

COUNTERPLAY AND TEAMPLAY

Tom Cadwell
VP Game Design



ABOUT ME – TOM 'ZILEAS' CADWELL

When I'm not a male model, I am...



VP GAME DESIGN AT RIOT GAMES

13 YEARS IN GAME DEVELOPMENT

MBA FROM KELLOGG, BS FROM MIT

SUPPORT & JUNGLE PLAYER

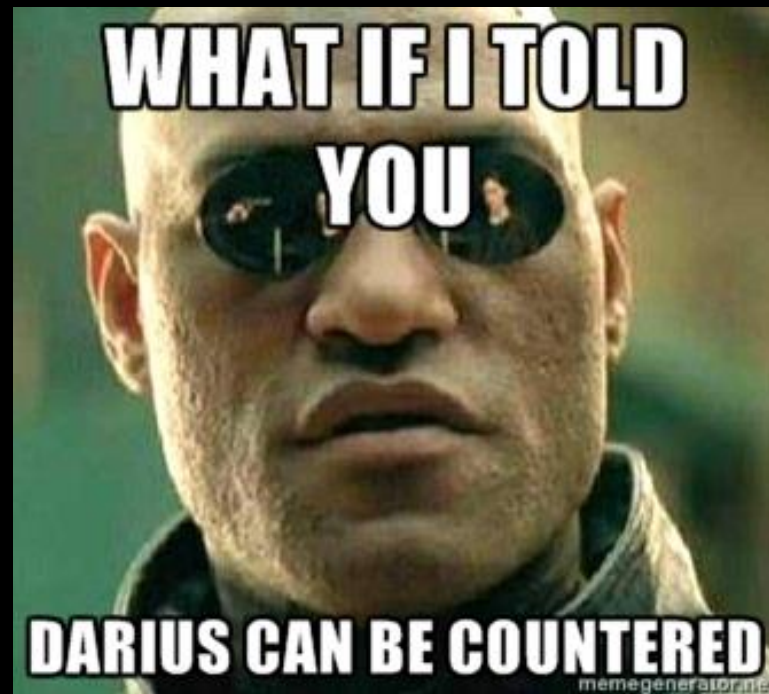
NOT SINGLE

A BRIEF MECHANICS REVIEW

COUNTERPLAY

TEAMPLAY

CLOSING THOUGHTS



MECHANICS SHOULD CREATE SATISFACTION

Paraphrased from an old boss

INEVITABLE GDC VENN DIAGRAM

Visceral,
clear,
responsive

FUN

**VERY SATISFYING
MECHANIC**

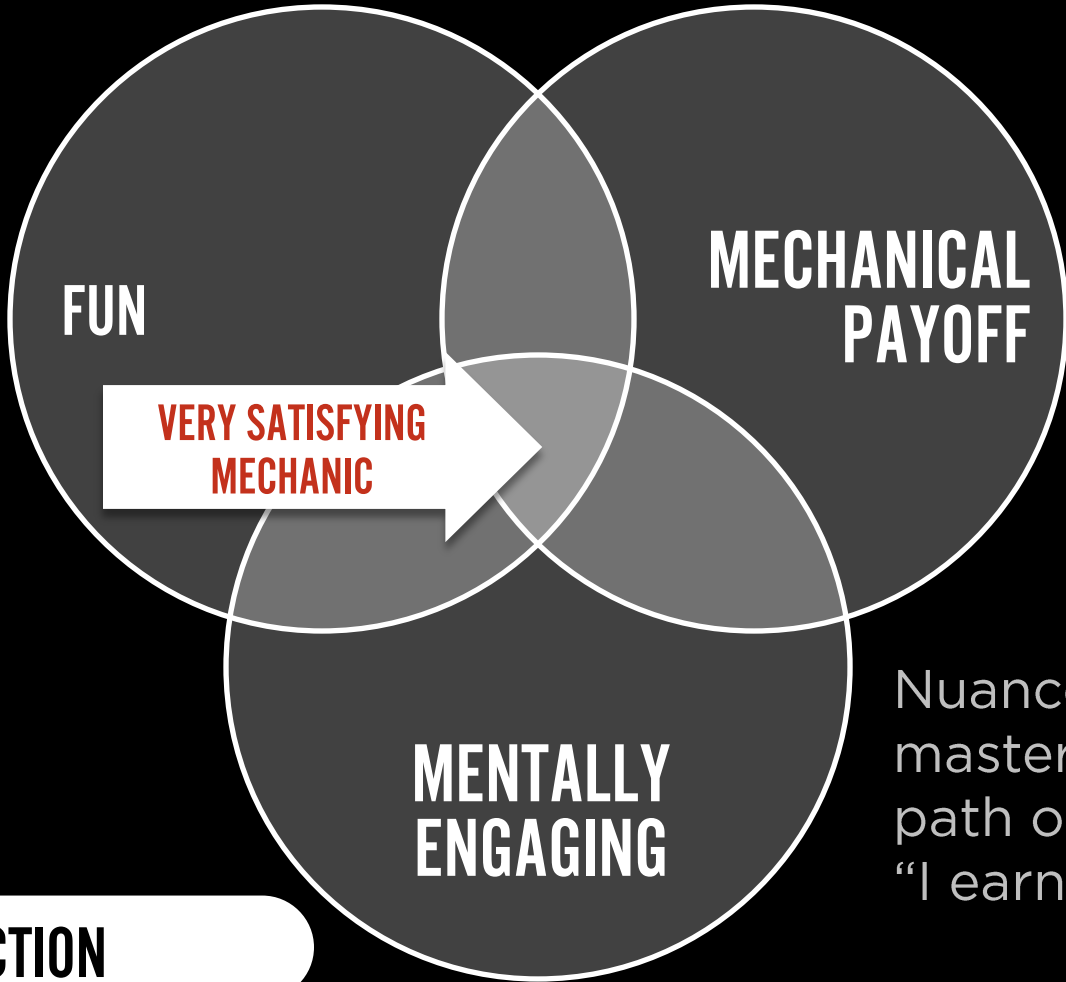
**MECHANICAL
PAYOFF**

Does what
the player
expects

**MENTALLY
ENGAGING**

Nuance,
mastery, clear
path of mastery,
“I earned it”

SATISFACTION





Are Fire Flower and Fireball satisfying mechanics in Mario Brothers?

FIREBALL



Great SFX, art,
controls,
bounces merrily

FUN

No surprise here

Kills goombas,
koopas

**MECHANICAL
PAYOFF**

**MENTALLY
ENGAGING**

Lots of
approaches &
techniques to
master

SATISFACTION

is key to good
game design

SATISFACTION of the **player**?

SATISFACTION of the **players?**

COUNTERPLAY

SATISFACTION

TEAMPLAY

COUNTERPLAY

SATISFACTION

THE ELEMENTS OF COUNTERPLAY

For a given ability, a
response is...

POSSIBLE

CLEAR

INTERESTING

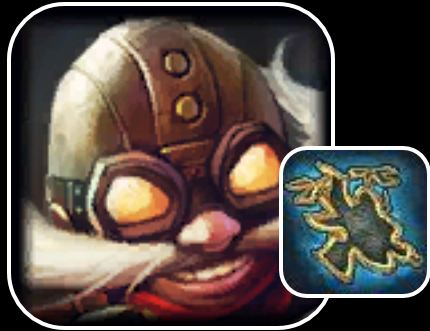
THE ELEMENTS OF COUNTERPLAY

POSSIBLE

CLEAR

INTERESTING

Is a response possible?



HEXTECH SHRAPNEL SHELLS

Basic attacks deal
extra true damage

POOR COUNTERPLAY

No meaningful reaction
other than getting out
of the way

THE ELEMENTS OF COUNTERPLAY

POSSIBLE

CLEAR

INTERESTING

Is the need for a response clear?

LEAGUE OF LEGENDS
TEAMFIGHT SPELL EFFECTS

INCONSISTENT COUNTERPLAY

Sometimes noisy

CLARITY COULD BE BETTER



THE ELEMENTS OF COUNTERPLAY

POSSIBLE

CLEAR

INTERESTING

Are responses varied and nuanced?



STEALTH 1.0

Invisible until
attacking or using
abilities

POOR COUNTERPLAY

Binary response

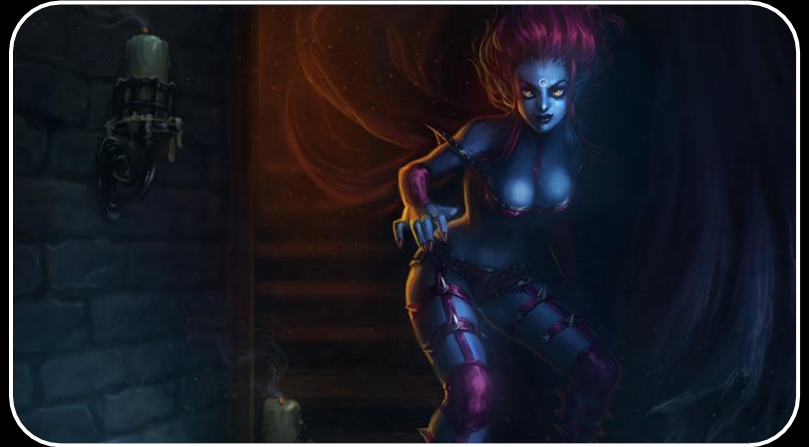
POOR COUNTERPLAY



Invisible until
attacking or using
abilities

Forced players to counter
with stealth detection

Too binary; no satisfaction
for either player



EVELYNN'S
STEALTH 1.0

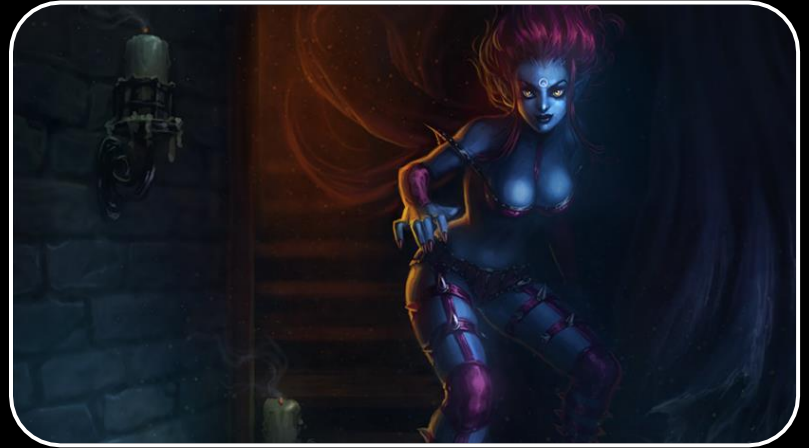
GOOD COUNTERPLAY



Invisible until
attacking or using
abilities



Partially visible at
close range



EVELYNN'S
STEALTH 2.0

GOOD COUNTERPLAY



Invisible until
attacking or using
abilities



Partially visible at
close range

- Evelynn actually has to sneak and find vulnerable moments
- Opponent rewarded for quick reaction time

THE ELEMENTS OF COUNTERPLAY

For a given
ability, a
response
is...

POSSIBLE

Is a response possible?

CLEAR

Is the need for a response
clear?

INTERESTING

Are responses varied and
nuanced?

THE ELEMENTS OF COUNTERPLAY

For a given
ability, a
response
is...

POSSIBLE

CLEAR

INTERESTING

Does the response
have its own healthy
counterplay?

LIMITED COUNTERPLAY



**KASSADIN'S
RIFTWALK**

COUNTERPLAY EXAMPLES

LEAGUE of
LEGENDS



MORGANA
DARK BINDING



WORLD
WARCRAFT



DEATH KNIGHT
REMORSELESS WINTER



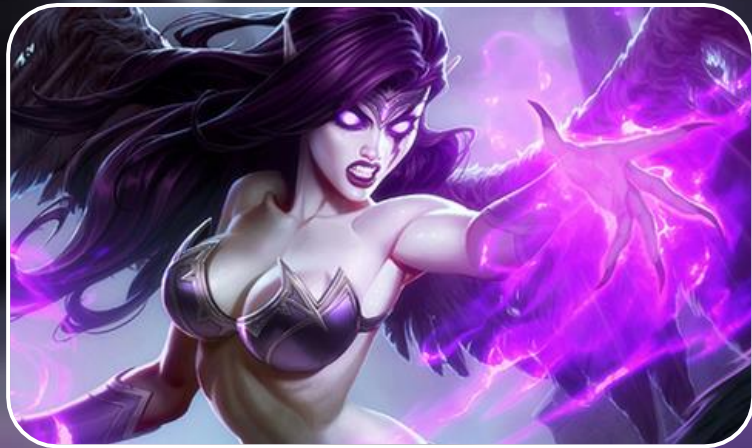
LEAGUE of
LEGENDS



GAREN
PERSEVERENCE



COUNTERPLAY EXAMPLES



MORGANA
DARK BINDING

COUNTERPLAY EXAMPLES



Single-target
root



Long cooldown



Short duration



RYZE
RUNE PRISON

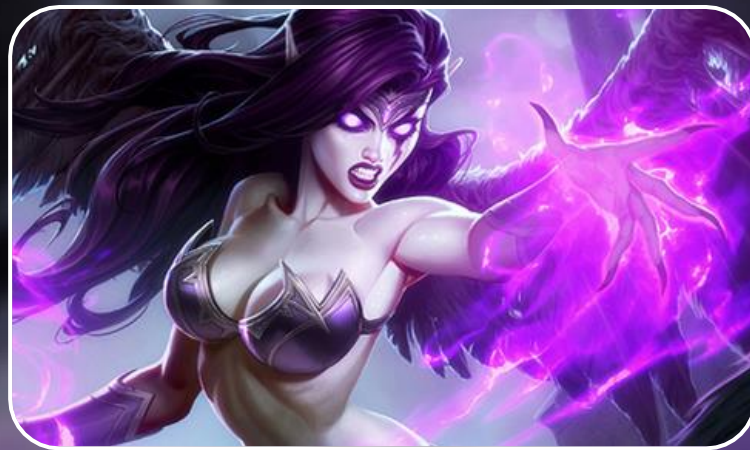
COUNTERPLAY EXAMPLES



Skill-shot root



Long cooldown

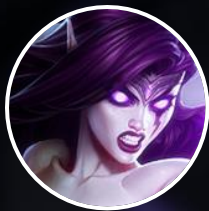


MORGANA
DARK BINDING

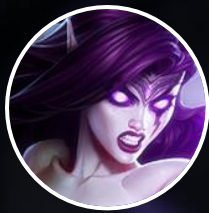
GREAT ANTICIPATION



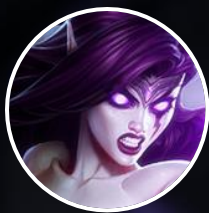
GREAT ANTICIPATION



GREAT ANTICIPATION



GREAT ANTICIPATION

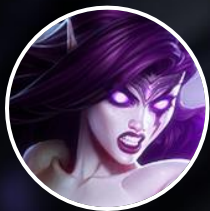


Will I hit?



Can I
dodge?

BETTER SATISFACTION



Can I lead
her?



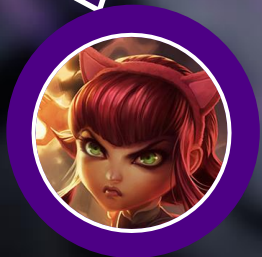
Can I make
it?



BETTER SATISFACTION



Can I lead
her?



Can I make
it?

COUNTERPLAY EXAMPLES



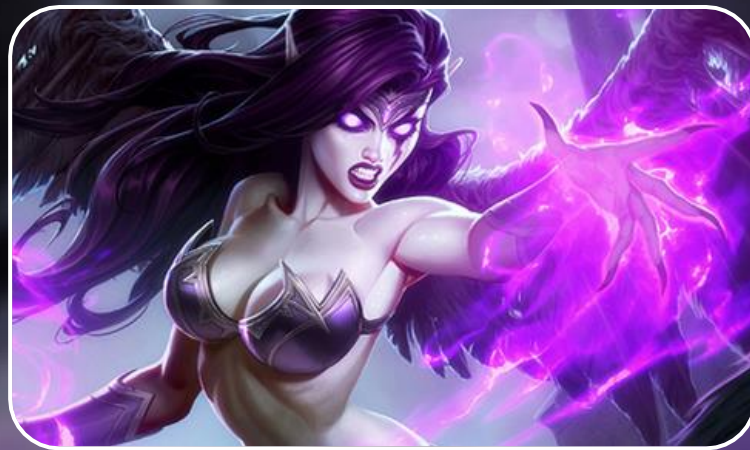
Skill-shot root



Long cooldown

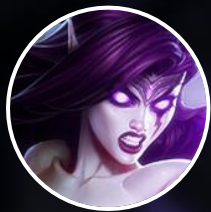


Interacts with
enemy minions



MORGANA
DARK BINDING

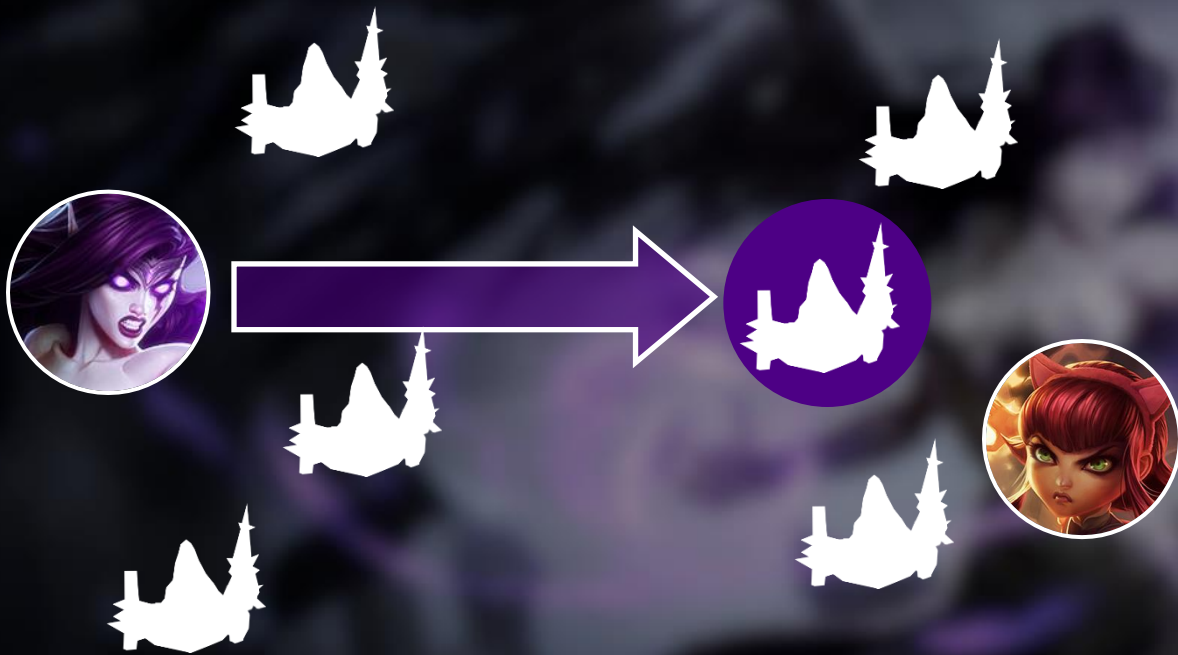
NUANCED COUNTER-POSITIONING



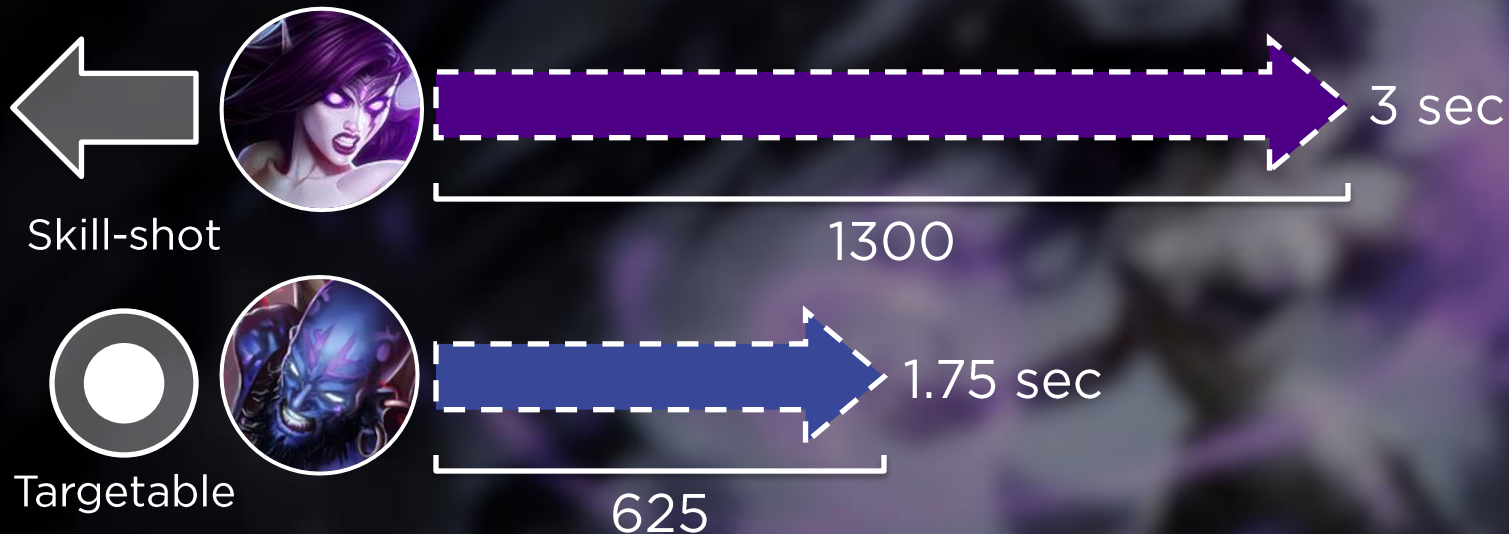
NUANCED COUNTER-POSITIONING



NUANCED COUNTER-POSITIONING



MORE POWER TO THE PLAYER



Possibility of missing = larger reward for success

COUNTERPLAY EXAMPLES



Skill-shot stun



Long cooldown



Interacts with
enemy minions

- Restrictions may allow tuning to 'OP'
- The manner in which you give power determines the satisfaction created
- Anticipation usually improves satisfaction
- And...**satisfaction is not zero sum!!!**

COUNTERPLAY EXAMPLES



Instant AOE
daze

No chance for opponent
to react

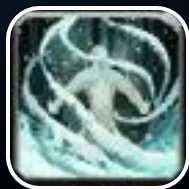
Medium gameplay, no
counterplay



DEATH KNIGHT
HUNGERING COLD

WRATH OF THE LICH KING

COUNTERPLAY EXAMPLES



Instant AOE
slow



Slowly
stacks over
time



Stuns for 6
seconds at
5 stacks



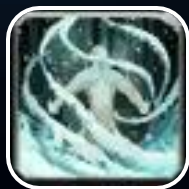
DEATH KNIGHT

~~HUNGERING COLD~~

REMORSELESS WINTER

MISTS OF PANDARIA

COUNTERPLAY EXAMPLES



Instant AOE
slow



Slowly
stacks over
time



Stuns for 6
seconds at
5 stacks

- Your use of the skill provides opponents an opportunity to make different responses
- Satisfaction is not zero sum
- Anticipation is awesome



Regenerate %
health per second



GAREN
PERSEVERENCE 1.0
(PASSIVE)



Regenerate %
health per second

Used to be on all the
time

Nothing to react to



GAREN
PERSEVERENCE 1.0
(PASSIVE)

COUNTERPLAY EXAMPLES



Regenerate %
health per second



Combat damage
turns it off



GAREN
PERSEVERENCE **2.0**
(PASSIVE)

COUNTERPLAY EXAMPLES



Regenerate %
health per second



Combat damage
turns it off

- Creates opportunity for counterplay where none existed before
- Spends power budget better to deliver gameplay
- Creating a goal around normal actions can sometimes create better context for satisfaction

ONE MORE EXAMPLE...

COUNTERPLAY EXAMPLES



Targeted damage
ability



Channel time

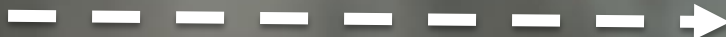
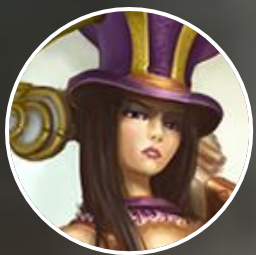


Blockable by
teammates

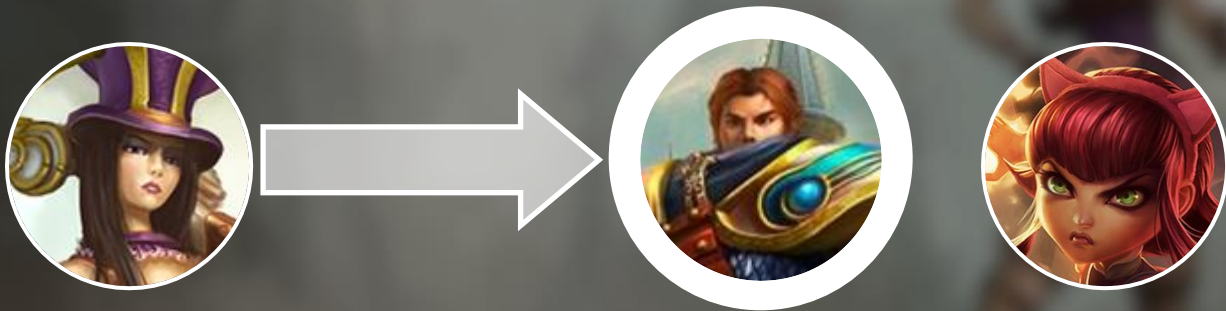


CAITLYN
ACE IN THE HOLE

ENABLES HEROIC MOMENTS



ENABLES HEROIC MOMENTS



COUNTERPLAY EXAMPLES



Targeted damage ability



Channel time



Blockable by teammates

- Good designs can enable heroism
- Anticipation boosts drama and satisfaction

COUNTERPLAY

SATISFACTION

SATISFACTION
TEAMPLAY

THE ELEMENTS OF TEAMPLAY

For a given ability,
teamplay is...

POSSIBLE

CLEAR

INTERESTING

THE ELEMENTS OF TEAMPLAY

POSSIBLE

CLEAR

INTERESTING

Does the ability create an opportunity for teamwork?



LOADED DICE

Allies receive
more gold per kill

THE ELEMENTS OF TEAMPLAY

POSSIBLE

CLEAR

INTERESTING

Does the ability create an opportunity for teamwork?



LOADED DICE

Allies receive
more gold per kill

NO TEAMPLAY

Teamwork is not
increased

THE ELEMENTS OF TEAMPLAY

POSSIBLE

CLEAR

INTERESTING

Can teammates notice and understand the ability?



BLOOD BOIL

Increase ally
attack speed

THE ELEMENTS OF TEAMPLAY

POSSIBLE

CLEAR

INTERESTING

Can teammates notice and understand the ability?



BLOOD BOIL

Increase ally
attack speed

POOR TEAMPLAY

Effect is too subtle in
a teamfight to react
to it

THE ELEMENTS OF TEAMPLAY

POSSIBLE

CLEAR

INTERESTING

Is the teamwork that occurs both varied and nuanced?



GOREFIEND'S GRASP

Pulls all monsters
in 20 yards to the
target ally

GOOD TEAMPLAY

A tool with many
potential uses

THE ELEMENTS OF TEAMPLAY

POSSIBLE

CLEAR

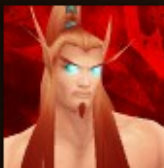
INTERESTING

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GOREFIEND'S GRASP

Pulls all monsters
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Krenastus ▼

90 Blood Elf Death

Knight

Monks of Pandaria

3480 🏆

What's the point of having it? It does nothing, I thought it would work like death grip.

#1

1/21/2013



Basanda ▼

90 Night Elf Death Knight

The Enclave

11095 🏆

Personally I can't imagine not using it. I think it's a god-send of a talent. The sheer control you have for mob placement is amazing. That, and it's range is much larger then D&D's. Drop in in the middle of a bunch of mobs where it's not hitting them all, run into it, hit GG, and hey! Everything is in the D&D suddenly.

#8

1/21/2013

Do make yourself a macro that self targets GG though, it helps.



Pus ▼

90 Orc Death Knight

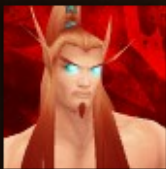
The Hellfire Club

13270 🏆

When I first hit 90 it saved my bacon one day doing dailies. Bit off way more than I could handle in my gear at the time, was getting wrecked, ran out cd's, Col one mob, run, Gorefiends the rest onto it, dnd in between, bandage, win. Was also great in early 5 mans because of terrible/dead/afk healers and again, gear. Grasp everything to a ranged player at just the right time and you can save a death. BAM!@Defensive CD. Has uses, just gotta be clever, and OMG I can only imagine in pvp.....

#22

1/22/2013



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#22
1/22/2013

THE ELEMENTS OF TEAMPLAY

For a given
ability,
teamplay is...

POSSIBLE

Is teamwork in response to the mechanic even possible?

CLEAR

Can teammates notice and understand the ability?

INTERESTING

Is the teamwork exhibited varied and nuanced?

A QUICK NOTE...

EXPERIENCING TEAMWORK IS VERY SATISFYING

TEAMPLAY EXAMPLES

LEAGUE of
LEGENDS



THRESH
DARK PASSAGE

WORLD
WARCRAFT



SHAMAN
BLOODLUST

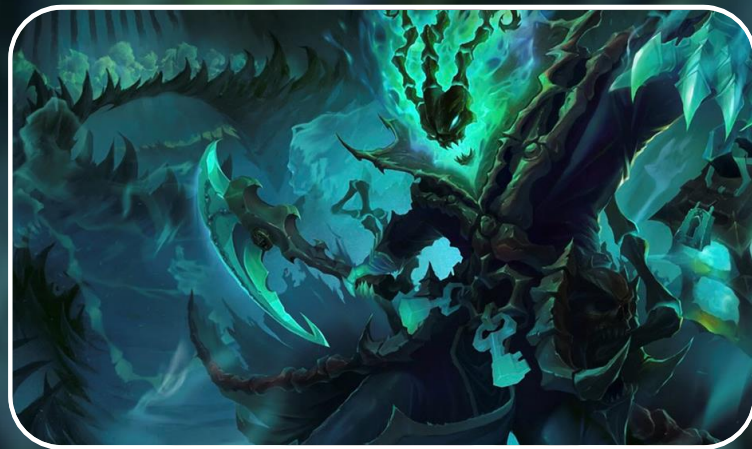
TEAMPLAY EXAMPLES



Thresh throws his lantern to location



Ally can click lantern to be pulled to Thresh



THRESH

DARK PASSAGE

TEAMPLAY EXAMPLES



Thresh throws his lantern to location



Ally can click lantern to be pulled to Thresh



NOT THIS (ON PURPOSE)

SAVE YOUR TEAMMATES



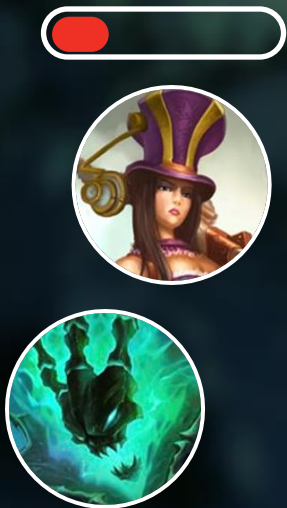
SAVE YOUR TEAMMATES



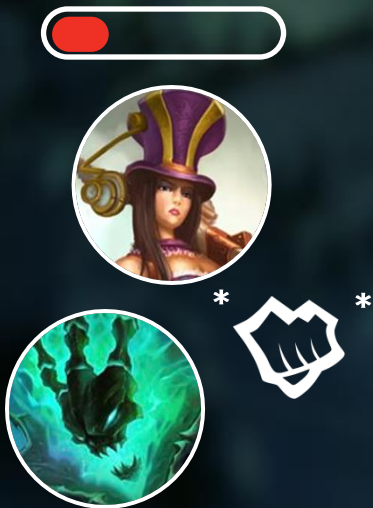
SAVE YOUR TEAMMATES

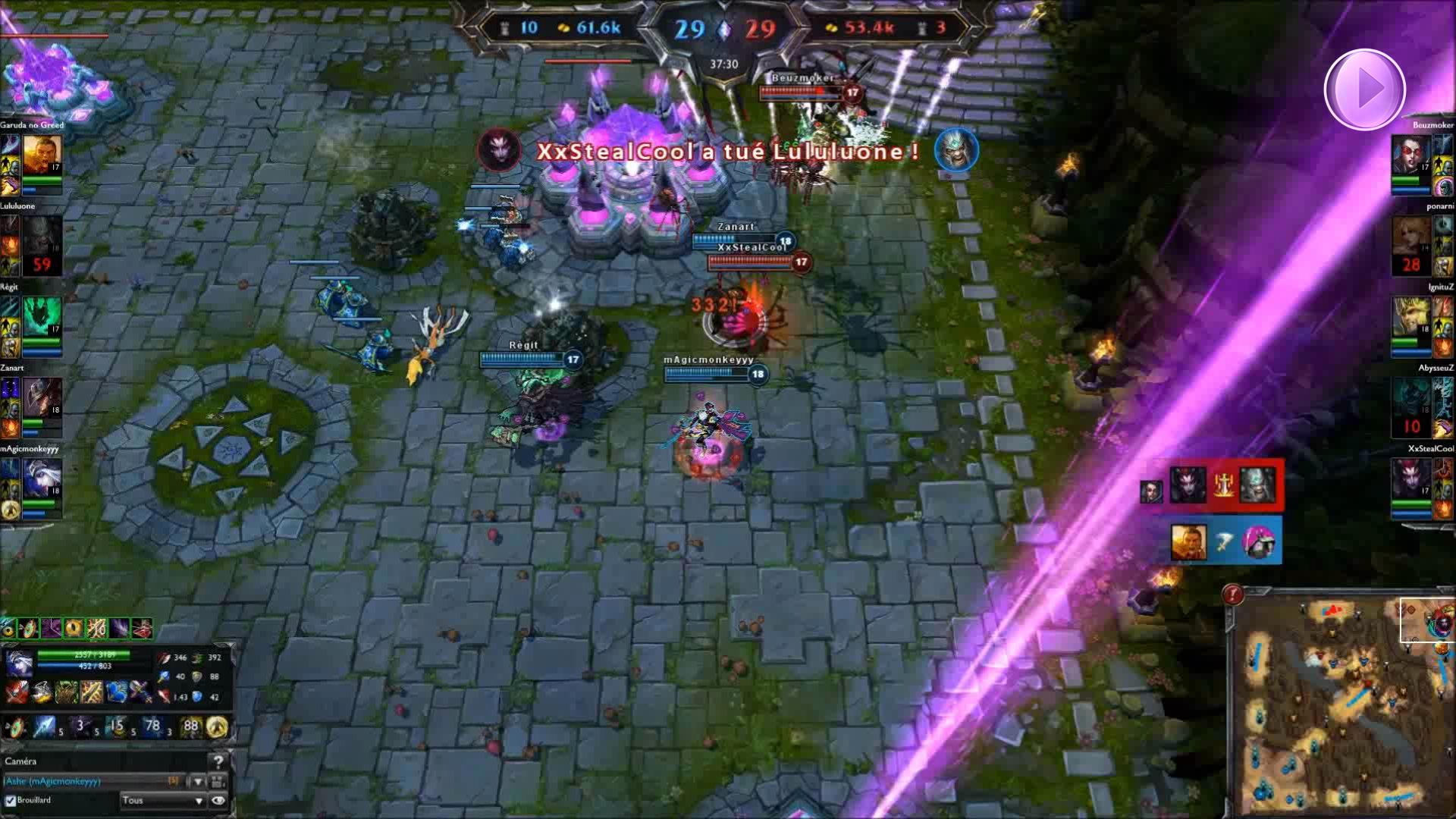


SAVE YOUR TEAMMATES



SAVE YOUR TEAMMATES





Garuda no Greed 17

Lululuone 59

Régit 17

Zanart 18

mAgicmonkeyyy 18

10 61.6k 29 29 53.4k 3

37:30

XxStealCool a tué Lululuone!

Zanart 18

XxStealCool 17

3321

mAgicmonkeyyy 18

Régit 17

Team composition icons



Beuzmoker 17

ponarni 14

Ignituz 18

AbsysseuZ 18

XxStealCool 17

Player stats and camera controls

257 / 310 / 432 / 803

346 392

40 88

1.43 42

3 5 15 5 78 3 88

Caméra ?

Ashir (mAgicmonkeyyy)

Brouillard Tous



TEAMPLAY EXAMPLES



Thresh throws his lantern to location



Ally can click lantern to be pulled to Thresh

- If an ability requires teamwork to use, the reward can be larger
- When things go well, players like to attribute it to teamwork... Warm fuzzies all around

TEAMPLAY EXAMPLES



**SHAMAN'S
BLOODLUST**



% increase to attack power

Only one interesting decision, for the raid leader: should I have a Hunter?

Non-interactive after that decision is made

Reduces power budget for other abilities



HUNTER'S TRUESHOT AURA

EARLY WoW ABILITY

TEAMPLAY EXAMPLES



% increase to attack power



Slight change in the same concept makes excellent teamplay



Bloodlust

21.5% of base mana

Instant

5 min cooldown

Requires Shaman

Requires level 70

Increases melee, ranged, and spell casting speed by 30% for all party and raid members. Lasts 40 sec.

TEAMPLAY EXAMPLES



% increase to attack
and casting speed



Once-per
encounter use

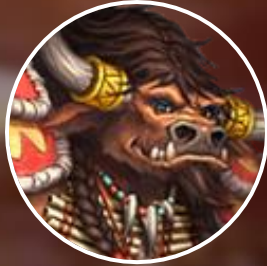


Limited duration

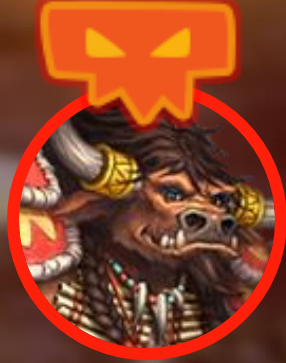


**SHAMAN'S
BLOODLUST**

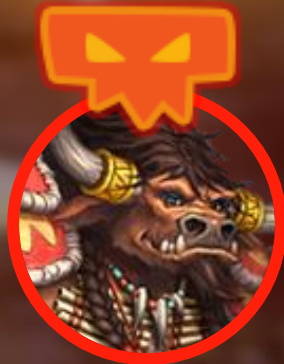
TEAMPLAY EXAMPLES



TEAMPLAY EXAMPLES



TEAMPLAY EXAMPLES



Pop
cooldowns!



TEAMPLAY EXAMPLES



CRITICAL HIT

Pop
cooldowns!



TEAMPLAY EXAMPLES



% increase to attack and casting speed



Once-per encounter use



Limited duration

- The way you grant power determines its satisfaction
- Short duration events create a window for teamwork and add value to effective communication

COUNTERPLAY

SATISFACTION

TEAMPLAY

POSSIBLE

CLEAR

POSSIBLE

COUNTERPLAY
SATISFACTION
TEAMPLAY

In a multiplayer
game, one player's
actions can affect all
players' satisfaction

COUNTERPLAY
SATISFACTION
TEAMPLAY



WE'RE HIRING

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