🎮 Product Recommendations: Improving Player Retention in League of Legends (EUW)

Executive Summary

Analysis of player behavior using live League of Legends match data reveals **severe early churn**, with approximately **97% of players dropping off after their first match**. Retention is not primarily driven by player skill, match outcomes, or performance metrics, but by **early repetition and habit formation**. Players who complete multiple matches within their first few sessions are significantly more likely to retain long-term.

This document outlines **three high-impact product recommendations** to improve early retention, engagement, and player lifetime value.

1️⃣ Focus on Early Repetition, Not Performance

Finding

- Winning early, high kill counts, or longer match duration **do not significantly improve retention**

- Players who play **multiple matches early** retain far better than those who do not

- Activation (≥3 matches) is the strongest predictor of retention

Recommendation

Design the onboarding experience to encourage immediate replay.

Concrete actions:

- Add a **"Play Again" prompt** immediately after the first match

- Introduce **short-term incentives** for completing 2–3 matches in the first 24–48 hours

- Reduce friction between matches (faster queues, clearer next steps)

Why this matters:
Retention improves when players form a habit early — not when they perform well.

2️⃣ Redesign Onboarding to Prevent "One-and-Done" Churn

Finding

- The largest drop-off occurs between the **first and second match**

- Most players never return after their first game

- This suggests confusion, overwhelm, or lack of motivation rather than dissatisfaction with gameplay

Recommendation

Rework the first-match experience to explicitly guide players toward a second match.

Concrete actions:

- Add a **post-match onboarding screen** explaining:

   o   What to do next

   o   Why playing again matters

- Introduce a **"Second Match Bonus"** (XP boost, cosmetic, progression unlock)

- Surface progress bars (e.g. *"2/3 matches to unlock reward"*)

Why this matters:
Players who reach a second match are dramatically more likely to activate and retain.

3️⃣ Treat High-Intensity Players as a Burnout Risk, Not Just a Success Segment

Finding

- High-engagement ("extreme") players play more matches per day

- However, they show **higher churn risk over time**

- Intensity alone does not guarantee longevity

Recommendation

Actively manage high-engagement players to reduce burnout.

Concrete actions:

- Introduce **session pacing mechanisms** (break reminders, daily caps)

- Offer **varied content** instead of repetitive play loops

- Reward consistency over volume (e.g. daily streaks vs marathon sessions)

Why this matters:
Sustainable engagement outperforms short-term intensity for long-term retention.

🔢 Use Activation as the Core Success Metric

Finding

- Activation (3+ matches) explains retention better than any single performance metric

- Activated players retain at significantly higher rates across all segments

Recommendation

Make activation the primary KPI for early player success.

Concrete actions:

- Track activation rate as a top-level metric

- Run A/B tests focused on improving activation

- Align onboarding, rewards, and UX decisions around early activation

Why this matters:
Improving activation directly improves retention, lifetime value, and monetization potential.

Final Takeaway

The data shows that **retention is a behavioral problem, not a skill problem**.
Players stay when they build momentum early.

The highest-impact retention improvements lie in **accelerating early repetition**, not in improving win rates or performance outcomes.