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C9 vs FW: An Inside Look at one of the Worst Games Ever Played at Worlds

The professional League game that gave me more headaches than my Mom gave me when I was 15.



akiyowind

the New Standard: Season 2, Episode 3 (Beast Drive)

On the second day of Worlds, Cloud9's mid laner Nicolaj "**Jensen**" Jensen stepped up massively. Throughout the entirety of the 2016 NA LCS, Jensen only played three games on Orianna, all three of which were in the Spring Split. But in his second day of the tournament in a breathtaking 70 minute back-and-forth match between North America's Cloud9 (C9) and Taiwan's Flash Wolves (FW), Jensen went 6/0/3 and stole a crucial Baron after looking outclassed against Korea's SK Telecom T1 the previous day.

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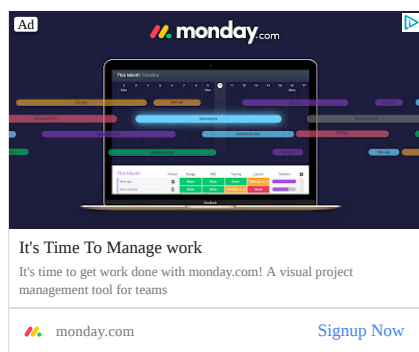
At least, that's what it looked like, right? To the majority of *League of Legends* fans, yesterday's match was a great, high-octane match that saw C9 come back after being down 10k gold. North America's third seeded team would eventually accrue a gold lead of 6.3k when they won—a gold swing of nearly 16k. And although it truly was a “Cinderella” match that has large implications for the North American side's eventual placing in the top-two of Group B, that game was one of the worst played at Worlds, ever. In the words of C9's AD Carry Zachary "**Sneaky**" Scuderi, “...it is not like either team won that match.”



Generally speaking, when a professional League of Legends match goes over the 45 to 50 minute mark and one team obtains a significant gold lead at 20 minutes, it is a sign that either one team is playing exceptionally well or one team is playing exceptionally poorly. However, in this case, both teams played terribly.

Win Conditions

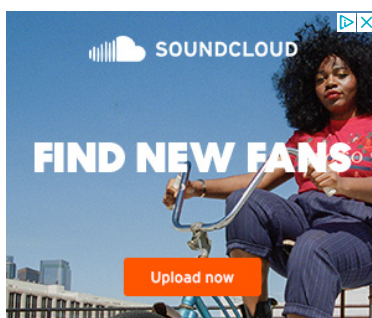
But before properly analyzing any match in any game, one has to first identify the “win conditions” of both teams, which is what they (the teams) should be trying to do on the rift to allow them the greatest chance of winning. FW’s composition had them drafting champions with significant mid-game power spikes in Varus, Rumble, Ezreal, Elise and Nami, while C9 drafted champions that primarily spiked in the early and late game, with Caitlyn, Lee Sin, Karma, Kennen and Orianna.



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Both of the teams’ win conditions were pretty clear—the Flash Wolves wanted to utilize the poke of Varus and Ezreal, along with the massive zone that Rumble’s ultimate, “The Equalizer,” creates, to either set up a siege at C9’s turrets or set up vision control and priority at a major objective, like the drakes and Baron. Eventually, the Wolves would want to naturally establish vision in the mid game due to their mid-game power spiking champions to force Cloud9 into a disadvantageous fight by baiting and taking multiple drakes and eventually Baron, which would mitigate Caitlyn and Orianna’s incredible anti-siege.

On the other hand, C9’s comp was much more versatile; with the exception of the Orianna vs. Varus lane, which is mostly a waveclear war, the North American team’s lanes allowed them to adopt the mentality of “win lane, win game.” Although the composition was sub-par in the mid game, vision control around objectives would allow that to be a non-factor with skills like “Orianna’s Shockwave,” Kennen’s “Slicing Malestrom,” and Caitlyn’s cupcakes to control real estate in the upper and lower rivers. As an insurance policy, C9 could stall to late game and attempt a Smeb-esque Kennen play or put all of their eggs in the Caitlyn basket and use Shockwave to peel C9’s star AD Carry. With the win conditions of both teams in mind, it’s time to get into the migraine that was C9 vs FW.

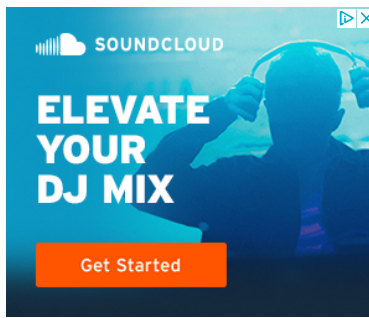


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Meteos Please

The early game was actually fantastic for the Taiwanese team. Some intelligent pathing by FW’s jungler Hung “**Karsa**” Hau-Hsuan led to first blood on C9’s top laner, Jung “**Impact**” Eon-yeong, at four minutes. Then, an impressive five-man collapse by the Flash Wolves led to three kills in the top lane at 10 minutes. After an awful face-check by Sneaky in bot tri bush two minutes later, the Wolves were up 5-0 in kills and nearly 2.5k in gold. At this point, any top team in the world would be able to close out the game by suffocating their opposition through superior item timings, vision control, and objective control. Theoretically speaking, the vision control allowed by such a gargantuan gold lead would disallow any major surprises and comeback mechanics for the opposing team. That, however, is not what happened.

Instead of pressing their lead by establishing control of the bottom-side river with a combined 4/0/7 lead on that side of the map (mid, jungle, and the bot lane), the Wolves allowed a completely unnecessary relief in pressure by letting C9’s late game composition receive two completely uncontested infernal drakes by 15 minutes, a 16 percent bonus damage amplifier.

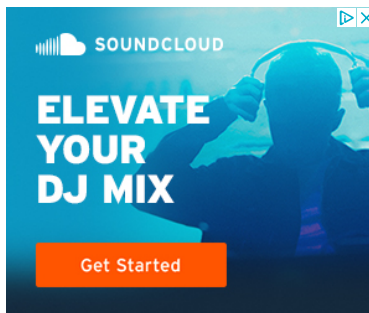


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Those two drakes would eventually prove to be one of very few positive contributions in the game involving C9's jungler. In his first game at Worlds, C9's jungler William "Meteos" Hartman failed to provide any positive pressure on the map until 20 minutes on Lee Sin, one of the most early and mid-game oriented junglers in the current meta. His second game would be no different, failing to execute a gank remotely close to successful on a lane in the entirety of the game. In fact, at roughly the 67 minute mark, the only significantly positive impact the C9 jungler could claim was three almost free drakes and one assist, with four deaths to boot. However, it turned out that Meteos did not have to positively impact the game, because the Flash Wolves ended up being their own worst enemies.

Flash Wolves Please

It was simple; set up vision control in order to bait and take neutral objectives. However, the Flash Wolves failed to show any real semblance of pressure of closing out the game. Arbitrary pink ward control in C9's jungle allowed several picks onto a face-checking and underwhelming Sneaky in the mid game; several turrets were taken, but the North American team's inner perimeter was not harassed until the 40 minute mark. By that time, it had already begun to become too late, as Impact was becoming a monster.



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What Meteos lacked, Impact made up for. Solo killing MMD twice (an occurrence that should not happen in top League of Legends even once) at 18 and 33 minutes and forcing countless Equalizers solely for the sake of safe farming, the Korean import was C9's sole point of pressure for the majority of the match. Well, Impact and a Baron that the Flash Wolves refused to start.

Still riding on the back of a near 5k gold lead at 27 minutes created by their earlier plays, the Flash Wolves decided to establish vision control around the Baron area and bait it multiple times. But unlike normal "Baron baits," the Taiwanese team never actually started Baron, so C9 did not need to come close enough to start an advantageous engagement until 14 minutes later.

At that point, C9's late game's composition, 14 minutes of free farming lanes, and the natural diminishment of item effectiveness as the game progressed should have begun to take over.

But at 41 minutes, when the Flash Wolves finally decided to damage Baron Nashor, C9 called their bluff and was positioned poorly for the ensuing fight. In fact, Jensen was at his team's blue buff by the time Baron was nearly dead. A free Baron and a free Meteos who was desperate to steal the Baron forced C9 to play defensively for the following three and a half minutes. After claiming a free Elder Dragon at 42 minutes, the Wolves had all of the tools necessary to end the game.

However, in one of the most unnecessarily scared sieges ever seen on the Worlds stage, the Taiwanese team only took a mid inhibitor made naked several minutes earlier. Absolutely abysmal lane assignments and wave control, as well as an unwillingness to pull the

trigger on significantly damaging C9's champions, prevented the Wolves from claiming any of the objectives they should have taken in the duration of the dual buffs of Baron Nashor and Elder Dragon, specifically the Nexus. This also allowed C9 to farm up to six items.

Aghhhhhh... Meteos

At the 53-minute mark, the C9 jungler decided to try his hand at the "insec," which is an advanced maneuver on Lee Sin that utilizes the champion's ultimate, "Dragons Rage," to force the mispositioning of an enemy (generally a high priority carry) by kicking him back to Lee Sin's team.

And in actuality, this was the perfect time to blow the game open; C9's late game team composition had been allowed to reach max items, so that any five-on-five fight on equal footing would favor the North American side at a point in the game when, due to the exceedingly long death timers, any real man advantage should essentially result in a victory.

But Meteos's attempt was horrendous. In fact, it was so horrendous that he had to blow his flash to prevent his Guardian Angel from activating and the Flash Wolves were able to take Baron with no real harassment at 53 minutes, by virtue of Meteos being too low to get close to the pit.

This time, the Flash Wolves were able to press their advantage, and due to actually decent lane assignments and wave management, take all three inhibitors despite lacking an Elder Dragon buff (unlike the previous siege attempt). By 55 minutes, C9's base consisted only of the Nexus and its turrets, with the Baron buff still being active for roughly a minute and a half.

This is where the game should have definitively ended. Any other one of the 15 teams at the 2016 World Championships would most likely say the same thing after questioningly mentioning FW's previous push with Baron and Elder buffs; if a team has all five members up, takes three inhibitors, and still has Baron to empower three lanes of super minions, the game should end. Always.

However, the Flash Wolves managed to rush things, botch their push, and they ended up losing three members and an Elder Dragon at 57 minutes to a Cloud9 team with two Infernals and a late game composition. Forced to use the Elder Dragon's buff to stall the game until their inhibitors respawned, Cloud9 waited for the next Baron to spawn at the 60 minute mark to make their move.

Then, at 60 minutes, they didn't. C9, with two Infernal Drakes and a late game composition against FW's obviously mid-game spiking team, watched the Taiwanese take Baron without really even fighting for real estate in the upper river, much less organized vision control.

Although Jensen managed to steal Baron with an extremely well-timed Shockwave, the resulting lack of pressure in a team-fight meant that C9 lost their support in a fight they realistically should have won the game with.

Despite having Baron, C9 was still forced to stall within the confines of their base due to the nature of a 4v5 post-60 minutes. Then, at 67 minutes, Meteos finally did it.

Reminding the viewers of his presence in the game, Meteos exploited the terrible vision line of the Flash Wolves and found the perfect insec on FW's mid laner, Huang "Maple" Yi-Tang, in the jungle, which resulted in Karsa dieing as well. Taking the Elder Dragon in the ensuing 3v5, C9 managed to push into the Taiwanese base and end the game with another Meteos insec play on Maple, upping his kill participation and KDA to a disgusting 36 percent and 1.25, respectively, at the game's end. To put that into perspective, Lee Sin has won three other games at Worlds thus far, with an average kill participation and KDA of 67 percent and 35.0, respectively.

The Verdict

That game was awful. More than likely, it was one of the worst games played at Worlds, ever. Although there have been many extremely one-sided victories in the history of the international stage (i.e. SSW vs. anyone in season four), there has never been a game where two teams have failed so repeatedly to play to their win conditions.

To win in *League of Legends*, it is essential to constantly communicate the needs of the team, as well as what the team can, and cannot do, to win. Even at a non-professional level, many Renekton and Darius (historically strong early-mid game champions) players understand their power spike, and the window of opportunity to gain advantages for themselves, as well as their team.

However, in this game, both teams failed to play to their win conditions for the majority of the match. In addition, Cloud9 had to play nearly 4v5 for over an hour. It was only when Meteos decided to make an actual attempt at a play that the game was decided against a team that needed to constantly be worrying about Kennen teleport flanks regardless.

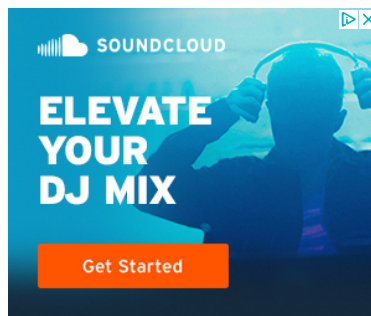
In any competition, many will agree that the better team generally wins. However, this specific match was determined by the team that played less-terribly, and that team just barely squeaked by.

In the words of caster Trevor “**Quickshot**” Henry, after the game, although Cloud9 looked happy about the win, they seemed “disappointed about how they did it.”

Both C9 and the Flash Wolves will need to improve drastically if they want to advance further in this tournament.

Do you think either of these teams will advance out of the group stage? Let us know by commenting below or tweeting us [@GAMURScm](#).

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