SUPER SMASH BROS.™ ULTIMATE

Character Customization Feature Proposal

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Agenda

Background & Context

Experience Goals & Success Metrics
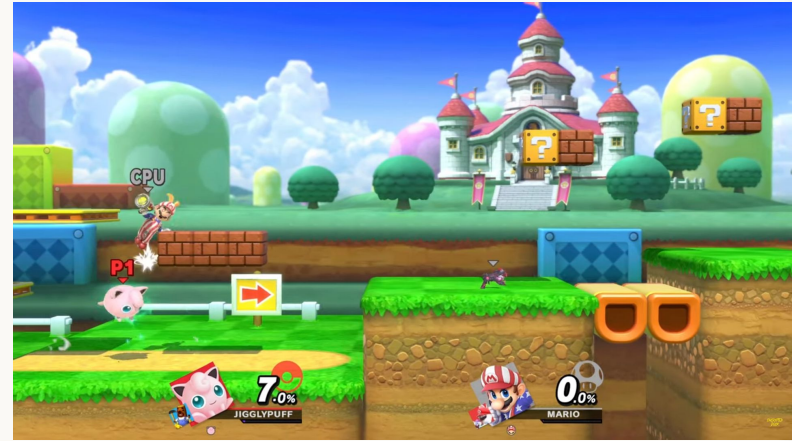
Work Process

- Flow Chart
- Wireframes
- Stakeholder Communication

Risk Management Plan

Background & Context

Background & Context

Beloved Licensed characters are selected by players for versus matches against sophisticated computer opponents and real life friends.

Background & Context

*These licensed characters are unlocked one by one by progressing through the **Adventure mode** story*

Pros:

Players are presented a reason to play single player campaign

Cons:

...whether the players like it or not.

Player Feedback

- *Experienced Players & Longtime Fans • Male • 32-34 years old •*
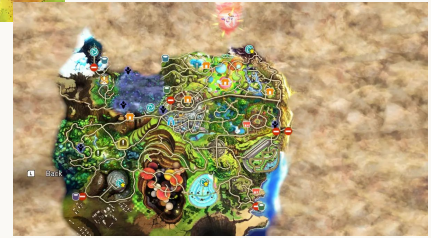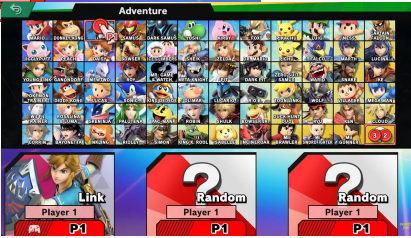- *Average play duration: 6 hours daily ("More on weekends")*

Early Stage Game

Late Stage Game

aka: expectations of experienced players

"Having only Kirby unlocked at start of game was already enough to deter some people [from playing]"

- Theo

"You're only going where you're going on luck"

- Matt

Takeaways

Make players' preferred characters more accessible!

- **Players are willing to use real-world currency to attain access to the fighter characters they are**
  - attached to personally
  - experienced fighting matches with
- **Customization will increase personal connection players have with their favorite characters**

Experience Goals & Success Metrics

Heuristic Models
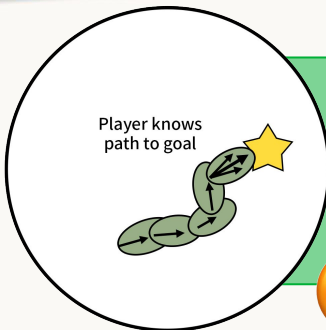
SATISFACTION

Acceptable play experiences

BOREDOM ← PLAY → CONFUSION

Tester Assessment

FRUSTRATION

Testers placed their experience unlocking characters via random matches between boredom and confusion

aka: *GRINDING*

Player knows path to goal

Ideal: Player knows what steps to take to achieve desired outcome ☺️

"Horizon of Action" models

Player's actions achieve results at random
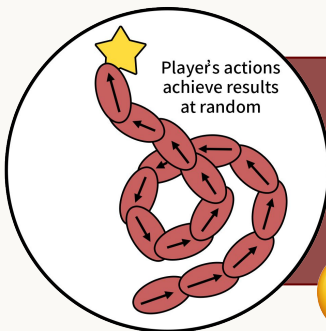
Flawed: Player goes through random motions with no feedback informing future choices 🤨

Heuristic Models in practice

The journey to defeat Galeem begins...

# Goals & Visions

	Usability	Desirability	Discoverability (Scalability)	Feasibility	Screen(s) Name	Development Operations

Character Customization Feature	☑☑☑
	
	Player can recognize their character as unique, even if all other players are using same character
	· Current P1–P4 colored outline already handles issue
	
	Other Players can recognize Player's character as unique in remote multiplayer matches
	· Current P1–P4 colored outline already handles issue
	
	Players' customization options are visible on mobile screen size as easily as on larger screens.
		☑☑☑
		
		Players have favorite ("mains") characters they are motivated to give wardrobe of custom assets to
		
		Players are motivated to play campaign to acquire currency and unlock *additional* features in character customization
		· Appearance of Player's character telegraphs to other players
		  · Personal Identity
		  · Progression in game
		    · by proxy express proficiency in game (aka: unlocking hat placements = late stage player that is more experienced at game)
		
		Players can be encouraged to try other characters they might not have prior due to interest in new custom cosmetic themes
			☑☑☑
			
			Players will be hyped by the announcement of feature and encourage each other to seek out and engage with character creation flow
			
			Players will be able to find their saved character customizations alongside the default characters in fighter/brawler selection screens.
			
			Extended Project Lifetime
			· Seasonal/Holiday content to
			  · increase engagement at different times in different markets (Lunar New Year)
			  · Continued content for players that have unlocked everything and would be less inclined to return.
				☑☑
				
				Nintendo IP could provide difficult range of options for preserving brand identity of tentpole characters.
				
				Fully custom characters are out of scope and create too many edge cases for hitbox collision or screen real estate bugs
				
				cosmetic revisions available:
				Bronze:
				· hue shifting color zones of individual characters (shoes/shirts, makeup)
				· approved taunt animations and voice lines to maintain individual brand fidelity
				Silver
				· small additions to players such as hats, stickers on shirts difficult, as some characters already have hats and some don't)
				Gold
				· Seasonal/Holiday content to
				  · increase engagement at different times in different markets (Lunar New Year)
				  · Continued content for players that have unlocked everything and would be less inclined to return.
					Character Customization Screen
					Custom Character Screen (no)
					Your Character
					Your Character Screen
					Character Shop
					Custom Character
						Design Team
						· ideate cosmetic items to populate content (collaborate with Art Team)
						· Evenly disperse items along value/rarity scale
						Art Team
						· Collaborate with Design ideating cosmetic items
						· color zones divided within texture for hue tinting divided in texture maps
						· Asset root points added to 3D model
						  · hat node root
						  · sticker texture on "shirt" root
						  · etc
						Ui Team
						· Surface player-facing interfaces to communicate
						  · location
						  · options to customize
						  · value
						Programming Team
						· Construct back-end data tables for rarity/value of items
						· hook up UI for player to select, revise, and save character customizations.

Work Process

Flow Integration
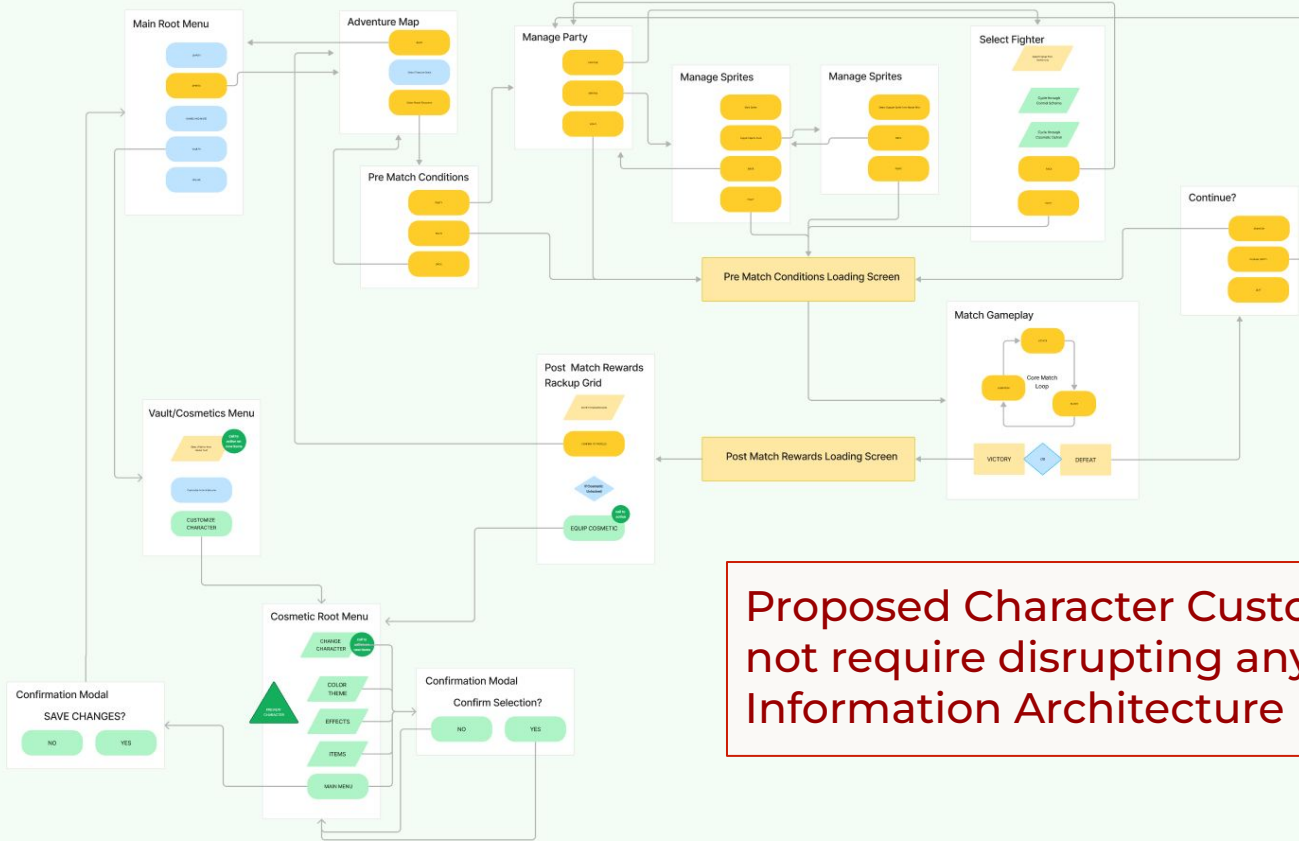
Color Key

Current Unrelated Flow

Current Related Flow

Proposed Feature

Proposed Character Customization does not require disrupting any current Information Architecture

Wireframe - Customize

Cosmetic Root Menu

CHANGE CHARACTER

call to action on new items

PREVIEW CHARACTER

COLOR THEME

EFFECTS

ITEMS

MAIN MENU

CUSTOMIZE

CHARACTER NAME

LB CHANGE CHARACTER RB

< COLOR THEME > !

NAME OF OPTION LONG

EFFECTS

ITEMS

MAIN MENU
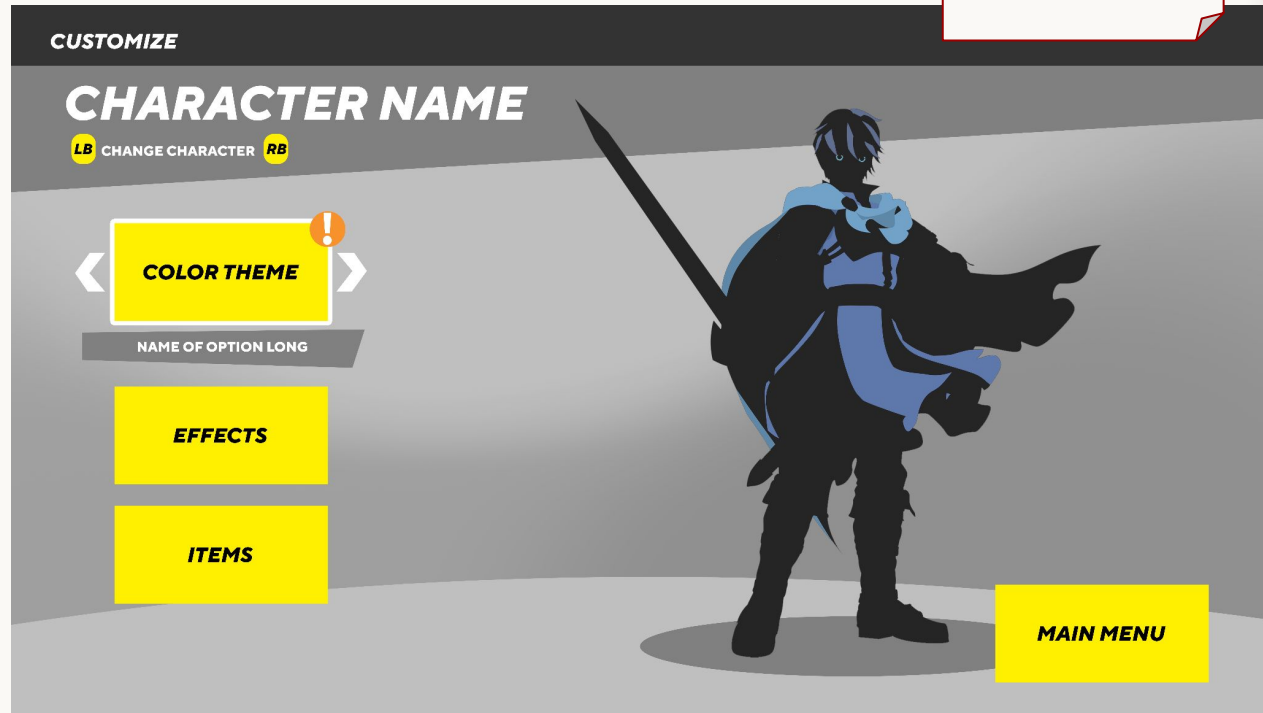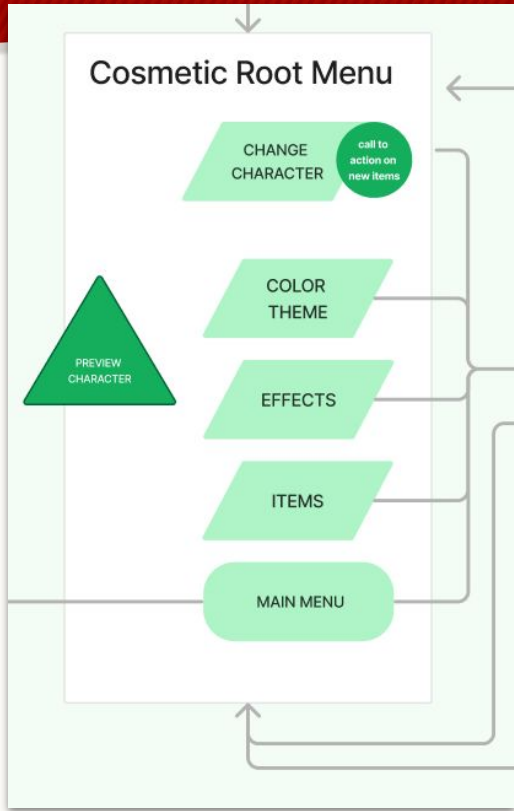
Wireframe - Load Saved Custom

Select Fighter

- Select Fighter from Roster Grid
- Cycle through Control Scheme
- Cycle through Cosmetic Option
- BACK
- FIGHT

BATTLE TYPE

CONTROL SCHEME

COSMETIC THEME

P1

I use yellow and blue the most to call out interactive elements like buttons and hotkeys.

Blue and Yellow are the most immune to colorblindness, and this helped several of the colorblind designers and programmers I've collaborated with in the past ^_^

Risk Management Plan

Player Research

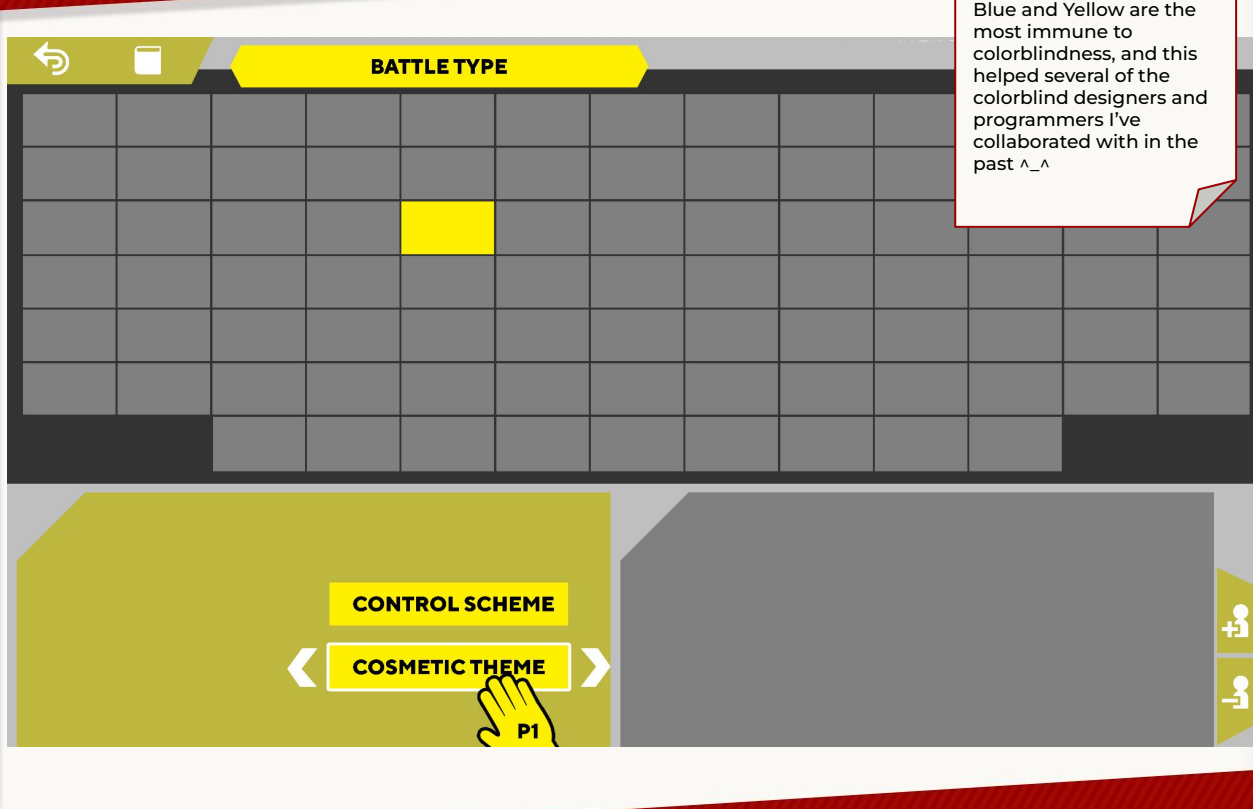| Player	Player Feedback	What do they really mean?	What really matters to them?	What could be the desired path for dev team?	What can you change in your design/art?
Rob, Jay, Matt	I want to customize the character flow in the game.	I want to unlock more unique items and characters	telegraphing unique status and build expectation for other players with the visual presentation of their own character	Potential for data tables of item/character rarity or value to become more intricate with tagging systems	· Create hidden/secret content that rewards characters who explore · Discuss whether cosmetics have any strategic or stat/based benefit · opportunity to integrate cosmetics with sprite system to increase motivation of player to engage with system · (Theo/Matt testers disregarded sprites unless necessary)
M.J., Jay, Matt, Theo	I want to see more characters in the game.	I want more characters available for me to play	Being able to unlock more characters without having to pay	Potentially revisit the weight/value/rarity of characters and when they unlock based off community insights of which characters are most popular · send out survey to players	Free unlocking of characters is base model of current design. · **Opportunity to have fighter Unlock checkpoints present a "multiple choice" so player still has gated agency in what fighters to play**
Rob, M.J., Jay, Theo	I don't like this character.	I'd rather play another character that's more interesting or powerful to me	Having a Smash Bros fighter feel right, both as their representative onscreen and via the strategy of the character's move set		Proposed design surfaces friction between blind unlocking and having to find walkthroughs online

Rob

MJ

Jay

Theo

Matt

Feedback from established fans of Smash Bros can recalibrate what players will and won't enjoy from established IP

Expert Review - Usability

Experience Goals	Design / Art Hypothesis & Risks	Possibilities - Link To Players (H/M/L)	Impacts (H/M/L)	Mitigate/Accept Plan	Notes
Usability					
Players can easily acquire the characters and customizations they like.	Players understand how transaction on the platform works – **They understand at what step will involve real money transaction.**	Low Matt, Theo	*High*	Mitigate: · UI and Programming team telegraph currency value and confirmation Accept:	· *Players that unlock content for free should not feel cheated or resentful aka: campaign's value is still apparent to brand*
Players can easily understand and remember which player has which custom character equipped in match	Players have certain degree of understanding of object permanance	*Low* *All Players*	*High*	Mitigate: · 3D team provide up to four (4) slightly shifted palettes to distinguish players · VFX team maintain P1–P4 stroke Accept: Players might intentionally do this as a challenge/joke	· *Current expectation is established P1–P4 stroke is sufficient*
Players can easily navigate within character customization flow/screens and gameplay/ social.	Players are familiar with Mouse Keyboard or Controller buttons.	*Low* *All Players*	*High*	Mitigate: · FTUE introduces controls slowly to reduce cognitive load Accept: Many players will skip tutorial	· *UI animation and sound FX could provide breadcrumbs via overt, effective feedback*
	Players can understand easily what is happening in each gameplay & social screen – so they can determine the right moment(s) to visit character customization.	*Low* *Theo, Matt, MJ*	*Medium*	Mitigate: · standardized calls to action for new content available Accept: · highlighted explicitly on rewards screens with flow to edit immediately	
Parents have controls to limit in-game purchases of underage players	Younger players find workarounds	Medium Jay	*High*	Mitigate: · UI and Programming team sync feature with console's parental settings Accept: Children are very, very good at workarounds, especially with internet research	
Players can establish accurate expectations to the character and the customization options before purchase.	Character is previewed when selected and edited by player	*Low* *All Players*	*High*	Mitigate: · manage loading times of assets to maintain realtime visual feedback when customizing Accept: Loading throbber integrated for larger data changes	

Proposed feature does not erase current campaign

Players that prefer to unlock content for free over time are still accommodated (MJ, Jay)

Expert Review - Desirability

Experience Goals	Design / Art Hypothesis & Risks	Possibilities – Link To Players (H/M/L)	Impacts (H/M/L)	Mitigate/Accept Plan
Desirability				
Before owning the characters and their customizations, players can find the characters appealing and exciting.	Players actually like the characters visual design style • it is their preferred design. • *it is their preferred characters of their own*	*High* *Matt, Theo*	*High*	Mitigate: different player ages/ demographics will have different thresholds, and not everyone will be happy with content rollout
	Players aren't feeling offended and/or discomfort with the visual design for the characters and customizations.	*Medium* *MJ*	*High*	Avoid Mitigate: sensitivity readers for feedback
After players own the characters and their customizations, players can equip and show off with / 'wow' other players to boost their vanity.	Opportunity to give Character Customization screen an option to hide UI to allow for clean, posed screenshots	*Medium/High* *Rob, Matt*	*Low*	

Expert Review - Scalability

Experience Goals	Design / Art Hypothesis & Risks	Possibilities – Link To Players (H/M/L)	Impacts (H/M/L)	Mitigate/Accept Plan	Notes
Scalability / Discoverability					
Players can easily discover all of the characters: whether they own or they don't own.	Players experiences friction between wanting to unlock their own favorite characters/ options for those characters and grinding in a campaign that withholds them as a motivator	*Medium/High* *Jay, Rob, Theo, Matt*	*High*	Mitigate · have an idea of which characters are most popular to ensure majority of player base is mollified with content · and breadcrumb with epic/ legendary items as well as common/uncommon cosmetics to create arcs in thrill experience Accept · different player ages/ demographics will have different thresholds, and not everyone will be happy with content rollout	Monitor player base response online, as well as data of character usage from sequels, to get ballpark of which characters lead the content expectations
Players are encouraged to return to unlock seasonal/ holiday content	Increased risk for characters to fall into cultural stereotypes or religious aspects of holidays	*Medium* *MJ, Theo*	*Low*	Avoid	
	Popular events have strong aesthetic opportunities that can highlight thematically appropriate characters	*Medium* *All Players*	*High*	Mitigate · finite amount of thematically appropriate characters · Establish some odd choices to reduce shock when themed characters "run out"	· spooky/dead characters during Halloween · ice climbers during winter holidays, Kirby during Thanksgiving

Expert Review - Feasibility

Experience Goals	Design / Art Hypothesis & Risks	Possibilities – Link To Players (H/M/L)	Impacts (H/M/L)	Mitigate/Accept Plan
Feasibility				
Players can easily navigate and view each characters and their customization options with limited lagging issues.	Proposed alterations are texture driven, over 3D mesh additions or revisions. Loading times should be low	*Low* *Rob*	*Medium*	Mitigate · review asset export pipeline for loading order and size
Players can see each others' custom characters	Ensure data transfer for remote players includes custom character selection	*High* *All Players*	*Medium*	Mitigate · developers examine exchange of data for remote matchmaking

This phase requires the most intensive collaboration with programmers that understand where and when data is loaded to become player-facing

Takeaway

Players will play longer, with more satisfaction, using their preferred fighters customized themselves

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Thank you!

Any Questions?

If you wish to engage privately or think of anything later, please feel free to reach out!

- **@HFoland** in work chat
- Heidi.Foland@workemail.com

Mock Questions 1

Q: When a player unlocks a character, what happens to that character in campaign mode?

> **A:** The order of characters is modular and random, with low-to-zero impact on the story told via the campaign. A purchased character can be removed from the content pool, replaced with any other character or reward.

Q: Could we increase monetization with purchased loot boxes?

> **A:** Recent legislation in Europe has created a legal concerns with loot boxes available to younger audiences being criminalized as gambling. Independent of legislation, however, the players' *empowered* access to preferred characters has the highest likelihood of increasing satisfaction with the target player base.

Mock Questions 2

Q: Your sampled players cited "boredom" and "frustration", but still played for six hours a day? They don't sound like we need to cater to them at all.

A: Many players cited usage of an online walkthrough as a necessity, and two explicitly outlined a hack they performed repeatedly on the console to reset the CPU match timer to spam the game until unlocking their preferred characters.

QA has a ticket to fix the console breach, but all players willing and capable to perform console hacks stated they would have gladly paid real world currency to avoid doing so.

The multiple hours of gameplay were done in classic online and local matches with preferred characters, avoiding the Adventure campaign whenever possible.