

Changes to Marble Madness II
Proposed 4/23/91

- A. From the Focus we learned that the trakball is the more intuitive control to roll a marble, and that it is the desired control for the high-end player. But, the joystick was perceived as an easier control for a beginner to learn the game. Thus, we would like to change the trakball control to a joystick, and see if we gain a wider audience. In order to gain the variable speed of the trakball control we need to add a "turbo" button with the joystick. From in-house play and the Focus, the "turbo" was seen as a fun new feature.
- B. There was no objection to the "cuteness" level of the game from the Focus. But the players did feel the transformation to Marble Man was "hokey, "stupid," and meaningless. We will remove "Marble Man" from the entire game. This means the Title screen, cabinet artwork, pinball spell outs, and goal transformation all need to be changed. There were objections to the "scream" of acid death, and the fall grunt from the marble. We would like to change these voices to something more comical rather than realistic.
- C. There were general elements of confusion.
1. Players did not find the power towers until many hours of play. We can modify the tower graphics by placing the animating power sphere on top of the tower.
 2. Players were confused by score and time bubbles that look like marbles. Since the flags have values on them there is no need to give a score bubble, instead we will merely change the color of the flag to the player color to let him know he received the points. Second, we will replace the "100" flags that lead the player to the goal with miniature checkered goal flags. These new flags will have no collision and award no score value. (They will provide a clear path to the goal.)
 3. It was not clear to players that after a score threshold was reached the player received extra time. All score flags will be worth from 1,000 to 5,000 points with the score threshold being every 5,000 points. This will provide a more immediate feedback of the "score gives time" rule.
 4. There was a lack of basic instructions.(ie. We never told the player to get to the goal before the clock reaches 0.) We will add the necessary instructions to the "Start Screen."
 5. Also there was confusion concerning how much time the player thought he had to complete the wave from the wave start. We will place the track messages on a black background and animate a 5 digit from the track clock to every players' clock.
- D. There were some specific multi-player problems mentioned at the Focus.

1. One, Players' did not like going to the trouble of breaking a tower and then losing the power to someone else. We can guarantee that the player who breaks the tower receives the power right away.
2. Also the scrolling was annoying in multiplayer play. It was apparent that players did not want to hold others up by not being able to keep up, and they did not want to be slowed by players who could not keep up with them. If we return the scroller to the original Marble Madness type scrolling, the lead marble will always control the screen position and poorer players will be moved forward for free. (Marble Madness took 5 seconds off the player moved ahead) This means players will not be held up and will not hold up others.

E. Players wish to have more powers that last longer. Specifically they wanted more Helicopter Power. We can give them more Helicopter Power for longer if we restrict the scroller. One solution is to simply not let the lead marble control the scroller if he has Helicopter power.

F. The first round ramping was a significant problem in the field tests. We have far too many people quitting before they reach the first pin. We are going to redo enemies in the first round to more closely match the original Marble Madness design, where the difficulty was in learning terrain with an occasional enemy. We will give the players more continue time in the 1st round.

In order to get a new field test we need the following:

New control panel assembly (harness, graphics, 3 joysticks, 6 buttons)

New MOB/PF graphics

New program/adpcm/audio

Note: For every unit to be placed on field test we need the above.

We estimate it will take 2 weeks to complete the program changes that are necessary to re-test the game.

So, Monday, May 6, we will place a new version in the common area for 1 week of game pounding.

On Monday, May 13, we will be able to place a new version out on field test.