Future of Haxball

The issues

Rush and I formed this group made from figures in the Haxball community across Europe and South America to try one last time to help improve the game and finally set it on the right path. We all love Haxball, but we believe that gradually it has become a chore to play due to how one-dimensional the game has become at the competitive level. We want to be able to remedy that, and in doing so make the game more welcoming for new players, in turn allowing us to re-grow the community. We are prepared to help you in any way, but we need you to be willing to listen to and cooperate with us. The game has immense potential and it's still not too late for the big change in the right direction. That being said, the current state of the global Haxball scene is pretty sad. Let me explain.

For a while now I have been complaining about extrapolation, fake X, and the people that exploit these things, but I realized that these are merely symptoms of the wider problem of the game's poor optimisation caused by browser limitations (or so I understand from our previous conversations). The immediate problems HTML5 had after it's release were varying input lag, inconsistent performance from day to day and disproportionately worse effective lag over even the tiniest of ping differences. You released extrapolation three years ago in hopes of fixing at least one of these issues, but even as it has become apparent that it doesn't address the core issue (your words), it still remains part of the game, compromising the experience of playing for many of the long-standing competitive community, and alienating potential newcomers with the counter-intuitive style of play that extrapolation engenders.

In the early days following its release, extreme values of extrapolation were rarely used, but as time passed, more and more people started noticing the advantages of doing so. Fast forward to today and you have a completely broken game where if you want to compete on the highest level you absolutely must adopt this meta and use extrapolation yourself. For those determined enough to accustom themselves to the jerky observed player movements that high extrapolation creates, it becomes significantly easier to perform skills like wallbounces and one-touch passes consistently. The observed individual skill of each player might now be greater, but there is now less to distinguish between players at the competitive level, as every player has effectively the same skillset. It also doesn't allow for optimal positioning as you can't even trust what you're seeing in game - the only reason why it's still used is that the tradeoff of not having to deal with randomly miscontrolling the ball is still favourable, even though players have to often simply guess where their teammates and opponents are. On top of that, higher extrapolation makes it easier to abuse fake X consistently and considering everyone is forced to use it, the

gameplay looks chaotic - though for players familiar with extrapolation it is a very predictable form of chaos, since everybody is playing under the same conditions. If it took a player 250 hours of gameplay in the Flash era to reach a good level, it only takes perhaps 50 hours today using 100+ extrap. to do what the top players are doing. Players that in the past would be a lot further from the top players' level are now by virtue of using extrap. able to compete much more readily. On flash, everyone played on 0 extra, +30ms ping/delay because of flash, lower fps (high refresh rate monitors weren't mainstream back then) and we were all of course less 'skilled', but best players always had that extra room to improve - it was HARD to reach that level for others, being good meant something, now it doesn't mean anything anymore, just put 100+ extrap. and play for a week or two..

The solution

Considering the main cause of all of this is a poorly optimized game, limited by browsers, I think the solution is quite simple - a standalone Haxball app. (the Haxapp that already exists is not an actual app, it's built on Electron which is also used for Chromium, so it's actually a lighter browser and doesn't fix core haxball issues) already talked about it almost exactly 2 years ago and from what I understand it is the only way to get rid of all the performance issues we're currently facing. You would also get to control every aspect of the game and wouldn't be limited by browsers. Now, I know that isn't easy to do, but there's plenty of people in the Haxball community that are knowledgeable and willing to help you in any way possible - if you allow us to help.

If/when we'd have access to the app, we could enter a testing and transition period just like with the transition from flash to HTML. If everything works well, it would finally no longer be necessary to use extrapolation - we would have a great foundation to once again start working on expanding the community, promoting the game to new players, because currently none of that is realistic. I can't even imagine what the newer players think when they first try the game and see everyone basically playing a different game to what they see, just guess what happens when a newer player asks for tips to become better, more skilled - "try extrapolation, it makes you faster". Anyway, it's pretty obvious that despite all the effort and enthusiasm from the global community, the game is still gradually shrinking; newer players are 'welcomed' by these issues and the game's state is just not good enough for any of us to recommend the game to anyone.

I'm not alone in thinking that this game has immense potential, I don't think any game comes closer to simulating a real sport than Haxball does, it's simple to play

and enjoy, but hard to master and can be extremely competitive, it could potentially be a big esports title in the future, since it's still not too late to turn a new chapter.

Think about the economic aspect of things. I'm sure you earn a decent amount of money from Haxball ads, but it will only keep shrinking, unless something is done to help the game and it's community. You could earn 5-10x more if the game takes the right steps (transitioning to an app, possibly getting added to a platform like steam, being promoted on YouTube and other sites); the player base can grow exponentially from here.

The doubts

Now, again, this is my last try at helping the game. I enjoyed playing it for so many years, but it simply became annoying, boring and uninteresting to compete when there are so many issues in such a simple game, that's why I formed the group to gather different opinions and perspectives. Obviously there are a lot of people who would agree with majority of what I am writing here, but there will also always be those who simply don't want to give up something they got used to, be that using high extrapolation values, the advantage they are getting versus low extrapolation players and I understand that, after all it's not their fault the game allows for such a meta, it's a competitive game and there are many who will do anything to get a competitive edge over others. It's still very apparent that extrapolation's advantage in the gameplay is an unintended consequence and not a longstanding feature. People who use high values use it to be more skilled, to do fake x more consistently, not to combat input lag (which it doesn't even really fix).

I am hoping the app solves the performance issues and people will be able to feel the positive difference compared to HTML5 gameplay and we could once and for all get rid of extrapolation.Though, without the app and better performance, it's hard for me to imagine these people would be willing to agree on extrapolation removal (if it was even possible at this point, without people bypassing it).

That being said, I want to show that many of us feel the same way about this matter and that even a lot of those who abuse these to gain advantage today would prefer not to, but they're simply forced to, if they want to continue to be competitive.

I just want to end by saying that the game/community really needs this to at least give us a chance at surviving/succeeding in the future. I want to show you that we're in this together and we all want the same thing, so please, cooperate with us.

We will also be making a petition and a site with information on a lot of the leagues/communities just to show you how much support we have and that you shouldn't ignore the issues anymore.

Examples

Videos :
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GAw5Vql0h94 - Futsal match on 0 extra
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LumqMWwKhdU - Real Soccer match on 0 extra
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h9CIfzd-Gxk - Real Soccer match on 50 extra
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ySjHk3f1IDU - Real Soccer match on 100 extra
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QWYIGhTShLk - Fake X on 0 extrapolation
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jvzzZ9Q24H0 - 3def match on 200 extra
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MRfh3RadFI8 - Real Soccer match on 0 extra #2

Gifs :
https://i.imgur.com/vmRLtxu.gif - opponent's fake X on 25 extra
https://i.imgur.com/p4ekiSc.gif - fake X on replayer
https://i.imgur.com/behaA2Y.mp4 - fake X on 0 extra
https://streamable.com/f0zqg1 - opponent's fake X on 120 ping, 20 extra

Discussions :
https://github.com/haxball/haxball-issues/issues/329
https://github.com/haxball/haxball-issues/issues/412
https://github.com/haxball/haxball-issues/issues/728
https://github.com/haxball/haxball-issues/issues/755
https://github.com/haxball/haxball-issues/issues/768
https://github.com/haxball/haxball-issues/issues/773
https://github.com/haxball/haxball-issues/issues/799
https://github.com/haxball/haxball-issues/issues/822
https://github.com/haxball/haxball-issues/issues/916
https://github.com/haxball/haxball-issues/issues/1054
https://github.com/haxball/haxball-issues/issues/1095
https://github.com/haxball/haxball-issues/issues/1120

https://www.reddit.com/r/haxball/comments/i4v3f0/extrapolation_abuse/

https://fm-haxball.co.uk/community/viewtopic.php?t=8448
https://fm-haxball.co.uk/community/viewtopic.php?t=8694
https://fm-haxball.co.uk/community/viewtopic.php?t=8927
https://fm-haxball.co.uk/community/viewtopic.php?t=9378
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https://fm-haxball.co.uk/community/viewtopic.php?t=10028
https://fm-haxball.co.uk/community/viewtopic.php?t=10163
https://fm-haxball.co.uk/community/viewtopic.php?t=10962

Summary

In short, we want a better optimized Haxball, which will be a foundation for expanding the player base in the future. We want an equal and fair competitive environment where the skill and level of players is representative of their hard work and time put into the game, not by using a command to increase a variable.