



APEX LEGENDS™
GLOBAL SERIES
ONLINE

**Summer Circuit Americas
Meta Dissection**

DAVID KALAMARIDES

Introduction

Statement

This case study hopes to provide insight on the current metagame of professional play through data from the July 12th Apex Legends Global Series Americas Regional. In turn, this insight will be turned into suggestions for future rebalances to better professional gameplay without jeopardizing the fun of lower levels.

The study begins with the definition of some terminology that will be used throughout the rest of the writing. The performance of each legend in the tournament will be presented, followed by an examination of where the meta stands. The same will be done for weapons. The paper will be concluded potential updates to improve the game on all levels as well as notes on past patches.

Due to the small scope of the data and the inherent disconnect between empirical results and actual gameplay, the study is susceptible to the biases of the writer and may fail to grasp the totality of the developers' and player base's views on Apex Legends. The reader is urged to use this paper and the data it presents to inform their own views and not a judgment on the game, Respawn, or its players.

The Players

All decisions regarding changes in any first-person shooter must keep the happiness of its player base in mind. Therefore, we must be careful to define the types of players and distinguish their needs.

NOVICES

With the multitude of FPS available, Apex has only a few hours if not minutes to sell itself new players, meaning they require a low barrier to entry to quickly assess the strengths and weakness of each legend and weapon.

COMPETITIVE

The competitive player are the diehard fans, who play hours a week, actively consume and produce outside content and are vocal on social media. They are excited by **discovery** made possible by **balance**. A game becomes stale when strategies, weapons, and legends are unusable because they cannot compete .

CASUAL

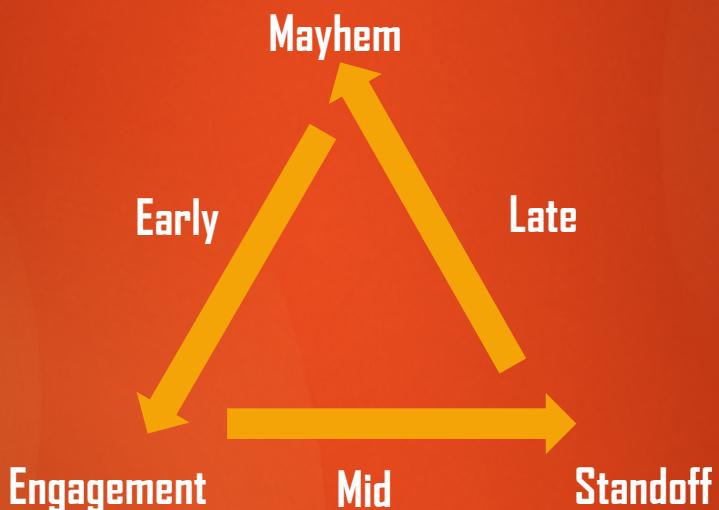
The casual player represents the bulk of the player base. They play for an hour or two a week and enjoy consistency. A game that changes between every play session become impossible for the casual user to keep up with.

PROFESSIONAL

While many professionals are also streamers who fall under the competitive category, the tournament scene deserves a class of its own, where only the very best contend. While the pros thrive on **consistency** to be able prepare and respond to the state of the game, the viewers will become bored if the meta is "solved."

Types of Combat

Combat flows in a cycle throughout the game. Casual games often begin with mayhem, where multiple teams hard fight in cacophony and are often decided by a combination of luck and previous positioning. Most of casual and competitive combat is team versus team engagements, whittling teams down until a short standoff until one team believes they have enough of an advantage to push into the final engagement.¹

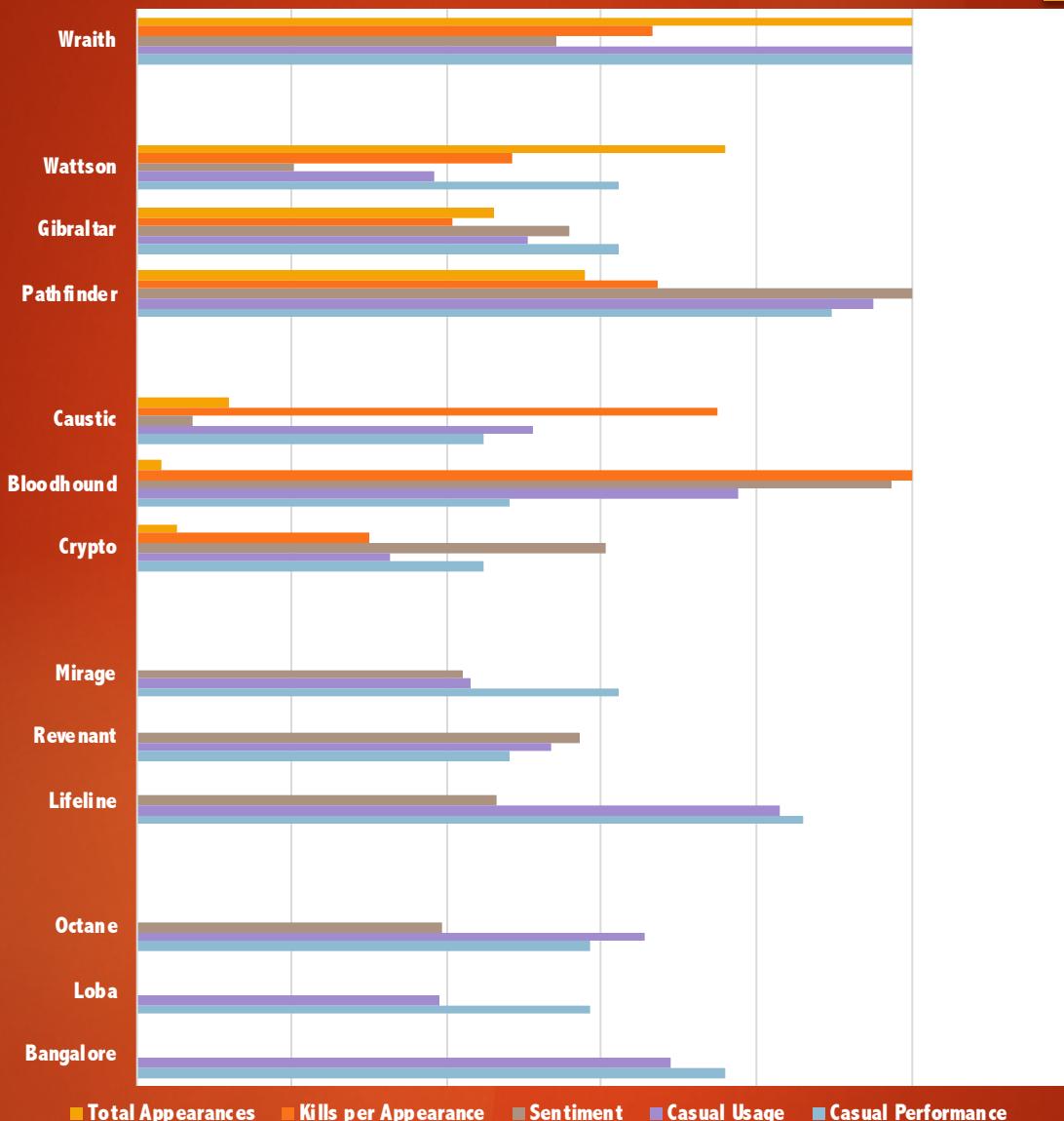


However, professional game play looks different. Most teams drop to isolated locations and quickly grab positions near the final circle. The war of attrition then begins while fifteen to twenty teams are met in a standoff. Players win by slowly working their way inward and pushing teams out of their position. Until, the last few squads meet in the final mayhem.



Legends

Legends: the Data



ALGS Data

This data was directly taken from ALGS streams, to measure the legend pick rate and performance.

Sentiment

Scores were produced by sentiment analysis on Daily Discussion threads from r/ApexLegends

Casual

Casual data shows pick rate and Kills per Match by legend!

All data has been normalized for direct comparison

Legends: Wraith

Wraith is a problem. A game built on the myriad of characters it possess is nothing but cut short by the oppression and ubiquity of a single legend. Every team in both Americas and EMEA has a Wraith on the team², because no character can do what she can do: Move the entire team without fear of damage. Forgetting her small hitbox, bailout button for scouting, and speed boost, her ultimate keeps her on every professional team, because her ultimate is a necessity for surviving the standoff phase of the game.

Option 1: Nerf

The most direct method of limiting her playability is through nerfs, which Respawn has done continuously since the launch (see On Past Patches). This has been successful in reducing Wraith's presence in casual lobbies but failed to limit her professionally.

Option 2: Alternatives

Wraith's role could be mitigated by allowing other legends to fill her position. Unfortunately, Pathfinder, who once could move teams in a similar way, can no longer do so safely with zipline hopping removed. The other movement option is Octane's jump pad, which is still to predictable to be able to use. The last option is a new legend who can take on that role.

Option 3: Restructure

The last and most extreme option would be either a complete restructure of the character or the tournament format itself. Games, built around engagement rather than standoffs, would reduce the need for Wraith and encourage the use of other characters. This could be done by:

- Increasing the importance of kills over placement
- Irregular shaped zone's that drive teams towards each other at different spots on the map
- Choosing final circles with large scale structures to shield combatants from each other.

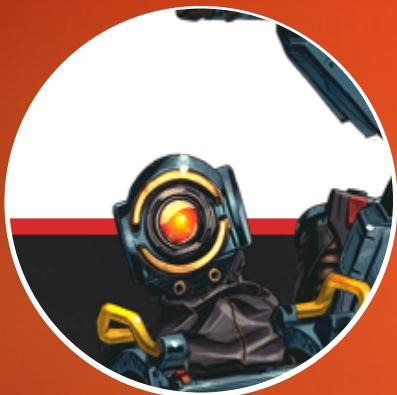


Legends: The Meta

Of the spots left beside Wraith, these characters take the vast majority. Strong, but not inherently broken, the legends here are balanced and provide the basis of how the rest ought to be judged.

Wattson

Once as much of necessity as Wraith, Wattson's dominance has fallen of slightly. She still is the best legends to hold a position in standoff and serves a strong counter to both Gibraltar and Wraith's ultimates. Her recent reworks have excellently required Wattson player's to be more proactive without limiting her actual abilities. Despite some dislike, her casual performance does not indicate that she is need of many changes.



Pathfinder

A fan-favorite, and the second choice behind Wraith among casual and competitive players, Pathfinder is a strong choice with his grapple permitting aggressive playstyles, his zipline providing movement, and his passive giving information needed for a positional advantage.

Gibraltar

Receiving more buffs than any character beside Bloodhound, Gibraltar has risen from unplayable in the preseason to a solid presence. His tactical is fantastic at beginning and recovering from pushes within standoffs while his ultimate can force a team out of a dominant position. In lower levels, his gun shield and fortified body does present a potentially unfair advantage, especially early game.



Legends: The Rogues

These legend's saw some performance in the ALGS, keeping enemies on their toes as they adopted different playstyles and tactics to keep their opponents off guard. Their usage is not indicative of a meta shift just yet, but their role as counters to the meta legends make them powerful additions.

Caustic

True to his villainous backstory, Caustic is the least liked of any legend and for good reason: in casual play, his gas is a nuisance to enemies and until recently teammates as well. He stands well as a counterpick to Wattson and Gibraltar, but his overwhelming strength inside buildings requires changes in the casual scene.

Crypto

Played consistently by TeQ in these games, Crypto is another Wattson counter and can quickly strip away a team's defenses to take the by storm. TLP's push on Sola Fide before the final circle in Round I, exemplifies his power with an aggressive squad. He is limited in his defensive abilities and his abilities have little use on the defensive.



Revenant

Despite going unpicked in the American tournament, he has become a familiar face in scrimmages and has begun to see more play in lower stake games. The now unlimited range on the death totem permits teams to probe a push without becoming too vulnerable.

Bloodhound

Another popular choice among casual players, Bloodhound is well balanced and serves as another useful recon. However, as his other abilities are rather lackluster professionally, it will be interesting to see if his role is filled completely by Crypto.

Legends: The Left Behind

The remaining legends see little performance in tournament play, despite mixed results casually. Major changes must be made for these legends to become part of the regular meta.

Lifeline

Lifeline has returned to her glory as the best healer in the game, but still failed to be picked. She is commonplace as the third in aggressive competitive teams, especially for those grinding to Predator. Ajay Che is especially strong in duos but won't be picked with the current professional playstyle.

Octane

Octane is a solo player in a team sport. The control provided by his double jump allows him to compete with Pathfinder in terms of verticality but is clearly still a second choice.

Loba

Loba has failed to make any noise since her arrival. Her teleportation is a powerful tool for repositioning but leaves the user too exposed in a standoffs.

Mirage

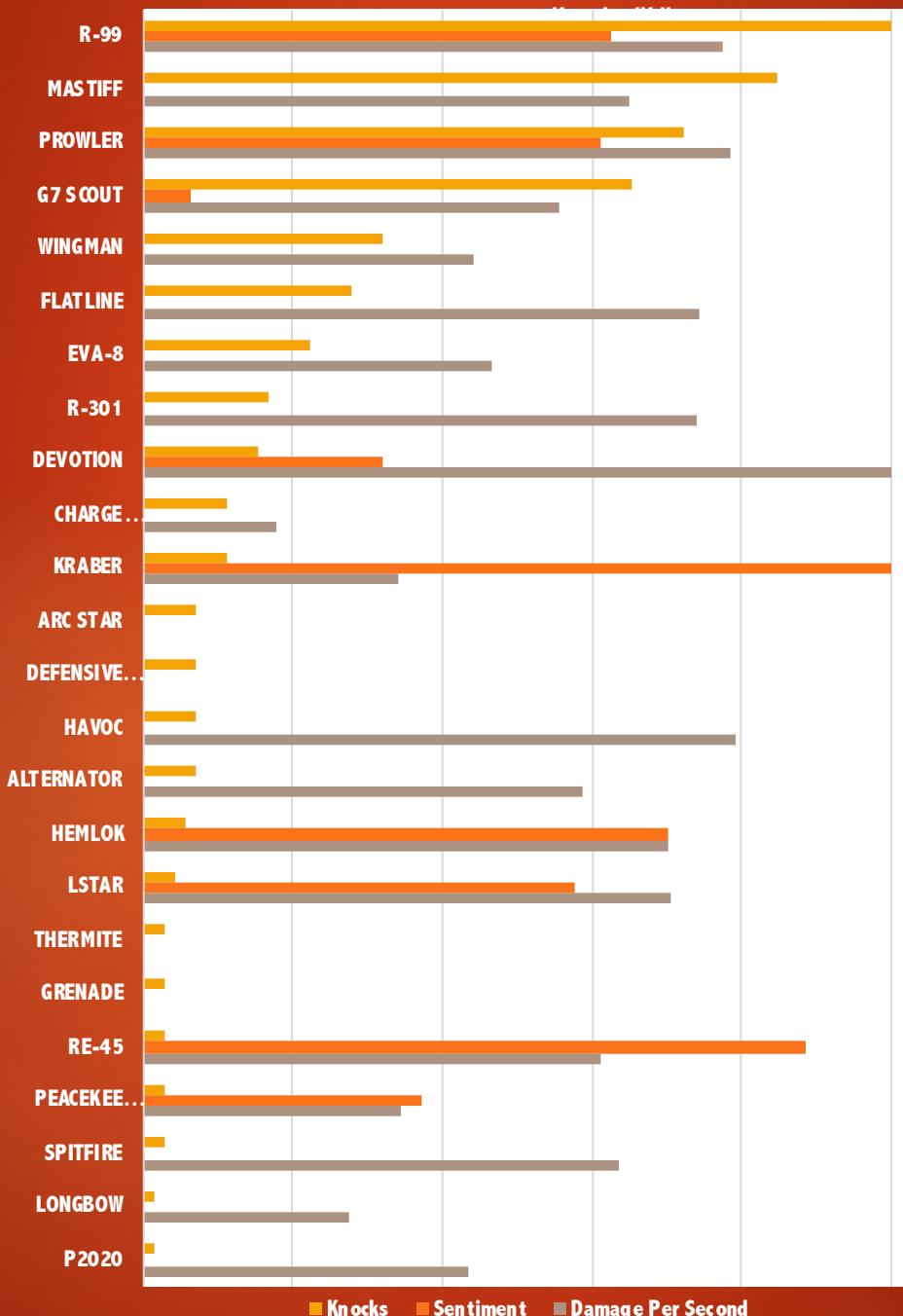
Aside from MattPickett, no one has brought Mirage to scrimmage. With his current redesign, Mirage may be played on a rogue team to catch enemies unawares, but since he benefits so well from confusion, it is unlikely his will every become a meta staple.

Bangalore

If any legend can be considered average, it is Bangalore. Her abilities offer plenty of flexibility, but she fails to excel in any way. A team could be built around her if one member is especially good with her, but she fails to find a role in min/max strategies.

Weapons

Weapons



Weapons: Short Range

R-99

The Wraith of weapons, the R-99 is an immediate pickup for any player but becomes truly fearsome in the hands of a professional. The top players have mastered its recoil, beaming targets from almost midrange. Its high skill ceiling makes it rewarding without inherently broken.



Mastiff

Bringing the Mastiff to the general loot pool was an elegant solution to the Peacekeeper. The Mastiff can still be a serious threat, but rarely will one-shot a player like the Peacekeeper has.

Prowler

The prowler has begun to see more play recently. With a higher DPS than the R-99 at the expense of more random recoil, it is a fantastic second option for a SMG. Boasting twenty ammo with no magazine, it is especially strong as soon as it is picked up.

EVA-8

The EVA-8 deserves an honorable mention on this list as a good pick up if the above isn't found. It is almost always dropped in favor of a Mastiff but is still a viable weapon until then.

Weapons: Midrange

Wingman

The weapon of choice among streamers, the Wingman matches the range of assault rifles with high single fire damage allowing for rapid repositioning. It finally sits in a good position both early and late game with an appropriate magazine size and the skull piercer.

G7 Scout

Not soon after the bullet width patch, the G7 quickly became the weapon of choice for poking opponents mid-to-long range. It's biggest drawback and the source of much complaining on social media, is its iron sights. Though not a tall order, a necessary attachment helps limit the G7 early game.



Flatline and R-301

Both middle of the pack weapons, the Flatline and R-301 are excellent choices for players opting for a balanced primary and a specialized secondary.

Weapons: Long Range

The weapon meta has shifted away from long range fights, as such sniper usage has gone down drastically. The Triple Take and Sentinel failed to appear in the North American tournament, and the Longbow had only one knock that was subsequently revived. This is far healthier for the professional scene in terms of viewer enjoyment and easier for new players who won't enjoy being gunned down by a third party across the map.

Charge Rifle

Although nowhere as near as deadly when it was first released, the Charge Rifle was the only common sniper rifle to see play. Its usage has fallen off in casual and competitive play but sits in a healthy position.

Kraber

The Kraber is brutally strong, but not unfair. It avoids the trap of overpowered snipers in some games, by requiring a high level of precision and timing.



Conclusion

Design Change: Early Weapons

Every weapon in a battle royale does not need the same power level for the game to be balanced. In fact, the randomness of the loot is one of the main appeals of the game mode. However, since the level progression occurs in attachments instead of weapons, it is frustrating when a gun is objectively better than another. Therefore, a design shift towards specialization over general power level could increase the playability of certain weapons without overpowering them.

#1 Buff base Alternator and RE-45

Since the removal of disruptor rounds, the Alternator and RE-45 have become worse versions of the R-301 and R-99. By improving base performance without changing level 3, these weapons could become viable in the early mayhem.

#2 Reduce base magazine-size for Prowler and Hemlok

The Prowler and Hemlok are both strong late-game weapons but are incredibly strong on the drop. The burst-fire is especially devastating for unshielded opponents, knocking them with one or two shots. Decreasing their magazine size early game would keep them in check, but allow them to still perform well late game.

#3 Flip the Selectfire for the Havoc

The Havoc received an incredibly strong buff through the reduction of muzzle flash before being fixed with even more recoil. With the expected release of the Volt filling the roll of a close-range energy weapon, the Havoc could switch to a midrange weapon with the option to close-range through the hop-up. The single-fire option would also likely need a slight increase in fire rate to be viable.

Design Change: Class Abilities

While many players have speculated that this change is arriving in season six, it should ideally level the playing field for disparities among legends who compete for the same roles. At the same time, it would clarify the roles of characters to new players and provide greater variance for casual players.

Offensive: Damage Charge

Much like an Evo Shield, offensive agents can charge their ultimate abilities by dealing damage. This would promote aggressive play and help teams fight back against third parties.

Defensive: Faster Revive

Although Caustic will need a unique revive animation like Gibraltar and Wattson for symmetry purposes, this buff will help solidify defensive legends roles in locking down an area. The boost would be restricted to inside the dome, gas, or pylon radius to restrict it as a defensive option and not overshadow Lifeline as a healer.

Support: Blue Supply Bins

The ability to steal extra loot from supply bins is so in line with her character, that this is a must for Loba. With the hopeful addition of another support character, this should buff their role in the professional scene by aiding in the midgame war of attrition.

Recon: Survey Beacons

The most influential change would allow permit Crypto and Bloodhound to take Pathfinder's spot on aggressive teams. Pathfinder's passive would have to be replaced but could be done so in a way to promote his role as a Recon legend instead of an offensive one, such as detection of when enemies use a zipline. Again, lore-wise, without this ability, Bloodhound's data knife and Crypto's drone have nothing to hack.

Design Change: Team Movement

As stated earlier, Wraith is the sole offensive legend seeing play, because no other legend can move their team as well. These changes aim to give the other legends more ways to aid their team, especially in terms of reposition, without drastically increasing their casual power level.

Bangalore: Third Smoke

Bangalore's smokes currently work quite well in breaking line of sight or blanketing an area for the team to move through. Currently, the two smokes fail to fully blind a well spread out team and doesn't obfuscate enough ground for a team to reposition.

Revenant: Cancel Death Totem

Revenant's death totem is very effective at giving players to chances to push onto a site. However, moving the team into a new spot can expose the totem and members returning to it. If players had the ability to cancel the effects of the totem, they could use it to test a push and maintain it if they are in a strong position.

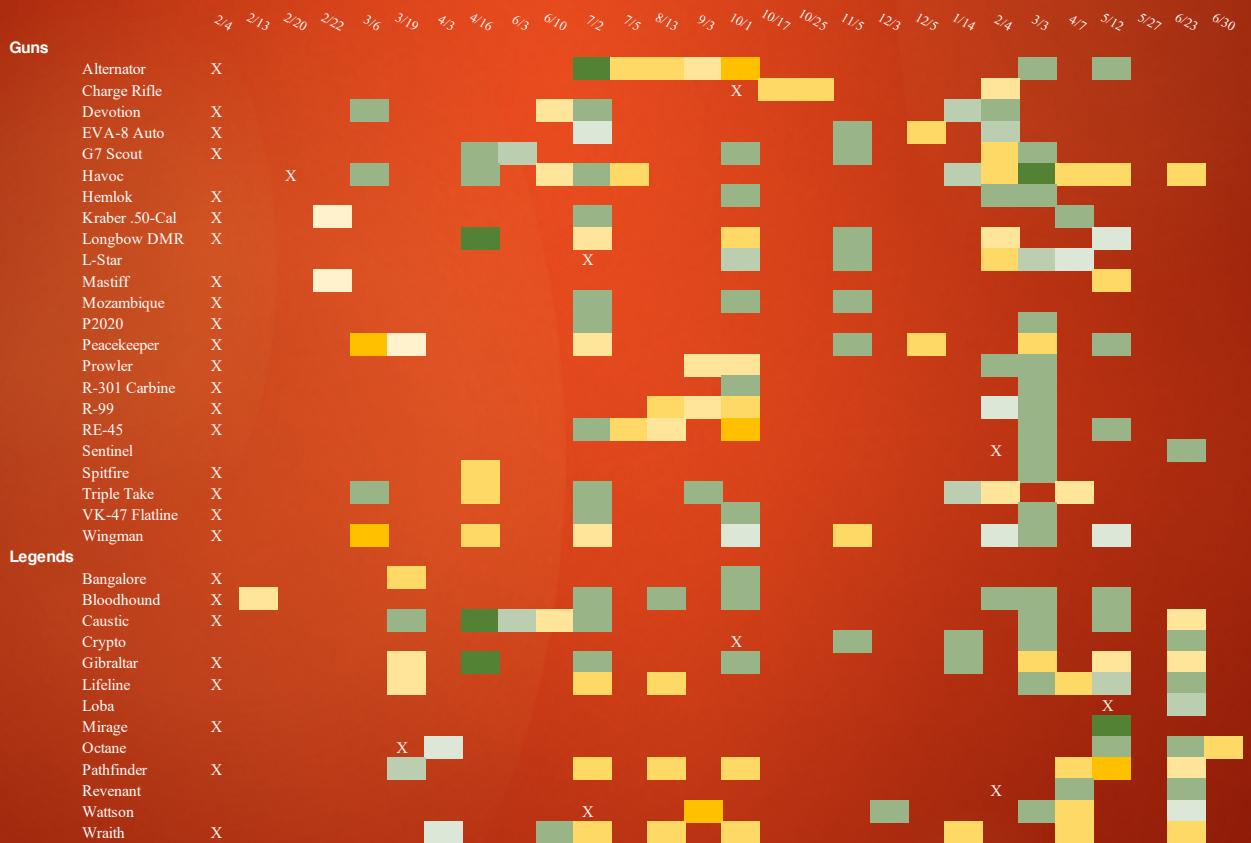
Mirage: Decoys of Any Legend

Mirage's abilities still largely only benefit himself. With decoys of teammates, a Mirage could fake the movement of his team allowing them to reposition safely.

Octane: Sliding Jump Pad

It remains to be seen if the addition of the double jump will improve Octane's playability professionally. A minor buff would be a further, shorter jump off the pad if players' slide into it instead of just running on it. The jump arcs are currently quite predictable and simple to track for the best players.

On Past Patches



Closing Thoughts

The design changes outlined in this section are just a few steps that could be taken to improve variance within the competitive scene in terms of small adjustments to legends and weapons. More drastic changes will likely occur as new guns, characters, and maps are added to play. A healthy metagame will be thrown into flux with each introduction and slowly solved throughout the season.

For Apex to remain in the competitive scene, the most important members to listen to are the professionals themselves. Open lines of communication and adjustments to how they believe tournament gameplay should be modified will provide the best changes as well as retain players from switching to other games.

The information presented here is limited by its data and further investigations can be made to determine if changes need to be made. Some key performance indicators would be:

- Weapon Swap Tendencies
- Encounter Win Rate
- Weapon Knocks By Round
- Churn Rate after Death to certain legends and weapons
- Damage Per Second adjusted by accuracy

The raw data, code used to gather it, and any future versions of this case study will be made available at [HTTPS://GITHUB.COM/DKALAMAR/APYEX](https://github.com/DKALAMAR/APYEX)