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**APOLLO Combat Status Update**

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# Apollo Combat

## Combat Design Plan

Apollo has not had a dedicated combat designer until the last few weeks so our previous combat design was a product of what little free time our Lead Game Designer was able to dedicate. Now that our new Combat Designer has spent some more time with it, we have come up with a more consistent, fleshed out concept for basic combat.

We've established a common language for the button properties that players can learn and strategize around without needing to memorize endless chains of X’s and Y’s. The button properties are also consistently tied in with our other core gameplay systems such as Stealth and Fear.

Across the entire move list, the buttons consistently carry the following properties:

* X Button = quick, light damage, stun (out of the fight for a short time), quiet, low fear
* Y Button = slow, heavy damage, knockdown (out of the fight for a longer time), loud, high fear
* B Button = quick, no damage, knockback (out of the fight only for a moment), no fear

The basics of moment to moment risk/reward with quick/light vs. slow/heavy attacks on X and Y are tried and true conventions for brawlers. The more impactful “stun” and “knockdown” properties being more consistent and predictable than in other brawlers will allow the player to strategize with more tangible visible results in the world, rather than abstract button combo memorization mapping to slightly more high damage attacks as in many of our competitors. While these “stun” and “knockdown” properties will still be engaged only when special moves or combos are performed (with the associated attack buttons), there are much fewer and simpler special moves and combos to memorize, making the whole system a bit more accessible than say, Ninja Gaiden or Devil May Cry. Once enemies are in a “stun” or “knockdown” state, the player will have unique options for how to engage them further, providing more opportunities to strategize based on observations in the world.

Beyond these core brawler mechanics, we have also provided an alternative/complimentary path for players who feel that their Batman should be a more defensive fighter (or who just like Assassin’s Creed’s combat style). A series of talent tree unlockable counter attacks that are engaged off of the block state could be the focus for these types of players.

There is a chart of the potential player moves at the end of this document.

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## Current Team Structure and Approach

In addition to the new Combat Designer designing and balancing moves as they come online, we have a dedicated player side engineer, a dedicated AI side engineer, and at least one dedicated animator supporting combat progress. We also have occasional support from an additional engineer on combat camera.

We have identified the core systems missing from having functional first pass brawling and are rapidly attacking these foundational tasks first (namely, “translation scaling”, “soft targeting”, and basic combat camera logic). Using the full move list as a guide, we are also mapping out and prioritizing all the player, AI, and tool related tasks and constantly assessing which combination of engineering and animation tasks will get us the most bang for our buck and ability to playtest quickly. Once we complete the foundational work, such as the combat tool which is already implemented and the tasks listed above, we will return to a rapid prototyping mentality. We will try to playtest early and often, first using the team, then internal testers (but through the usability group), then external testers.

Our new Combat Designer has already learned a lot about our complex combat set up across many tools, and has drastically improved the reliability of our current basic combat in game. Player and AI no longer interpenetrate while in combat, AI regularly attack again, all the player attacks actually land and trigger appropriate recoils, and the recoils’ animation translation match the player’s attack animation translation. These are small victories, but huge improvements over what has been in the game since the PathEngine integration began a couple months ago.

## Expectations for Vertical Slice

We will accomplish all the core moves detailed in the Vertical Slice Walkthrough. Basic brawling systems and animation will be polished as much as the Core Leads feel is necessary for a good visual presentation in the VS demo, but then the combat strike team will focus on implementing the elements of the system that we deem more necessary for evaluating the strategy, feel, and fun factor of our combat rather than emphasizing visual polish during this rapid prototyping phase.

## PLAYER MOVES (Excluding Stealth-Specific Combat Moves)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **INPUT** | **ACTION** | **LOCK?** | **DAMAGE** | **EFFECT TO NPC** | **OFFENSIVE/DEFENSIVE** | **NOTES** |
| **BASIC ACTIONS** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| X | Quick/Light Attack | NO | Light | Hit | Offensive | Chaining, directional |
| X (held) | Quick Spin Attack | YES | Light | AOE Hit -> Stun | Offensive | Radial Light Attack (Cape?) |
| Y | Slow/Heavy Attack | NO | Medium | Hit | Offensive | Ender if off of a Combo |
| Y (held) | Heavy Spin Attack | YES | Medium | AOE Hit -> KD | Offensive | Radial Heavy Attack (Cape?) |
| A (held) | Free Run | NO | N/A |  | N/A |  |
| A, A | Evade | NO | N/A |  | Defensive | Directional based on stick input.  Could be LB + Stk Dir as an alternative to A, A |
| B | Knockback, Context-sensitive Action (see below), Drop Down | NO | None | KB | Defensive | B is knockback, or context-sensitive action if enemy is prompting |
| B (held) | Radial Knockback | YES | None | AOE Hit -> KB | Defensive | Radial Knockback Attack (Cape?) |
| RB | Shadow Dive | NO | N/A |  | N/A | *Can’t be used to start a combo!* |
| RT | Grapple Gun | NO | N/A |  | N/A | *Can’t be used to start a combo!* |
| LB (held) | Block (avoid enemy attack) | NO | None |  | Defensive | *Can’t be used to start a combo!  Evasive synchronized dodging action (not turtling)* |
| LB (held), X (timed) | Stunning Counter | YES | Medium | Hit -> Stun | Defensive | Timed synchronized action, leaves enemy Stunned, Triggers Bone Breaker if NPC health % low and minimum time expired |
| LB (held), Y (timed) | Knockdown Counter | YES | Medium | Hit -> KD | Defensive | Timed synchronized action, Knocks Down enemy, Triggers Bone Breaker if NPC health % low and minimum time expired |
| LB (held), B (timed) | Knockback Counter | YES | Medium | Hit -> KB | Defensive | Timed synchronized action, Knocks Back enemy |
| LT (held) | Gadget Aim | NO | Depends on Gadget | Depends on Gadget | Depends on Gadget | Can’t be used to start a combo!, When button released, gadget is deployed |
| LT (tap) | Gadget Insta-use | NO | Depends on Gadget | Depends on Gadget | Depends on Gadget | *Can’t be used to start a combo! Gadget instantly deployed* |
| **ATTACK COMBOS** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| X, B, X | Attack Combo 1 | YES | Heavy | Hit + KB + Hit -> Stun | Offensive | After the enemy is Knocked Back, Batman lunges toward for last hit |
| Y, B, Y | Attack Combo 2 | YES | Heavy | Hit + KB + Hit -> KD | Offensive | After the enemy is Knocked Back, Batman lunges toward for last hit |
| **CONTEXT-SENSITIVE** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| X (while running) | Shoulder Check | NO | Medium | Hit | Offensive | If Batman is Free Running, recoils enemy out of the way, singular running action |
| X (long ranged) | Long-ranged Attacks | YES | Light | Hit | Offensive | Allows Batman to attack enemies at further range |
| X (PC knocked down) | Stunning Rising Attack | YES | Medium | Hit -> Stun | Offensive | If enemy near, perform attack, otherwise just get up |
| Y (PC knocked down) | Knockdown Rising Attack | YES | Medium | Hit -> KD | Offensive | If enemy near, perform attack, otherwise just get up |
| B (PC knocked down) | Knockback Rising Attack | YES | Medium | Hit -> KB | Offensive | If enemy near, perform attack, otherwise just get up |
| Y (NPC stunned) | Stunned Knockdown | NO | Heavy | Hit -> KD | Offensive | Heavy move performed on Stunned NPCs |
| B (NPC stunned) | Extended Knockback | NO | Medium | Hit -> KB | Offensive | Knocks enemy back further, does extra damage |
| None! (while evading over enemy) | Evade-over Attack | YES | Medium | Evade + Hit | Offensive and Defensive | Adds hit to evasion over an enemy |
| B, X or Y (mash) | Ground Pound | NO | Light to Heavy (depends on number of hits) | Hit (multiple times) | Offensive | If enemy is Knocked Down, B lunges player to NPC, X or Y attacks enemy once there |
| Y + B | Ground Finisher | YES | KO | Finisher | Offensive | Syncronized special finisher on NPCs that are Knocked Down |
| Y + B | Standing Finisher | YES | KO | Finisher |  | Synchronized special finisher on NPCs that are Stunned |
| A (held), X (timed) | Use Environment Attack | YES | Medium | Hit | Offensive | Prompted when player is FreeRunning and can attack from current environmental interaction |
| **GADGET COMBOS** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| X, LT | Gadget Combo 1 | YES | Medium | Hit + Gadget (depends on gadget) | Offensive | Quick, Close range |
| Y, LT | Gadget Combo 2 | YES | Heavy | Hit + Gadget (depends on gadget) | Offensive | Slow, Close range |
| X, B, LT | Gadget Combo 3 | YES | Medium | Hit + KB + Gadget (depends on gadget) | Offensive | Quick, Knocks Back enemy as part of combo |
| Y, B, LT | Gadget Combo 4 | YES | Heavy | Hit + KB + Gadget (depends on gadget) | Offensive | Slow, Knocks Down enemy as part of combo |
| **GRAPPLE COMBOS** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| X, RT | Grapple Combo 1 | NO | Medium | Hit + Grapple | Offensive | Quick, pulls in enemy as part of combo |
| Y, RT | Grapple Combo 2 | NO | Heavy | Hit + Grapple | Offensive | Slow, pulls in enemy as part of combo |
| X, B, RT | Grapple Combo 3 | NO | Medium | Hit + KB + Grapple -> Stun | Offensive | Quick, Knocks Back enemy as part of combo |
| Y, B, RT | Grapple Combo 4 | NO | Heavy | Hit + KB + Grapple -> Stun | Offensive | Slow, Knocks Back enemy as part of combo |
| **GLIDE ATTACKS** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| X | Glide Choke | YES | KO | Silent Takedown | Offensive | Quiet |
| Y | Glide Kick | NO | KO | Loud Takedown | Offensive | Loud |