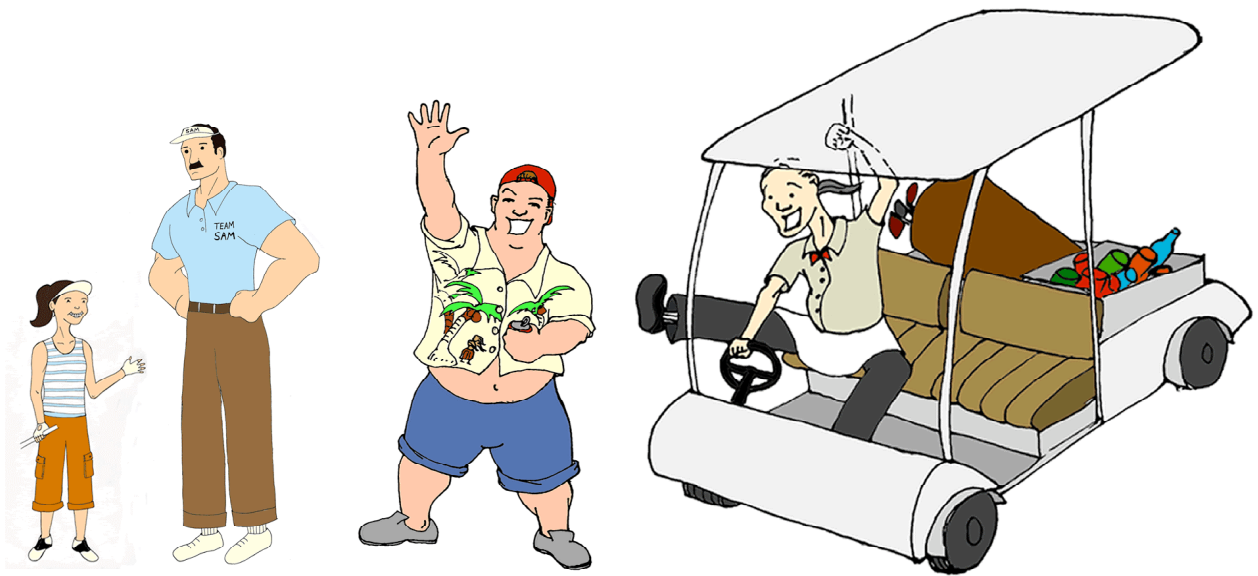


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In the Rough



Game Genre and Platform

In the Rough is a sports/fighting game for all three major console systems that mixes the basic rules of golf with the intense competition aspect of multiplayer combat games. Because it is a golf game, it involves immense amounts of concentration (putting, driving, chipping, etc). However, its fighting game ties require the player to develop quick reflexes and use cunning and creativity to win the game (running, tackling, dodging, etc.).

Target Audience

In the Rough's target audience primarily includes adult social gamers—people who play games in groups; for instance, college students that return to their dorm rooms after class and spend the afternoon playing *Super Smash Melee* with their friends. According to the IDSA this target group makes up a substantial portion of gamers. “Almost 60% of frequent game players play with friends (IDSA, 2002).” Although the game features characters hitting each other with their clubs and tackling each other, the violence is cartoon-like and exaggerated so as not to alienate those who abhor gory violence. In fact, the designers tried to make the hitting and tackling funny. As David Perry comments, “Humor is a very important part of entertainment. So if you can make it amusing, that’s the easiest way to go” (Saltzman, 2000). Despite the amusing cartoon-like violence, the characters’ taunts and personality quirks strive to encourage competitive play.

Storyline

The story takes place on the Kind Of Like Golf Association (KOLGA) tour. The tour positions itself as an alternative to the PGA tour, somewhat like the XFL is an alternative to the NFL. However, the rule against cheerleaders dating players is still in effect for the KOLGA tour. The object of the game is to complete all of the course’s holes with the lowest number of strokes in the least amount of time possible. Points are awarded for the number of strokes and the amount of time needed to complete each hole. The player with the lowest point total at the end of the course wins. Although there is a progressive storyline as the players compete across the 18 holes, there is no intertwined narrative that makes the competition seem like it is more than it is. The characters do have complex backstories and personalities, but they do not change as the game progresses.

Never-Playable Characters

While the game features the golfing characters and their accompanying caddies, each of which is selectable by the player, it also has a set of supporting characters that add to the game’s appeal and challenge. During the match, the players encounter functional characters like “the alligator in the lake” and “Harold, the driving range ball collector”. These characters maintain the quirky nature of the KOLGA tour, providing just enough oddity and uncertainty to keep the player interested in the game, but not too much unpredictability or breaking of the rules to create player frustration (Rouse, 2001).

Non-player Characters

When the group of gamers is too small to fill all of the playable slots, i.e. the golfer-caddy pairs, or when the player chooses the single-player option, the computer takes over the extra characters in order to fill a foursome (or, more correctly, ‘eightsome’). These characters are the same ones the player can select from, but the computer plays them according to their preset personalities without introducing the amount of flexibility that human players can. Other than the

difference in playing styles between the computer and human players, the main characters have the same attributes and skills no matter who controls them. This level playing field between the computer and human players, gives the players the fair chance they are looking for (Rouse, 2001).

General character types and analysis

Like a traditional golf game or other sports or racing game (*SSX Tricky*, *Mario Kart*, *Twisted Metal*), human players can choose from a selection of avatar characters. The remaining characters can then be used by the game as NPC competitors. Each of the golfers has an accompanying caddy, a helper that aids the golfer in her quest to win the tournament. Each caddy acts as her golfer's henchman—attacking other players, defending her golfer against attacks, securing power-ups, etc. With eight to twelve player/caddy tandems available to choose from in the game, *In the Rough* promises great re-playability. Between the computer AI and player flexibility, the game strives to give the player a unique experience every time she plays it (Rouse, 2001). The following analysis looks at the two types of characters, golfers and caddies, followed by an in-depth analysis of two golfer/caddy pairs: Sam and Sam Sr., and Murph and Rusty.

The goal of the golfer is to race through each hole and complete the course in the least amount of time. This goal leads the golfer to be more skill and performance oriented than the caddies must be. For the golfer, a premium is placed on quickly lining up and executing a shot before an interloper can interfere with it. All members of the golfing group tee off at the same time and race to complete the hole as quickly as possible. Along the way, the golfer has to defend herself from malicious caddies and frustrated golfers. Her opponents can distract her by throwing objects, making noises, moving her ball, and outright tackling her if given an opening. At the same time, the golfer is able to rush, taunt, and distract her opponents as well, but has to balance the time it takes for confrontation and the time it takes to complete each hole. Each golfer can be incapacitated by her opponents and require her caddy to attend to her in order to continue playing the hole.

The golfers provide the foundation for the game. Without having a group of characters bent on actually trying to play golf in this bizarre environment, the game turns into *WWF Smackdown* on a golf course. One of the basic tenets of any golf course is that there are golfers on it. Ignoring this expectation would interfere with players' enjoyment of the game by causing them to question its design. While the characters themselves may be cartoon-like and exaggerated, they still seem like normal people. They do not have super powers other than a high pain threshold, and each golfer has her own personality and traits that make her a challenge for the player to use during the game. As far as the internal motivational elements of the golfers are concerned, it is obvious that each golfer wants to get their ball in the hole as quickly as possible; however, the underlying reason for each golfer playing the course is different. Some of the golfers make their desires very plain to the other characters (opponents and their caddy) while others keep the motivation hidden in order to promote mystery or allow for more player interpretation of events. The characters' motivations and personalities are illustrated during the character selection interactions and several cut scenes throughout the course. They also come into play when the characters taunt each other on the course or have to be attended to by their caddy. Ultimately, each golfer should be appealing to someone. The game offers enough variety in the characters' playing styles, appearances, and personalities, that even though they are all golfers with the same basic goal, they are all distinctly different. On a gender related note, it seems that girls enjoy games anchored in reality and things they understand and can relate to (Subrahmanyam, 1998). Since at its core, *In the Rough* has a set of complex, yet realistic,

characters going through a common scene, the designers felt that it stood a higher chance of appealing to girl gamers than an outrageous fighting game would.





While the golfer is charged with moving the ball from the tee to the green, the caddies get to club their way through the course in a different way. The caddy has more time and freedom to hinder other players' progress since she is not required to take time out to hit a shot. In addition to blatantly whacking the other competitors to slow them down, the caddy can interfere with the other players' golf balls. For example, Rusty can run over an exposed ball and drive it into the ground, thus, forcing the player to take a bad shot in order to recover. Sam Sr., on the other hand, can hurl his daughter's clubs across the course to waylay her opponents. The caddies are also saddled with protecting their golfing partner. While serving as their bodyguards, they have to keep the other caddies and golfers from distracting their partner by engaging them before they can reach her. When an opponent does incapacitate a golfer, her caddy must return to the scene and help her recover and regain her composure.

The caddies also provide an additional springboard to illustrate the golfers' personalities by having the two of them interact with each other during the competition. Since it is common for tour players to have caddies escort their clubs around the course, *In the Rough's* caddies certainly seem in their element. Each of the caddies has a good reason for behaving as she does and for being on the course to begin with. Rusty works for the club and sees Murph as his meal ticket, and Sam Sr. is a pushy father who is determined to turn his daughter into a star in order to make up for his own failures. These motivations become clear through the interactions between the caddies and their golfing companions. The two of them are intimately tied together by the golfer's vulnerability while lining up and executing a shot. That is, during these vulnerable moments, the caddy needs to be close by in order to protect the golfer. This necessary physical closeness enables the interactions between the golfer and caddy to occur in a way that fits seamlessly in the natural flow of the game.

As with the golfers, the caddies' personalities are illustrated by their dress, faces, speech, and interactions with other characters. These personalities cover a large range of types. Some caddies are designed to provide more protection for their golfer than to interfere with other players, and others are designed to cause more trouble for others than to help their own teammate. This variety enables the caddies to appeal to those concerned with either offense or defense. The caddies run the gamut from thugs to noble rogues, and somewhere in that spectrum there is something for everyone.

Character description and analysis

The following table provides a basic description of the four focal characters.

Golfer	Accompanying caddy
<p><i>Sam, the child prodigy</i></p>  <p>Age: 12 Height: 5'2" Weight: 100lbs</p> <p>At 12-years old, Sam was born old, which may explain the prodigy's talent. She may not have the strength and poise that some of the other players do, but she has the skill and precision to make impossible shots look easy.</p> <p>Quote: "My childhood was boot camp, but that was a long time ago."</p>	<p><i>Sam Sr., the domineering father</i></p>  <p>Age: 36 Height: 6'4" Weight: 240lbs</p> <p>Every child sports star has an overly driven parent vicariously living through their child's talent. Sam Sr. didn't let having three girls stop him from creating a world-class athlete. He drives his daughter hard, but also serves as her bodyguard—never letting her too far out of his sight.</p> <p>Quote: "I only want us to be happy winning."</p>
<p><i>Murph, the party golfer</i></p>  <p>Age: 33 Height: 5'11" Weight: 270lbs</p> <p>Murph joined the tour as part of a promotional lottery. Odds of winning were based on the number of beer can tabs each contestant sent and Murph had the best chance by a wide margin.</p> <p>He relies on strength and momentum to "beat" the ball around the course. Although he has a powerful shot, inebriation makes his accuracy shaky at best and makes him belligerent when provoked. However, a pleasant benefit is that Murph is oblivious to pressure.</p> <p>Quote: "What can I get for a Washington?"</p>	<p><i>Rusty, the bar cart driver</i></p>  <p>Age: 52 Height: 5'10" Weight: 140lbs</p> <p>Being out of shape and unable to walk the entire course, the tour gave Murph the VIP treatment by providing him with Rusty and his incomparable bar cart to "assist" him (keep him upright) during the competition.</p> <p>Rusty uses the cart to run over opponents or block their progress. He uses the mini-bar in the back to keep Murph satisfied and make extra money in tips while transporting him across the course.</p> <p>Quote: "That one looked a little flat. Can I offer you another?"</p>

Sam

This 12-year-old child prodigy with braces is not afraid to compete with the adults, and even if she were, she still would have no choice about it. Her practical pony tail keeps her hair out of her face while she swings her clubs, and her fashionable Capri pants keep her clothes from gathering grass stains (see model sheet at the end of the character descriptions). Sam has more precision and control of the ball, but her tiny frame inhibits her power hitting. During short holes, she can dominate the course if she plays without being pressured. However, this is a rare occurrence due to her father and the constant barrage of opponents rushing at her.

Sam provides a character that relies almost entirely on her speed and precision in order to win. If she is not being rushed, she has the most forgiving aiming features, meaning that no matter how bad she hits the ball, it is still going to be a decent shot. Her downside is that she does not have the power to hit the ball a long ways, nor does she have the strength to subdue her competitors. She is relegated to running and dodging them and hoping that her hulking father can prevent them from reaching her.

Since *In the Rough* is targeted at social gamers, and these social groups can include women as well as men, the game designers did not wish to alienate an entire gender by not having female characters. At the same time, they wanted all of the characters to fit seamlessly into the world. Sam and the other (not yet designed) female characters fit that role. Each of them has a reason for playing on the tour, and adds to the complexity of the world. However, female characters are not solely for women. As we the designers learned, men have no problem adopting female characters as their avatars if they are appealing either visually or from a performance aspect (Herz, 1997). By having a diversity of characters, *In the Rough* expands its player appeal.

The relationship between Sam and her father, Sam Sr., gives her character credibility. Normal parents would never sign their preteen daughter up for such a bruising competition, but her relationship with the domineering Sam Sr. explains why she is on the tour (see section on Sam Sr. for more details). The PGA acknowledges her skill, but maintains that she is too young to play on the tour. The KOLGA sees her as a marketing dream and has no issues with her father home-schooling her and having her play week after week, because as the stereotype portrays, behind every exceptional child, there is a pushy parent.

Most of Sam's personality traits are placed in the open so that the player gets a good feel for who she is immediately upon seeing her. She has a round child's face with big cheeks and round expressive eyes (see head shots at the end of the character descriptions). Her outfit and the way she carries herself are both reflective of a kid being forced to operate in an adult world (see characteristic poses). The only thing left unclear is whether this is something she wants or not. She goes through mood swings that affect her play and can lead the player to believe she is either being pushed against her will or is being encouraged to pursue her dreams by her father. Depending on how the player sees it, the emotional roller coaster can either be caused by preteen angst or intense pressure to succeed. By leaving this question intentionally unanswered, the game designers hope to get the player to imprint more of their own impressions onto Sam's character. The player can either support Sam by having her play well, or fight the power (her father) and let her have fun on the course.

Most of Sam's mood swings are illustrated through the use of her face and her posture (see characteristic poses). When she is enjoying the game, she stands more upright and flashes her braces more. When she is caving into the pressure or having an off day, she slumps and frowns. Like all of the other major characters, Sam displays her emotions and relationship to the other characters through her taunts and brief monologues while playing. During the character selection mode, Sam is seen interacting with her father in order for the player to get a feeling for

how she acts and thinks. Most noticeably, Sam is physically smaller than any of the other players (see character lineup). Force feedback inside the console controllers indicates Sam's confidence under pressure. The more the controller vibrates while she lines up her shot, the more pressure she is feeling and the more difficult it is for the player to successfully make the shot.

Sam's appeal rests on the fact that she plays toward and against common stereotypes at the same time. Even though she is the youngest and smallest character, she is by far the most accurate golf player out there. This nice contradiction between her physical appearance and golfing skills creates an interesting challenge for any player that chooses to play as Sam. Sam is the most skilled of all of the characters, but has the hardest time defending herself against other players. The challenge comes in keeping her protected and out of harms way. If the player manages to do this, Sam can outplay the other characters. On a gender related note, Sam's tactics of hiding and trying to stay away from her opponents, could appeal more to female players who want to avoid direct confrontation and aggression (Subrahmanyam, 1998). Also, Sam's psychological world, as a child prodigy with a domineering father, makes her a character the player sympathizes with.

Sam Sr.

Nothing says "loving father" like brown high-water pants, a baby blue T-shirt that matches his daughter's striped shirt, and two hours of constant screaming about how you're letting him down (see model sheet). There is no doubt Sam Sr. cares about his daughter, but there are large concerns about how he shows it. He has taken the team concept and altered it so that he refers to himself and Sam as one entity—"We can do it, Sam!" He even has a "Team Sam" logo displayed on his shirt and visor (see model sheet). Built like an NFL linebacker, and with a temper comparable to any "roid rage," Sam Sr. fills the role of his daughter's coach and protector. He provides more insight into Sam's character and an outlet for players to assault the other characters with. In order for the player to find Sam believable, Sam Sr. is a necessary presence. It would be difficult to illustrate the pressure Sam feels without having the source of that pressure present, and with Sam Sr. required to stay near his daughter at all times, the two can banter back and forth while playing through the course.

Only a pushy, egocentric, domineering father would sign his child up for a tournament that allows players to attack each other. No matter how well he thinks he can protect her, there will be instances when she is undefended, but Sam Sr. sees those as events that make you stronger in the future, and the best athletes never crack under such pressure.

Sam Sr. has two speeds—on edge and over the edge, and he makes both perfectly clear. He gesticulates wildly when his daughter misses a putt or someone lunges at her to throw her off her game (see characteristic poses). He is known to hurl clubs down field at the back of people's heads, and he feels no pain when he bum rushes headlong into a caddy to protect his daughter. Even when he tends to Sam after another character stuns her, he refers to "us" instead of "you." The hotter his temper flares, the redder his face and the back of his neck become. Being rather impulsive, he shows everything he is feeling and thinking as it is happening - usually anger, frustration, and disappointment.

Sam Sr. actually taunts the other players less than his own daughter. He thinks of it as a motivational tactic, but in some cases it seems just mean. He has the same appeal as Haggar, the former wrestler mayor, from *Final Fight*. He protects the smaller characters from harm, but is definitely rough around the edges. He is meant to appeal to players that want to concentrate more on beating people up than playing golf, but he cannot wander too far away from Sam because of her weakness. This invisible leash limits the havoc he can cause since if he ventures too far from her, she will surely be 'stunned' by an opponent attack until he returns.

Murph

In college, Murph was the social director for his fraternity. That was over a decade ago, and besides his waistline, not much has changed. He still wears his university ball cap and the same Hawaiian shirts, but they no longer completely cover his stomach (see model sheet). Years of maintaining his perpetual buzz have increased his girth and decreased his mobility to the point where he cannot physically walk an entire golf course during a day. Ever the lucky guy, Murph won his way onto the tour by entering a promotional contest and being selected as the “random” winner. For him, the tour really is a vacation, and he certainly acts like it.

Murph’s strength and mass make him a momentum player. He can drive a mile, but his aim is always suspect. He has as good a chance of hitting someone in the back of the head with his ball as he does getting it close to the pin. However, no matter where it goes or where he is on the leader board, Murph carries a smile on his face. Ever the prankster, all of his interference moves are more in line with practical jokes than out of malice or spite.

Murph serves most directly as a contrast to the two Sams. While they are all about competition and adversity, Murph is in search of a good time. His buzz exempts him from the force feedback handicap, but his aiming cursor tends to wobble while lining up his stroke. The one exception to the drifting cursor is when Murph drops onto his stomach and uses his club as a pool cue to shoot the ball into the hole (see characteristic poses). The concentration required by this shot wears him out though, and he tends to fall asleep before being able to get back up for the next hole. Since he’s the slowest character on foot, the tour provides Murph the VIP treatment and allows him to ride alongside the refreshment cart driver, Rusty, as he progresses through the course.

The winning of the promotional contest explains away Murph’s golf cart and caddy and why he gets preferential treatment on the course. The tour is taking care of him in order to ingratiate itself with its fans and make the tour appeal to the everyman.

Murph is an open book. His inebriation lowers his inhibitions to the point where he says what is on his mind without hesitation. This, along with his vacationing attitude, makes him the most likely character to praise his opponent. Like (most of) the other characters, he wears an outfit that stands out from the green grass and leafy trees along the course so that he is easy to spot. He is also much larger with respect to the other characters (see character lineup). Murph has no secrets; he is as he portrays himself: an oversized man who is out to have fun at all costs.

Between holes, Murph spends time chatting with Rusty or the other characters to show his carefree attitude and how he maintains his bliss. His personality is also displayed in the way he hits the golf ball. Where Sam hits it smoothly and effortlessly, Murph hacks away at it causing it to sail far into the distance, but not necessarily toward the hole. His level of intoxication can be gauged by how quickly he climbs in and out of the cart and by how much assistance Rusty has to give him in propping him up before a shot.

Beyond the cliché “drunk guys are funny,” Murph is actually the most stable of the characters. The strength of his skills is independent of how well he is doing on the course or how much his opponents are interfering with him. He does not suffer from the rises and falls that the other characters do. Once the player masters the wavering aiming cursor, Murph can be a powerhouse because all of his features are remarkably consistent from stroke to stroke. His relationship with his caddy is friendlier than some of the other pairs. He and Rusty get along and support each other better than the Sams, for example. This camaraderie makes him an enjoyable character to play because the player does not have to spend time bickering with the caddy to get him to do what he is supposed to (Rouse, 2001). Also, Murph’s nonchalance about his own game

could very well transfer to the player so that she does not feel pressured to have Murph do well, and by removing that pressure, she may end up doing better.

Rusty

If riding in a golf cart is seen as cool, actually being able to drive the cart has to be even cooler, and if there were a mini-bar in the back, life would be one step away from perfection. This is Rusty's life behind the wheel of the club's refreshment cart. Rusty is the solution to the club's "Murph problem." The fifty-something man with a balding head and ragged ponytail works for the club and provides for Murph's every whim (see model sheet). It just happens that Murph does not carry big dreams. Slightly paranoid from some distant trauma during his youth (or from some unspecified chemical aftereffects), Rusty maintains that people are out to get him, even though Murph never notices it himself. Rusty attempts to fight his age and tries to pull off a young and dashing look with his ponytail and demeanor; however, the façade quickly crumbles against his bowtie and waiter's outfit and the fact that he finds it difficult to be nice to anyone who is not paying him.

Rusty's paranoia coupled with his desire to please Murph in order to get larger tips, causes him to be almost as reckless with his cart as Murph would be by himself. During the character selection interactions, Rusty plows over the ball retriever with his cart in order to give Murph a better look at the driving range. Although Rusty focuses on making Murph's life easier and more enjoyable, his judgment is questionable at best. As a computer player, Rusty is known to leave Murph vulnerable at critical moments in order to chase after an opponent he has little chance of catching.

As a computer character, Rusty provides the randomness and unpredictability that players want from an AI system (Rouse, 2001). As a teammate or playable character, Rusty has one of the best toys on the course. Nothing outruns the refreshment cart sans Murph, and Rusty still manages to keep Murph competitive by carting him across the course when he needs to. He also enables Murph's constant buzz with his assortment of spirited drinks in the cart's trunk.

No self-respecting club would leave an intoxicated man to his own devices, and only someone of questionable intelligence would support him during a competitive event. For Rusty, the price was right and the guy was ripe for the siphoning. Having him drive the refreshment cart reinforces the point that Murph is a special case and not every golfer/caddy pair should have its own cart. In order to maintain some semblance of character balance, Murph needs a way to move at the speed of the other characters or else he would have no chance at being competitive within the game's rules. As Rouse points out, players expect their characters to have a chance at accomplishing the game's objectives (Rouse, 2001).

Everything but Rusty's mysterious (and perhaps apocryphal) dark trauma and his resultant bizarre behavior is made clear to the player either through his interactions with Murph, his attire, or his actions on the course. While it is clear that something affects him, it is never explicitly mentioned, with the intention that the player can imagine something more personal than what the designers could come up with.

As a playable character, Rusty allows the player to preemptively strike at Murph's opponents and be rewarded for it. The cart gives him the power to cause chaos over large distances while Murph takes his shots and return before Murph needs to start moving to his ball. And the designers do think it would be cool to be the only guy with a golf cart.

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