



I Made This

360 had a creative dream; Hull University had a talented team. Given 24 hours, no sleep and a shedload of caffeine and instant noodles, could we create the dream videogame?

The Plan

Here on **360**, we know all about games. We've put in more than 1,500 collective hours on *Call Of Duty*, got the 'Seriously...' Achievement on *Gears Of War* and started a new user account just to get it again. We've cancelled into Ultras on anybody's ass who dared take us on at *Super Street Fighter IV*, and we've grazed the top of the *Forza* leaderboards for over a year.

Thus, we decided we were brilliantly placed to move onto the next step: creating our own game concept and wowing the world with our excellence in every field of electronic entertainment.

The plan: a full 3D game based around the concept of golf... but on an epic scale. Smash orbs from atop skyscrapers and carve holes through time, space and reality. Battle through world and history chasing an evil scientist, with only your trusty nine iron standing between you and the dissolution of eternity. It would be *Crackdown* meets *Gears Of War* meets *Tiger Woods PGA Tour* – we would make it, and it would be good. And it would be made in a mere 24 hours.

Just how hard could that be?

The Brief

In all seriousness, the idea of the exercise was to see just what could be turned over in 24 hours using nothing but the XNA programming environment, and, in addition to our own design and gameplay concepts, the collective talent and enthusiasm of those who knew how to write code in it. The University Of Hull's Department of Computer Science kindly assembled 15 competing teams of willing student programmers, and we, in our eternal wisdom, showed up to 'help'.

The ultimate marriage of creative spirit and technical prowess, or a daylong disaster just waiting to happen? It was going to be fun to find out.

The students had been given a certain amount of prep time for the week preceding the event. Lecturer and Microsoft Most Valued Professional Rob Miles had provided lectures on some key aspects of an approach to the game, our ambitious full 3D open-world 'rooftop golf' idea already boiled down, in the interests of necessity (and, in fact, reality) into a two-dimensional, side-scrolling endeavour not unlike iPhone staple *Angry Birds*. On top of this, Rob had suggested (though not everybody took him up on it) that students utilise a free plug-in physics technology known as Farseer in order to cater for all the ball-flinging hijinks.

All that remained, beginning at 11am on a Saturday and finishing at the same time the next morning, was for these 15 plucky teams to each try to produce an Xbox 360 indie game of worth and originality. The project deemed to be the most playable videogame at the end of it all would be declared the winner. Easy.



Members: Chris Hoyle, Kristian Fenn, Christophe Lionet, Chris Wickens

■ The four flavours of Chris planned an arty, paper puppet-esque graphical style for their golf game, charting the demented adventures of a depressed businessman going all *Falling Down* on a particularly bad day. The reality was several bits of games that, for technical reasons far beyond our understanding, could only operate on three separate computers, but not together. That doesn't count as multiplayer, guys.



Curve of Pursuit

Members: Liam Stockwell, Gareth Andrews, Antony Nunn

■ The brave foundation course trio can be credited with two accomplishments in the contest. The first was the most literally 'cheesy' design. A cheese ball, a cheese house and a cheese landscape. We could almost taste the congealed milk, but the real triumph was such a sleek attainment of the brief. Fire the ball at the house, and the house falls down. Done. Simple, effective, but unfortunately about as much fun as an all-night Bid Up TV marathon.



Left 4 Dev

Members: Matt Taylor, Craig Holland, Peter Brooksbank, John Dixon

■ Incredibly aptly named, we found this team all-but forgotten in a side-room on Sunday morning, by which time it had crafted a hilariously Terry Gilliam-esque take on the demolition theme, major London landmarks crammed onto a rock as satisfying potshots were taken with full aiming meters. No frontend, but we were just impressed the team survived the dozens of Pot Noodles it devoured during the night.



Saturday, 10.54am

When we arrive, most teams are already installed in the labs, some working with their pimped-out home PCs, replete with stickers and carry handles, and others slumming it with the department development machines. While everybody looks bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, one team is already visibly quaking in fear, squinting uncertainly at the screens in front of them.

"We don't really have a clue what we're doing," admits Rusty Spoons. "We're all first years, so we've only been doing it a few weeks. It's all new to us. We're just working by the book, basically." Quite literally by the book. Clutching Rob Miles' own tome on the subject, Alex, Josh, Heather, Miles and Thomas are leafing cautiously through it, page by page, apparently attempting to learn XNA as they go along. "Is it even similar to anything you've worked with before?" We ask, in mild disbelief. "Um... no!" they gamely admit. "It's a bit like what we've been learning, but we haven't got much

further than 'do loops' in the lectures, so that to a game is a rather big step. But we'll see." But you're still going to make the best game, right? "Yes. Of course." Excellent.

Not every team is so green, mind. Secluded in a dark corner of the lab, the mysteriously named Stealth Team comprises solely of Harry Overs, a student with a couple of years' study

Harry knows what he's doing, it appears that, in his opinion, someone at Microsoft might not have done. "I've had a couple of problems with getting some vertices to draw in it," he tells us, as half-drawn boxes flail confusingly around a blank screen. "It doesn't really like them very much; it's a newer version of XNA, and they've changed a lot of things without telling anyone,

altogether, busying itself instead with cutting out eye-catching characters from bits of paper and scanning them into Photoshop. So far the team's got an excellent paper protagonist named 'Sam the Depressed Businessman', and a variety of hand-hewn bridges, super-deformed London buses and lovely spherical trees. Another Chris, meanwhile, who's supposed to be a level designer ("I can't design levels, because there's no level editor yet!" he craftily smiles) is busying himself with a freeware synthesiser program, declaring himself 'sound guy' after a mere two hours of 'professional' experience. We creep away quietly, because we can see some actual physics going on elsewhere.

Freeside is a team apparently grabbing this challenge by the horns. Casey, self-elected team spokeswoman, fills us in. "We've been thinking about things like the *Worms* games, so we're going to have everything on one screen, have a tower of blocks at the end, and you score points for knocking bricks off," she enthuses. And every 5-10,000

"The ultimate marriage of creative spirit and technical prowess, or a daylong disaster waiting to happen?"

and a previously released Indie Games high-definition port of *Pong* already under his belt. His approach to the competition is rather unique – catching the pre-released tech hype of the upcoming Windows Phone 7 and coding his own touch-controlled version of *Destruction Golf* all ready for Microsoft's brand new smartphone Marketplace.

It's smooth and it's clever, but it's not all going swimmingly. Even though

and nobody knows how to do it." As we make our way around the lab, we start to hear this a fair amount – the XNA environment has been recently upgraded, and is often leaving everybody at a loss. What to do?

C4 has its own answer, but it's a controversial one. So-named because, remarkably, every one of their four members is named Chris, the team's decided to tackle the risk of coding woes by simply ignoring it

Fresh Pot

Members: **Jonathan Niland, Cameron Wilby, Jack Thorpe, 360**
 ■ Yes, you read right. **360** contributed exclusive art assets to this epic tale of caffeine-obsessed Foo Fighters frontman Dave Grohl's backstage battle with an array of possessed audio equipment. The muso trio recorded their own soundtrack out in the corridor with guitars while we feverishly Photoshopped away on some evil-eyed speakers. Sadly, while we were stepping out for our own coffee, they all bugged off, quitting the competition after a distinct lack of progress in the wee hours. Aww.



Getting schooled

Who's in charge of all this carnage? We spoke to some of the Hull academics responsible for shaping the games developers of tomorrow

UNIVERSITY OF Hull

360: Who are you?

Warren Viant: I'm head of computer science. I've worked on the Computer Science with Games Development course for ten years.

John Purdy: I'm a lecturer in computer science. My official title is games subject leader, so I advise and decide on what topics we cover in the games syllabuses, particularly on the MSc programme.

Rob Miles: I'm a lecturer in computer science, first year programming, and years two and three software development, and embedded development in second year. I'm a Microsoft MVP, and I'm quite involved in the Windows Phone project; I've been doing some training from that as well, basically from the XNA perspective.

360: When and how did the course originate?

JP: It started life as a computer graphics and visualisation course in 1996. But we realised pretty soon that most of the graduates were going into the games industry, and really from pressure from them and the industry, we made the course a little less research graphics-orientated, and a bit more applied games on a group game development exercise. We introduced AI, and a more 'physicsy' module, and we branded it as a games programming MSc. It graduated its first course in 2002.

360: How do you decide what content goes on the courses?

JP: We take advice from lots of quarters, really. The press, and we go to GDC every year to try to decide what's coming up. We get pressurised by Sony to use their Kit, and Microsoft to use theirs.

Really, we just try to make it a very difficult programming course, so we concentrate on doing generic programming very well, and we find that students can adapt to any environment if they understand the fundamentals of the programming properly. Which is where Rob comes in. He drills it into them in the first year.

RM: There's a lot of fairly cynical marketing going on [elsewhere] where people are saying "become a game developer" and what they'll do is they'll teach you how to write storyboards, design names for planets and write the subplot for the next *Tomb Raider*.

But what the developers want is hardcore coders. We had a big problem getting the games degree through the university because they thought, 'Oh, you're going to trivialise: it's games'. But it turns out it's the toughest course that you can do, because it's loaded down with physics and maths. If you want to make things work realistically, you have to understand these things.

360: Where have your past students ended up?

RM: Half of Black Rock's programming team is people who have been through the Masters course at Hull. We've got people at Sony, we've got people at Rare, people at Codemasters. Last year Black Rock actually paid for a bunch of our students to go and stay in a hotel in Brighton and meet up with them.

It's tough, it's a hard thing to get into, but we try to give them the skills to match. But we make damn sure



John Purdy



Rob Miles



Warren Viant

that the game developers come and see us and tell us what they want their programmers to be able to do, and then we fit the course around that.

360: So you'll be often seeking feedback from the industry to shape your course as you go?

JP: Not really. We just realised

at the start that you shouldn't be producing someone who's a jack-of-all-trades: you need to be producing specialists. Because we did the course in the traditional way, developing a course around our specialisms; we didn't put a course on and then say 'who are we going to get to teach it?'. Nobody knows anything about games design or art in the department, so why would we try to teach it? We know what we're good at and what we're bad at. We just stick to what we're good at and leave the rest to other people.

WV: This department has evolved in the last ten years. We've come to realise that our strength is producing graduates that can actually make an immediate impact, who've got the academic background, but also the skill base. So we push throughout the course that the students must be able to program and they must be software engineers. And then everything else comes with it. So the games programmers will focus on graphics and physics and AI. The computer science people will then have a broad range so they can pick some artificial intelligence and neural networks, and the software engineers will do even more software engineering. But the core is: everybody who comes out at the end must be able to program. It's a bit like you wouldn't come out the end of a history degree and not be able to write, for instance.

360: Sounds like tough work for the students. Is this the school of hard knocks?

WV: We need to make sure their skills are relevant; we move very quickly to commercial languages rather than academic languages, and even if that means it's more difficult for us to teach them, we have to focus on those because that's where we believe the future for the students lies.

If students pick an academic language, those students are very capable of transferring, but that transfer has to be done in the employer's time, and has to be done in a very short period of time. We just think we can do that here as part of their education and give a slightly different feel to the education. That's our main goal here: to be able to produce students that can make an immediate impact.

But generally we can find a very happy medium, and that's why 70 or 80 per cent of students will graduate and go into the large companies.

points you get a rocket that does, like, humongous damage." Impressive. "And there's a multiplayer mode with lots of bricks in the middle and either turn-based or all at the same time. We're still working on that - you hit them, knock the blocks down, get a rocket. Only the rocket can damage your opponent. You both have three lives."

This could work. This sounds brilliant. A vision, an aim, the lot. We're treated to an early demo. A ball smashes at high speed into a pile of bricks, and they all shoot sky high, disappearing off the top of the screen into unseen ether. "We're... erm... in a non-working state at the moment, while transitioning to uh, a working state. Hopefully," team member James tells us, as if to explain this alarming irregularity in the laws of physics. Never mind. Plenty more to see... oh, what's that?

"It's a pig." Generic Game Developers Rob, Jack and Joel tell us. "Is it... the ball?" We ask, incredulously. "Yeah. We have other animal-based balls as well that are

going to have different properties," the team tells us. "They'll all explode in characterful ways, so the pig's going to explode in ham shanks and bacon."

They assure us they've never played *Spllosion Man*: "We're too busy making bad games to actually play any". A squid in a bowler hat being punted across the moon, knocking over crates labelled 'LOL'. Bad game? Never.

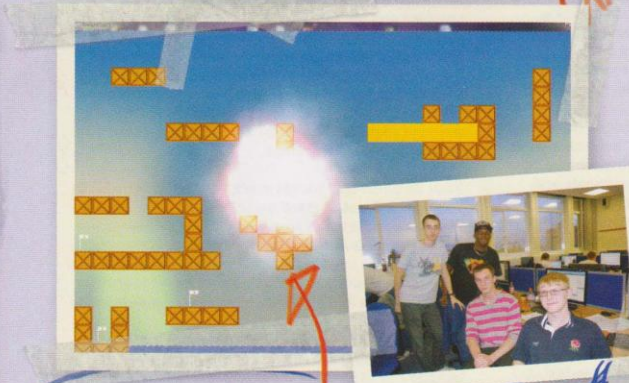
A visibly genuinely good game, even at this early stage, is Team Ice Cream's effort. Using the week's planning stage to full advantage, this is an effort displaying such industry staples as graphics, sound and even – shock – 360 pad control. Hirsute frontman Simon fills us in as to where they were up to:

"We're torn because we've all got to work on different parts at once, so we only ever have bits of a game. Then we'll have to spend an hour or so putting things back into the starting place," Steve cuts in: "So it's kind of a mess."

Oh, come on now. It looks excellent. Kind of like popular Flash platformer *Canabalt*: all moody Atari-style blocky greys. A big white golf ball punches fetchingly blocky holes through a building. But hey, Ice Cream, what's it going to play like?

Steve perks up. "Yeah, so, you've got to smash your way through the other side, to the other person's side. And there [he points] is your goal. And there's going to be different balls you can get for different explosion sizes." Simon says, "It's like a risk/reward. You'll be working together to bash through the screen, and then as soon as there's an available gap, you're suddenly against each other. Hopefully that's how it'll work, anyway."

Ace coder Mark chirps up an explanation of the impressive physics. More impressive than we thought, actually. "Everyone else is using the Farseer engine, but we decided to do it ourselves. It's been a nightmare to set up, but it's working now."



Intel Inside, Mental Outside

Members: Michael Clayton, Stephen Akinwale, Allan Anderson, Joe Axon

■ The standout feature of this team's approach to the task was, undoubtedly, its decision to write its own physics system. Maintaining golf's shot-by-shot approach to play, it became almost like a maze game, encouraging the player to divine the best route through the level while still reaching par. Pretty inspired.

HUG

■ Members: Alex Lynch, Abdullah Mohammed, Donald Cheung Quiet, yet inspirationally streamlined, Hull University Games had its priorities in order while many teams were still unpacking. With a rudimentary level designer in place, a dedicated HUD designer and an artist with a flair for the manic, we're not entirely sure why HUG's not replaced Lionhead or something by now. Coding issues, mainly. There wasn't a dragon in it, either.



Generic Game Developers

Members: Robert Elm, Jack Longthorp, Joel Parky

■ "There needs to be a game in there, otherwise it's just a cat dancing on the moon..." This, we feel, sums up Generic Game Developers' strengths and weaknesses. While the premise was as sound as it was insane, launching a variety of disturbing-looking cartoon animals across a lunar landscape, despite the impressive motion blur and bloom effects, did indeed turn out to be little more than a cat dancing on the moon. Given a few hours, we're sure it could have positively shone.

Saturday, 5:37pm

It's nearing mid-afternoon, and at this third-of-the-way-through point, the various competencies and organisational styles of the teams are starting to draw divisions in progress.

Curve of Pursuit, for example, has pretty much reached its limit already, but really by no fault of its own. A team comprised entirely of foundation students, this is another crew of amateur coders trying to play with the big boys.

"It was hilarious seeing the lecturer's face. He's all smiley smiley and then we go 'we're foundation students' and he goes 'Whaaat?'" laughs Anthony, excellent hat-wearing code monkey.

The cheese landscape the team's designed contains a cheese house, which must be destroyed by a cheese ball. That's really the only aim at this stage, but an almost complete absence of XNA knowledge among

the trio requires slightly more creative methods: "So far we've managed to get the code in, we're just having a bit of trouble getting it all together," Gareth tells us. "We've found some multiplayer code open source on the internet. It involves cannons... but we can convert it." That, of course, is not thievery.

Freeside, its tiles still escaping vertically off the top of the screen, meanwhile, seems to have hit a considerable technical bump. "Okay, there was a very, very basic, not-working core code before," says Casey. "Now there is working core code, and we're currently trying to sort out the fact that I've been working on this while they've been working on that, and trying to get things to behave," she sighs. "That is, without losing all the work I've just done, because I will start hurting people if that happens."

Freeside

Members: Casey Trotter, James Flanagan, Ashley Izat, Ben Woodward

■ Though never lacking in enthusiasm, Freeside's dream of reinventing the Worm was sadly subject to several unforeseen technical setbacks. This, and some additional creative differences early on Sunday morning, set them back a little, but they nevertheless came back with a fun and eye-catching design, and even a bonus level. It was truly a triumph over adversity.



Rusty Spoons

Members: Alex Beamer, Josh Crowther, Heather Macdougall, Miles McGowan, Thomas McPherson

■ Those underdog first years beat all the odds and coded a damn-near finished product in a night. Concerned with smashing a ball into a variety of buildings and pushing them into flaming craters as the surrounding city burned, it worked the physics system with skill, and was darn funny to boot. Hats off, kids. You done good.



Team Bean

Members: David Hart, Sean Fitzpatrick, Matt Blowman

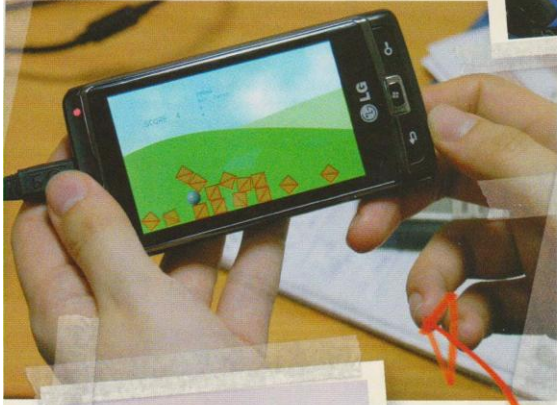
■ The brilliantly *Katamari*-inspired lunacy of this golf game, which saw a demented robot grow from demolishing cars with metallic golf balls all the way to standing atop the Earth and driving a winning tee shot into the sun itself, is the stuff of genius, and the only result from the weekend that, if anything, proved even more outlandish than our own moderately insane design dreams.



Stealth Team

Member: Harry Overs

■ Mr Overs was possessed of quiet confidence right from the off, and had a workable system up and running within hours. The main problems were importing the finished product into the prototype phone, but he got there in the end and it worked brilliantly. Look out for Harry's Windows Phone 7 HD Pong port, on Marketplace now.



A set of chaps displaying a little less rising panic are The Knights Who Say Ni, who take some time out from development for a good old chinwag. Spokesman Lawrence admits his XNA skills could be more refined: "Through the summer, you're supposed to be constantly increasing your knowledge but... there are people, there's booze, there's fun..." But he's quite happy to share his vision for the development of the industry at large, and his place in it. While his team-mates dutifully animate a solitary golfer sprite, Lawrence's mind is projecting far into the future.

"What I want to do in the long run," he tells us, "is basically make my own company, and bring the fun back into the games industry. That's my aim. That's my target right there. I just want to say: 'Look mate, you don't need to bring out bullshit; you don't need Halo 250. You can have other ideas; you can have other things. Let your mind

run free and just go with it.'" Colleague Robert chimes in: "When we were growing up it was fun games, now it's all shooters. Is it any wonder kids are like they are now?"

"Yeah, it's like, 'You've lost the plot,'" cries Lawrence. "It's not all just about

We ask him if he plans to correct this. "That's my aim. Hit people in the face, use a bit of violence; if you need to get something, use a bit of violence." Quite. We ask Lawrence if he's effectively going to use violence to promote non-violence? "Yeah! I'll

and cars, and in doing so is slowly growing. Very soon, he's levelled forests, skyscrapers, and is visible from space. "In the end," says team member Sean, "He's going to be, like, stood on the Earth taking planets out." Ridiculous, and quite brilliant.

This is a two-man team, and we ask Team Bean whether the obvious success they're finding may be due, in part, to the minimal nature of their personnel. "The smaller the teams, the less problems there seem to be," they tell us. "Seeing as they're all really small games, only one of you can be working on the game properly, you have to have a proper plan if you're splitting the work up between you."

These are salient words and, it turns out, potentially prophetic. As the sun goes down, Hull's skyline begins to slip into an inky gloom than usual, and everybody really starts to pile in the coffees...

"I want to say: 'Look mate, you don't need Halo 250. You can have other ideas; you can have other things'"

making the most violent game. It's about making the games more... what's the word for it?" "Innovative?" We offer. "Yeah. That's what is lacking. The industry's losing its identity. Before, you could look at a game and say 'Oh, this publisher made it or that publisher made it.' But now, if you took off the names, you wouldn't have a clue who the hell made what."

kick you in the face if you make a violent game." He's a regular CluffyB, this one.

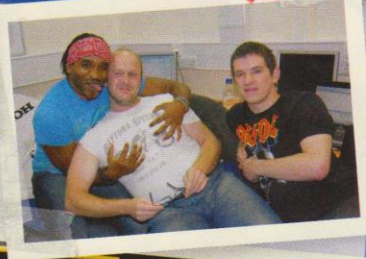
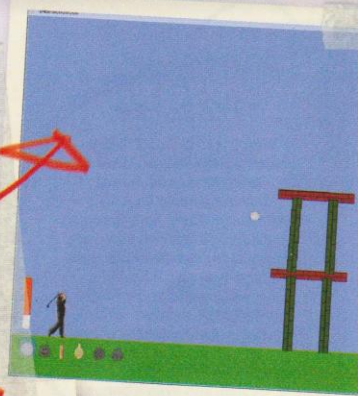
Nearby, a comparatively quiet couple of chaps are working on something astonishing. As we watch, even our own delusional dreams of superhero time travel golf seemed dwarfed by what's unfolding. A robot is bashing golf balls into houses



The Knights Who Say Ni

Members: Robert Campbell, Lawrence Worrell, Tanya Hegarty, Jonathan Jenkinson

■ Kept us going through the long and fraught night with some excellent banter. Perhaps, actually, it was partly our fault that they produced little more than a small, nicely animated golfer. Never mind. We'll never forget their views on life, the universe and Halo.



Team Ice Cream

Members: Stephen Muir, Marc Cutsworth, Simon Johnson, Richard Sharp

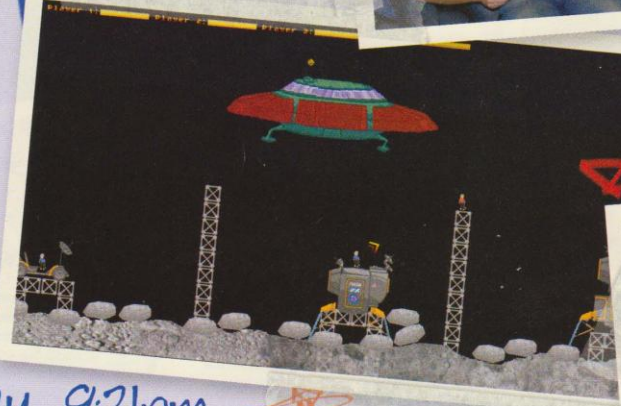
■ Half of Ice Cream had broken off to play *Team Fortress* by 2am, so we could tell something was afoot. It turned out the boys had finished incredibly early, and in doing so had all-but produced an entire game. Described as "sports Worms", it's got a two-player risk/reward dynamic at heart. Work together, from opposite sides, to smash through the buildings, then go turncoat and try to hole the ball beneath each other's position.

Technically astute, visually attractive and displaying genuine quality, Team Ice Cream's effort was our winner of the session. Well done, chaps.

Unhandled Exceptions

Members: Dan Brace, Louis Deane, James Taylor, Aslan Silva

■ It was a well-oiled outfit, to be sure, replete with mysterious outsourced artists and musicians. They had contacts, these boys. Emerging as a four-player turn-based combat golf game, complete with damage-inducing falling masonry, it also sported a real-time mode for a unique kind of carnage.



Saturday, 9:21pm

By now, in many cases, the physics experiments occurring on the screens are nothing to those on the developers' own desks.

Empty soda and energy drink cans are piled in pyramids, weighing down building piles of sketched equations, geometric diagrams, and level designs. These teams are now in the zone, and we almost hate to interrupt them. But we must know what's happening with Freeside.

"Basically, everything's ground to a halt until we can sort this out, and make sure that everyone's working on the recent version of the code that's the right version with everything in it," Casey tells us, looking mildly bleary-eyed by now.

She shows us a diagram on the screen, which looks a bit like a Tube map, except designed by a four-year-old impressionist painter. Tangled lines pointing to various submitted versions of the game in the team's shared file

area. "Technically there should be only four versions of the file because there are only four of us working on it, but there were seven, because something had gone seriously wrong. We had to merge two threads together and then merged the merged ones."

Basically, a version of the game had been incorrectly submitted, changes made, then that submission merged with correct parts, creating an inherently broken game. It was like a rubber-band ball, and we could only offer our condolences. Still, Team Bean's advice rang in our ears: a bigger team would definitely benefit from tighter control on submissions. Lesson learned.

Back to first years Rusty Spoons. We'd checked in with them a few hours earlier, and learned that, in their words, "All we've done is changed the background from the sample code we were given". It was now nearly 12 hours into the task, so we popped over to take a look.

The phone they'd strategically placed on the desk, its stopwatch counting down their remaining time down to the millisecond, created an atmosphere of dread. The background was sure still very nice – an apocalyptic, flaming city – but there was just nothing else there. What was the meaning of this?

"We've gone back a bit, but hopefully later we'll move forward. It's a tactical retreat," they tried to explain. Never mind rusty, now the corrosion had set in. We decided that they'd had it. Game Over, Rusty Spoons.

Elsewhere, projects were slowly starting to come to life. While the chief focus of the task, as part of the University's course speciality was on the coding, many teams had now reached the point where our tiny, mammalian brain could start to appreciate their work, as the pretty graphics began to emerge.

The zany Generic Game Developers sported a variety of

cartoon pigs, tigers and that squid in a bowler hat being launched across a parallax-scrolling moonscape with full motion blur. Who Needs to Go Outside? was now boasting some rudimentary shop graphics for a planned range of differently-powered golf balls, and even some *BioShock*-style advertising promos to explain what they did.

Around midnight, we were able to witness a little bit of history. Harry Overs, of Stealth Team, was ready to upload his Windows Phone 7 version of *Demolition Golf* to a prototype handset, and we enjoyed a few rounds of this touch-controlled crazy golf sim. It was neat, fun and dangerously addictive. As we crawled towards a sofa and collapsed around 3am, we started to realise, as we drifted into oblivion, that this could be the first of many small triumphs coming from this crunch-time think tank.

Up and away

Rob Miles' top four game design strategies

Focus on coding before prettiness

"At Hull, We use XNA as a hook. About 60 per cent of the first years are game development students. They're learning it from the primary point of view; we don't bother with game design. We don't have any people here today making assets. We're talking about engines and tools."

Solve old problems before following new ideas

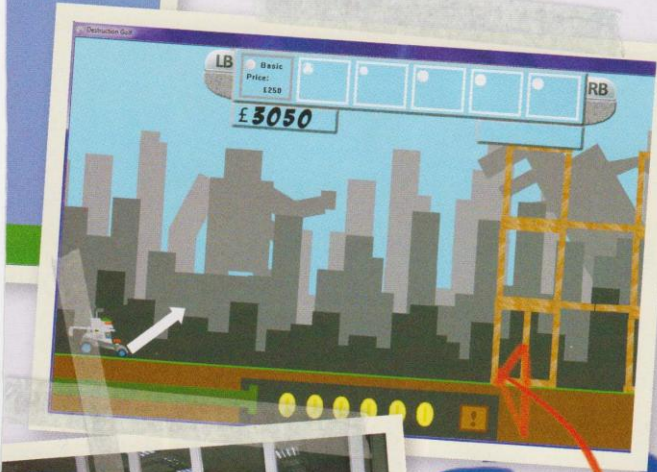
"If you come out of a meeting having had six great ideas for gameplay, as opposed to six problems you've solved making the thing actually work... the second kind of meeting is much more useful. Because you could have ideas like, you know, let's bring in some atomic rabbits. Fantastic! Let's do that. We can have them bouncing around and attacking things with their laser beam eyes. Great! But someone has to make all the code to do that."

Allow implementation to lead gameplay

"I've just been talking to the Rusty Spoons team, who've never coded before, and they've had an implementation problem which is that we're finding the ball just stops moving. I've said, 'Well have a magic button so you can stop the ball in mid-flight if it's over the shelf.' It'll become part of the game for the player. This is a big chunk of making games work and getting the thing to behave in the manner that you could program, and then wrapping the rest around it. I guess it's a kind of cheating, but it's a constructive kind of cheating."

Join the Indie Games party

"A few years ago, if you wanted to develop for a console, you'd have to pay Microsoft a hundred thousand bucks, or something, and it would send you a piece of hardware that you would then be allowed to put programs on. And then to release it, you'd have to get Microsoft to sign all your discs and pay royalties. Now you just download a copy of XNA, pay your 99 bucks for your Creators' Club membership, and you're off. And I think once you've got to that point, people are going to have a go."



Who Needs To Go Outside?

Members: Daniel Endersby, Alex Man, Mitchell Tulley, Anthony Haynes

Not these guys, that's for sure. They're too busy staying in designing killer frontends for barmy combat golf games. Another mad robot, this time rampaging his way through capital cities preceded by alarmist news reports. With a shop system, ET cartridge hordes and Mario homages, it's a unique and sassy experience.

Sunday, 8:04am

Boy, had we ever overslept. Shaking ourselves down and emerging from the gloomy corridor, there was just time for one last tour of duty before the gong.

Team Ice Cream had spent a good deal of the night playing *Team Fortress*, having completed their game many hours before. While this

else, reached the leaderboard on *Geometry Wars*, and C4 still had more paper than graphics. But there was one rather huge surprise – the seemingly crushed Rusty Spoons were not only still here, but had coded a finished, playable game. It had a title screen and everything. The apocalyptic city was still there, but now it was possible to launch balls at

"We were incredibly impressed with absolutely everything we saw, and everyone we met"

may have risked looking smug, the ever-smiling team somehow pulled off this celebratory deathmatch, and they'd even managed to code in a natty Teddy Boy golfer in their spare time, too.

Freeside were clinging on, working diligently on a bonus level; The Knights Who Say Ni had, if nothing

housing tenements and orphanages ("Think of the children!") to pot as many buildings as possible within a strict time limit. We shook our heads in disbelief, then, as the bell tolled, quietly slipped on our judging hat. Stepping over empty coffee cups, crisp packets and the occasional snoozing student, we sat down to play some games...

Endgame

Academics and 360 may have come together to 'judge' a winner, but if there was any singular message we brought away from this ram-packed 24 hours, it's that in this process, there were no losers. While you can find in the reports scattered around these pages our own views on each team's output, and which we considered most playable and accomplished, we were incredibly impressed with absolutely everything we saw, and everyone we met.



Not only did the students prove that, actually, a game can indeed be made in a day, they also proved that, given a vague brief and full creative freedom, an almost infinite number of twists and approaches can be taken to a simple task. It fills us with hope when faced with an industry increasingly hobbled by low-risk decisions, sequelitis and commercial focus.

Study the names on these pages well – they could very well bring their excellent training and commitment to making a marked contribution to the future of gaming. 360