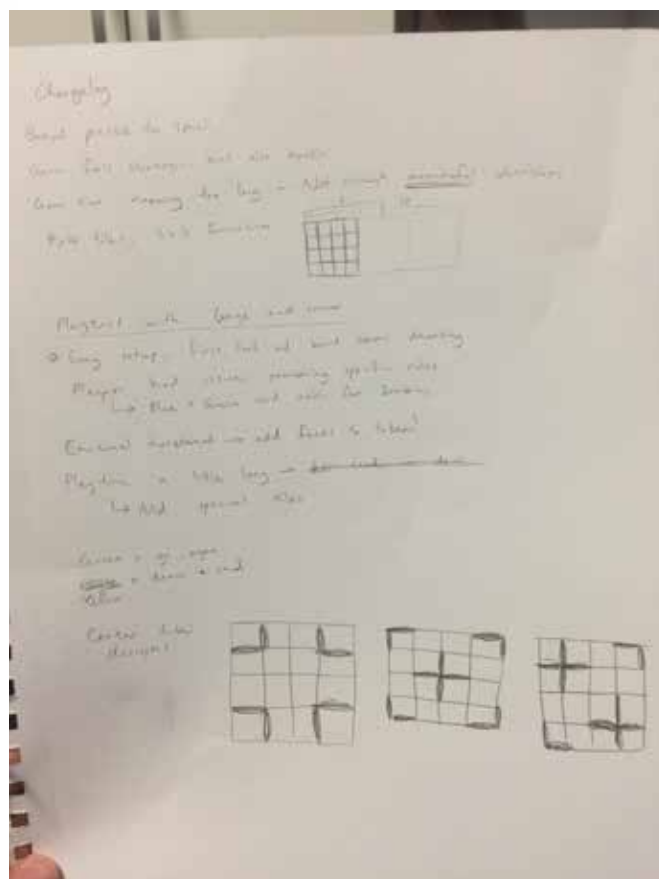
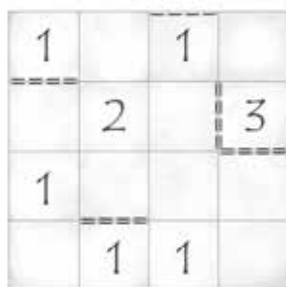
11/6/2016 - Playtest with members of the group. The game was much faster and exciting as players could now move and draw faster. The game ended in a close 53 Humans to 51 Zombies. The middle tile however needs work as the players never utilized the space provided by the middle tile. The walls of the middle tile worked smoothly with the other tiles in the game.



11/7/2016 - Added alternating Green and Yellow (formerly circle) tiles around the edges of the middle tile and also added 4 human tokens in the center of the tile in order to add more interest in center of the board.



11/8/2016 - Started production of final board. Added faces to the Humans and Zombie tokens in order to add flavor. Added light textures to the board pieces on photoshop, and created 15 different board pieces. Cards were also edited and added descriptions to help aid in the playing of the game. Began work on rule sheet.



11/9/2016 - Printed individual pieces and started cutting of foam core to produce the Human, Zombie, Wall, Stop, and Hide tokens. Printed images were glued to foam core. Edited rule sheet for grammar, aesthetics, and fixed some rules. Rule sheet printed for use on Thursday. A shoebox was secured for packaging.



Work in Progress



Final



Post Mortem

Throughout the process of creating the board game, it was interesting to see our game transform from idea into reality. It was a satisfying and exciting experience. More importantly, understanding the player was truly important, and we as developers were constantly trying to dive into the minds of the players and how they would see the game from their points of views. Some key questions we had were: as a player, do you feel that you have opportunities to formulate and execute your strategy? Do you feel that you have both clear and uncertain options in order to succeed? Ultimately, is the game stimulating and fun to play?

We believe that we were successful in delivering a more unique experience in a scenario that is somewhat overused in the industry. Our board game successfully incorporates strategy as a main feature in gameplay, and also offers high moments when one's strategy is executed well. However, we feel that perhaps we could have explored other genres and positioned away from Zombies for a more interesting and fresh narrative. Another point we think could have been worked on is lowering the number of pieces on the board. The game feels a little daunting at times due to the sheer number of tokens involved; especially to new players.