Death Mates

Sabotage your frenemies!
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Game Overview

Description

Death Mates is a free-for-all (every man for himself, no rules) multiplayer 3D racing platformer for 2-4 people. In Death Mates, players race to the finish line while altering the level by placing power-ups and traps to boost or sabotage each other. The goal of Death Mates is to get to the finish line at all costs and with the highest score.

Target Audience

Casual party gamers (teenagers and young adults). This demographic typically has the most amount of free time and tend to spend time with their friends in a casual environment where party games would be played.

Gameplay & Mechanics

Game Flow

Death Mates is played with 2-4 people with everyone on a single screen (not split screen). The main gamemode is free-for-all, but temporary organic alliances & rivalries are expected to form during the game. The camera looks at the players from the side with and all players visible on screen.

Player race on a straight path from left to right and can move in any direction. Players are also able to jump short distances. Various pickups (storing traps and power-ups) are scattered throughout their path (like powerup boxes in Mario Kart). Any player can grab a pickup and place the item (could be a trap or a powerup) it stored ahead of them using their joystick’s right trigger. When they press the trigger, a translucent blueprint appears some distance in front of them and when the right trigger is let go, the item is permanently placed onto the level at the blueprint location. Items snap onto the lane in which the player is currently running. Players, however, can move in an unrestricted manner and can smoothly transition between lanes at will, as well as move backwards. A “Wall of Death” (death barrier) is dragged a certain distance behind the player in the lead and all players have to remain in front of the wall. Any player that falls behind the Wall of Death will die and be respawned closer to the remaining players. Players can only hold 1 trap/powerup on them at a time and every player’s currently held item is displayed above their head. If a player has an item equipped when picking up a
new pickup then it will be replaced. Since the screen is shared among all players, everyone can tell who has what item (if any), and prepare themselves.

_Death Mates mid-game level slice concept art - 3 players with 3 lanes of traps_

Each “level” is played multiple times (rounds) and items that were placed on previous rounds remain on the map for the next round. Spawn points for pickups are reset every round, ensuring that players never run out of traps and power-ups to place. With each round, more and more power-ups and traps are present on the map (from previous rounds), making it more difficult for players to stay alive and especially remain in the lead (player at the front can see less in front of them). At the end of each round, the players’ scores are compounded. After 5 rounds the scores are displayed and the winner is declared. Scores are tallied based on the amount of deaths (more deaths = less points), the amount of times the players managed to trap/boost others, and the position they finished the race in each round.

General Experience & Timings

Death Mates is a casual party game. Game controls, menu navigation and user interface are designed to accommodate inexperienced and experienced players alike. A typical game session (a single level played with 2-4 people) will last roughly 5 minutes with each round lasting anywhere between 30 to 90 seconds. Setup and preparation, post-round banter and post-level fighting and cursing are expected to take roughly 1-5 minutes.
Placeables

Boost Powerup

If a player lands on the boost powerup, they will be propelled forward (thrown) in a fashion similar to how a catapult would propel an object. The model of the boost powerup will be a cannon and it will only accommodate a single person at a time.

Slow Trap

If a player walks into the slow trap, they will be slowed to a halt and but quickly regain their normal speed (within 1 second), creating an experience similar to walking out of the water on a beach. The trap will look like wooden spikes and will trap any person who enters regardless of whether there is another player currently affected by it.

Theme & Setting

Death Mates is set in a fictional cartoon world with different levels set in various locations. For the first release, only a single level will be available for play. This level is themed to a medieval castle. The colors of the players will be red, blue, yellow and dark green to accommodate colorblind players. Traps and power-ups are also themed to the level.

*Player model draft that will be used for the players in Death Mates (distinguished by color)*
In the future, the levels will be expanded to include more locations such as sewers, forest and metropolis (to name a few possible ideas). Traps and power-ups will also be themed to the level and have unique behaviors.

Level Design

As a fast-paced racing platformer, Death Mates will have the most simple and streamlined level design possible - players will spend the majority of their time placing traps and power-ups onto the level while avoiding previously placed ones, and this would leave them with little time to do anything else (such as explore hidden areas, etc).

The core gameplay behavior will be created dynamically on-the-fly by the players as they place traps and power-ups onto the floor ahead of them and repeat runs. As such, further complexity at this stage would only make it more difficult to play (not good for a casual party game).
For the prototype, the level will consist entirely of a flat surface to test the core gameplay functionality. Later, if deemed necessary, some platforms may be added to spice up the gameplay (such as rare pickups on hard-to-reach platforms, or “safe” platforms with no traps/powerups).

**User Interface**

Since players will need a lot of attention to dodge traps and get power-ups as well as sabotage or help their “frenemies”, they will have very little to no time to check their lives and especially what item they are holding. As such, the game HUD will contain only the most crucial information - player name, their lives and what item they are holding.

This information will appear either right above each player or at the bottom/top of the screen (this will be decided by playtests). Icons and colors will be used wherever possible for indicators (health will be hearts, items will have unique, identifiable icons).

At the start of the game, players will be prompted to press the A/X button (XBox 360/PS3) on their joystick to indicate that they are ready to play. Once everyone is ready, the players will spawn into the level and begin the race shortly after a countdown that will be displayed on the screen.
Joystick control scheme (R1 instead of R2)

- Trap Placement (R2)
- Movement
- Jump
Draft of UI for connecting players (joystick setup)

Draft of Game HUD (score may not be included, trap image will be more visible)
Draft of Score display (players sorted from highest score to lowest top-to-bottom)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scores</th>
<th></th>
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<tr>
<td>Player 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Player 4</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Player 1</td>
<td>158</td>
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**Technical**

**Hardware**

Death Mates is intended to be played on a low/medium performance PC or laptop. Currently, Death Mates only supports the Windows joystick control scheme, but this will be changed based on the target OS. In the future, all major OSes (Windows, Linux, MacOS) will be supported as Unity is cross-platform.

**Development Hardware/Software**

Development is done on a variety of machines that run Windows, Linux and MacOS. All development is done in the latest version of Unity 2018.

Death Mates requires a controller to be played. If using a PS3 controller, an Xbox 360 controller emulator must be used ([https://github.com/nefarius/ScpToolkit/](https://github.com/nefarius/ScpToolkit/)) is preferred for this).
Assets

Models & Textures

All models must have a low polygon count. Textures should adhere to a simple cartoon art style seen in games such as Gang Beasts. The following models will be required for the first castle-themed level (with accompanying textures):

- Player model (knight)
- Castle tower (2 variations)
- 3 variations of castle walls
- Cobblestone road
- 3 variations of trees
- Wooden spike trap
- Wooden catapult powerup

Reference images for inspiration & aesthetic (not our images):
Animations

Only player animations are required. Players will have the following animations:

- Running cycle
- Jumping
- Falling/floatng
- Taunt (optional, non-essential)

Soundtrack & SFX

The soundtrack will consist of the following:

- 1-minute gameplay loop (fast-paced, bouncy, medieval-themed for castle level)
  - inspired by Ultimate Chicken Horse soundtrack

Sound effects required:

- Jumping (knight in armor)
- Screams/pain sounds (in knight helmet)
- Running/walking sound (knight in armor)
- Ambience loop (birds chirping, light wind, trees rustling quietly) [?]

Timeline

October 17: Prototype complete (dev team)
October 20: Catapult model complete (art team)
October 26: Environment re-texturing complete (art team)
October 27: 1-minute gameplay loop soundtrack complete (music team)
October 27: Scoring system + score GUI complete (dev team)
October 28: Main menu + feedback UI complete (dev team)
October 30: Modular road model re-make complete
October 31: Alpha demo complete (dev team)
November 9: Player model complete (art team)
November 10: All SFX except ambience loop complete (music team)
November 11: New trap/powerup models complete (art team)
November 12: New environment assets complete (art team)
November 13: New soundtrack loop complete (music team)
November 14: Playtest report, beta demo complete (dev team)
November 24: Profiling & optimization, asset and code cleanup complete (dev team)
November 24: Ambience loop complete (music team)
November 28: Game release (dev team)
November 28: 90-second gameplay trailer complete (art team)