

Inter-Office Memo

Atari Games Corporation

To: Distribution

From: Jerry Momoda

Subject: Warrior Focus

Date: November 27, 1991

Background

This is a summary covering the main points from Nov. 13th's Warrior Focus. Two groups attended, 16-19 (5-7:00) and 13-15 (7-9:00). All were recruited for their interest and ability in fighting games. Two three-player cabinets with basic game instructions and the new "big button" control were available. The game featured four waves - gym, street, movie theatre and alley.

Player Profile

All twenty players were male and are frequent players of coin-operated games. All but one of the twenty players said Street Fighter II was their favorite fighting game.

A hopeful shot in the arm for coin-op is a waning interest in the Nintendo eight-bit market. Of twenty players, only one had a Super NES at home. Most had a regular NES at home but it sounded like they were collecting dust.

Comprehension

Each group split in two and took turns to make sure everyone got an opportunity to see all of the game.

Both groups said there were too many bodies on the screen at once, making it difficult to see where they were and when they got hit.

Nearly all players had problems lining up with enemies along the horizontal axis. It was also mentioned that some kicks were not proportional to the size of the enemy.

While it was not obvious they could go into the movie theatre, it didn't keep them from trying to enter the bar. In addition, how to enter and exit (all players must congregate at the door) the theatre also caused confusion.

All players in the older group preferred SFII's 6 button configuration because they thought it was less confusing. A few players had trouble finding the start button since it was not marked.

Likes/Dislikes

Unfortunately, players gave a luke warm response to Warrior. They were so biased to SFII that to a degree it effected their objectivity of Warrior.

They liked new moves to learn, plus ones that "work one time but don't the next".

Players in the younger group felt the game was easy to learn and control.

Of all the screens, players preferred the head-to-head gym screen the most. Competition, good lighting and a less crowded playfield were mentioned as reasons.

Upon entering the alley scene, the majority of players felt overwhelmed by an instant barrage of enemies.

Players reacted well to many of the interactive items in the background. Specifically, they mentioned picking up the bum, smashing light poles and cars.

Game Characters

Older players showed no hesitation in playing a female character. They liked Chun Li of SFII because she was quick, strong and a good fighter that made her superior to other opponents. The two groups suggestions for appearance ranged from petite to big (bodybuilder), quick speed, powerful legs and a strong looking physique.

Other suggestions for Warrior characters included an unassuming small thin guy (fast), a big bulky guy and a motorcycle type guy.

Judgements of the "Will Willis" and "Javier" characters of Warrior were mixed. Some thought Javier was faster and some didn't. When asked how they liked the appearance of Will and Javier, players comments ranged from "alright" to "cool".

The older group expressed some concern that the gang concept could cause trouble amongst players. A few witnessed fights that had to be broken up by the police. One said a player returned with a gun after losing a game.

Some other suggestions for other enemies included schoolboy gangs, teachers, principals and animals.

Favorite characters in SFII included Ken, Ryu, Chun Li, Guile and Blanka.

Fighting Moves

With limited time, players discovered some of the hidden moves, specifically - the foot sweep and Will's back flip. A player in the older group said he didn't use the "defend" much, only in one-on-one situations.

Players suggested that each character have different regular moves as well as special moves.

Other suggestions included throwing bodies through windows (car, building) and the movie screen in the theatre.

Weapons

Players liked the objects available for focus. In addition, they suggested clubs, knives, rocks and car fenders.

Wave Structure

The most liked wave was the gym scene. Reasons were they enjoyed the head-to-head action and in the gym they could practice moves.

Players noted that upon entering the alley scene they were pounced on immediately.

Controls

Contrary to the 16-19 year olds, the 13-15 group was more positive of the new button and layout.

Those in the older group thought the big button made it too easy to accidentally hit the wrong button. They said hitting the wrong button in SFII didn't matter as much because it would only minimally alter the move.

Almost all of the younger group liked the big button. They mentioned the buttons weren't all spread out, easier to use, and easier to reach in combination with the muscle button.

Graphics

Nearly all voiced a preference for animated "fantasy" style of art to the digitized look of Warrior. Players mentioned that colors needed to be brighter as they are now too dark.

One player said he had trouble differentiating between the red and yellow character of Will and often got them confused on the screen.

The younger group mentioned a preference for Pit-Fighter's black and white backgrounds because characters could be seen better against it.

Music

Regarding music, player preferences covered a surprisingly broad range. The older group listed Rap, Heavy Metal, Reggae, Hard Rock, Country and Top 40. In the younger group, players were mainly into Rap with one Heavy Metal, Country, Top 40 and Thrash.

Players requested they be able to select their music ala Sega Out Run. Rap oriented 13-15 years olds were negative to having to listen to Heavy Metal in a game.

Movies

Favorite movies of the older players were Home Alone, Robin Hood, Shattered, T2 and New Jack City. The younger players liked T2, New Jack City and Boyz in the Hood.

Game Name

Jump Street
Tuff Turf
Pit-Fighter II
Gangbangers (and others with "gang" in name).

Captain America

The few players who played Captain America thought it was a good game. They cited clear/bright graphics, cartoon quality, good moves and a constant moving gameplay.

Conclusions/Recommendations

Comprehension

Like Pit-Fighter, players had problems telling who's who on the screen. Cutting down the number of bodies on the screen at once might reduce the confusion. Allowing more than one player to select the same character is going to naturally cause this to persist (regardless of color coding). Unlike SFII, Warrior can't have eight distinct characters to select from.

Tweaking collisions will hopefully reduce frustrations, but the problem of punches missing is unavoidable in all games that have depth to the playfield.

Likes/Dislikes

I think many of the players remarks were based more on comparison to SFII than objective criticism. Ten months ago players would probably have been more open minded, but now players see SFII as the new standard in fighting games.

Players enjoyed the head-to-head competition of the gym scene. Expanding on the head-to-head competitive aspect more and playing down the "mass brawl" style might give them more of what they want.

Game Characters

Player's less than ecstatic reactions to Javier and Will show that adding unique moves are necessary to improve their popularity. In addition, showing some personality may make it easier for them to relate to him/her. In SFII, Guile combs his hair occasionally, Dhalsim magically floats in the mid-air.

Also, assorted comments supported the development of a character base comprised of various ethnic groups.

Fighting Moves

In the street scenes with numerous opponents attacking from all sides, players tend to be more offensive and pay less attention to defense. The best defense is a good offense.

In SFII, players were allowed to "savor" the killing blow. A subtle pause after each hit highlighting it's effect. And, when the fatal punch was landed, the action entered slow motion and the loser slowly hits the canvas. I think this makes the win more rewarding for the winner.

Long-range fantasy powers like those used in SFII could be good in Warrior also. Throwing electrical shocks via a joystick stroke and buttons would add the powerhouse move that isn't 100%. I know Gary prefers more of a dark and serious nature, but kids like the inventiveness these moves and characters bring.

Wave Structure

The head-to-head scene in Warrior's "gym" scene was the most popular segment of the game. It's less cluttered with bodies and lends itself to more technique and less wild pounding of buttons.

I think players would prefer a breather after exiting the theatre before getting into another brawl. Pacing the action with momentary "rest points" is important. Occasionally feeding opponents one at a time might allow them to use more moves, technique, strategy and defensive. I believe players will feel more in control and less frustrated. They know when you're demanding another quarter.

Adding a bonus wave destroying gang headquarters with lots of breakable objects would be too much fun for a teenager to resist.

Controls

Perhaps for the smaller hands of the 13-15 year old players the new control was better. They cited ease in hitting all buttons for the supermove. Older players cited it being too easy to hit wrong buttons. I'm not sold that this is the best button arraignment. Any other ideas? Is it possible to come up with some other alternative for in-house evaluation? The big button seems to be more compatible for a game like Relief Pitcher.

Graphics

The players preference for animated game graphics was strong enough for us to evaluate future usage. I doubt it spells doom for digitized games, but identifies it's appeal is not as great as others have perceived. It may be limited to licensed titles and simulation games with driving and flying themes.

Some thoughts why animation vs. digitization was preferred by players at focus. First, their favorite game is animated (SFII). Second, the fantasy element in animation allows a more entertaining cast of characters, ie - Blanka and Dhalsim of SFII. Fantasy allows for moves like fireballs,

inverted helicopter kicks, firebreath, arm/leg stretch kicks/punches, boomerangs, head bites, high voltage shocks, etc. These things really appeal to the imagination of a teenager. The hottest action movie titles today are mostly fantasy/sci-fi. Incorporating some elements of fantasy might be appropriate.

Comparative Game Ratings

	<u>Warrior</u>	<u>Pit-Fighter</u>
1. Rate this game on how it is to play overall:		
excellent -	10%	63%
very good -	45%	32%
good -	30%	5%
fair -	10%	-
poor -	5%	-
2. Rate the player controls on this game:		
excellent -	15%	32%
very good -	30%	32%
good -	30%	32%
fair -	20%	5%
poor -	5%	-
3. Rate the sounds the game makes:		
excellent -	20%	79%
very good -	30%	11%
good -	30%	5%
fair -	20%	5%
poor -	-	-
4. Rate the way the game is scored or points are accumulated:		
excellent -	10%	32%
very good -	25%	37%
good -	45%	26%
fair -	15%	-
poor -	5%	5%
5. Rate the pictures or the "graphics" on the screen:		
excellent -	25%	84%
very good -	30%	16%
good -	30%	-
fair -	10%	-
poor -	5%	-
6. How is this game compared to other video games you have played:		

much better -	10%	74%
little better -	30%	26%
about the same -	30%	-
not as good -	20%	-
others are better -	10%	-

Check any of the following boxes you feel would describe your favorite game, and then check the boxes you feel would describe:

<u>Warrior</u>	<u>Pit-Fighter</u>	
11	8	appeals to all ages
10	13	clear goal or objective of game
9	11	easy to control
2	1	silly
7	4	too fast
15	11	room to improve score
16	14	challenging/takes skill
17	16	competitive
1	1	too slow
6	4	both girls and boys would like
2	0	boring
19	17	lots of action
7	16	will be around a long time
11	13	variety of things to do
8	12	good concept/theme
11	15	easy to learn
12	6	hard to master

Distribution: L. Benzler R. Moore
 A. Burgess H. Nakajima
 S. Comstock M. Pierce
 C. Downend J. Ray
 M. Fujihara G. Stark
 B. Fuller P. Takaichi