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MonkEat III – Presidential Deb'Ape '08

How one Monkey elected a president and other Monkeys pulled its strings

This was the first game where I really felt like I got to get my hands dirty, as we engaged in some late working days, with each of us doing our part while being able to offer immediate feedback to the other members. This challenge was also special in that it was placed right next to the fall vacation, which then gave us a modest 2 weeks to finish the game. By the end of the fall vacation we had the concept in place, a presidential fighting game. Having to include monkeys (due to our self-appointed rules) we decided to include the Monkey Referee to keep tabs on the fighting.

We weren't focused on selecting a specific article for the challenge, but rather perused all of the articles and designed some concepts that were then proposed to the rest of the group. The initial concept conceived by Rasmus was a fighting game, like Tekken or similar, where the players would use various moves and attacks tied to their choice of presidential candidate. Shortly after deciding on this concept, it was also decided that we instead wanted a greater focus on the candidates' issues and various statements made through their running for the post in order to make the game more persuasive, one of the evaluation criteria. So we went from making a fighting game to making a debating game.

Besides assisting with the design, my roles for the projects were mainly focused on collecting data for the various political statements in the game, as well as performing in-group Q&A towards the end of the development cycle. Some of the key aspects of the game:

- **Immersion:** The overall political feel and immersion of the game was satisfying. We had the presidential candidates, the political party colors, the issue statements and the Truman-meter. While some of the sound-clips broke the immersion a bit, we were quite satisfied with the overall result.
- **Persuasiveness:** While the initial concept had a much less focus on persuasiveness, the inclusion of all the statements and the transformation into a quiz game about their political views ended up fulfilling the challenge requirements quite nicely.
- **Interface:** Having to include a lot of information readily at hand for the player to access, the interface ended up well done, having gone through several iterations in order to fill the increasing amount of information on the screen.

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Although we had a shorter development period, this game was more successful than ApeXtinction. With the lessons learned from the past game, we reacted by sticking more to deadlines and keeping up with the latest changes in the game in order to contribute additional ones relevant to our role and tasks. Overall then I feel this was our second most successful game, beaten only by MonkEat. This game was more complex than MonkEat and lacked several features that would greatly have improved upon the game.

- **Single-player:** We wanted to include a single-player mode, where the computer selected statements based on a random number based on difficulty, with a higher difficulty having a greater chance of selecting the right answer. That was the player would be able to compete against the computer.
- **Issues:** The game's replayability would greatly have benefitted from having more issues and statements. Being the one working on them, it required a fair amount of research in order to obtain the correct results and also making sure that the data wasn't erroneous in any way.
- **Miscellaneous:** Having multiple candidates to choose among and then having the candidates affect the gameplay would have been great. High-scores for single-player as well as a form of campaign-mode would have improved on the longevity of the game as well. While we did include a few sound clips, having more and also having the gameplay better support the addition of sounds, would have helped set the tone for the game, by allowing the candidates to speak on some of their issues.