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Methods and the User Experience

Game Testing Final Report

DODGEBOT

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Introduction

This final report shall be the culmination of all the work that was completed during playtesting for this game during the course's duration. This final documentation highlights an overview of the game, the variables that were chosen for assessment, as well as the criteria that those variables were tested against to observe their effectiveness, usage and the way they function within the game as compared to other games.

Body

The game "DodgeBot" was selected as the subject for the playtesting assignments for this course, to not only acquire experience with playtesting, as well as increase observational skills and the creation of documentation, to formulate a thorough, well informed conclusion when evaluating the game, the choice of which methods were best suitable and gave the game its most accurate representation was made, as well as which variables would be the most relevant and affect the game's user experience and its overall makeup.

The variables that were chosen to represent the game and where it interacts most with the player are the game's menu, the game's modes, the usability of the game, the controls, the movement within the game, the actions that are available to the player, the game's goals, the stages within the game and lastly, the overall game aesthetic. These variables interact with the player in sometimes more ways than one, whether affecting the game visually, user interaction or even affecting the player's progression within the game.

On the other hand, these variables shall be evaluated against multiple criteria in order to gauge their efficacy, purpose within the game and seeing how durable these variables are during stress and fault testing. These criteria include smooth implementation referring to how well were the variables integrated into the game, the usage referring to how well can these

variables be manipulated by the player as well as ensuring their purpose is achieved, measuring what benefit does the variable bring to the game such as is it a necessary or unnecessary addition, then stress and fault testing each variable to exploit any bugs or errors, and test their overall durability. The final and possibly one of the most important criteria to evaluate the variables include comparing the expected results before testing the variables, to the actual results that were observed after the variables were tested.

For this final report, in order to gain an overall synopsis of the variables as well as a general understanding of how they exist within the game, the criteria of comparing the variables' expected versus actual results shall be highlighted.

1. **MENU**

The Menus for this game are quite minimal as there is only the splash screen containing the options: Find Match, Create Match, Quit Game”, upon selecting “Find Match” you will be brought to a server/game list that would showcase all of the games/servers available for you to play, selecting the “Create Room” option would not only allow you to name your newly created room, but choose between the stages, lastly, the in-game menu after pressing “ESC” would only allow for you to resume or leave the match.

- **Expected Results**

Game having at least a minimum set of options that would encompass visual, auditory, controls and sometimes tips/how to play settings available to the user.

- **Actual Results**

The game has three initial menu options: Find Match, Create Match and Quit, with only two subset menu items once in game. Thus, the game does not match the expected results

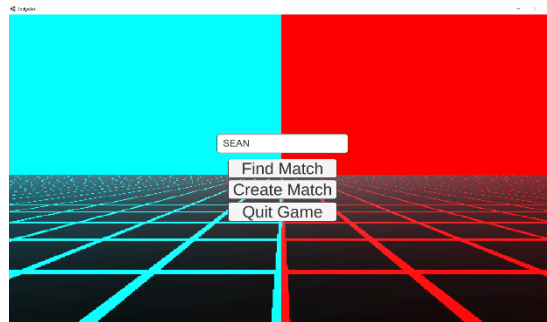


Image Showcasing The Splash Menu and Options Available Once Game Starts

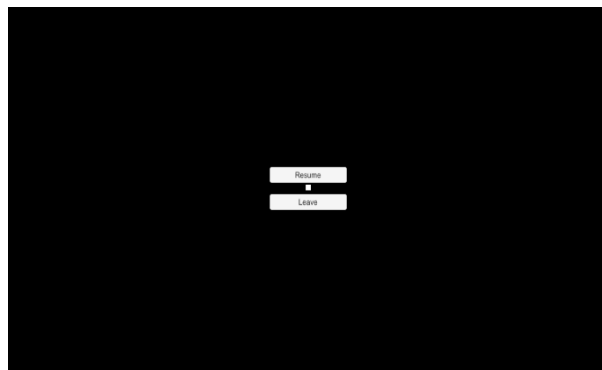


Image Showcasing The In-Game Menu Once “ESC” is Pressed

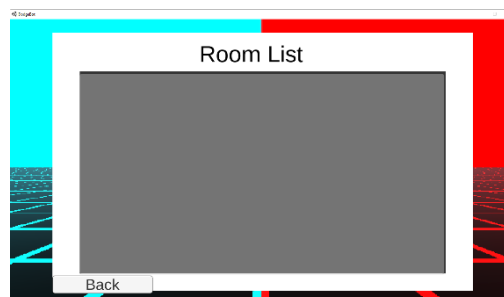


Image Highlighting The Room List That Would Show All Available Online Games

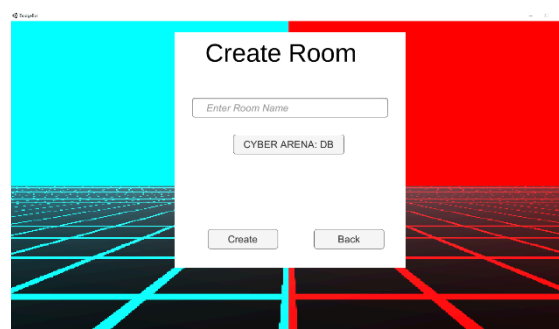


Image Demonstrating The Selection Of Both A Stage and Mode

2. MODES

Within this game, besides being able to find and create your own match, you can also select your stage as well as the mode. The player can cycle through three options including: “Cyber Arena, Cyber Arena: DB, and The Divide Bar: DB. Upon selecting “Cyber Arena”, you are brought to the “Cyber Arena” stage, choose between being on either the red or blue team, depending on which team you assign yourself to that team would begin at 20, while the other begins at 21. On the other hand, if you choose the “DB” version of a stage either on the “Cyber Arena or The Divide Bar”, both teams would begin at 4 points and if you get hit by an opponent’s ball, or a teammate, or your own ball, the team will lose a point and you will be teleported to the spectator stands.

- **Expected Results**

When it comes to the modes of a game, it can vary as a game can be fully based upon a single mode, while others have alternate modes to give the game variety. As a result, once this single mode or multiple modes are well executed, then the game modes were effective.

- **Actual Results**

Game had sufficient modes available for the user to play, including a 20 point and 4-point game. These are coupled with 2 stages which adds variety to the game, thus adding value. As a result, the game modes matched the expected results.

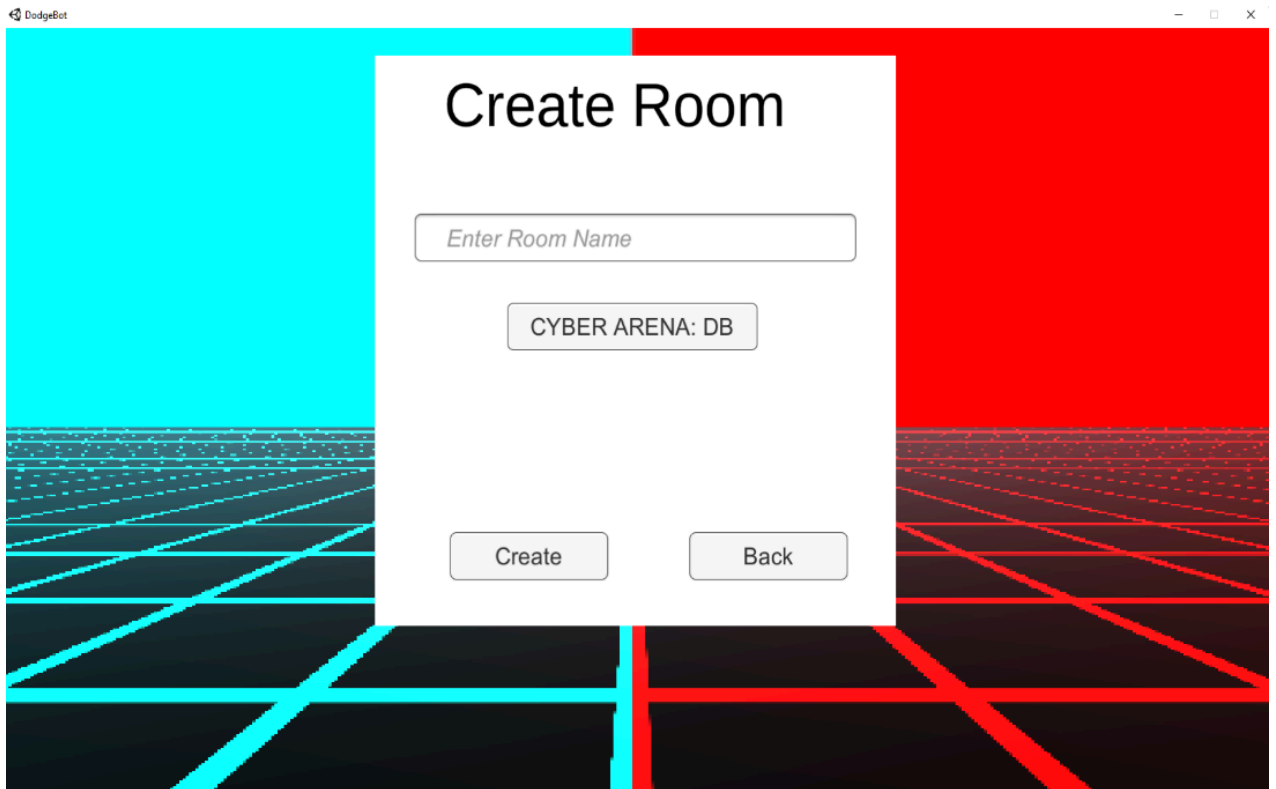


Image Showcasing The Selection of Stages and Modes

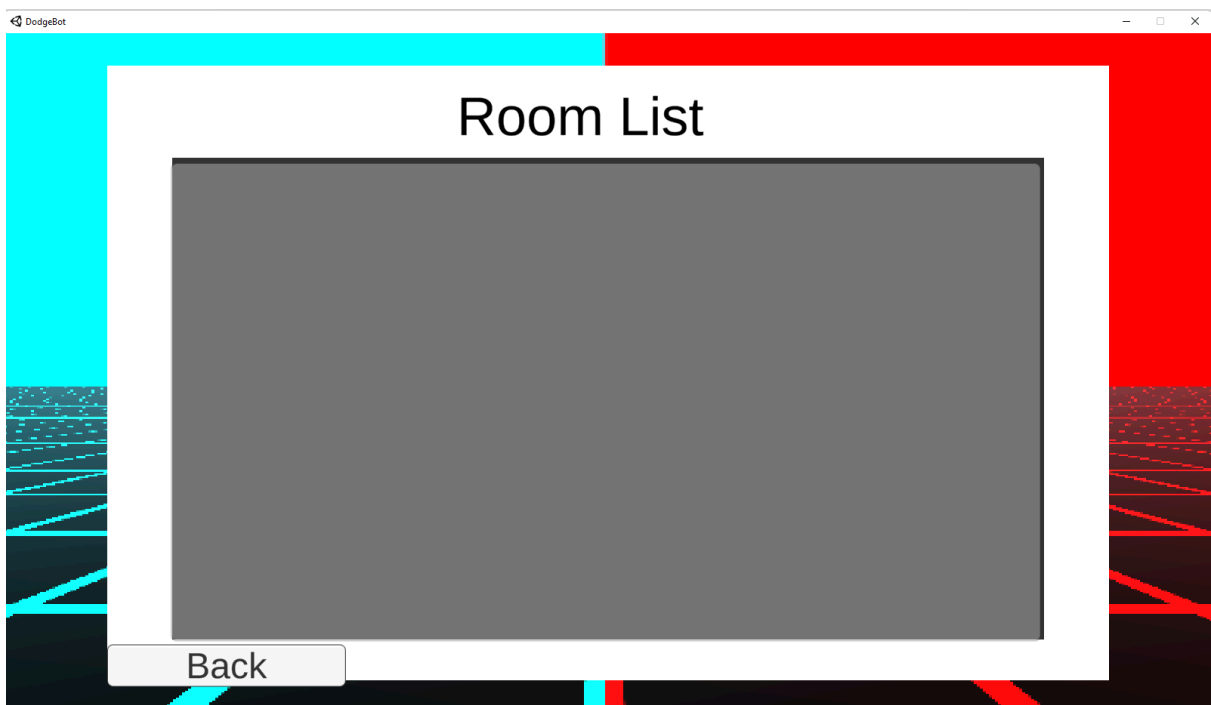


Image Showcasing The Room List That Would Populate Once Other Matches are Being Held

3. **USABILITY**

This variable focuses on the overall user experience throughout the game, taking into consideration all the other variables, as well as how feasible is the game on a whole.

This would encompass the game's complexity, accessibility, how well each aspect of the game feels to the user and their senses.

- **Expected Results**

The game should prioritize its player base, as well as their needs, accommodations, user experience and the game composition into consideration.

- **Actual Results**

Overall, the usability of this game is playable, but can be heavily improved.

The visuals of the "Cyber Arena" stage is slightly visually overwhelming, it is possible to go outside of the game's borders, if the player falls outside the game's playable area, there is no reset/respawn mechanic, the look sensitivity is far too high and it is possible for your own ball or a teammate's ball to hit you, and cause your team to lose a point or eliminate you. Therefore, although these are some changes that can greatly improve the game's architecture, the game is usable and does meet the expected results.

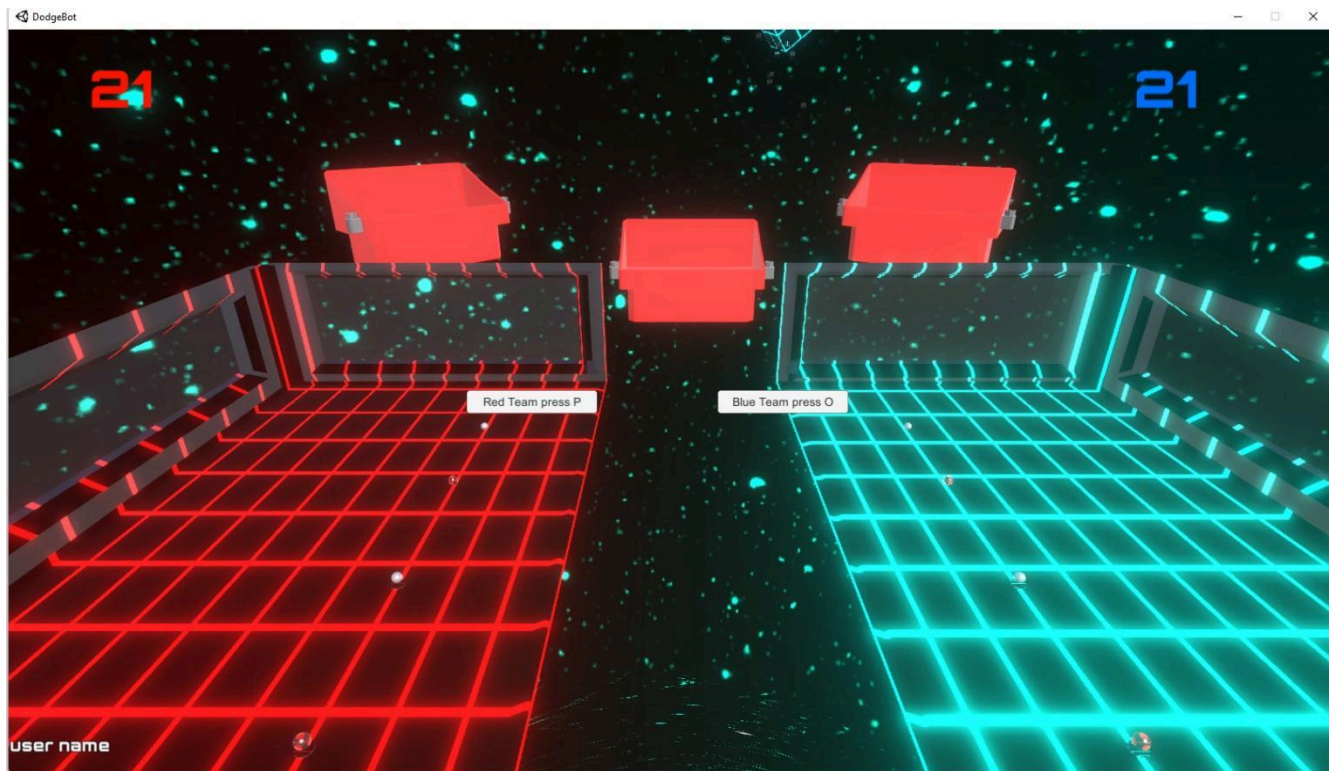


Image Highlighting the Prominent Gap on The Stage “Cyber Arena”, As Well As Its
Distracting Color Scheme

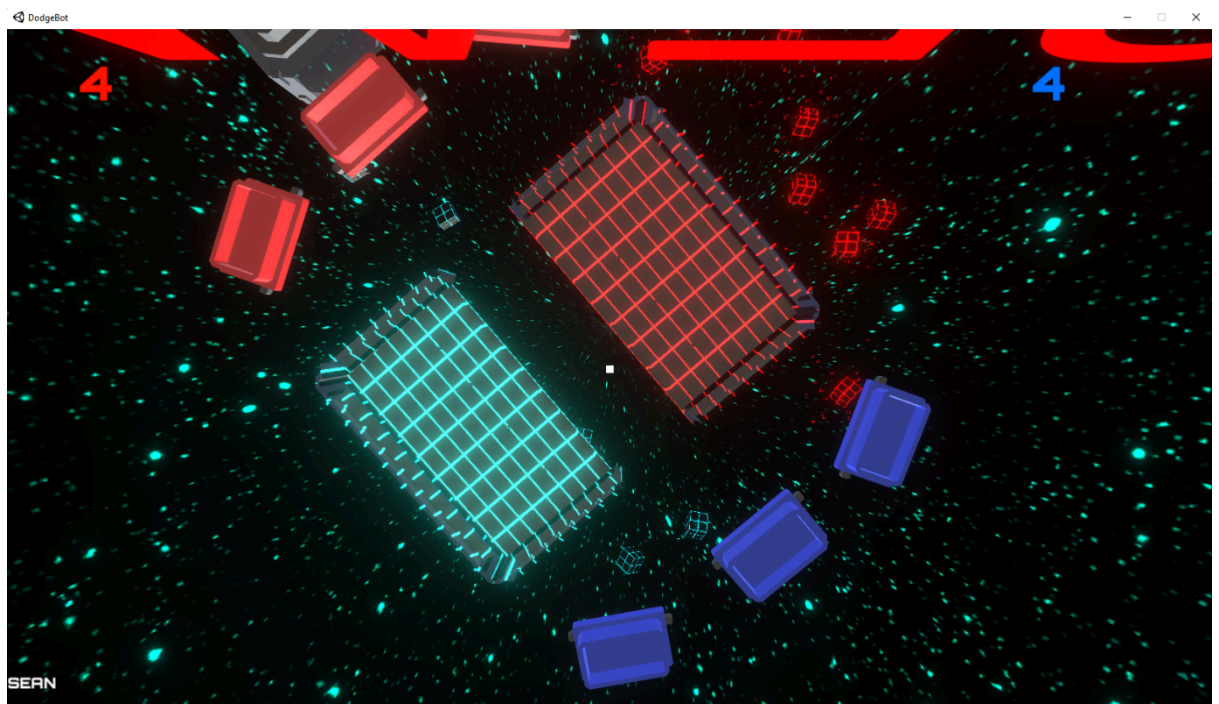


Image Demonstrating Underneath The Map After Falling

4. CONTROLS

As we are aware, the controls within a game are one, if not the most important aspect of a game. Hence, no matter how realistic and visually advanced the game's graphics are, or no matter how many effects, gameplay features, storyline, or who developed the game, if the controls of the game are ineffective, unresponsive and not matching the other aspects of the game, then nothing shall matter.

- **Expected Results**

A game is meant to have controls that are either easy to pick up, grasp the understanding and use it effectively and efficiently, or have the player grasp the understanding of the controls after some instruction and practice.

Moreover, controls need to be responsive, appropriate for its intended action, and not be too complicated or conflicting with other controls.

- **Actual Results**

The controls of the game include the peripheral of a mouse and keyboard, whereby within the menu the mouse's movement is used for navigation, during the game you utilize the "WASD" keys for movement, "Spacebar" to jump, mouse to move the camera and orient yourself and finally, the left mouse button to throw a dodgeball after picking one up. Overall, these controls do work for the game's purpose, however the look sensitivity is quite high which not only makes you turn/spin extremely quickly, but it even disorients you substantially. Nevertheless, the game's controls are usable and effective to fully indulge in the game's experience, thus its actual result matches the expected result.

5. **MOVEMENT**

Movement like controls are one of the most important features within a game, that again no matter how technologically advanced the game's graphics are, how immersive and well written the storyline is, or how many gameplay features were implemented, the movement and controls should be prioritized and ensure they are fully operational and appropriate to the game.

- **Expected Results**

The movement within a game should be fluid, responsive and appropriate for the game its implemented in. The movement should not be a complex process, unless it is within a game that incorporates complex movement, then a period of practice and instruction shall be required. Furthermore, there should be an option when it comes to movement, to alter the camera sensitivity as in some cases it may be different for everyone.

- **Actual Results**

The movement within the game feels fluid and responsive to the player's interaction, using the "WASD" keys for up, down, left and right, respectively. Moreover, the mouse is utilized to move the camera and orient the player, however the sensitivity on the mouse is quite high, resulting in any slight movement making the camera spin uncontrollably. Lastly, through using the "Spacebar" to jump, it can be observed that it feels quite floaty and lessened gravity. Nevertheless, the movement and camera scheme are appropriate for the game and are usable. Thus, the actual results match the expected results.

6. **AVAILABLE ACTIONS**

The available actions within a game refer to the various features that are available to the player. These would encompass the various gameplay features, systems and processes that are implemented for the player's use or their user experience.

Furthermore, these features should not be too complicated for the player to grasp its understanding or conflict with the user's experience.

- **Expected Results**

While it isn't a necessity for a game to have an abundance of gameplay features, it is important that the features that are within the game are well implemented, they're effective and efficient in the purpose that they are offering to the user and most importantly, they do not conflict and negatively impact the user experience.

- **Actual Results**

The actions that are available to the user includes movement using "WASD" for forward, backward, left and right, the "Spacebar" to jump, the "ESC" key to bring up the game menu, the mouse's movement to control the camera and orient yourself, and lastly the "LMB" left mouse button to throw a dodgeball. All these actions serve their desired purpose through gameplay and do not affect the player experience and in conclusion, the actual results match the expected results.

7. **GAME GOALS**

Within a game, there must exist an end point, or rather the point where you feel accomplishment and satisfaction. This of course refers to the goal/s of the game, the point where the game would roll the credits, or allow the player to further progress during the game. Thus, the game goals should be realistic and most importantly, attainable for the player base. Lastly, the goals should be appropriate for the game and can be broken down into categories such as: primary or main goal, sub or secondary goal, and moment-to-moment goals.

- **Expected Results**

The goals should be appropriate, realistic and most importantly attainable for the player. Lastly, the effort expended to attain these goals must be appropriate to the reward or the progression earned.

- **Actual Results**

The game follows the traditional gameplay of dodgeball, whereby two teams compete to eliminate each other by hitting or tagging themselves with dodgeballs. Within “DodgeBot” there exists both a 4 point and a 21-point game, whereby if you are hit in the 4-point game you will be eliminated and teleported to the spectator stands, however if you get hit in the 21-point game you will just be respawned, but your team will lose a point. As a result, the goal of the game is simply to eliminate all players on the opposing team or deplete their points, thus the actual results match the expected results.

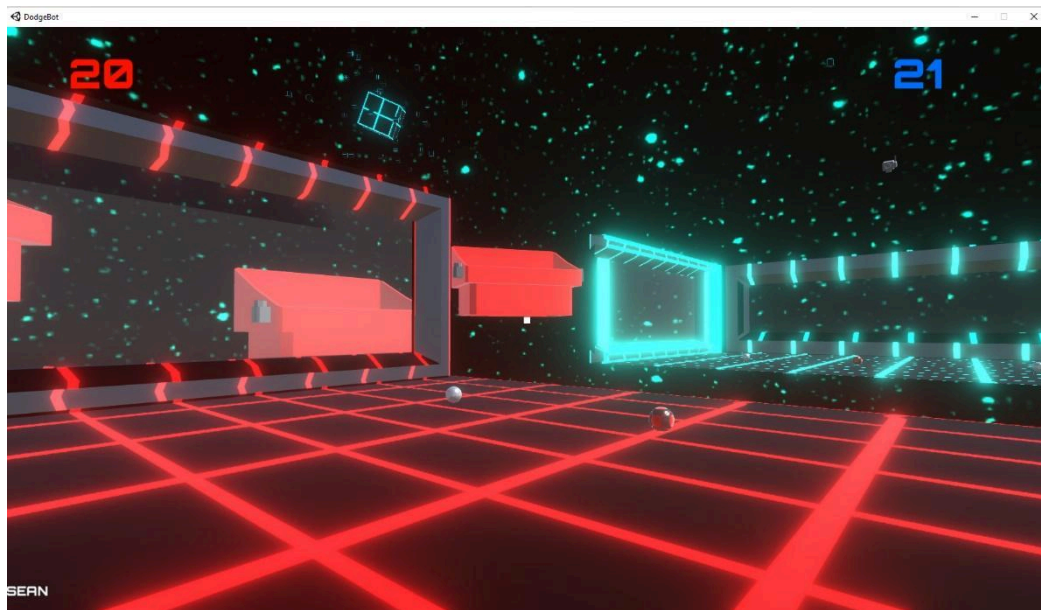


Image Showcasing the 21 Point Game

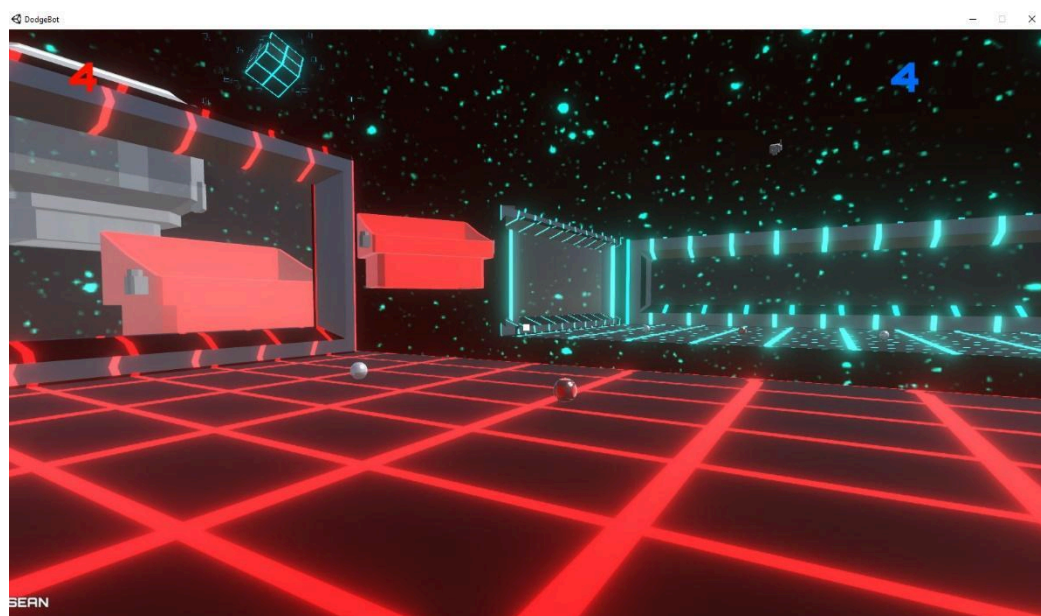


Image Showcasing the 4 Point Game

8. **STAGES**

This is a particular variable whereby not all games have different maps, levels or stages. Thus, in games where having stages or levels are apart of its foundation, these levels, stages, maps, should be unique and having apparent differences from one another.

- **Expected Result**

The stages within the game should be fully functional to allow the player to efficiently and effectively complete their task/s and have enough variance so they can be classified as a different map, stage, level, area, etc.

- **Actual Result**

There are two stages that are present within the game being “Cyber Arena” and “The Divide Bar”. These two stages are vastly different in terms of design and playability. Cyber Arena is a large sci-fi, futuristic, red and blue neon themed stage that is the main target for this game, and the Divide Bar is a small map resembling a common bar or saloon that has barriers/reflectors and furniture for the balls to bounce off. Both stages are playable however it is possible to escape both maps especially in the Cyber Arena map, whereby there is a huge gap between the red team’s platform and the blue team’s platform that the player can fall into. You can easily jump from the red to blue side and vice versa, however if you fall off the map, there is no reset/respawn mechanic available. Furthermore, in the 4 point “DB” game mode, when you get hit by a ball, you are transported to the spectator stands, however, it is possible to also get out of that area and fall outside the map. As a result, due to there being two stages with one having these issues, the actual results do not match the expected results.

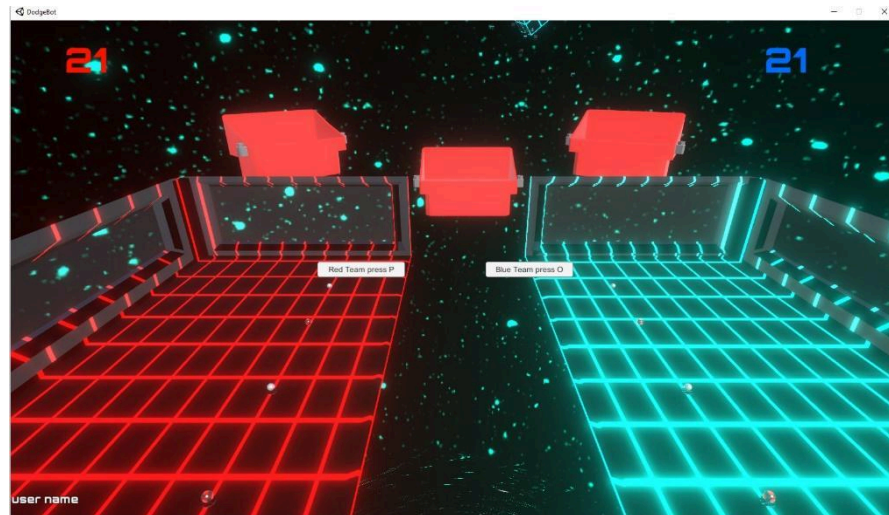


Image Showcasing the Cyber Arena Stage



Image Showcasing The Divide Bar Stage

9. **GAME AESTHETIC**

A game's aesthetic encompasses many facets including the game's color palette, mood board, theme and sometimes even the reference images of other games, scenarios or ideas that you would like the game to highlight. Thus, the aesthetic of the game should be a direct relation to the game's purpose. For example, a fishing game should have the aesthetic of the open ocean, blue waters, aquatic wildlife, etc. and should not be based in the desert.

- **Expected Results**

The aesthetic of the game should be appropriate to the game's purpose, if the game contains different stages, then these stages should still uphold the game's purpose and most importantly, the visuals or any aspect of the game's aesthetic should not strain the user's eyes or take away/distract them from their user experience.

- **Actual Results**

The game's aesthetic fit its purpose of a synth-wave, futuristic setting, however it can be a bit much to process at times. This can be observed within the "Cyber Arena" stage with its flashing, moving and animated neon red and blue color scheme. This can be slightly visually overbearing, as well as distracting at times, to the point of causing dizziness alongside the high camera sensitivity. As a result, the actual results do not match the expected results.

Conclusion

This evaluative process was rather lengthy due to having to playtest the game thoroughly, examine each variable independently, as well as analyze them through the lens of several criteria mentioned before. Throughout this experience, it has an inside peek into the playtesting and quality assurance testing division within a game studio and imagining how many variables and documentation would be created for a full developed triple A title. As a result, these roles should be more appreciated, as without these roles, games would have multiple errors slip past inspection and not be as polished as it could've been. In conclusion, playtesting and creating the documentation for the game is a crucial aspect that should be a progressively iterative process, to ensure the best possible product is released.

References

“DODGEBOT” by Zygotbot Studios