Transcript Q&A 9 Apr 2024

Vileskin (VS) & Greendude (GD)

Following questions about new season stress and if GD has had a chance to relax a bit since launch.

[GD thoughts on the topic that may or may not be exact words used but help fill in the gaps]

At times throughout the conversational text you will see long strings of "--------". This indicates that I could not make out the verbiage through context clues enough to be confident in what exact word was used, or the overpowering audio of the original Stream Vod made it very difficult to make out after several attempts.

~6:00 in on MackanMusic's video

VS: Are you in preparation for next season?

GD: Yeah, but nothing crazy. I am playing around with some skills and stuff. I always have some things' work in progress or finishing or stuff. I'm always planning for the next season and stuff. Unfinished skills and projects and stuff.

VS: You mentioned in the patch notes about wanting community feedback for the length of upcoming seasons? Have you decided yet?

GD: Definitely going to ask everyone. It has to be within a certain range. It can't be shorter than 3 months or longer than 6 months. And in terms of fine tuning that range is the community feedback. We're just going to ask for feedback. We're not going to be able to please everybody, but shorter than 3 months for me personally is too much to handle, and more than 6 months for some people is just way too long. We will see what the community says and it will have an impact for sure.

VS: The season isn't over yet, but I guess you can pretty much draw conclusions at this point already. One of the questions was, what features and changes are you the most and least happy about in this season?

GD: Yeah that's a good question. There's plenty of stuff I'm pretty happy with and even some things I'm proud of, but there's also plenty of stuff that kinda went wrong. Some of it isn't so obvious like within the way we handle things on the servers in the background and there are things not seen with some difficulties there I want to improve on. But, as far in terms of more player-facing issues I'd say obviously: The balance between Hemo and Whirling axes isn't perfect, it's gonna need some tweaking, I didn't expect to nail it first try. The thing that was surprising about Hemo is, I didn't touch the damage. If you have been paying attention to the patch notes, the damage has actually been the same, it was the same last season. So this huge spike in Hemo seemed to come from just the fact that it has a more satisfying AOE, you don't need to cast three times, but that didn't make a lot of sense to me that that would be the only reason. But, of course, one thing I had failed to account for was that in the past season, you actually couldn't get +Skills to Hemo on wands and shrunken heads and stuff, and that made a big impact. I knew that it would apply to Hemo, it applies to every skill now, but I hadn't considered it enough because that's where a lot of the damage came from. Even from the leveling perspective it's not hard to get a Hemo wand, and stuff like that. The other thing I wasn't too happy with, I already said this before, was that Whirling Axes is a great skill and I love the impact it's had and how masteries Skillers are something that people desire now, which is a big thing compared to vanilla, and so I'm proud of that. But, one of the things that I wasn't too happy with was that the fact whirlwind is the superior way to play Whirling axes. I didn't want it to be unplayable, but I thought the combination that the fact that Frenzy has a bonus, so does power throw, they both have a bonus to proc chance and on top of that whirlwind has a, what do you call it, a penalty to CTC right, [chance is lowered to one third the original] --- So I thought the combination of those skills getting a plus and whirlwind getting a reduction would mean that you'd still be able to do it with whirlwind but that it wouldn't necessarily be the superior choice. Because the whole point of that skill was—- (I can't make this out) –[to make frenzy more viable end game and frenzy/throw more viable leveling options to hell]---I feel like that didn't fare out so well. So something I wanted to ---------- I'm just so happy though because it opened a whole different, well different builds, playstyle's different, gear options different. (This particular section is hard to hear)[essentially it was still a partial success in that there are new build variants that have a different playstyle and open up new gear options (like mastery skillers, like wearing different polearms or dual wield weapons)]

Discussion of Hardcore viability without a shield in maps currently and other offensive/defensive/survivability comments about WA barb.

VS: The increased proc chance from Frenzy, I feel like it falls off by a lot once you have gear, because like, with my gear currently, I'm already at 92, 93% chance, so I don't rely on it too much. It is good on early levels I guess, when you don't have Skillers, torches, stuff like that.

GD: Exactly, that's the other thing is that I designed it as not just an endgame skill, of course I want there to be a leveling portion, the same way that, you know, Frenzy itself is already a leveling [option], not a perfect one, and then you have cleave, which is a great option, for Barbs, at least once you hit level 30. With Whirling Axes, I wanted it to be able to, as soon as you get it, and beyond that, you could level as it through Nightmare and stuff, but then I realized if the proc rate is super low, then it's just so inconsistent for leveling, but in the endgame it made it difficult because I could do the Amazon passives----[treatment where they use diminishing returns so the early points are useful but the higher u go the less you get however this feels bad cause it makes them less rewarding to invest it and you constantly feel you need to respec as you earn +skills to remove some of your hard points in it which become less valuable. [in hindsight that was probably the play because you still want to invest in it for the damage portion unlike amazon passives which have no other benefits]]------ I can't make any of this out ----- Maybe I should have set a cap on it, or have it start to fall off after the first 12 or 13 levels, and then I would probably scale it but I'm definitely going to go back to the drawing board there and figure out how I can make it so it's still strong leveling, because that's still the main goal first, and figure out a way for it to be at least on par with Frenzy but probably superior on Frenzy.

VS: Have you ever thought about moving some of the skills that are, not only on a Barb but also on other classes, a little bit more like, earlier level in the skill tree? Because, I don't think it makes a big difference in the late game, but drastically improves the leveling experience.

GD: Well for Barb specifically, I'm trying to fix it by, through introducing, these changes. So, Cleave is designed 100% for leveling skill. And obviously, Whirling Axes, I tried to pair with E Throw----[power throw (which can proc whirling axes & has 20% added chance)]--------- Added as a leveling skill, because it works but it's kind of hard to balance that one ——----- I have made changes to try to improve that experience, but probably you're hinting at E throw and whirlwind being before level (30?) ---But that is, not impossible, it just seems to me that it would be very, very powerful and it would also be powerful in a nonlinear way so it's one of those things like, once you reach it, boom, now you're really, really strong. That's something you have to, sort of be aware, for example, even like Meteor right. I know a lot of people don't like to play meteor endgame, but if you had access to meteor at level 12, I'd have to tweak the numbers completely because it would be overpowered. So, you just have to consider having a more linear, more smooth progression. So what I would like to do, instead of bringing Whirlwind down, I would like to keep it where it is, but make it where the Barb, on the way to Whirlwind, is a (Suitable?) [smoother (probably)] experience, through doing something more logical, smooth and linear, rather than just changing where the spike comes in, if you know what I mean.

(Some discussion on re-spec requirements on builds, and changes to help leveling progression without spending Akara re-specs too much in your build progression. Barb Mastery consolidation, Strafe and Multi-Shot leveling, and other intended directions for past changes.)

VS: Facets, the new facets: I personally think the Phys facet is amazing. It triple dips on Bowzons, where you get the minus, the plus and the reflect (deflect?). Already a little less powerful in other builds, but, have you, kind of like, tried to get some feedback on that or listen to conversations people had on how well or not those are received, or how many people are actually using them or integrated into their builds?

GD: yeah, definitely, they've been popular. I know that you know this, but I don't know how many people know this, but the way the facets work, is actually, is they exist as individual Uniques. The lightning facet for example, doesn't roll lightning, it just is a lightning facet in the game files. And so, and there's 2 versions of each, 1 that has a level up and 1 that has a death effect. What that means is, for example, in the original ones, there are like 8 entries in the game files for Uniques. And magic and Phys I added 1 entry each. So, they will have a level-up effect but no death effect. So that essentially means the magic and physical facets are rarer. That was kind of my way of testing them out right, and making sure they don't break. So, let me make it where they are rarer and see what people do with them and from there we can decide to remove them, or keep them, or add the 2nd one for each. One thing I didn't specifically like is just the fact that it is so strong, even like builds such as Multiple Shot, or builds like Warcry which is really what it's intended for, or Tornado, all the Tornado builds are pretty good already, things like that. Or, maybe more like a cast-oriented Shockwave, things like that. So, I'd be disappointed if it ends up best in slot for attack builds, but I'm still happy with the addition though, it's really cool and it's something else, another chase item, in that sense it's pretty good.

[to clarify what i meant by the facets type u get because its poorly explained by me: in the game files each type of facet is an individual unique item rather than a special item with rolls like say ormus. with ormus you drop that unique and then it rolls the +skill, but this isnt the case with facets. you actually drop a facet because each one is its own item they just happen to have the same name. you dont actually roll an element. this is a key distinction because it doesnt drop a facet and then roll 1 element out of 4 for vanilla and 6 for this patch. that would mean all elements including new phys and magic would be 1 in 6 which isnt the case. instead because it just drops one of the facets, each individual facet has a one in X chance to drop. theres 4 elements and each element has two variants so theres actually 8 unique facets in the game files which means each variant is 1 in 8 (lvl up or death effect) but 2 in 8 for the element because we usually dont care about the lvlup/deatheffect so you have a 2 in 8 chance that your facet is the elemental type you want. since i added phys and magic but only one effect, the chance of phys being picked is 1 in 10. same for magic. so all other facets are now at 2 in 10 while phys and magic are still 1 in 10]

(Discussion on how the old builds such as Bowzon hasn't changed much, but with the facet change has made the builds very different. Some commentary on possible concerns with making old vanilla Bowzon completely obsolete as a negative result of the facets. Commentary on these facets as well as things like Synth items not being able to fully know how it will affect the game ahead of time, and keeping in mind that everything added is removable if it's necessary to the players, balance, GD himself, etc.)

VS: And now that we've kind of touched some of those topics with the OP builds, or builds that you consider too strong, and other people, such as Hemo for example. (Are) mid-season nerfs something you'd ever consider?

GD: Uh, so that's a tough one. I don' t know if I can give a satisfying answer. Here's the thing, on one hand, if you commit to a build and then you, keep in mind here, I'm thinking of a casual player coming from work, maybe playing 3 hours and going to sleep. I'm definitely not considering you and I who obviously have more time to play, like you who no-life and people who no-life and that's fine. If you think about those people that play more casually, or not optimally, it kind of sucks to have them level up and get gear and do this and do that and suddenly there's a patch that nerfs your build. I try to be super careful and not do that and I prefer to not do that mid-season. However, if something was broken beyond belief, like there was uh, if you remember, with Fireclaw, there was a season, I don't know if it was 8x damage, or 10x or 16x damage, but there was a bug with it that allowed it to do crazy multiples on its damage. Then of course I'm going to intervene, especially with that one that's based on a bug. But, when it comes to, obviously Hemo, is probably what people are thinking about with that question. Yeah, the Hemo +skills took me by surprise and I wish I had done better with it, but it would also be awful to nerf it mid-season for all the more casual players. Now I also recognize it feels awful the opposite way, which is if you're not playing it, you might feel like you're losing out. There's definitely that side and I don't have a satisfying answer for that. My thought is, I just have to get it right next time from the start, and uh, yeah, that's…I don't have a good answer *chuckle*

VS: Since we've already mentioned them, Synth Items. What is your conclusion on Synth items. Did it work out the way you wanted to, or was it maybe a little too rare, or hard to get a good one?

GD: Yeah, so it was definitely too rare. I effectively doubled it, although it was such a low chance that it's still a low chance, so double sounds crazy, but I doubled the chance because it was…this is exactly what I mean when I say I rather err on the side of caution because obviously these items have a huge potential to be, not only best in slot, but even maybe twice as strong as the best in slot. There's some rare combinations that are possible and I've seen them myself by generating millions of them. Uh, so it's one of those things where the entire balance of the system is based on RNG. So, the reason people are not walking around with a million best in slot Synth items is because they're so rare. The combinations are, there is like a rarity tier, so elite items are (less likely to?) contribute or be the base, but there is no stat-to-stat weight, so a +skills is just as likely as cold res of spawning. And I feel like that's actually the more interesting way to do it because it would kind of suck if you finally got the item you want to Synthesize to the base item, and then you have a 1 in 10 chance of a best slot. That would feel awful. Instead, it's truly random, but uh, yeah basically its' balance via rarities, so it has to be rare. Some people were telling me they did 10 maps and haven't found one. Yeah, that sucks, but if you found one every map then uh, if you multiply your own personal odds and then by all the people on the server, they just, there will be just a ton that flood the market. You might be the unlucky guy, but we have other players, hundreds of players farming those zones, so I think I didn't nail the original drop rate perfectly, I think it's a lot better now. But, the item itself, or the system, is great because you're seeing people chasing these items that are so far away but so close, because any map can drop the perfect item. It's a rewarding chase where it's RNG based, but it's achievable, especially for the, and the builds I targeted the most, attack builds. Realistically you're more likely to find a high DPS weapon than you are to find a caster item and that's intentional. That's why Synth items are weapons, because I wanted to, like I am fine there still being chased items for casters who can obviously find crazy stuff, like a +5 Paladin wand or something. But, uh, that is so much more rare than getting a high dps 2-hander for melee build or whatever, so I'm pretty happy with that. I will say though, I'm not going to give too much away, the whole Synth system was a little bit different in the way I shipped it versus what I had in mind. There was meant to be some other aspect to it that would have been interesting. So if we decide to keep on synth items, I might just try to sort of see that vision through the whole way.

VS: Do you feel like you may want to tweak the level of the (Synth) items, like the level requirement for some. For example, I found a really cool Bloodletter, it had mana leech, 400 e.d., it still had the skills and everything but it was level 74 or something, which made it completely useless. It's not even a leveling item anymore. Is that something you may want to…?

GD: Well yes and no. I'm not going to say that the current level requirement, the way we implemented it, if you don't know, [its] the level requirement of the highest level requirement of the base and synthesized items. So maybe that's not a good system. Maybe it should just be a flat level 50 req, or 60 or somewhere around there. Or maybe it should be, depending on how many synth items got incorporated into it, I'm definitely willing [to get feedback and also to change that part. But, the reason why you wouldn't want bloodletter to be its base level req is that there are other items where it just breaks the whole game completely [at low levels].

(Discussions on broken leveling power spikes vs end game power. Greendude's opinions on long term effects of leveling, alt characters, trading costs and viability, other items maintaining relevance, ridiculous power creep, etc.)

VS: Is that something you might want to change, where there's a little more logic behind it, where it doesn't make sense to have Bow Skills to a lance or something. Or is that something you like because it adds more rarity to get the perfect one?

GD: Yeah, I think there's 2 things about that. There's the aspect of the chaos of it right, that can lead to these crazy items that are nonsensical. And I think that's kind of cool. It adds to the chaos, it adds to that feeling of - this item could have been anything because see how crazy it turned out this time.   So in a way, getting those bad ones that just make no sense, the 2-hander and it's got like some bow skills and then it has some caster mods that don't benefit you, and just craziness. But that also leads to making you hopeful that, okay then if the stars align, I can get this crazy item. But, if I start applying logic to it, I'd have to tweak the rarity of everything. I'd have to go back to the whole drawing board, because now it's like, okay well, if you get a weapon, then your chances of getting bow skills, bow related stats, or caster related stats drop to say 0, because there's logic built into it, so this is a melee weapon so it should have only melee mods. So, now your chances of getting a crazy weapon is so high that I'd have to even tweak the individual stats within the attack mods. So, like make it way more likely to get 10% IAS over 40% IAS. Then, what happens is, as a player, you're sort of blinded to the odds and the weights and so it might feel less rewarding because now every time I find a synth item, it has the stats I want, just low values. That feels kind of bad, at least that's how I predict it.

(Discussions of future use of Synth items or additional concepts added to Synth items in seasons beyond the current one. Feedback on its impact to vanilla, the mod itself, and if it takes away from the Mod. Discussion of endless possibilities behind the game, shoutouts to Necrolis, and the time it takes to perfect changes. Talking about the idea of seasonal mechanics before and after the Mod was completed, and how it's a new(ish) concept still being considered in regards to PoD and going forward to keep things fresh after balance and QoL changes.)

VS: (Referencing Diablo 3) – There was eventually a new kind of item where you had 3 slots and kind of like, extract powers of an item and put it in there to make it permanently active. I could see something like that replacing Mercs, where you kind of like put the Infinity in that slot instead of your merc. Because the Merc is stupid, the A.I. sucks. I'm fine with replacing mercs in general, what do you think about mercs?

GD: They're definitely not smart and you're 100% right about their flaws. This is probably one of those things that falls into, its Diablo 2, its identity, part of its charm. As frustrating as it is to have to revive your merc every time, mercs are fun to hire, put gear on. It feels nice to, almost like another gear chase where you're just not gearing yourself but you're gearing your merc. So it adds to the game for sure and I wouldn't want to get rid of mercs but I understand what you're saying. More like a character buff or global buff that you could apply. I get that. That could be done in the form of charms or something, or another system for sure. But I don't see entirely replacing mercs and honestly, Infinity is one of those items where I would never turn it into a character buff. It's already been problematic for me to balance around. But, I wouldn't want you to just get a free infinity. (Free in the sense of a free buff slot always up, not free as in cost).

(Discussion on lack of viability for certain mercs and builds such as Act 1 mercs, Fanaticism aura giving important breakpoints, and comments from Greendude spit-balling a few ideas regarding hiring mercs not just based on the buff the merc gives, but the A.I. temperament/playstyle. Also talks of possible key-binding commands to give the merc for basic improvements of the game A.I. Just concepts and ideas of making Mercs better in this segment without giving freebie/invincible/taking away from D2 too much in these changes.)

~1:00:00 in mackanmusic's video (I chose to summarize the next 15 minutes as it was less Q&A and just commentary and conversation around coding the game, small projects and the hard work involved

(GreenDude summarizes and compliments some of the intricate efforts of Necrolis and others on the team going beyond the limitations of himself and the Diablo 2 coding. He also emphasizes the difficulty of finding others with similar capabilities to bring on the team and always having interest in quality team-members with varying skill sets not necessarily requiring a huge Diablo 2 knowledge base or experience. GreenDude encourages feedback from the players and never assuming that everyone is aware of the bug that you are experiencing at the time, so make sure to submit feedback and bug reports.)

~1:16:00

VS: Do you ever feel like playing yourself, but you just didn't get to really play because you didn't have the time. When was the last time you really played?

GD: Definitely. Every season is like that. There was a time when we had 1 game server. Actually, fun fact, the New Jersey server we have today is the original server from 9 years ago when we set it up. It was the only server. The realm and the server were interjoined. And the reason I'm not giving up that server is because I was able to lock in the price and so it's the cheapest server. So long as I don't remove it, that one has a special place in my heart. What would happen at the season start is, I would just open the server and I was already in queue with everybody and could just play. I could just play and sure, maybe I'd have to stop to deal with some issue or something but at the time, the changes were a lot less extensive, we had fewer players and 1 server, so the amount of chances we had to stop playing and deal with something was really low. That's definitely changed, and nowadays there's always something even as simple as observing the servers are getting full in a certain region and I just have –[to stop what im doing/playing and deploy more servers]--- I can't play just knowing that someone can't get into the server, but hey GreenDude's having fun right now. No. That would feel terrible. So, I would have to fix the –[situation? forgot]--- Even people DM'ing me to reset their password because they forgot their password. Yeah, that sucks for me to get a DM 1 minute before [go] time saying 'hey, I forgot my password'. Yeah, maybe you should have logged in 2 days ago at least to give me a chance to reset your password when things are less hectic. But what am I to say to that player? Like, that player can't play right now because he doesn't know his password. I can't ignore it and just start playing. I'd feel terrible. Yeah, I don't' get to play, but one thing I would say is I live vicariously through people. When they stream, and especially patch notes day, everything is worth it. Everything is worth it on patch notes day. There's nothing more rewarding [after] all of the bullshit you have to deal with because 2 players are fighting with each other and you have to moderate it. Or a player died, and he thinks it's due to lag and he wants his items back or he's going to quit and tell other players not to play on the server. That stuff is literally things that happen and that's shitty and it feels bad, but it's all worth it —[when players see the patch notes and they super excited on reddit and discord or the livestream. makes it all worth it in the end]------

(Discussions on the origin of Path of Diablo via PoE players wanting a break from long seasons and the development of its popularity as well as GreenDude's relationship building in that regard.)

VS: Did you kind of like, raise some awareness from companies with PoD that, maybe, contacted you and wanted to hire you or something because you made this game out of nothing basically and it's so popular. Was there any company that kind of like 'You got what it takes' ---------But like any other games. Anyone ever ask you?

GD: Yeah, there's 2 companies. Theres just an Indy developer who wanted me to look at his game and give an honest opinion. And then later on decided to hire me a little bit to work on his game. Unfortunately it didn't work out just --------[something about limited budget so it was a very short term gig]------------ So he's just an indy developer. ------------------------------ There was another company, that wanted to make a, basically like diablo 2 but for crypto. You know in vanilla, there was unfortunately a lot of real money trading, and for some people that's almost the way of playing Diablo 2. ----- So these guys had an idea of "embrace it", but turn it into you trading yourself directly to players -------------- So, they had that. They actually had a really interesting ------[game design unrelated to the crypto part]--------- Obviously the crypto thing, people can get really turned off by that. And especially with the aspect of pay to win, technically. So, I definitely understand that. But they actually had some good design decisions that took modern ARPGs into a different direction and I helped expand on that a lot and I just really enjoyed those conversations. But, it didn't end up manifesting or do anything, because you know, they had to raise money ----------------[and the crypto crash happened so pitching to investors went nowhere so with no funding the project was canceled]---------------- So it was just like a pipe dream and design conversations. Its never going to be real until you get an investor and that just never materialized.

(Conversations about Diablo 4 stash mechanics and opinions on it as well as Diablo 3 character naming and uniqueness behind it.)

VS: Speaking about respecs: You can reset in Diablo 2, but are you happy with the system? Do you like it that we have to farm Baal to get an essence or do you ever plan on maybe implementing an alternative system. Not 'alternative' as in the old system is gone, but maybe an additional way of acquiring a token?

GD: That's a good point now that were talking about 'character permanence'. One thing I wouldn't want to do is make it easier to Respec. So, for that question, "no". Building a character that does a 'something', and then later realizing, "I want another character to do something different". I do want that process to be "okay its better to level up a new character" so, perfect example is, in Vanilla, I had an MF Sorc and then I had an enchantress sorc to enchant my friends' different characters. -------------------------------- So, I had this idea that I had a character to this and a character for that, ----------------------[i think i said i had a hammerdin pally and a fist of heaven pally with gris set with full lightning facets]---But, what I enjoyed about that was I couldn't just take my other paladin, because I had a classic Hammerdin, and I couldn't just instantly respec him to the Fist of the Heavens just to see if it works for fun. No, I had to rebuild a new character and that's a good thing and I never want to lose that. So, I don't want to make it easier, but at the same time I can appreciate that the Essences is not a good design system necessarily. It's not bad but its not good. --- I would have maybe preferred, you know, again if I was building D2 from scratch, I would have made it so that a random drops from maps -------------- or something like that. But at the same time, it is what it is and that's how it is right now and I don't want to make that easier. So, if I add an alternative, it would make it easier. Short of adding an alternative route but then nerfing the existing route, I can't see how you can add an alternative and NOT make it easier. But, if someone has an idea for it, I'd look forward to it. [transcript falls apart here so ill just summarize my thought: yes essences, and the way they are farmed now, pushes tele sorcs to have an advantage and that sucks for other builds, especially the ones that are broken and need it most cant farm it really. its flawed but if we did change essences to be farmable another way, i wouldnt want the other way to be easier or to make it more common because that leads to tokens being cheap and easy to acquire and may hurt character permnanence. so instead if want the alternate way to get tokens to be still rare or hard to farm but targeting other builds. so a perfect example is a very rare chance a map boss drops an essence then it means in the economy there wouldnt be too many more essences but u as a mapper could eventually get a token made which u can then use on another char at some point rather than buying it. this is just a made up example but u get the idea: the alternate way should not make them more common but just rely less on tele sorcs that boss farm. so if i did change it, it would be more along those lines. all that said im sure some sorcs like the idea of having a sorc that is focused on building wealth for yourself by farming and trading or having a uber kill that focused on doing uber services and gaining wealth. these dedicated roles can be very healthy to the community and build diversity]

(Vileskin's idea was to add an old relic as a corruptible location that can drop a token instead of another relic at the boss. GreenDude likes the idea but also comments on keeping lower levels in mind when trying to address the problem and not just 'mapping level' players. It's more of an RNG solution but doesn't solve some of the problems revolving around why players need to respec. The solution is good just not all encompassing.)

*Answer given also applies to Key farming.

(Discussions around Teleport, Sorc power and reliance, as well as Diablo 2 build variety and character variety. GreenDude's opinions on the Immunity mechanics are also discussed here very briefly.)

~1:50:50

VS: Hardcore vs Softcore: Every season within the last few years, I see the hardcore community getting smaller and smaller. Do you see yourself in the role of intervening or doing something about it, or is that something you say 'I can't do anything about it because it's the people's decision...' or?

GD: Well, uh, I mean, there's probably things that can be done. One thing I did notice just for general trends towards softcore ----------[people are in general trending towards softcore as we age]------------- So, I played a lot of Path of Exile. Path of exile had a huge hardcore community, it might have been bigger than softcore during closed beta. --------[Back then]-----It was hard to find a Softcore streamer. Fast forward to today, and like everyone I know who plays path of exile plays on Softcore and all the streamers play on softcore. Well, not all of them but a lot of them do. Some of them still stick to hardcore and I respect them a lot for it. I definitely think hardcore -------[is more thrilling and encourages more theorycraft/strategizing]---------------- Its my go-to way to play. But I can't blame all these streamers and all these players for going to

softcore, because, you know, that's either that's what they need to do, because they have a job, they have kids, they don't have a lot of time to play on a full reset or -------------------------------------- I understand as well, because when I played hardcore, I was no-lifing the game, whether it was during high school or whether it was during college. I wasn't spending my time wisely, I was playing these games and trying to go crazy on hardcore, right? Trying to be #1 and stuff. I did a lot of Path of Exile racing and stuff, and that's hardcore, because when you die you lose the race and you can't finish it. So I enjoy that aspect and I definitely want to help hardcore when I can. But I also notice there's a general trend of us getting older, honestly, and uh, realizing that it's not as fun to reset when you have limited amount of time. So, that's the first thing. First, I want to note, want to acknowledge that some people cannot be converted back to hardcore no matter what I do, just that their life is different. In terms of helping hardcore…well, one thing that doesn't help is the fact that there were a few issues with maps and being really dangerous for everybody, but especially to a hardcore character. There were some bugs there, and that's something that's my fault that I have to just, make sure that that doesn't happen (again?), because that discourages hardcore play. So, that's uh, something I can fix. But, in terms of, and you and I have talked about this and this --- I don't even know if this is doable, but we've talked about how there might be ways to help hardcore by making like, where everybody on hardcore play who dies just switch to softcore.--------------That's a cool idea. I definitely think that's a good idea. But its not something I've looked into in terms of feasibility. I'm definitely open to feedback on it,and if there is something people think we can do for hardcore, I'd be willing to do it. One thing I will say is that I definitely designed the mod with hardcore in mind so when it comes to build balance, I always think hardcore, I don't think softcore. So, things like dexterity as a synergy or energy as a synergy, I'm thinking first, 'What values could a hardcore player achieve realistically' rather than…because, you know with softcore, technically speaking, you could just go over 500 dexterity and, you know, it wouldn't matter. So I try not to get hardstuck in terms of softcore ——--things. --------- I don't envision it, instead, I just try to focus on---------[balance the numbers for hardcore]-------------------

VS: That makes sense, everything that works in hardcore, works in softcore. It's just that I talk to a lot of hardcore people. The issue is, it dies off so quickly, trading is impossible, like straight up impossible. And on top of that, you kind of also want to force us into grouping up for red maps which in theory is good and fun, but in practice it doesn't work. We don't have the type of community on hardcore to group up, we don't have people to group up with. So, do you think it's fine that we then just say 'we can do red maps for first 2 weeks and after that, no more red maps for hardcore because there's just no people left'.

GD: Well, I don't know what you mean by 'it's fine'. It's not me saying 'that's okay, that's what I want', but there is no other alternative. What am I supposed to do, a mid-season patch where I nerf red maps so that they're easier on hardcore and ------------[something along the lines of making the maps hard for 8 man hardcore at season start and then nerfing red maps mid season so that u can solo play red maps when the community is smaller, i said it as an exaggerated like obviously unrealistic solution to the problem he pointed out]-----------------. There is no clean solution, it's more of a 'this is the way it is' and not me saying 'this is good'. ---------------------- But, here's the other thing, we had a long hiatus right, the servers hadn't reset for a long time. That didn't help, and we have to rebuild that community and one way to rebuild that is to be consistent.

(Further discussion that is difficult to make out exact wording. Balancing challenging maps versus impossibly hard maps. It is difficult to balance group content intentions and allow 'solo-able' content at the same time with the same maps. "I am choosing between the content will be hard for the first 2 weeks and then impossible, or easy and then…normal." Further discussions regarding ideas and plans to try and address the map design system. Ideas of using an experienced balance council for group input on refining the map designs and challenge choices. Comments such as layouts, monster types, map size, all relating to metrics for each map tier and how to separate solo and group content map logic. No confirmations, just discussions on brainstorming ideas.)

VS: I already said this to other people complaining about maps, in general, is that you don't have to do red maps at all. Loot wise, every map is the same, it's just really hard to get a high density white map. Like, you will not really see that many icy caverns at 1k plus. You can see it sometimes happen but not really very often. The problem is fixing that is also not really a thing you can do because if you increase the average density of a white map it will then just result in everyone just doing the white map because why do a harder map when you can do an easier one. So it's really not that easy to fix it, but what I like about red maps is (GD: "Exactly.), I like to slowly push myself to 99 solo, and that is just not really doable only doing white or yellow maps so you are kind of forced to do some red maps.

GD: Yeah and that goes back to the problem of like, wanting white maps to sort of be like, beginner friendly. Someone who has never done maps can jump into a white map and successfully do it. Then you have people saying white maps suck for me because I can't get the density I want, or the XP I want. But, that's part of the design right. I'm not saying it's good, I'm just saying the affixes for white maps are literally easier than the affixes. The affixes are tier-based on the color of the map. A white map can never get 200 Phys, a white map can never get curses, amp damage and that's intentional right? But, that also means it cannot get the same density percent and XP percent, because those are tied to the difficulty. I can't just make it where white maps can roll high density for free, because then people, like you said, people just won't bother. The whole point is that you have to challenge your character when rolling a hard mod to then get the higher percentage. So, there's no way to solve what you're saying. There's plenty of ways to improve the system and we can definitely look at that, but there's no way to straight up just make everybody happy. Yeah, I know you can't reach 99 with white maps, but then if you could, then what about the new players who hop into red maps and just insta die and get turned off by the system. The white maps are not meant to be grinded by expert players or groups, they're meant to be Beginner, stepping stones to Yellows. I don't necessarily have a clean [solution] there, but one thing we definitely want to improve is choosing the right layout and monster types, first, starting from the ground up, assigning the layout to the tier, the monster type to the tier. That would help a lot because then, we could add some of the harder mods back to whites because the monster types are easier or the layout is smaller. It allows us to potentially change the tiers of the affixes because now that map is just easier. -----------------

VS: Yeah, well it's funny that you said that those white maps are meant to be stepping stones to other maps, yet you put Chargers in every white map. Which is, like, making white maps harder than every red map out there by default.

GD: Yeah, so there's a few things there. First off, some of the monster types that were picked for the layouts before they were even decided what color they would be. So, the Chargers were put there before that map was ever white, yellow or red. That's just because each map was made in a vacuum, and then came the white, yellow, red to have different tiered affixes. Then, I used player feedback to decide which layout goes to which tier and so it just happens to be that way. So, I know now that's ---------------- Chargers are in the White map and that feels wrong. That's part of the reason I want to rework entirely where the layouts are or even what monster types are within them and were going to do that with some sort kind of like ------[player council where we pick veteran mappers and we have a group discussion about what relic layout goes to what color and then what monster types goes into them knowing their layout+color]--------- So it's definitely not in a good space, but yeah, basically I had to retroactively apply that white, yellow, red to the existing maps and that's why it doesn't feel perfect altogether.

VS: Isn't that like, at least for me from an outside perspective, a rather minor change you can put in right now?

GD: Yeah, in terms of time wise or terms of difficulty wise, I can do it any moment. But, the thing is it has to be more thought out than that. It has to be, like, every map needs to have their monsters hand picked and then you have to consider their resistance implications and A.I. implications. Yeah, I could just swap the chargers out for fallen. But, what does that mean? Does that mean chargers aren't in anymore maps, and about Fallen, the A.I. is horrible. That basically means there's no difficulty with Fallen. It really has a profound effect on the difficulty and the thing you don't want to happen is where white maps are easier than Hell Baal. Because remember even though I said whites are like stepping stones to yellow, whites yellows and reds, all of them should be the hardest content in the game. So, Hell Baal should not be easier than white. Like, if you had a clean white map with no affixes, it should still be deadly, somewhat.

(Some opinions on the difficulty of white maps relative to Hell Baal, points made as alternatives to the Hell Baal difficulty and not necessarily the next level past it. How challenging should they be and incentives to do white maps over doing Baal runs at all. Discussions on the expectations of level progression and difficulty progressions of the average player.)

VS: I just feel like, there are certain builds that get into those maps super easy and certain builds that don't (GD: For sure), and maybe changing a few things, like Chargers for example, would make it easier for everyone to get into them. They uh, they should be gone. As a melee, you don't want to be in there, you know, I would much rather farm Baal.

GD: Yeah, but I didn't disagree on that part, just to make it clear. I said that, once we do the council, we're going to pick a layout first, then handpick the monsters for each layout. So that the odds of a Charger ending up in a white map are, like, zero to none, you know. So, we're in agreeance there. I'm talking just conceptually, white maps should be harder than Hell Baals. I'm not saying it has to be through Chargers, I'm just saying it should be hard, harder.

VS: --- Generally speaking, do you think curses are a good idea in maps? Because to me right now it feels a little boring right now, as the meta right now is Plague or Silence on mercs, for <u>everyone</u>.

GD: Well, I can't say that like, I think having to run cleansing always and in the limited ways that it's available now is great, I'm not going to defend that. But, yes, the hardest content should utilize curses, absolutely, because not only am I basing the whole mapping system off of Path of Exile where definitely there are curses there, but could you imagine maps without curses, how easy mode that would be. And, I know that like, I want to make it clear that this is meant, and I maybe failed in this goal, but the goal of these maps is that it's the hardest content in the game. How do you achieve the hardest content in the game and not have curses at all? Now, I'm not saying the curses are perfect, that the proc chance, the levels, how often they spawn, all of that, I'm open to feedback, I'm not saying any of that is perfect. But, I cannot imagine a world with no curses at all, so cleansing is always going to be strong. And honestly, you know what, the fact that cleansing is good is actually kind of nice, because in vanilla, cleansing is useless.

(Conversation of an idea regarding making monster-specific curses that do not correlate exactly with player spells and tooltips. Also, the example of how Meteor operates in maps versus the Sorceress Meteor as far as an adjustment made for maps. Some hardcore player examples of map affix challenges and bug fixes. Meteor's burning ground damage and stacking meteors falling all looked to be the same, and the damage would all hit simultaneously or stack burning damage. Clarification that hot fixes and bug repairs for maps do not always retroactively affect existing maps, or even if they did, it could potentially corrupt the entire character. Some explanations on unintuitive mistakes regarding post-drop and current-drop item changes and misunderstandings of how it all panned out. Clarifications on how fixing a huge issue with a map's boss worked and developed itself.)

VS: We need some gear on the PTR if we want to do testing. People are not willing to farm gear to be testing. Is that something you would give us?

GD: It would depend on the PTR. Like, the PTR we just had was basically, you know, because of the hiatus, that PTR was basically its own Season. So, that one, it didn't make sense. It's like, people should just play throughout the game. The other thing is, that PTR was for major reworks of systems --------[so having ppl start from lvl 1 is important so that every aspect of the game is explored]----------------- It is impossible to know

where the next bug will be. If we had just given people level 99 with full gear, I guarantee some of the early [levels] bugs would never have been found. So, it's one of those awkward things that I can acknowledge for sure, you don't want to grind for stuff, but what I would say to that is, we need to consider the impact that will have on early and mid-game. If people just outright skip them, that's' not good. Second, you don't need best in slot gear to test something, you just don't need that, it's not true. It just depends on what you're testing. For map affixes, sure, I can understand you'd want pre-built characters because maps are difficult so without gear you can't do them. But, like if you're testing Molten Strike rework, or you know, whatever, the damage nerf to Fire Trapper, you don't need best in slot gear to test whether that's working as intended or if there's a new bug. It's like, I don't have a clean solution to that either. I would have to either start the PTR where nobody has gear and you're forced to level up and then bring in the free gear later. But, then the question is, would people just NOT level up if they know the free gear is coming. You see my dilemma, right? -----I need people to test all aspects of the game sometimes, whereas other times I need them to test the harder stuff, it's not always the same. It depends on the PTR. I've done it in the past, though, I mean you, yourself helped me get pre-made characters, remember?

VS: I just feels like when it comes to changes to existing skills, like nerfs or whatever, or even the Molten Strike thing, the only thing that really matters is 'map viability'. That's all it comes down to in this game currently and I kind of feel like that's also your goal I guess, every build should be viable in maps. I don't think you're going to be happy with "Yeah Molten Strike is perfect, I can clear pits super fast but maps I don't even touch them, because it's impossible to run them". That would probably be bad. So in order to test something like that, even the Molten Strike rework, we would need the gear that it takes to run maps to try it, if it's good enough.

GD: But here's what I want to clarify right. To test whether Molten Strike is good and if the damage numbers are good, you don't need best in slot gear. From that part, like from a mechanical perspective or from a damage-balance, numbers, at least on the character sheet, you don't need best in slot gear. Now, in terms of map viability, sure, you can argue for sure and it's a good argument that you need the gear to test like, how good it is in maps. But, I also have to be careful not to just give you the best in slot gear, and you just fully experience a skill and therefore next season you don't bother playing that skill, because you already have experienced it. Like, a lot of the content for people returning to PoD is to try the new stuff.[to clarify here what im saying is some PTR we need ppl to play from lvl 1 so no free gear, others maybe we give gear but its never going to be the #1 Best in Slot, maybe the #4 or 5 best in slot. so maybe a spirit sword but not a hoto or maybe for Fend test, a non-eth steel pillar but not an EBOTD. this way u can still test maps and the build's viability in end game but u still can look forward to the new season to see the build in its absolute final form without spoiling urself.]

(Summarizing the final points of this topic as trying to agree on 'enough help' without just giving GG gear to everyone. Being able to 'test' versus 'fully test in maps' discussions and the different complications behind certain builds needing specific gear to work at all, and where the 'compromise' would be in the range of gear quality. "Keeping motivation to see the build through all the way.")

VS: I have a question from Flyers, actually from the Reddit post. He said that Necrolis gave you the ability to do a lot of things. This – Changing potions, like throwable potions, something you'd have in mind? Like those explosive or poison ones, I think, is that something you could see as a thing in the viable future, them having stats or something?

GD: Well', first' before I answer that question let me clarify something. Necrolis helps in 2 ways, right. So either he implements straight-up the change I ask him to implement, so I say "can you do this for me?", "yes' ', he then phones it in and bam. Then, there are changes he does where he just opens up my toolkit, so that I then can go in and make changes that I couldn't do before. So, uh, trying to come up with a good example on the spot. Oh yeah, so Desecrate this season, your Convocation will cast Desecrate wherever you land, right? You know what I'm talking about? Yeah, so that is a change I could not mod into the game myself before, but he has improved my tools so that I then can do that[Necrolis himself didnt add that change to Convocation, i did but he coded the tools to allow me to do that, thats the other way he can help]. But, the potion one does not fit inside my toolkit. There is no, he has not implemented any change that makes me able to do potions better. So, the answer is 'No', I cannot just change potions like that. It would require either him doing the changes [himself fully], or to add them as part of, you know, the flexibility of me to be able to mod them, and in either case it requires Necrolis' time. And Necrolis' time is a valuable thing. There is a limited number of seconds he can work on this and it's a very premium currency, I have to be really smart about what I ask him and his time has to be spent very wisely. So, for example, shared stash is a no brainer because every single build will use the shared stash. But, modifying one skill or one item, that's kind of a waste of time because they will only impact the one thing and so that's something that I do as little as possible. Of course I would like him to change some things that impact only one skill. Just to come up with a random example, Rabies - Rabies when you kill the monster, it doesn't spread the Rabies. So, yeah that is something I would love for him to fix and he has the skill to do it, it's possible to fix but it will take time, right. He has to spend the time to do that and for those who don't know, he is a volunteer, he has a day job, he's working 40 hours a week somewhere, and then he comes home and wants some free time for himself. On weekends, he has free time. So he can't be working 24/7 on this. We have to utilize his time well, so, like for me it feels like a waste to go 'can you work on potions' or 'can you work on this one skill' like Rabies. Like, yeah that's on the to-do list for sure, I would love at some point for him to fix Rabies, but its not priority, its not on the top of my list. And I should mention, Necrolis works on things that you guys will never hear about, never see about, because it's not player-facing, or forward-facing. Sometimes, he will improve things on the server side so that I will have an easier time. Think about my moderation tools, or database stuff, maybe there's a bug or annoyance we've had for a very long time for how the database works. He'll fix it and then my life just got improved hugely, but you guys will never hear about it. So, he's working on that stuff, too. It's not just the stuff you see that I say he worked on. So, with that in mind, potions, maybe there's potential there, maybe it could be fun, maybe we could do potion builds. But, do we really want him to spend his time on that? For me personally, I feel the answer is No. So, I'm sorry to disappoint, but that's how I feel about potions right now, it's way down the list. ------------------------------------- I would prefer he works on…so here's a better example of a better use of his time. I could ask him to work on potions, or I could ask him to work on mana-cost formula so that I can make dynamic mana costs. Because, right now the way it works is very linear. I can say, I can set the starting mana cost and then I can set the mana increase or decrease per level, that's it. That's all I can do. That feels horrible, because imagine a skill like, Cleave for example. I would love for Cleave to basically, at level 5, just no longer cost mana, or maybe I want it to cost no mana for 10 levels and then it starts increasing a little bit of mana per level so that in end-game it has a fair cost, but in the leveling phase it doesn't cost anything. I cannot do that right now with Cleave. But him working on mana-costs would actually allow me to do changes on many skills. That's a better use of his time rather than just Rabies or potions.

VS: Okay, uhm… You apparently, I remember it myself, mentioned something like invasion bosses or something last season, but it was never added to the game. Is that something you still have on your mind?

GD: It's definitely something that I'd like to do. I wouldn't say it's done forever, it's just I need time, I need some more ---------[time to iron things out]--

VS: A lot of people have been asking about SLAMMING (We don't say corrupt here) Eth items? What are your thoughts?

GD: So, I'll reiterate my reasons before. I don't know how strongly I'll defend it. Like, I'm willing to [change my mind], if everybody feels it, then so be it. My reasoning before was this. When you corrupt a weapon, you're going to get some damage mods. So, basically the weapon would get more powerful if you get a good corruption, right. So, ideally then you would want to corrupt Eth items, because those are the highest damage potential for mercenaries. So essentially there'd be no downside, for example, to corrupt an Eth item, because for you as a player, you find an Eth item, and say okay, I can't use it, assuming it's not like a base you're looking for, -for like a merc. If you were trying to use it for yourself it's like okay, well this is a trash item, it landed Eth and I need it non-Eth. So I'm just going to YOLO corrupt it at no cost to me. There's no downside. And if it lands, you give it to your merc and if it doesn't land you throw it away you planned to. So, I'm always trying to make sure that items I rework, or items that I add do not benefit mercs.

VS: What about Quick Cast. People ask me this almost every day. Is it something you're willing to do or looking into?

GD: It's definitely something we are willing to do, but that requires Necrolis' time. I cannot do it myself, he would have to spend the time to do it and it's also not easy, and I want to stress this. It would take a significant amount of time, and it's a difficult task, it's not something that can be thrown together in a day, so it would not only take a lot of his time, but it would require a lot of PTR testing. So, I don't really have a timeline but it's definitely something we'd like to add in the future, because we didn't, at least I didn't, foresee how much of a wanted feature it was. Because, you know, I haven't played D2:R, so I haven't tested it. I have been living the regular D2 way forever and I have no problems with the current system, so it just seems to be one of those things where once you try, you don't want to go back. But because I haven't tried it, I didn't foresee the (impact?) of it. So, it's just one of those things that wasn't on my radar, to be honest.

VS: Speaking about Summoners. Now, everything is possible, with enough time, but is there maybe, like a way, of making Druids cast all 7 wolves in one cast, but only in town so it's not OP when mapping or something. Because one of the things that I really hated when I played some Summons, which was very little, I always tried to find an MF route that goes on for at least 15, 20 minutes, because if I only do like, Eldritch Shenk, it's not worth it, because I spend triple the time summoning all of my stuff every game rather than actually MF'ing.

GD: Yeah, for sure, but the problem is, that requires Necrolis' time. So, the answer to your question is yes, it's doable, yeah probably, but again it's just one of those things where it's, how do I use his time, what do I prioritize. So, having summoners instant cast 7 wolves instead of one, while in town, I would probably put it low on my priority. I understand, and like, anyone who is listening to this PodCast and is playing summoner, feels different right? It's so hard, because everyone will have a different opinion on what's priority, but if I apply the logic, which I think is sound logic, which is that his time is valuable, we should spend it on things that would impact many builds, then by that logic, multiple wolves thing is kind of like, low priority.

VS: Someone asked just a few minutes ago in chat about Next-Hit Delay and Necrolis already kind of answered that and said, 'Probably next season, depends on time'. Do we have any more information on that? What exactly are you looking into doing, like removing it, just reducing Next hit delay on certain abilities, or what?

GD: First of all, outright removing Next Hit Delay would be a Necrolis type of thing, that's not something I could do. People might not know this, because I don't know how much I've wrote about this, but reducing Next Hit delay is something I've done almost everywhere possible. One of my goals, this is years and years ago, maybe 8 years, 7 years ago, was to find every instance of next hit delay and reduce it if possible. So, it's already at a point where possible, I've improved it, so the only way to push it further is either, you know, like I said Necrolis' time, or outright remaking the skill. For example, when I designed Whirling Axes, the original idea with Pulverize was to just have some sort of flat damage physical proc and that one had next-hit delay. But, I went back to the drawing board and I made Whirling Axes, because Whirling Axes has no Next Hit Delay. You can spam that one no problem. That is a perfect example of a skill that was designed in mind with Next Hit Delay to try not to include it. It's always on my mind in terms of improving it or not using it a lot, but outright removing it is beyond my ability. (He hates NHD.)

(Some discussion on examples of attempts made to reduce visual clutter as much as reasonably possible in the game.)

VS: Why 30 ID scrolls in a tome, what was the idea with this number?

GD: No comment.

VS: Slam Anni's pl0x?

GD: No.

GD: New idea for Torch and Anni trade sink. What if you don't guarantee a Torch or Anni drop when you kill them? (Yikes.) [this was a joke but sarcasm wont come thru on the transcript. it was following his idea of corrupting torches and annis so they can sometimes brick resulting in a torch+anni sink hole. so i said that would make them more powerful but what if we just made it so that anni+torch dont always drop, then we successfully reduced the number in the economy *heavy sarcasm and many laughs*]

(The discussion here is regarding how GD feels about Dclone and the challenges in designing the fight. Confirmation that "prevent monster heal" should affect Dclone and is probably not working correctly at the time of this video. The arena size is small because the A.I. to Aggro the fight is poor, and being able to modify the Diablo A.I. is not something Greendude is capable of changing. It is possible with Necrolis, but right now it cannot be changed in that way. One thing he likes about the fight is that the small arena space makes managing the large Army a skill of doing Dclone in and of itself, especially without a Teleport. He wants the army itself to be a run-ender, it's just that some builds just avoid the mechanic entirely. Also discussions on the limitations of working within Diablo 2's inherent mechanics that prevent free reign in design or fixing design flaws.)