

CTF-Abydoz

Initial Stages

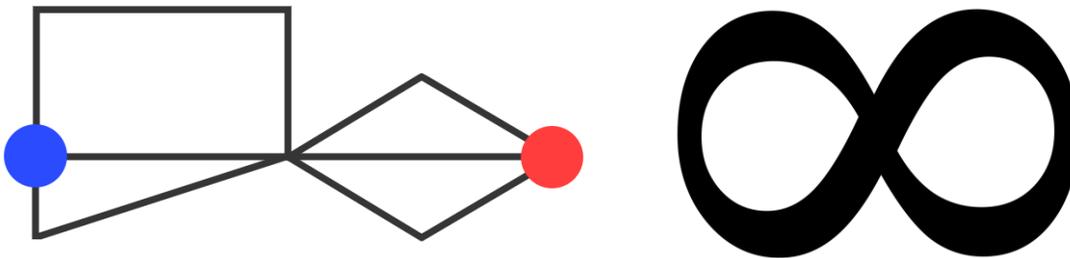
My first thoughts for the map were to go with a desert ruins environment. My main inspiration was the planet Abydos from the TV show Stargate SG1, hence the map eventually being called CTF-Abydoz. Below are my theme mood boards the third mood board is where I took the least inspiration from the hope was, I could make some kind of pyramid at the center of the map so players could use it as a reference so that they would never get lost. And the third mood board was what the inside of the pyramid might look like, but I decided to simplify the design and keep it to the Egyptian ruins theme. I hoped initially that I could use the spaceship aspects inside the pyramid as a way of allowing the players to role-play and make them feel like aliens invading a planet. But I kept this role-playing aspect as I added a stargate on one side of the map and the pyramid on the other which allowed one team to feel like they were coming on the planet through the Stargate and the other team to feel like they were defending the planet. This is the reasoning for having one of the flags in the pyramid and the other flag at the Stargate and having the subsequent team spawn around the area.



Next was the gameplay theme mood board, this mood board is to demonstrate the types of gameplay That will be in this map. For example, there is an image of a sniper I was hoping for the map to have an area where the sniper would get a good angle of all the map. But to make sure this wasn't too powerful I did make note to ensure there was no additional sniper ammo on the map and ensured the respawn time of the sniper was sensible. This is because you don't want a player to abuse the sniper. Additionally, I hoped to put some vents in the map when I was planning on there being a spaceship section. This is because I wanted to take advantage of the tactical slide that players can do in the Unreal Tournament. Even though there are no vents in the final map I still was able to position armor upgrades and ammo packs in locations that could only be accessed through technical slides. This is to increase re playability in the map and reward players that have had experience with the game. I did plan on using jump pads but didn't put them in the final map because I wanted the map to feel grounded and additionally, I put elevators in the map and changed the speed to be slower to increase the challenge of using the elevators and having jump pads would deter players from using the elevators because they would be a faster way of getting to high places. I hoped to use wall running in my map and have jumping to be a way of getting to more powerful weapons which I did put into the map.



I knew my gameplay type was Capture The Flag but was determined not to go with a symmetrical design of map. This was my finalized node-based design. I wanted there to be the same number of roots on both sides but have all the roots designed slightly different. This would mean that all routes lead to the center which would be the main area that combat would take place. I additionally wanted there to be a directional flow to the map. I wanted players to be able to keep moving and there be no dead ends. This is why my main inspiration for the node design was the infinity sign, which you can hopefully clearly see in my node design.



After I had completed my node base design, I moved onto my floor plan using my node design as a groundwork. Hopefully you can clearly see the two sides of the map and clearly identify where the spawn areas would be. I made some changes from the original node design when creating the floor plan. I took out the main route going from red team flag to blue team flag. This is because I wanted to increase the traffic of the path that would lead to the higher section of the map that is identified by a darker colour. Additionally, the bottom route on the left side of the map I made now splits into two separate parts going into the main arena in the centre. This is to add variety into the map and to stop players being able to predict what tunnel the opposite team will come out of. There is a 50/50 chance the enemy players can come out of one of the tunnels. But I did fear that players would go for the fastest route this is why when I got to white boxing the level, I put a health pick up in the next tunnel along to encourage players to choose between the two exits and not just go with the one that would get them to the conflict the fastest.

After this first version though I saw a few problems, mainly in the top area where the map is at its highest. On the first version of the floor plan the angle in which the two teams enter into that zone I'm not well thought through. In a second version I improved this by changing the angle so both teams would go into the zone facing each other and not have to turn over 90 degrees to see the enemy. As you can hopefully see you in a second image.



White Boxing

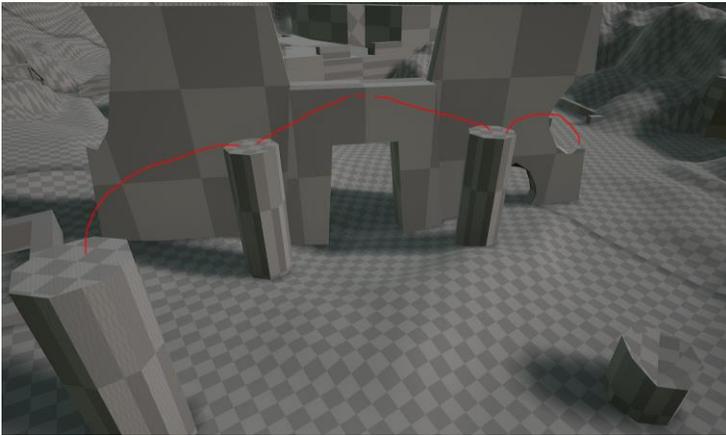
When it came to the white boxing, I slapped everything in and then went through and started slowly adjusting things. In the Unreal Tournament editor, you're able to jump in as a player and walk around the map as a player would. I repetitively did this to find sections on my map that were disorientating or uncomfortable to navigate. Obviously, I wouldn't be able to get all the problems sorted out at this stage as the creator of my map there are problems that I wouldn't be able to see. It's hard to get lost in your own map! But there were still areas I could see that obviously did improve. One for instance was a tunnel that was blocked and had another tunnel going off on the side, but the secondary tunnel had a turn that was too sharp, and it was challenging for a player to see that there was a tunnel at the end of the corridor that was blocked. So, I adjusted the corner to be wider and also added a torch that had fallen on the ground so that I could put a light source there and it could be used as another thing that could attract the players eyes to know that there was a tunnel going off from the one that was blocked. As seen in the before and after screenshots below.



When it came to the outside section of the map, I added the foundation of buildings that I would then make into ruins fitting the theme of the map. But I quickly realized that from the highest section of the map players would have an incredibly powerful vantage point over all of the map so I had to ensure that each one of the buildings that remained had sufficient cover to keep players safe and not make it too easy for a player with a sniper in this position to kill every player on the map.



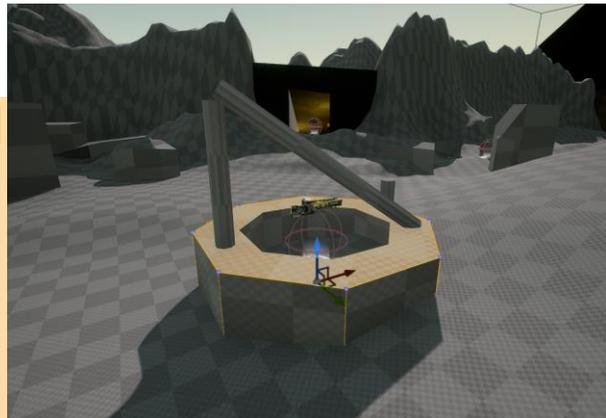
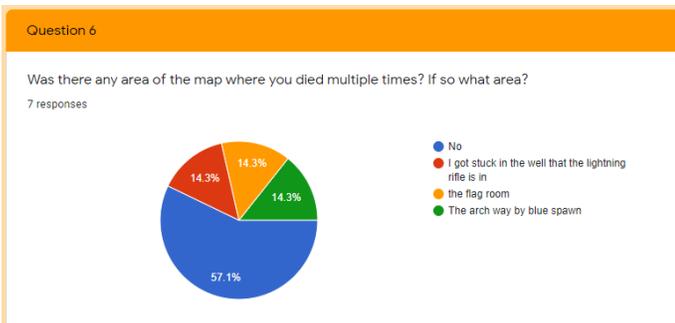
I was very keen to add re playability in my map so that players that had experience with the map would still be able to find new things in the map to discover. One of the ways I did this was by positioning weapons and power-ups in places that could only be accessed through doing certain jumps at certain angles and wall running. This would reward players that had experience in the game already, but I ensured that the power-ups would only spawn a limited number of times so that new players would not be defeated purely because of a lack of map knowledge and experience with the game. The image below is an example of a series of jumps that the players would need to go through to get to the special power-ups.



Playtest 1

Major Iterations

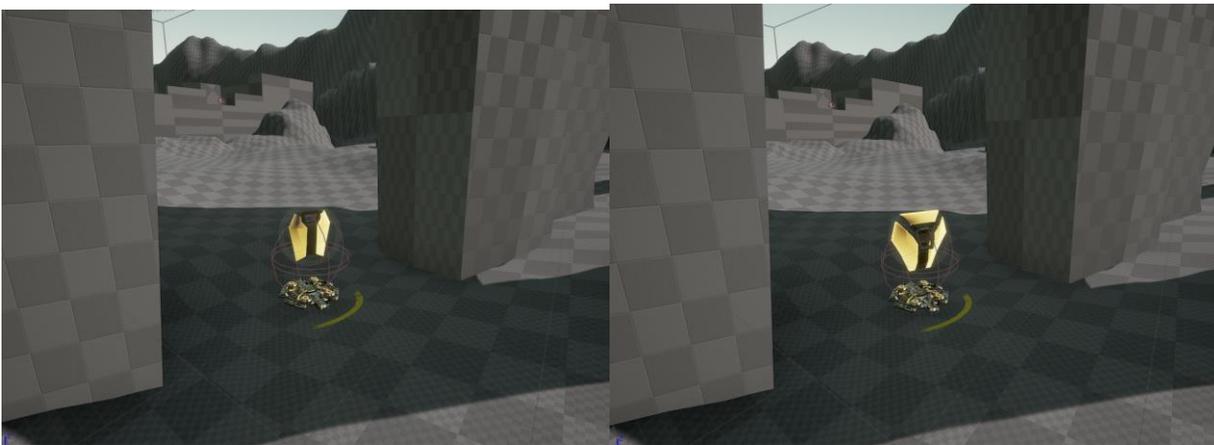
Players of my level answered a questionnaire. One player had said that he had got stuck in a certain part of the map as seen in the image below. The section of the map where they said they got stuck I put a well with a weapon pickup inside they seem to have got stuck inside the well. Therefore, I went into Unreal Tournament editor and adjusted the well so it would be easier to get in and out of it. As seen in the second image below.



As seen earlier I had set up a section of the map which could only be accessed through certain jumping techniques. I made a minor tweak to bring the height of the section which the players are supposed to wall run across. This was to make it more clearly communicate that players needed to run across that section.



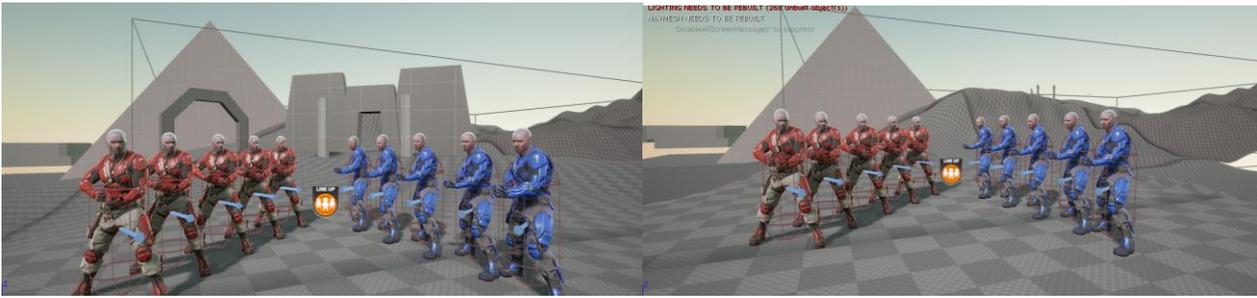
I also swapped out an armor pickup from a high-level armor pick up to a low-level armor pick up. This was because this pick-up was closer to the blue spawn and it was too easy for them to get.



I went into the terrain editor and removed sections of the terrain that I wasn't using. This was to increase efficiency. And then I reshaped some of the paths in the map to increase efficiency even further. I then added textures to the objects in my level and used the terrain tool to smooth down the hilly areas of my map to make them look more like sand.



I improved the lineup scene at the beginning and end of the game. This scene is shown with all the players that are currently in that session.



Playtest 2

Major Iterations

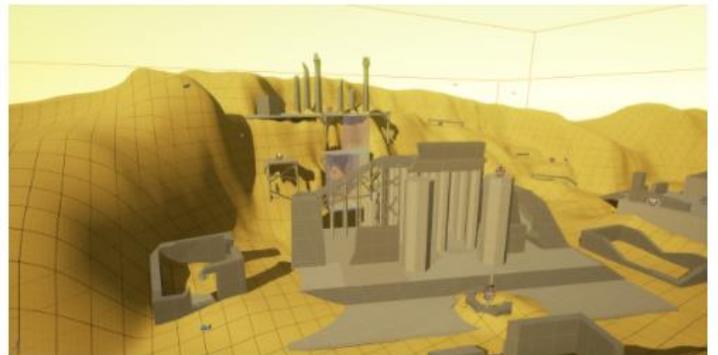
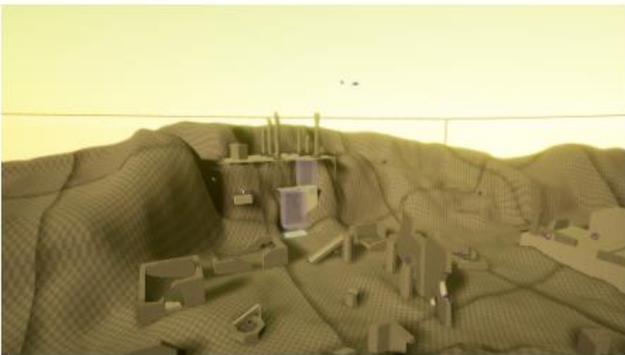
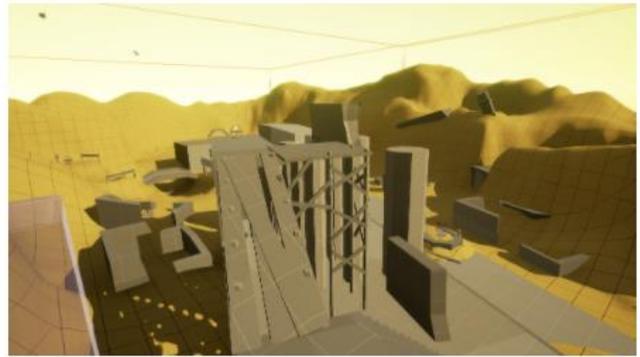
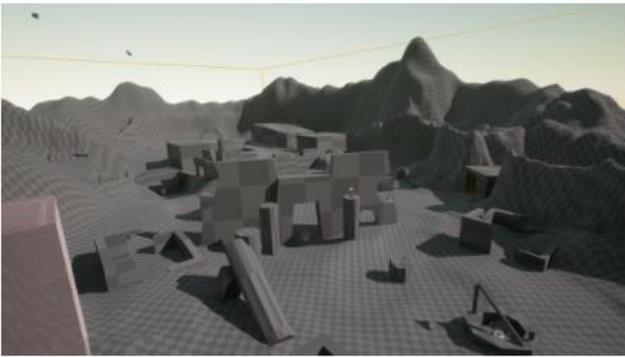
I created a custom material that I used for the terrain. It was coloured a bit more of a sandy tone and also had the ability to be used as a mask so I could remove pieces of the terrain this will be used later to make a tunnel system go through a piece of the terrain. Then I looked at my questionnaire to see if there was any feedback from the players of my level the first answers that stuck out to me were:

Question: What are some improvements you would recommend for the map?

"Maybe add more health pickups scattered around and some **elevated structures in the middle** like a tower or building"

"make the centre area a **bit smaller** and with **more cover** as anyone with a sniper rifle could just dominate"

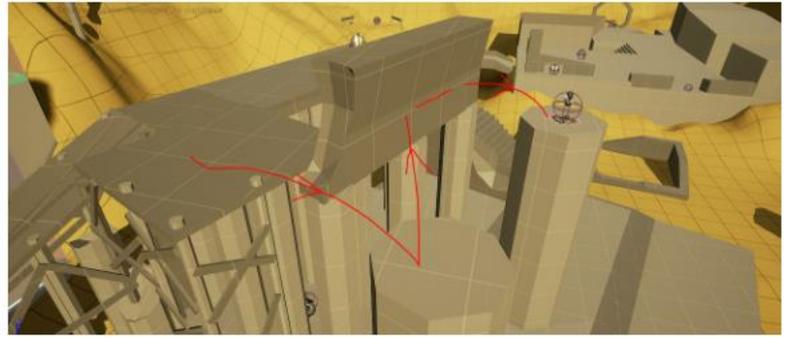
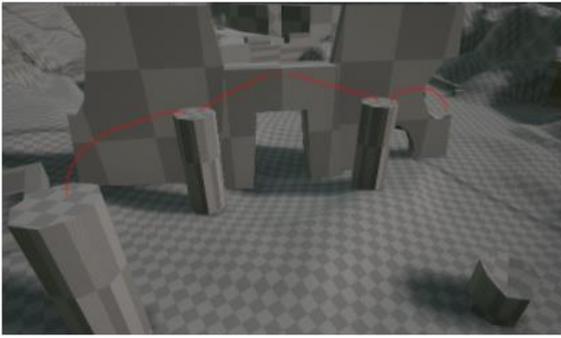
As I mentioned earlier this was something, I was concerned about I did add extra cover with buildings but evidently not enough. So, I got to work redesigning the centre area to have more of a structure too firstly be used as a reference to navigate the map and additionally as cover from sniper position above. The images below are before and after.



Question: What would you say interrupted the flow of your gameplay?

"I was trying to use the jumping platforms / routes in the middle, but they were so thin I couldn't actually use them properly - they were just too hard to stay on. They probs need to be much wider, and maybe you could break up the middle area a little more by having a raised platform part."

This player is saying that the initial jumping platforms I designed in the centre of the map were too challenging and needed to be made more achievable. This is something I additionally change when redesigning the centre. As you can see from the images below, I made the platforms larger and made the jump sequence less complicated. This should make this jump now more achievable for players. I did still design the jumping sequence to be challenging because I want it to be a reward for players with more skill.



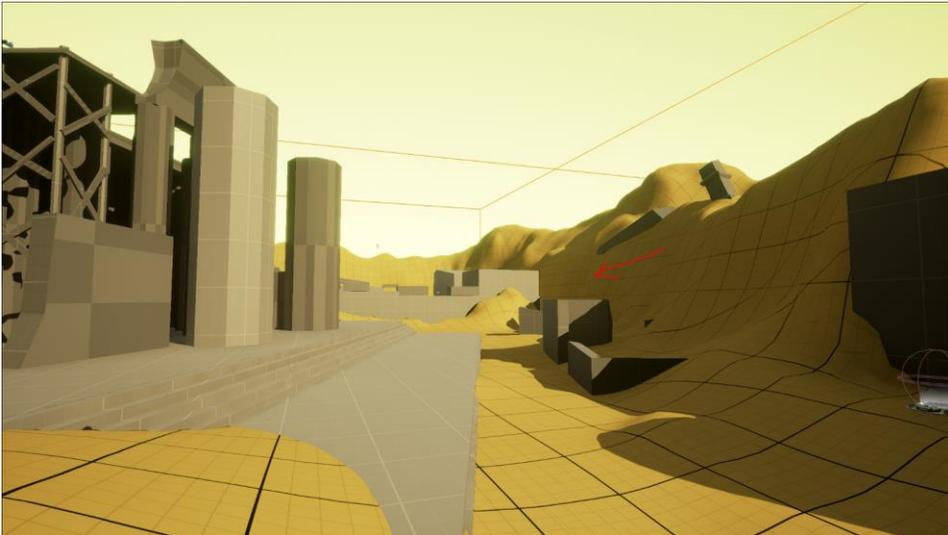
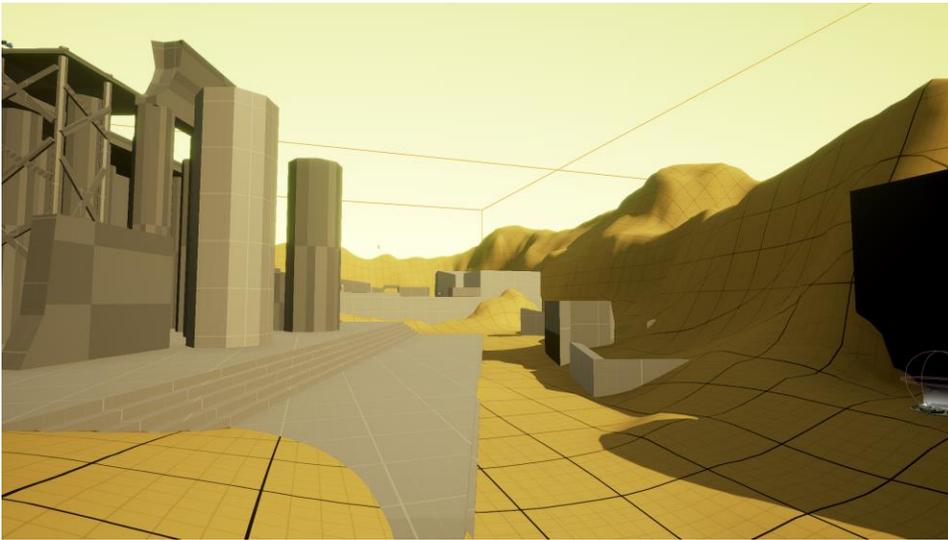
The design of the structure in the centre of the map was inspired by this reference image that was actually on one of my original mood boards.



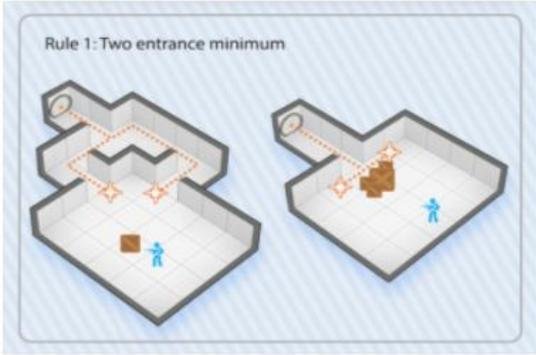
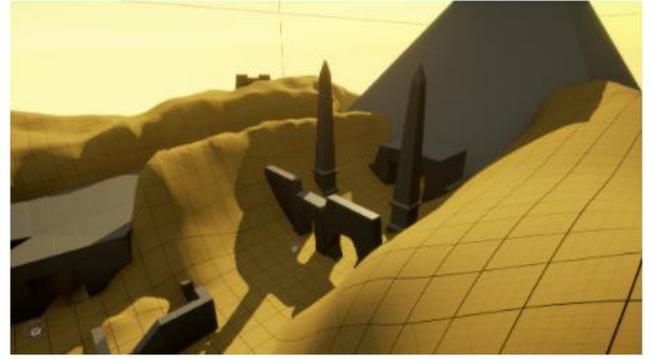
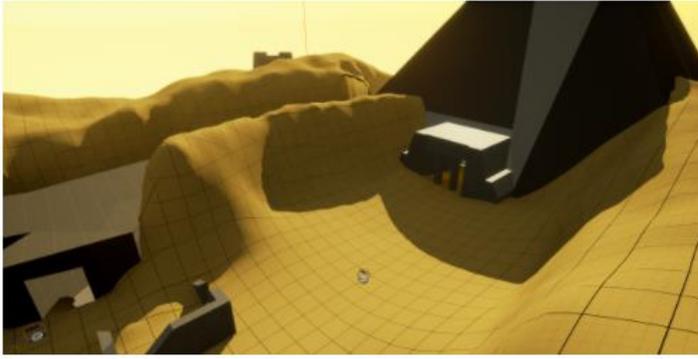
I then added some additional aspects of my map that would help players with navigation. First and foremost, I was concerned about the centre area becoming too busy and distracting and players not knowing where the opposite team's flag would be. Obviously, my map being ancient Egyptian in theme I wanted to use an obelisk at some point, and I thought it would be a perfect tool to help me direct players. Unreal Tournament editor does by default offer arrows that you can add your map to have guide please personally I find this a rather unnatural way to guide players I would much prefer something that would be hidden and discreet That would help the player without them even noticing. For example, the image below is a level design from The Last of Us Part 2. Looking at the image you can see particularly in the bottom right how the building is actually designed to direct your eyes in the direction that the designer wants the player to move to. This image was released in an event called #blocktober that happened on Twitter back in October level designers shared screenshots of their white boxed levels. This really inspired me to add something like this into my own level.



I was concerned about people getting lost in the centre area so I used an obelisk that had collapsed as a guide to point players eyes to the Blue spawn hopefully this player to know where they should be going and not get lost or feel disorientated. You can see the before and after images below.



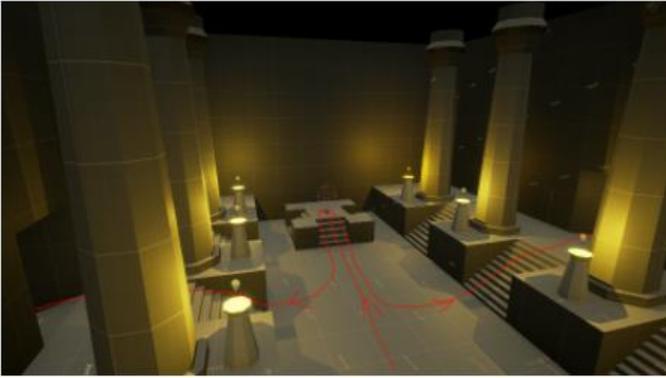
I then moved on to the entrance of the pyramid. As seen in the first image below it was quite open with no cover. I was keen to limit the movement down that route and maybe even bottleneck it so it would stop being so open and making the map feel too big. Therefore, I added an ancient Egyptian themed archway so that it would bottleneck the route in and out of the pyramid. As seen in image two. I then made an additional hole in the archway so that there would be two routes going in and out of the pyramid. This is because in Ben's Small Bible of Realistic Multiplayer Level Design (2004) he advises there must always be at least two entrances into a location as seen in the third image below.



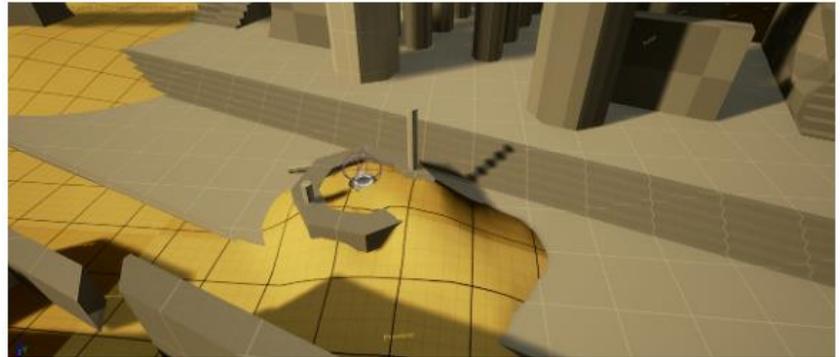
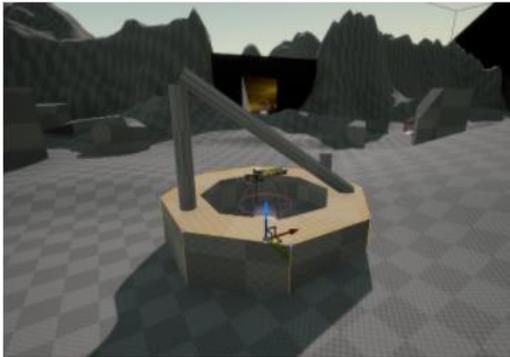
The entrance of the pyramid was designed with this reference image below.



One thing I was concerned about disrupting the flow of gameplay was the flag room in the pyramid. A player from the blue team would run in, collect the flag, then need to turn almost 180° to go down one of the three routes back to the blue flag. As seen in the first image below. So, I went about redesigning the room so that the player would only have to turn maximum 90 degrees to start leaving the flag room. Firstly, I moved the flag position and brought it closer to the front of the room in line with the two tunnels leading out the pyramid. Additionally, to ensure that the red team didn't spawn immediately next to the flag making it challenging for a blue team player to get the flag without immediately getting killed I created a new section of the chamber with a throne in it and moved the spawning points there. Now it'll take a few seconds for it red team player to get to the fed flag from when they spawn.



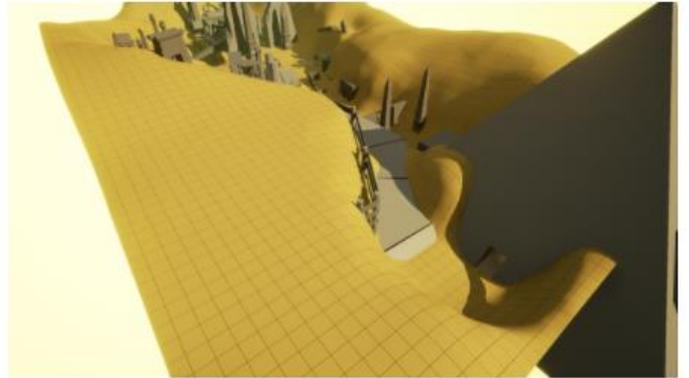
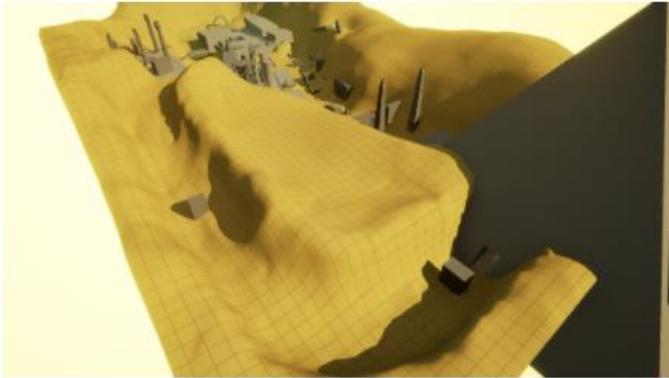
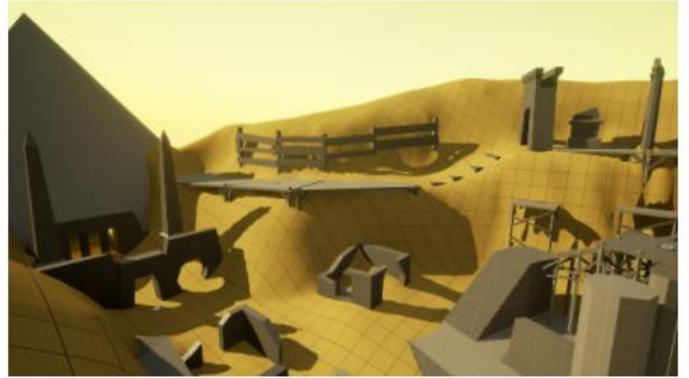
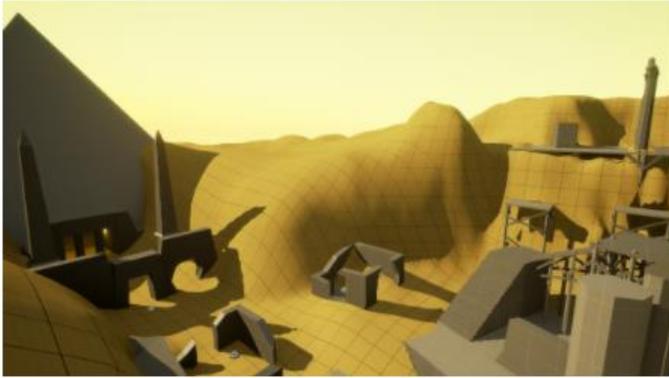
In some of minor iterations after my first play test a player said that they got stuck in the well. I fixed that at the time but now I've added further iterations on the well after redesigning the centre I have now repositioned. This creates a nice pathway to the weapon pick up. On the opposite side you will have to jump onto the well to get the pickup. This gives the person coming at it from the right-hand side an advantage. Initially this is where the blue team spawns but when the game gets going players on the red team could equally be coming at it from the right-hand side. This is because the map is designed to keep players moving in the figure of eight never stopping the flow of gameplay.



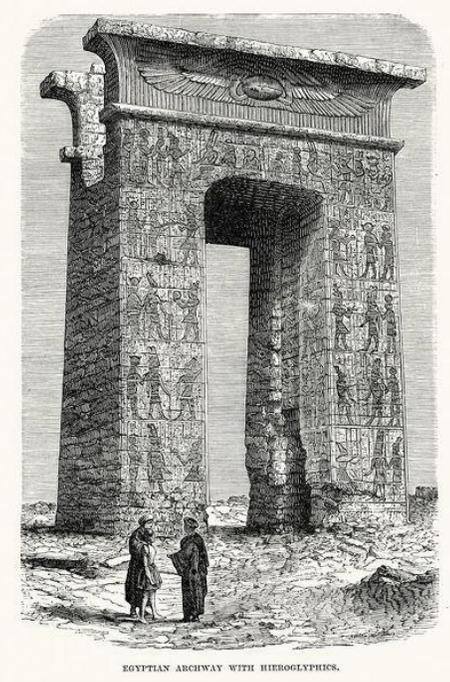
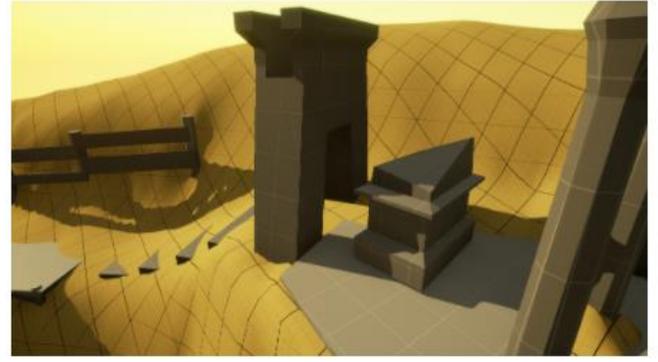
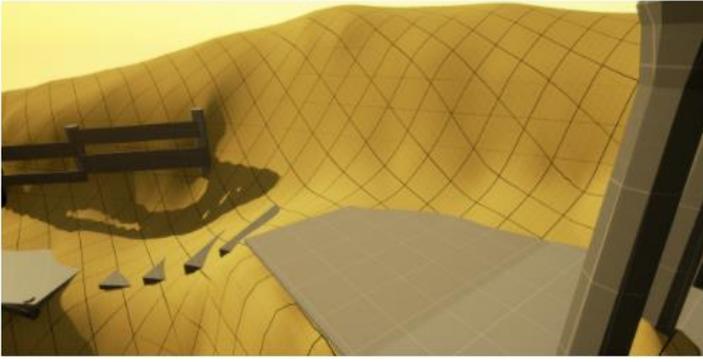
Playtest 3

Major Iterations

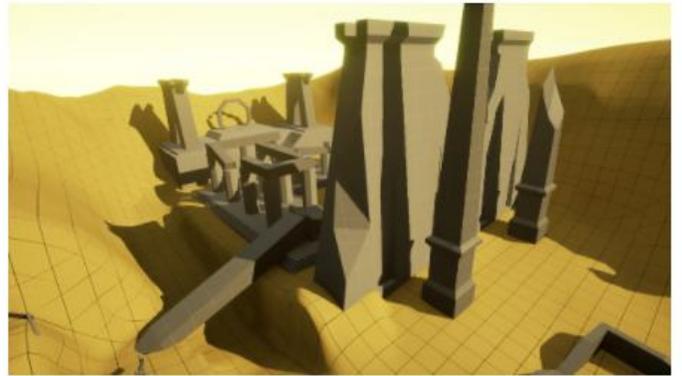
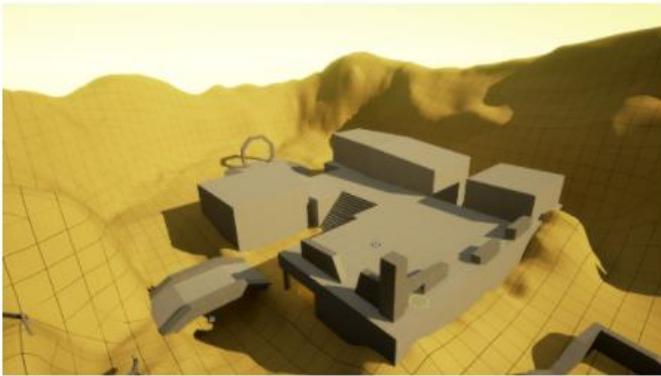
The first area of the map I improved on my third iteration was one of the main routes out of the pyramid. As you can see in images on the left before I had made any changes this mountain pass route was very long and very out the way. Additionally, if a player had the flag and went down this route no one else in the map would be able to shoot at him to retrieve the flag. So, I decided to revamp this section to fix these issues. I changed the route to go around the outside of the mountain so that it would be open air and all players would be able to see and shoot at anyone going along this route. This means no one could sneak away with the flag. And additionally, I added objects in the area to make it look like a wooden structured route along the side of the mountain with wooden supports stopping the sound covering path. As seen in the second images on the right-hand side.



But I quickly ran into a problem at the very top of the path that I just created. I was concerned about players not having any cover when entering the next section of map. If my map was all indoors this would be easy but because it is outside creating entrances to new areas can be challenging. I created an archway which I based off ancient Egyptian architecture. And placed a destroyed obelisk to create a blind spot meaning that players coming from either side would have two entrances in and out of this section of the map. Below are the before and after images and the Egyptian architecture that I based the archway off.



The biggest change to my third iteration was revamping the blue team spawn. In my initial design blue team players would spawn very close to the blue flag which would result in it being very challenging to retrieve the flag additionally the blue spawn compared to the rest of the map didn't capture the ancient Egyptian theme very well. So these were the main two problems I tried to solve when redesigning the blue spawn. As you can see in the before and after images below of the redesigned blue spawn.

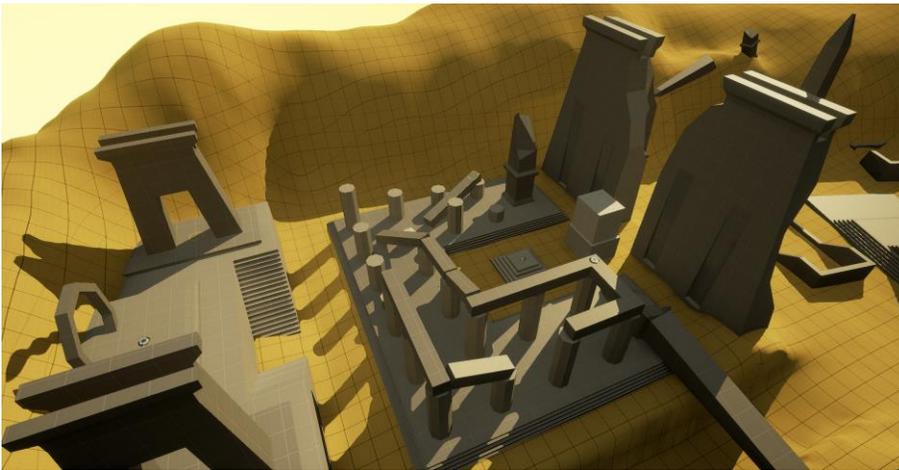


I've created a new, more grand entrance to the blue spawn this identifies it as one of the key areas of the map to help players navigate. Additionally, the design of this entrance was inspired by the ancient Egyptian temple of Luxor as seen in a second

image below.



I've replaced the bridge with an obelisk that is falling over. And created an area with columns that can be climbed on, to reach more powerful pickups.



The actual spawn points of the Blue team have been moved further away from the flag so it will take significant time for a blue player that's just spawned in to reach the flag additionally where they spawn their line of sight is blocked and is not directly looking at the flag so it will take a moment for them to start attacking any players that might be trying to steal the flag.

