TOTAL Call of Duty - @RoninJZC

Total CoD

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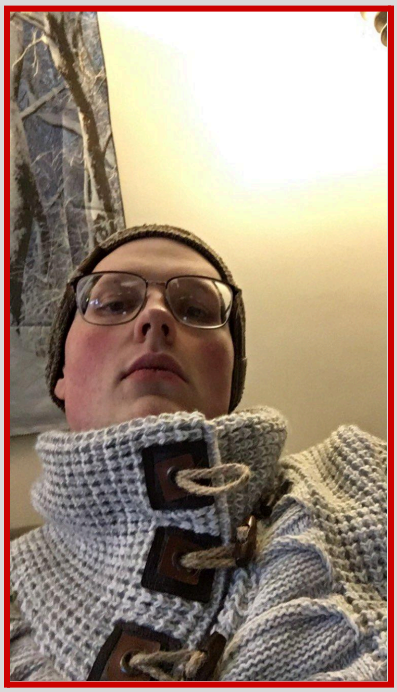
COACHING AVAILABLE AT HOURLY RATES



About Me:

Hello, for those of you who don’t know me, my gamertag is Ronin, and for those who do, you may be surprised to know it is not my real name. My given name is Jonathan and I am an esports coach/director with over a decade of experience, now 28 years of age.

(1) **Competitor -** I began my time in esports as a competitor. During my tenure as a player, I have partaken in tier 1 tournaments across multiple titles including the topic of this long winded manifesto, Call of Duty. At such time, I had several top 6-16 performances long before professionals were subject to the division of the franchised league. (Yes, I actually played the game).

(2) **Coach -** After several years of play, I made the personal decision to begin coaching. I came to the conclusion very rapidly that my attitude, personality, breadth of knowledge and attention to detail were more suited to a secondary role in team dynamics. That said, I began to recognize how much it meant to me to aid in the success of others. The goal to help those around me avoid the feeling of failure that haunted me as a player, and not only achieve success but create a habitually better mentality through arduous effort consumed my daily life. (Teams including: Built By Gamers, IronBlood Gaming, NYSL Academy, FaZe Black Stallions, and now TBA)

(3) **Management -** It has become something of a recurring theme for organizations under which I am employed to quickly promote me to Director of their Esports endeavors. This has happened 4 times. Most notably, with Built By Gamers, and followed therein by IronBlood Gaming (whoops), and most recently No Game No Life. Through these promotions I have learned much about other competitive titles, VALORANT, Apex Legends to name but two. These experiences have lent themselves to an already esports based lifestyle, and consequently, increased my understanding of the “esports professional” in a general sense, far beyond that of just a Call of Duty competitor.

(4) **Armchair Analyst -** Though to some this is not relevant experience I feel the need to explain that long before I was a competitor or coach, I was a fan of both sports, and esports. My early life was based almost

solely in team sports; basketball, football (American), baseball, even international volleyball. Just as many of you are now for esports, I was an avid armchair analyst, sat at home shaking my fist at professional sports players as if I knew better. This fascination with excellence in competition soon graduated to my love of esports when I began playing my first ever Call of Duty (Modern Warfare) on the Xbox 360. I was hooked, and my love soon transcended healthy boundaries to what I can confidently call an addiction to all things esports. This combination upbringing left me wanting, not just for success within the esports space but for all translatable knowledge between physical sports and the predominantly cognitive/psychological esports.

Coaching Philosophy

As with many, my coaching philosophy is my compass. It guides me along a path to what I call success, ensuring I am always aligned with my core values. I prefer direct and honest tutelage, lesson based, rather than fact spamming or answer driven. It is my true belief that whether it be the process or the final product, answers are only as good as the questions that produced them. Rather than tell a player “I think you should have taken space here” it is always, in my world, preferable to ask a thought provoking question: “What would have been the benefits of taking space here instead?”. This is not to say I do not work arduously to have the answer to the questions I ask, of course, that is another necessary part of what I do. Being able to answer the question and providing it are far different, “If you give a man a fish, he eats for a day. If you teach a man to fish, he eats for a lifetime”. Though I believe there is no definitive and consistent secret to winning, I do inherently believe there are definitive and consistent methods to increase the probability you win, as well as statistically optimal choices. My coaching structure can be defined as a collaboration of divisive, sometimes unanimously undervalued tactics, alongside traditional sports theories that have garnered great success in team activities throughout history. In doing so, I am able to reinforce strong foundational values from sportsmanship, to teamwork, while simultaneously pushing the boundaries of conventional wisdom within each title respectively.

With this document’s focus being Call of Duty, I believe wholeheartedly that my role as a coach is to be a leader. Creating a winning culture begins at the top, and though many of you view coaches (especially those who you never had to win a 1v1 against) as glorified VOD recorders and cheerleaders, my objective is to abolish this delusion. Chemistry and confidence begins long before the map loads, whether you believe in my abilities to help you improve or otherwise is not an indictment of your intelligence, but rather, of my own ineptitude. Comfort with your surroundings is just as important as the comfort you feel when you land on the map and begin your trek to championships. It is my job as your coach not only to improve your technical skills, but also install a sense of comradery and confidence in the people you will fist bump when your own jobs are done (myself included). With my experiences so far, I believe I am able to expand how a team functions in every phase of existence from signing players, to chemistry building, practice, performance, and professionalism. TLDR: Systematic growth through critical thinking, passionate dedication, creative problem solving, and finally decisive application of our hard work.

The Purpose of Coaching:

Coaching, both in traditional sports and esports, plays an essential role in improving performance, shaping mental toughness, and fostering team cohesion. Coaches are tasked with guiding athletes through physical, tactical, and psychological development, optimizing performance, and helping individuals and teams navigate the competitive landscape. The purpose of coaching is not only to improve the technical aspects of the game but also to create an environment conducive to holistic growth. This dissertation explores the purpose of coaching in sports and esports, integrating scientific evidence and practical frameworks that support the value of structured coaching, including the importance of establishing routines and schedules.

Defining Coaching: The Intersection of Science and Practice

Coaching can be defined as the process of guiding and supporting an individual or group to enhance performance through instruction, motivation, feedback, and strategy development. According to *Côté et al. (2007)*, coaching involves a complex interplay between instruction, mentorship, and psychological support aimed at developing the athlete's potential in the context of a competitive environment.

In traditional sports, coaching has long been studied through various psychological and sociological lenses. Research by *Weiss (2002)* highlights the importance of coaches not only as technical instructors but as mentors, providing athletes with psychological tools that foster resilience and self-efficacy. In esports, where players engage in highly competitive digital games, the role of the coach extends beyond gameplay strategy, embracing elements of emotional intelligence and mental fortitude.

A key aspect of coaching is the use of **feedback loops**. The science of feedback is grounded in principles such as reinforcement learning and cognitive-behavioral theories. The feedback provided by coaches helps athletes to make adjustments based on their performance, ensuring continuous improvement. *Hodges & Franks (2002)* demonstrated that real-time feedback can lead to better decision-making and performance outcomes by triggering a learning cycle that refines skills and strategies.

The Role of Coaching in Sports and Esports Performance

Physical and Mental Development: In traditional sports, coaching focuses on the development of motor skills, endurance, and technique. For instance, a football coach uses drills to improve passing, shooting, and positional play. Additionally, mental training, such as visualization techniques, is used to enhance performance. *Vealey (2007)* emphasized that mental skills training, often guided by coaches, significantly improves athletes' abilities to manage stress and focus under pressure.

In esports, coaches help players refine reflexes, game knowledge, and strategies. However, the importance of mental training is amplified in the gaming context due to the high cognitive load and decision-making speed required. *Fischer et al. (2019)* conducted research demonstrating that cognitive flexibility, attention control, and

strategic thinking are critical skills in esports. Coaches help players develop these skills through analysis of gameplay, scenario training, and post-match reviews.

Team Dynamics and Cohesion: Coaching also addresses group dynamics. Coaches foster communication, trust, and collaboration within a team. In sports, coaches focus on building a sense of unity and teamwork, which is pivotal for high-performance outcomes. *Carron et al. (2002)* outlined that a well-structured and positive team environment enhances both individual and collective performance in sports.

In esports, the dynamics of virtual teams also require coaches to navigate conflicts, ensure optimal team composition, and develop strategies that maximize each player's strengths. *Brunner et al. (2018)* found that successful esports teams often have strong leadership and effective communication, which are nurtured through regular interaction with coaches.

The Need for Schedules and Routines in Coaching

One of the cornerstones of effective coaching is the implementation of structured schedules and routines. In both traditional sports and esports, consistency and discipline are key to sustaining high levels of performance. A coach's role is to design schedules that integrate training, rest, competition, and mental health support in a balanced manner.

Psychological Benefits of Routines: Establishing a routine creates predictability, reducing anxiety and stress among athletes. *Kabat-Zinn (1990)* in his research on mindfulness, suggests that routines not only provide structure but also reduce cognitive overload, allowing athletes to focus better on their tasks. In sports, the routine could include daily physical training, mental conditioning, and game preparation. Similarly, in esports, a well-rounded schedule might consist of strategy discussions, in-game practice, and physical exercises, as studies have shown that physical activity positively affects cognitive functions (Nebel et al., 2016).

Optimizing Performance: Creating a schedule also allows coaches to monitor progress and ensure peak performance. In traditional sports, coaches often emphasize periodization — a planning method designed to optimize performance at critical moments of competition. This involves varying the intensity of training to allow for recovery and to avoid burnout. In esports, periodization is equally relevant, with schedules often incorporating rest and off-days to prevent fatigue, which can impact decision-making and reaction time.

Research conducted by *Kreher & Schwartz (2012)* in sports science supports the notion that managing recovery through structured rest is as important as training itself. In esports, where players often train for long hours, incorporating breaks and rest periods is essential to avoid mental fatigue and ensure sustained attention.

The purpose of coaching, whether in traditional sports or esports, is to enhance both the technical and psychological attributes of the individual or team. Coaches serve as guides, mentors, and strategists, optimizing the development of athletes by focusing on skill acquisition, mental resilience, and teamwork. The scientific understanding of

coaching—particularly its influence on feedback mechanisms, cognitive development, and team dynamics—demonstrates its broad significance in high-performance settings.

The creation of structured routines and schedules is a crucial aspect of coaching that provides athletes and esports players with the stability needed to perform at their best. Scientific evidence underscores the importance of managing training intensity, incorporating rest, and ensuring cognitive readiness. Through strategic planning, coaches help individuals and teams reach their peak potential, illustrating the multifaceted value of coaching in both sports and esports contexts.

Why me?

You may have gotten this far and be wondering why you should care about what I have to say. That is fair. I have never won an important championship, or sniffed the professional league. But in truth, I have worked hard to make sure the following can truly expand the knowledge base of any who read it. My skills are in understanding and pushing boundaries of conceptual viability. Bridging the gap between traditional sports and cognitive esports has become a goal since my induction into the space as a teenager. More importantly than this, however, is my focus on detail and pattern recognition. Many, MANY things in this life are reflections of one another. This can be seen through the patterns they use to operate, let alone the patterns left in the wake of those operations. Ultimately, the combination of my understanding, and most importantly my forty thousand plus hours of experience have led me to a place of efficiency in seeking success. So again, why me? I don't know. But, I like to think I can make a difference.

Phase 1:

Before The Game Begins:

The most important thing to understand when looking at esports, (Call of Duty is no different) is that as esports competitors, our primary source of confrontation is within cognition. We are cognitive athletes. A baseball player stands at the plate, he is faced with a mental stack (will discuss in detail later), he then has to accurately react, and use a full range of motion to swing his bat at a ball traveling 90+ miles an hour toward him, run at pace and reach the base. This combination of cognition and physical exertion differs greatly from constant mental stacking and cognitive stressors faced as a gamer, where most of our physical exertion happens in small bursts, rapid fire actions per minute that are not (for the greater majority) physically strenuous. To quote Yogi Berra "Baseball is 90% mental, and 50% physical", this is obviously in part, an exaggeration, but let's narrow the numbers and say for the sake of argument baseball is 70% physical and 30% mental. Compare this to esports where we are employing 95% mental and 5% physical division of bodily requirement, you have a semi-accurate depiction of how truly important the mentality of players, the psychology, breadth of knowledge, and motivation with esports is.

Given esports is a cognitive platform for competition, and it happens in milliseconds, as an athlete within the space you must be prepared for the challenges you face with almost prophetic efficiency. Hopefully, I can impart some

general and large scale concepts of the relationship between the physiological and the performance. Ideal performance states are representations of many factors, not least of which being your bodily condition. Whether you're a bodybuilder or a gamer, your brain is important. Sleep, eating right, and yes, ACTIVITY outside of the game support your cognitive function beyond simply remembering to breathe. Maximizing performance should be your top priority and this is done by supporting your body and brain, it is, even in Call of Duty, the tool you use to achieve success. If you had a $1,000.00 super controller and the best equipment in the world, it would be useless to you if your body was not performing at a peak to match its expense. Entering a performance state is necessary before even practice. Disregarding useless processing within your headspace, negative thoughts, onlookers, your image, or worrying about the coming performance on either a team or individual level (KDA players) is the doorway to maximizing performance.

Summarizing the performance state -

1. Absolute confidence.
2. Walking on quicksand.
3. Specific and Intense focus on the task at hand.
4. Effortless, bordering on instinctive action.
5. A sense of complete and unwavering control over the scenario through emotions.
6. A sense of the world around you, even the activity itself is moving slower than normal, and you are personally reacting faster than normal.
7. Loss of Self-Consciousness: (Seemingly a detachment from the result of the activity, releasing yourself from any judgments)
8. Intrinsic motivation.
9. Clear goals.

You may have experienced this, many people experience "flow state" from differing stimuli, or with differing results. That said, you may wonder… What in the mumbo jumbo does "walking on quicksand" mean? Quicksand is exactly what you think it is. There you are, focusing on competing, and something goes wrong. Maybe you just took a bad challenge, made a bad play, had a bad timing, something felt off, or maybe something bizarre happened, like a grenade hit an invisible wall, flew back and well, you get it. You still may have done well, even won or got a personal best, but something just is not resonating well. Why did that one mistake or even something outside of my control happen? It was just one time, right? You just focus on mentally, and emotionally preparing for your next game, your next match, your next tournament.

You spawn in, and almost instantly, it happens again. It may not be the next event or competition, but it happens within remembrance of that previous event. Was it just unlucky? Or maybe there was a problem with the setup, the temperature, maybe the controller is broken, maybe your teammates are secretly bad, or something else. But you remember what happened last time, and in combination that with the recent issue, all of a sudden you question yourself, your abilities, focus, practice, what you ate for breakfast, sensitivity, strategy, teammates, and even your luck. Even if an athlete does not question themselves the first or second time, by the third time of crashes, failure,

poor performance, or just some simple off-ness, you are sucked into that quicksand. The quicksand pulls you in hard, especially when you are trying to do everything to get yourself out, it just makes the situation incredibly worse. The higher the expectation, the faster the quicksand pulls you in. Let's continue with our discussion on psychology and cognition so you can not only work to "walk on quicksand", but avoid it entirely.

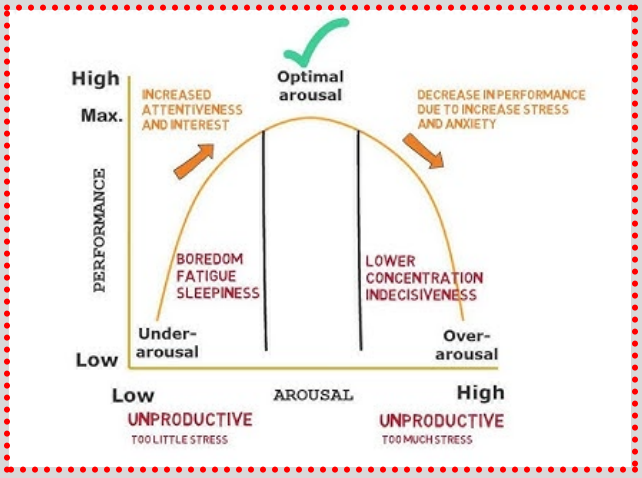
Ultimately the goal is to promote a performance state, while eliminating the negative mental repercussions of esports competition and even life in general, ranging from self-deprecation, lack of focus, lost motivation to lost faith. Though it is impossible to fend off the many variables you will face, it is my contention and obligation as a coach to aid in mastering a mental state that helps us perform optimally.

Think for a second about how a "long day" leaves you feeling drained, you may return from work and lack the energy to do anything at all, let alone sit down for hours of focused practice. Your stores of both physical AND cognitive energy are far from limitless, we are all human beings, and none of us are perfect. Managing that energy expenditure is crucial to performance. Emotions are temporary, they affect our mental state, exhausting us from the inside out, even having physical repercussions on our bodies. This is not to say good emotions don't exist, they do, some can be beneficial and hype us up to a performance fervor, elevating our confidence similar to whenever Heretics yells "MUERTO" after securing an important frag. However just like with anything in life, too much of a good thing can be bad, too much medicine can become a poison. It is the management of these good and bad emotions that can turn a good player to a great one, and a great one, to a champion.

Let's talk about **arousal**. Before you gamer, and make an onlyfans meme or dive too deeply into the gutter that is your mind, focus on the point. Arousal in this context is defined as a physiological and psychological state of being awoken or of sense stimulation resulting in intense motivation through the ascending reticular activating system of the brain. Thus, mediating wakefulness, the autonomic nervous system, and the endocrine system. This results in increased heart rate, blood pressure and a condition of sensory alertness, desire, mobility, and reactivity. (Quite literally, releasing dopamine into the bloodstream) Arousal can be generated through a multitude of factors. Massive amounts of positive thoughts, self-confidence and both forms of stress, (distress/negative, leads to anxiety. Eustress/positive, promotes arousal)

Closely related to arousal in the context of performance is **anxiety**, colloquially recognized as a sense of fear, dread, unease or inadequacy, anxiety is a killer for those competing against others. It is both physiological (cognitive anxiety) and physical bodily reaction (somatic anxiety). State anxiety rounds out the bunch as a finite but subjective experience of anxious tendencies such as uncertainty or a lack of personal confidence. Similar to stress, low to moderate temporary levels of anxiety can positively influence arousal, heighting our focus, and making us more alert leading up to any given competition.

So let's talk theory, through my experience, Drive Theory (the idea that as arousal/anxiety increases so too does performance) ultimately and nearly always culminates in the Inverted U-Theory (the idea that performance improves as arousal levels increase but that there is a threshold point. Any increase in arousal beyond the threshold point will worsen performance. At low arousal levels, performance quality is low).



How then do we monitor and control these states of existence to maximize performance within the window of ideal arousal?

Breathing. Specifically Diaphragmatic Breathing (Belly Breathing). Clearing our mind through focused and intentional breathing techniques helps increase our concentration and relieve an overabundance of the stresses we may face in our daily lives as competitors or during the match itself. Diaphragmatic Breathing has a direct impact on heart rate, mental stack, and muscle tension due to the causative link between our major bodily systems (respiratory/cardiac/nervous). The process by which we execute a Diaphragmatic Breath is simple enough. Breathe in deeply and fill your lungs with air, rather than expanding your chest, allow your abdomen to expand. As you breathe out, fully contract your abdomen inward until your lungs are emptied of the air you had taken in.

Cognitive restructuring.

"Self-defeating thoughts and responses to challenges kill creativity, innovation, and problem-solving ability. They are, in large part, habitual–we learn them. Therefore, we can unlearn them. Cognitive restructuring asks you to change your response, so instead of accepting the first thought that enters your mind, such as "I can't do this" or, "I'm getting slammed", or, "everyone must think I am ass", choose the opposite. Say, "I can do this, I just need more practice", or "I'm capable of turning this around", or "my team knows I am going to change this outcome". If you find yourself in the heat of action, dramatically failing and beating yourself up, then it's too late. The work must be done before the need arises. This takes time, practice, and a safe place to develop and often requires a coach to help you navigate." Hello, it is I, a coach, to help you navigate your restructuring.

Visualization (and Imagery).

Mentally rehearsing successful outcomes and envisioning yourself performing at your best can help you build self-efficacy and reduce performance anxiety through self created visual stimuli as well as empirically supporting your claim to excellence. Whether you start with just an image of a scoreboard in which you are popping off, or increase your imagery to a visualization of exact in-game scenarios playing out to your confident specifications, you are amassing control over a situation forthcoming. As you become more astute at creating your visualizations, you will recognize that this astuteness is coinciding with individual improvement, better practice and confidence from experience. Basically, the more you visualize the more you recognize and are comfortable with a positive outcome.

Psychological Skills Training (PST) refers to a systematic and consistent practice of mental or physiological skills for the purpose of enhancing performance.

Psychological factors account primarily for day-to-day fluctuations in performance.

Successful athletes were characterized by

1. Higher confidence
2. Greater self-regulation of arousal
3. Better concentration and focus
4. In control but not forcing it
5. Positive thoughts
6. Imagery
7. More determination
8. Commitment

Useful PST programs

1. Arousal regulation
2. Imagery
3. Confidence
4. Increasing motivation and commitment (goal setting)
5. Attention or concentration skills (self-talk, mental plans)
6. Coping with injury

Three Phases of PST program

Education Phase: participants quickly recognize how important it is to acquire psychological skills and how the skills affect performance.

- Increase athlete's awareness of the role that mental skills play in performance.
- Teach athletes how to turn tension or anxiety into positive energy
- Teaching the skill of regulating arousal states
- Explain causes of anxiety and the relationship b/w arousal and performance.

Acquisition Phase- Focuses on strategies and techniques for learning the various psychological skills.

- For the development of arousal regulation skills, formal meetings might focus on replacing negative self-statements that surface under stressful competitive conditions with positive coping statements.

Practice Phase:

Three Objectives

1. Automate skills through overlearning
2. Teach people to systematically integrate psychological skills into their performance situations
3. Simulate skills people will want to apply in actual competition

Self Regulation: The Ultimate Goal of PST

The ultimate goal of PST is to have athletes effectively function on their own without needing constant direction from a coach or sports psychologist.

Athletes should be able to self-regulate their internal functioning in the desired manner and successfully adapt to changes in the world around them.

Self Regulation: the ability to work on one's short and long-term goals by effectively monitoring and managing one's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

Five Stage Model of Athlete Self-Regulation by Kirschenbaum (1984)

1. Problem Identification
    a. The ability to identify a problem
    b. Determine that change is possible and desirable
    c. Take responsibility for its solution
2. Commitment to Change
    a. Deal with obstacles
    b. The slowness of progress
    c. The need for regular practice of the mental skills that will arise during the change process.
3. Execution
    a. Self evaluate
    b. Self-monitor
    c. Develop appropriate expectancies
    d. Self reinforces
4. Environmental Management
    a. Planning
    b. Deriving Strategies for managing the social and physical environment
5. Generalization
    a. Involves sustaining efforts over time
    b. Extending behaviors to new conditions and settings

(Special thanks to another coach I am aware of @gurpmusic on twitter for not only inspiring me to share my own variation of his original post for Call of Duty but providing me source material, formatting inspiration, and examples)

Mental Skills, Mindfulness, and Routines:

There are nine, specific mental skills that contribute to success in sports. They are all learned and can be improved with instruction and practice.

1. Choose and maintain a positive attitude

a. Realize attitude is a choice

b. View your sport as an opportunity to compete against themselves and their success and failures.
c. Pursue excellence and not perfection. We are not perfect
d. Respect the sport, the players, and the game.

2. Maintain a high level of self-motivation

a. Be aware of the rewards and benefits that are expected through your experience.
b. Be able to persist through difficulties and difficult times
c. Realize that many benefits come from participating not the outcome. (Be Present)

3. Set high, realistic goals

a. Set long/short term goals that are realistic, measurable, and time-oriented.
b. Aware of your current performance levels and develop plans for attaining goals
c. Commitment

4. Deal effectively with people

a. Realize that they are part of a larger system that includes their families, friends, teammates, coaches, and others.
b. When appropriate, communicate their thoughts, feelings, and needs to these people and listen to them as well.
c. Have learned effective skills for dealing with conflict, difficult opponents, and other people when they are negative or oppositional.

5. Use positive self-talk

a. Maintain their self-confidence during difficult times with realistic, positive self-talk.
b. Talk to themselves the way they would talk to their own best friend
c. Use self-talk to regulate thoughts, feelings, and behaviors during competition.

6. Use positive mental imagery

a. Prepare themselves for competition by imagining themselves performing well in competition.
b. Create and use mental images that are detailed, specific, and realistic.
c. Use imagery during competition to prepare for action and recover from errors and poor performances.

7. Manage anxiety effectively

a. Accept anxiety as part of the sport.
b. Realize that some degree of anxiety can help them perform well.
c. Know how to reduce anxiety when it becomes too strong, without losing its intensity.

8. **Manage their emotions effectively**

a. Accept strong emotions such as excitement, anger, and disappointment as part of the sports experience.

b. Are able to use these emotions to improve, rather than interfere with high-level performance

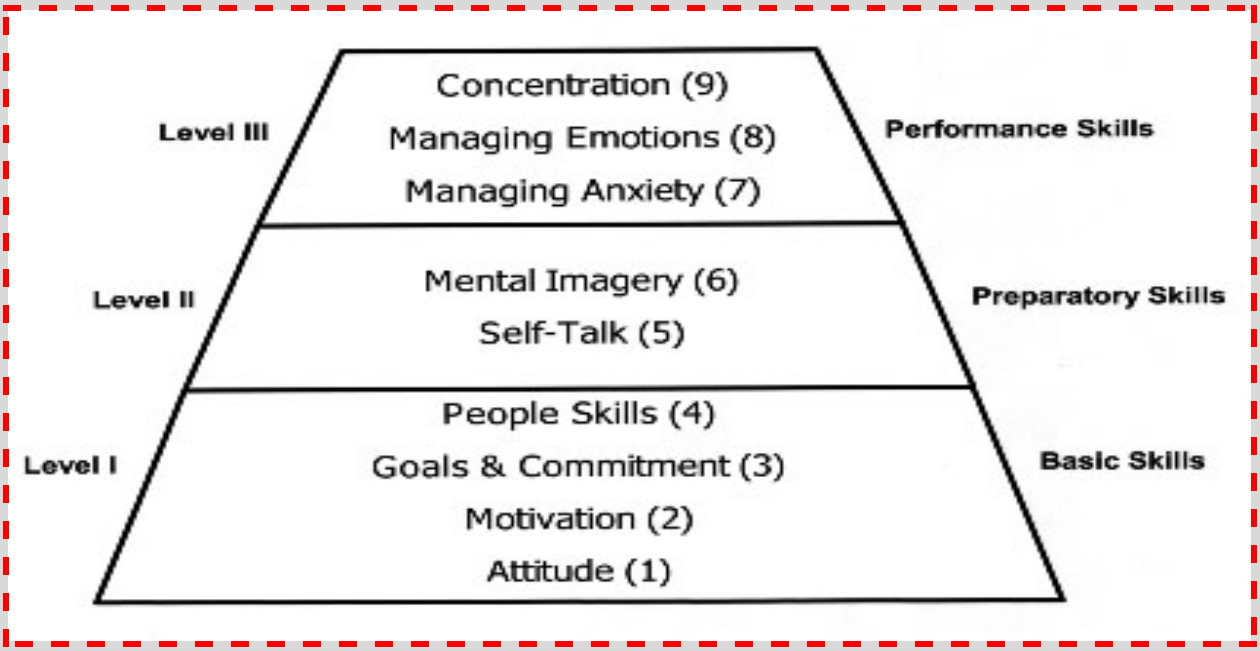
9. **Maintain Concentration**

a. Know what they must pay attention to during each game or sports situation.
b. Have learned how to maintain focus and resist distractions, whether they come from the environment or from within themselves.
c. Are able to regain their focus when concentration is lost during competition.
d. Have learned how to play in the "here-and-now", without regard to either past or anticipated future events.

These nine mental skills are necessary for performing well in sport as well as in non-sport performance situations. Those at the Ohio Center for Sport Psychology believe that these skills are learned and can be improved through instruction and practice.

The Performance Pyramid

Although each of the nine skills is important, its primary importance will occur during one of three phases: long-term development, immediate preparation for performance, and during performance itself.



Level I - These mental skills constitute a broad base for attaining long-term goals, learning, and sustaining daily practice. They are needed on a day-by-day basis for long periods of time, often months and years.

Level II - These skills are used immediately before performance to prepare for performance. They may be used just before competition begins, or immediately before a specific performance action, such as a golf shot or a free throw in basketball.

Level III - These skills are used during actual performance behavior.

Word to Kobe, much of what it takes to perform in competition is your approach to the game. Routines are a big part of this preparatory stage to competition, and performance therein. We have surpassed the limitation of hobbyist gamers and have become professionals (aspiring or otherwise). Consistency stems from a routine that, by definition, creates and promotes it.

At its core, a routine is a set sequence of actions performed consistently. Routine provides structure to our days, ensuring that essential activities like waking up, eating, exercising, and working are given dedicated time slots. This structure fosters a sense of stability, reducing the stress and anxiety that uncertainty can bring. When we know what to expect from our day, we're better equipped to handle unexpected challenges, as our routines serve as a comforting anchor. Consistency is the mark of a **CHAMPION**. Routines are often associated with increased efficiency and productivity. When tasks become habitual, they require less mental effort, allowing us to devote our cognitive resources to more demanding activities (Reducing our mental stack). As we perform these actions consistently, they become ingrained in our lifestyles, leading to lasting improvements in our well-being, making routines a powerful tool for habit formation in and out of game. While routines offer structure, they don't have to be rigid. As the world has started to change, you hear a lot about "going with the flow." In a world with a lot of uncontrollable variation, I love that. But if you don't have some sort of structure you're setting yourself up for failure. A lot of routines are made up of who you are and where you are trying to go. Embracing flexibility within your routines allows room for spontaneity and adaptation. This mindful approach to routines means being attuned to your needs and adjusting your schedule accordingly. It's about finding the balance between discipline and self-care, ensuring that your routines enhance rather than hinder your quality of life.

Goals for Routines in Call of Duty:

Unfortunately for the addicted, Call of Duty has a fundamental lack of consistency. Various factors contribute to this, from sketchy online play to multipliers and the variance between human beings and modes, Call of Duty is far from the ideal competitive canvas to produce a masterpiece of consistency. That said, having a routine achieves both short, and long term goals through consistency WITHIN your control as a player and coach. My solution is to have two separate routines, (yes you can actually have more than one). The first, is a daily practice routine, this focuses heavily on the minutiae of improvement for each individual involved:

1. Waking up at a reasonable hour (call it 9:30 AM)
2. Stretching, basic hygiene (No really, take care of yourself)
3. Eating a healthy breakfast (Yes, it does matter)
4. Hit the gym. (Working out develops the mental training we have been going on about, it also promotes the same self care as basic hygiene and healthy eating, resulting in greater confidence, focus, and building intensity through activity)
5. Meditate or otherwise isolate and clear your mind through the aforementioned psychological training methods.
6. Shoot bots. (Don't get crazy here, shoot recruit level bots, keep the map consistent, go for 30-45 minutes and get the fingers in flow)

7. Get up, stretch one more time, and improve the blood flow.
8. Play ranked, or public matches. (30-45 minutes)
9. Enter scrims with focus and a goal in mind.
10. Journal entry
11. Bed at or before Midnight.

The second is for a “day of” routine. This can include a tournament, league match, travel day, or otherwise important event:

A. Wake up at the same hour as your normal day plan (if circumstances allow)
B. Stretch, basic hygiene (No really, you stink, brush your teeth, comb your hair)
C. Eat a healthy breakfast (still matters)
D. Hit the gym with a partner/teammate.
E. Meditate, but do not intentionally isolate. Stretch again with teammates or friends.
F. Shoot bots (same principle as before)
G. Queue up public matches (NOT RANKED)
H. Arrive at the “event” in a timely manner and allow yourself time to focus back into the mental state of a champion.
I. Team Dinner
J. Journal entry
K. Bed at or before Midnight

You may ask, why have 2 different routines if they are so similar? The similarity is purposeful. Obviously routines are about consistency, maintaining that similarity allows for very slight divergence in cumulative result. In addition, the differences that are there, have their own specific necessity. The “Day of” routine is crafted in such a way that your focus is as far from what is INSIDE your head as can be possible, this is why it is done with a partner in most if not every scenario. Conversations naturally stray away from the game itself, bringing you peace of mind and allowing you to remain as calm and removed as possible. In doing so, as you finally sit down to produce results, your anxiety builds properly, in cadence with the competition itself helping intentionally monitor your levels of arousal and energy.

How do we Practice?

A **practice menu** refers to a structured collection of activities, drills, and exercises that athletes engage with during their training. The concept of "multiple practice menus" suggests that there are different types of training programs or approaches designed to target specific aspects of athletic performance, such as physical fitness, cognitive ability, mental toughness, and technical skills. These menus vary based on the needs and goals of the athlete, the sport (or esport), and the level of competition.

For both traditional and esports athletes, using multiple practice menus can be highly beneficial, as they address the multifaceted nature of performance. This practice is grounded in theories from sports science and cognitive psychology, which highlight the importance of variety, progression, and specificity in training.

In traditional sports (e.g., football, basketball, tennis, or athletics), athletes typically engage in physical, technical, tactical, and mental training. Having multiple practice menus allows athletes to train across these various domains and adjust their programs as needed. Below are key reasons why multiple practice menus are valuable in traditional sports:

Targeting Different Aspects of Performance

Traditional sports are often physically demanding and involve complex motor skills. A **multi-faceted approach** to training is necessary to optimize performance across various domains. A practice menu could include:

- **Physical Fitness Training**: For building strength, endurance, and agility.
- **Skill Development Drills**: Targeted at improving specific techniques such as passing, dribbling, or serving.
- **Tactical Training**: Focused on strategy and decision-making in the context of the sport.
- **Mental Conditioning**: Exercises to enhance focus, confidence, and stress management.

Having multiple menus allows the coach and athlete to focus on the most pressing needs at any given time. For example, during the off-season, the focus might be on physical conditioning and general fitness, whereas, during pre-competition periods, the focus might shift to skill development and tactical refinement.

Another reason for having multiple practice menus is the **periodization** of training, which involves adjusting the intensity and focus of training cycles based on the athlete's competition schedule. A well-designed periodization plan includes:

- **Macrocycle**: A long-term plan spanning an entire season or more.
- **Mesocycle**: Short-term plans (e.g., 4–6 weeks) focusing on specific goals.
- **Microcycle**: Weekly plans that break down the specific exercises and drills for a given week.

Research supports that varying intensity and focus over time allows for **optimal performance peaks** while preventing overtraining. *Kreher & Schwartz (2012)* discuss how well-designed periodization plans help to reduce the risk of injury and burnout, a common concern in traditional sports.

Cognitive and Mental Development

In addition to physical and technical training, traditional athletes need a practice menu focused on **mental skills training**. Cognitive skills such as focus, decision-making under pressure, and visualization can be developed through specialized drills. For example, tennis players might work on visualizing their serves or practicing mental focus techniques in a high-pressure environment.

Coaches often integrate these mental exercises into their practice menus to create a balanced approach. Research has demonstrated that mental conditioning positively impacts athletic performance, particularly when athletes are under stress or facing challenging situations (Weiss, 2002).

Let's Talk Esports

The growth of esports has seen the emergence of a parallel need for structured training approaches. Esports athletes often engage in activities that mirror traditional athletic training but adapted for the digital, cognitive, and highly competitive nature of gaming. Multiple practice menus are similarly valuable for esports players, as performance in competitive gaming demands a combination of **technical skill, cognitive ability, and mental resilience**.

Unlike traditional sports, where physicality is the primary component, esports performance is predominantly determined by **cognitive abilities** such as reaction time, decision-making, strategic thinking, and hand-eye coordination. Esports athletes need tailored practice menus that address:

- **In-Game Skill Refinement**: These drills focus on improving reflexes, precision, and muscle memory. For example, in *League of Legends*, practicing specific champion mechanics or refining last-hitting techniques might be part of a technical practice menu.
- **Game Sense and Strategy**: Esports athletes must also develop **tactical knowledge**, including understanding maps, resource management, and timing. Strategic practice could involve simulated scrims (practice matches) or reviewing and analyzing VOD to refine team strategy.

Research into cognitive training suggests that **cognitive flexibility**, the ability to adapt strategies quickly, is crucial in esports (Fischer et al., 2019). A menu focused on improving these areas—such as rapid decision-making drills or reacting to dynamic game changes—is necessary for optimal performance.

Esports is a highly demanding, mentally exhausting activity. Athletes are often required to play for long hours, sometimes under significant pressure during tournaments. As such, mental conditioning is an integral component of esports training. A practice menu for mental toughness might include:

- **Stress Management**: Techniques such as mindfulness, relaxation exercises, or breathing techniques to help players manage the intense emotions of competition.
- **Focus Training**: Exercises to enhance concentration, like focusing on one element of the game for a prolonged period (e.g., map awareness or combat).
- **Visualization**: Imagining themselves performing well under pressure can help esports athletes perform better in real-world situations. This technique has been proven to enhance confidence and emotional regulation (Vealey, 2007).

The **psychological** aspect of esports is often discussed in research, highlighting the role of mental toughness in maintaining optimal cognitive performance during long gaming sessions (Brunner et al., 2018).

Although esports players are not engaged in intense physical activity like traditional athletes, research has shown that physical health plays a role in cognitive performance. A practice menu for esports athletes should also incorporate elements of **physical fitness** to improve posture, reduce fatigue, and increase focus. This could involve:

- **Ergonomic Training**: To improve posture and prevent strain injuries like carpal tunnel syndrome.
- **Physical Activity**: Light aerobic exercises and stretching routines to improve blood circulation, alleviate tension, and enhance mental clarity.

Nebel et al. (2016) suggested that physical exercise positively influences cognitive functions like reaction time and attention control, which are vital skills for esports athletes.

Scientific Warrants for Multiple Practice Menus

The validity of multiple practice menus is supported by scientific research in both traditional and esports contexts. Key findings that support this approach include:

- **Skill Specialization and Transfer**: Studies on motor learning suggest that specific drills or exercises that target particular aspects of performance, such as strength, coordination, or decision-making, result in better outcomes than generalized training. A well-diversified practice menu allows athletes to specialize and improve in multiple areas simultaneously. (Schmidt & Lee, 2011)
- **Cognitive Load Theory**: Both traditional athletes and esports players benefit from structured practice menus that balance cognitive load. Research by *Sweller (1988)* indicates that cognitive performance improves when learners practice under varied conditions and challenges that push their limits without overwhelming them.
- **Rest and Recovery**: The importance of balancing practice with adequate rest is well-documented in both sports science and cognitive training. The **adaptive response theory** posits that periodic changes in training intensity (such as rest days) allow for physiological and psychological recovery, preventing burnout and optimizing performance over time (Kreher & Schwartz, 2012).

The use of multiple practice menus is an effective and scientifically valid approach for both traditional and esports athletes. By targeting specific aspects of performance through a variety of training regimens, athletes can optimize their technical, cognitive, and psychological skills. Whether it is through physical conditioning, cognitive drills, or mental resilience training, the application of multiple menus allows athletes to fine-tune their performance, adapt to different challenges, and avoid burnout. Both in traditional sports and esports, coaches and athletes who implement this multifaceted approach maximize the likelihood of sustained, peak performance.

But with all of that said, when are the best times for performance improvement or just performing in general?

With mentality and cognition in mind, let's take a quick detour into what cognition actually is and how it affects performance, specifically when it comes to playing the game:

Cognitive Performance:

Cognition refers in definition to the mental action or process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and the senses. In essence, the ability to perceive and react, process and understand, store and retrieve information, make decisions and produce appropriate responses.

In sports, it is important for an athlete to perceive and judge the current situation as quickly as possible in order to respond with the correct decisions. These abilities are heavily dependent on your perception, decision making, and creativity as well as your working memory, attention, and multitasking.

Just like traditional sports, in esports, these abilities have an effect on your performance. Being able to think strategically and make decisions based on the knowledge induced from your experiences are an essential component of esports performance. It is important to properly recall these cognitive skills to achieve optimal performance. Many gamers need a strong foundation of mental and psychological skills.

For example, emotional regulation and attentional control will allow for a clear mind and a proper working physical system that can be crucial for performance.

Cognitive abilities can fall under the umbrella of different domains when it comes to esport performance.

Examples:

Memory and concentration:

- Memorizing the game's commands, functions, progression, knowledge, concentrating on the task at hand, and switching between your attentive focus on different situations, processing a stream of information that is being fed through both your visual and auditory cues.

Action planning:

- Understanding and analyzing both the situations and tasks at hand, exploring different possibilities, thinking through actions, and planning and initiating actions. Dealing with the complexity of a number of different elements and factors that are subject to change anytime during your gameplay.

Perception:

- Conscious awareness and interpretation of sensory information received through sensory organs, through which we attribute meaning; an active process that improves with learning and maturation

Visual Information:

- What is being presented on screen?

Visual Stimulus

- Feedback from actions
- Change of conditions

Reaction Time;

- Relaying information to your brain for a response

Auditory Information

- In-Game sounds (footsteps, reload, sound cues)

Communication

- Clear, concise, information is being presented to the team.
- Allows players to be active and reactive

Responding to sensory cues

- Being able to perceive your own position, as well as the positions of other players, is an important spatial ability. The ability to predict actions is an important component of success in gaming.

I am sure the vast majority of you are here specifically due to my direct connection with the Call of Duty scene, so I suppose it is only right to get into the nitty gritty of that game specifically. I have been coaching Call of Duty specifically for going on a decade now and as such have experienced all manner of players and difficulties. With that said, I have developed a personal style that encompasses what has been said thus far in addition to my specific expertise within the space.

Peak Performance and Factors

Human performance varies throughout the day based on a combination of biological rhythms, psychological factors, and individual habits. The timing of peak performance is influenced by **circadian rhythms**, which govern physiological processes like body temperature, hormone release, and alertness. Understanding these cycles can help optimize productivity, focus, and efficiency in various tasks, whether physical or mental.

1. Circadian Rhythms and Peak Performance

The human body operates on a roughly 24-hour internal clock called the **circadian rhythm**, which regulates sleep-wake cycles and affects cognitive and physical performance. Research has shown that individuals tend to have peak performance during certain windows of the day, with factors such as sleep quality, age, and personality influencing these peak periods.

(1) **Morning (2–4 hours after waking)**

For most people, cognitive performance tends to peak **a few hours after waking up**. This time frame typically occurs between **8 a.m. to 12 p.m.**, depending on the person's sleep schedule and natural rhythm. When you wake up, your body is still adjusting to being awake, and there is a gradual increase in alertness, focus, and physical readiness.

- **Cognitive Performance**: Research supports that **working memory**, **focus**, and **problem-solving abilities** are often at their highest during the morning hours. This is because the **prefrontal cortex**, which governs executive functions like decision-making and concentration, is particularly responsive after a restful night of sleep.
    - *Supporting Research*: A study by *Kass et al. (2013)* found that cognitive performance, including tasks like reaction time and working memory, was significantly improved within the first few hours of waking.
- **Physical Performance**: For physical tasks, such as strength or endurance, people may experience a slight decline immediately after waking up due to the lower body temperature and stiffness that often accompany sleep. However, this can improve as the body warms up and blood flow increases.
    - *Supporting Research*: *Chtourou & Souissi (2012)* found that athletes typically experience peak performance in terms of strength and aerobic capacity in the late afternoon or early evening, though early-morning workouts could still yield effective results with proper preparation.

(2) **Afternoon (Peak: 1–3 p.m.)**

In the afternoon, **many individuals experience a slight dip in performance**, commonly referred to as the "afternoon slump," which typically occurs between **1 p.m. and 3 p.m.** This dip is often due to the body's **circadian dip** and a natural drop in alertness after lunch, compounded by the physiological drop in body temperature.

- **Cognitive and Mental Performance**: The dip in energy after lunch is a typical result of the body's **homeostatic sleep drive**, which makes people feel drowsy. Cognitive performance might drop slightly during this time, though tasks requiring little mental effort or routine tasks may still be performed adequately.

    - *Supporting Research*: *Burgess et al. (2002)* examined sleep patterns and found that alertness generally decreases post-lunch and peaks again later in the day.
- **Physical Performance**: Athletes often experience a decline in physical performance just after lunch. However, research suggests that light activities (like walking or stretching) can offset this dip and help restore energy and focus.

(3) **Evening (Peak: 4–6 p.m.)**

In the late afternoon to evening, the body's energy levels and alertness typically rise again, leading to an increase in performance for many individuals.

- **Cognitive Performance**: Mental performance peaks in the **afternoon or early evening**, typically between **4 p.m. and 6 p.m.** The brain's cognitive abilities are more fluid, making this an ideal time for complex problem-solving, decision-making, and tasks that require sustained attention. The increased body temperature, better circulation, and higher energy levels lead to better focus and reaction times.
    - *Supporting Research*: *Zohar et al. (1995)* found that cognitive performance, including focus and memory recall, was consistently higher in the late afternoon compared to early morning.
- **Physical Performance**: The body's temperature, muscle flexibility, and strength are at their peak in the **afternoon and early evening**, as body temperature reaches its highest point around **4 p.m. to 6 p.m.**. This physiological state contributes to improved muscle performance, faster reaction times, and greater endurance.
    - *Supporting Research*: Studies like *Chtourou & Souissi (2012)* have indicated that athletes perform better in terms of physical strength, endurance, and reaction time in the late afternoon and early evening.

(4) **Late Night (After 9 p.m.)**

While some individuals may feel sharp and productive at night, for most people, **mental and physical performance declines** as it gets later into the night. After about **9 p.m.**, the body's circadian rhythm begins preparing for sleep, and alertness and energy typically start to decrease. This can lead to **impaired decision-making**, slower reaction times, and **increased errors**.

- **Cognitive and Mental Performance**: At night, particularly after 9 p.m., the brain's ability to focus and make decisions diminishes as the body prepares for sleep. This is related to the **circadian low**, which typically occurs after dark. Individuals who push past this time may experience a decrease in cognitive performance.
    - *Supporting Research*: Research by *Burgess et al. (2002)* confirms that late-night work, especially cognitive tasks, tends to yield less effective results.

- **Physical Performance**: Although some athletes may continue to train at night, physical performance tends to decline in terms of strength and endurance. This is due to the lower body temperature and the body's preparation for rest.

Duration of Focus and Concentration

While the time of day influences peak performance, it's equally important to consider how long an individual can sustain focus on a task before cognitive fatigue sets in.

Human concentration is typically most effective in **short bursts**, with the ability to maintain attention generally lasting between **20 to 50 minutes** before cognitive fatigue begins to set in. After this period, individuals often experience diminishing returns in terms of focus and performance.

- **Ulrich Schimmack (2005)** demonstrated that people's cognitive performance decreases after a sustained period of work (typically after 25–40 minutes), and the brain needs a break to maintain productivity.
- **Pomodoro Technique**: This popular time-management technique utilizes 25-minute intervals of focused work, followed by 5-minute breaks, to maximize efficiency. This method is based on the principle that attention spans are best maintained with periodic breaks to prevent burnout and mental fatigue.

When working on a task for an extended period (e.g., 90 minutes or more), **mental fatigue** sets in. This causes reduced concentration, poorer decision-making, and slower response times. Breaks of **5 to 15 minutes** every hour can significantly reduce the effects of mental fatigue.

So far we have taken a look at when, and why we practice. But it is important to address the other aspects of living in a world of competition. We practice, we exercise our minds and bodies, but what fuels those bodies? Sleep and nutrition are a major factor in achieving one's peak performance and achieving goals.

Esports athletes, much like traditional athletes, require a strong foundation of **nutrition** and **sleep** to maximize their performance and maintain their competitive edge. While the demands on the body may differ from those in physical sports, the mind is equally, if not more, taxed during prolonged gaming sessions. Cognitive performance, decision-making, reaction times, and focus are critical in esports, and both nutrition and sleep play significant roles in optimizing these factors.

Let's explore how **proper nutrition** and **adequate sleep** contribute to an esports athlete's peak performance and overall well-being.

1. Nutrition: Fueling Mental and Physical Performance

Esports may not demand intense physical exertion in the same way traditional sports do, but it places significant demands on the brain. A proper diet can optimize **cognitive function**, **reaction time**, and **mental endurance**, all of

which are essential for peak performance in competitive gaming. Below are key aspects of nutrition that help esports athletes achieve their best results.

Carbohydrates: The Brain's Primary Energy Source

- **Importance**: Carbohydrates are the body's primary energy source, particularly for the brain. The brain consumes approximately 20% of the body's total energy, and glucose (derived from carbohydrates) is the brain's main fuel source.
- **Impact on Performance**: For esports athletes, maintaining stable glucose levels is crucial for sustaining **focus** and **mental clarity** during long gaming sessions. Consuming complex carbohydrates like whole grains, fruits, and vegetables helps to provide a slow and steady release of glucose, preventing energy crashes that can impair concentration.
- **Recommended Intake**: A balanced diet with **45–65% of daily calories from carbohydrates** is typically recommended. For esports athletes, focusing on **low-glycemic** carbs (e.g., oats, quinoa, sweet potatoes) can avoid spikes and crashes in blood sugar.

Protein: Supporting Cognitive Function and Recovery

- **Importance**: Protein plays a crucial role in the repair and maintenance of muscle tissue. While esports players don't rely as heavily on muscle strength, protein is vital for **neurotransmitter function**, which directly influences **mood**, **focus**, and **decision-making** during gaming.
- **Impact on Performance**: Neurotransmitters like **dopamine** and **serotonin**, which are involved in mood regulation, attention, and motivation, are synthesized from amino acids, the building blocks of protein. A diet sufficient in high-quality proteins helps ensure these neurotransmitters function optimally.
- **Recommended Intake**: A moderate intake of protein (around **15-25%** of daily calories) from lean meats, legumes, and dairy sources helps maintain stable brain function and physical health. Aim for around **1.2–1.5 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight**.

Healthy Fats: Brain Health and Mental Clarity

- **Importance**: Healthy fats, particularly omega-3 fatty acids, are critical for brain health. The brain is composed of approximately 60% fat, and omega-3s contribute to **cognitive function**, **focus**, and **memory retention**, which are necessary for high-level esports play.
- **Impact on Performance**: Omega-3s are involved in **synaptic plasticity**—the ability of the brain to form and reorganize connections in response to learning. This is vital for adapting to new strategies, improving reflexes, and remembering game tactics.
- **Recommended Intake**: Including foods rich in **omega-3s** (like fatty fish, flaxseeds, walnuts) in the diet can support mental clarity and reduce the impact of **cognitive fatigue**. A balanced intake of healthy fats should comprise **20-35% of daily calories**.

Hydration: Preventing Cognitive Decline

- **Importance**: Dehydration can lead to **reduced concentration**, **slower reaction times**, and increased mental fatigue. Even mild dehydration has been shown to impair cognitive performance, affecting both memory and decision-making.
- **Impact on Performance**: During intense gaming sessions, hydration is key for maintaining focus and reaction speed. Studies show that even a **2% reduction in body weight due to fluid loss** can negatively impact cognitive abilities, such as attention, memory, and focus.
- **Recommended Intake**: Esports athletes should aim for around **2–3 liters of water per day**, but this can vary based on individual factors like climate, health status, and activity levels. It's important to sip water regularly throughout the day and during gaming sessions.

Micronutrients: Vitamins and Minerals for Brain Health

- **Importance**: Micronutrients like **vitamin B12**, **iron**, **zinc**, and **magnesium** support brain function, mood regulation, and overall mental clarity. **B vitamins**, for example, are involved in the production of neurotransmitters, while **magnesium** helps regulate the body's stress response.
- **Impact on Performance**: Deficiencies in essential vitamins and minerals can lead to fatigue, mood swings, and impaired cognitive function, which are detrimental to esports performance.
- **Recommended Intake**: A **well-balanced diet** rich in fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains will ensure adequate intake of these vital nutrients. For esports players, a particular focus on **iron**, **vitamin B12**, and **magnesium** will help maintain energy levels and mental clarity.

Sleep: Restoring the Brain for Optimal Performance

Sleep is arguably the most critical factor in an esports athlete's overall well-being. Sleep impacts cognitive performance, mood, decision-making, and recovery, all of which are key components of esports success.

Cognitive and Performance Benefits of Sleep

- **Memory Consolidation**: Sleep plays a vital role in consolidating memory, which is crucial for esports players who need to remember strategies, in-game mechanics, and opponents' behavior patterns. Research shows that both **slow-wave sleep** (deep sleep) and **REM sleep** (rapid eye movement) are involved in memory retention and learning.
    - *Supporting Research*: Studies by *Walker (2017)* indicate that sleep not only helps to strengthen memories but also improves the **ability to recall learned information** and **adapt to new strategies**.
- **Reaction Times and Focus**: Adequate sleep has a direct impact on **reaction times** and **decision-making**. A lack of sleep can significantly impair these cognitive abilities, leading to slower reflexes and poor judgment—key factors in esports performance.

- *Supporting Research*: Research conducted by *Van Dongen et al. (2003)* found that sleep deprivation reduces cognitive function, increases errors, and slows response times, all of which are detrimental to competitive gaming.

Recommended Sleep Duration and Quality

Esports athletes typically need between **7–9 hours of sleep per night** to function optimally. However, **sleep quality** is just as important as quantity. The brain undergoes critical restorative processes during deep sleep, including the clearance of waste products and the repair of neural connections.

- **Sleep Hygiene**: Maintaining a consistent sleep schedule, avoiding excessive screen time before bed, and creating a dark, quiet sleeping environment can improve sleep quality.
- **Naps**: Short naps (10–20 minutes) can also enhance cognitive function and provide a quick boost in energy, especially during mid-day slumps.

The Impact of Sleep Deprivation

Inadequate sleep can lead to several detrimental effects on performance:

- **Impaired Cognitive Function**: Sleep deprivation leads to poor decision-making, slower reaction times, and impaired memory, which are all critical for esports.
- **Increased Stress and Anxiety**: Lack of sleep can increase stress hormones such as cortisol, which negatively impacts mood and concentration.

For esports athletes to perform at their peak, **nutrition** and **sleep** are indispensable. Proper nutrition ensures that the brain has the fuel it needs to maintain mental clarity, focus, and quick decision-making. Consuming the right balance of **carbohydrates**, **proteins**, **healthy fats**, and **micronutrients**, alongside adequate hydration, helps esports athletes maintain a high level of cognitive performance throughout gaming sessions.

Sleep, on the other hand, restores and regenerates the brain, consolidating memories and improving focus and reaction time. The combination of proper nutrition and sufficient, high-quality sleep allows esports athletes to stay sharp, reduce mental fatigue, and enhance overall performance.

By focusing on both nutrition and sleep, esports athletes can optimize their ability to focus, adapt to in-game strategies, and remain physically and mentally resilient throughout training and competition. Achieving peak performance is a holistic process—one that requires as much care and attention to recovery as it does to skill development. What happens outside of the game, is just as much if not more of a factor in outcome than what happens within.

With all of this said, the Call of Duty league finds itself in a unique position. Players are contracted professionals competing under a banner that is owned and operated with authority over their futures. Coaching and management can directly influence the day to day life of players for the better, propelling them rapidly in the right direction for

achieving their personal, as well as the team's goals.

Format, Practice, Culture, and My System:

Though this is one of my several divisive approaches to Call of Duty, I believe it is extremely important that as an esports we remove ourselves from our current practice format.

5 HP maps.

5 Control/CTF/Domination maps. (Let's go out on a limb and say we can actually have this many next year)

5 Search and destroy maps.

Let's also go out on a limb and say that at least 80% of these maps are universal across all 3 modes. 4 of the 5 are the SAME MAP. Why, then, do we feel the pull toward the current system of scrimmages across these in mode order, rather than by map?

Let's produce a hypothetical. You have 2 or 3 minutes between maps, (everyone wants to burn through them, which is also a problem), after you are finished with your Fringe HP, you're discussing issues with the prior map as the next one is loading in. Do you circumvent improvement for the past map, when the issues are fresh and experienced, and instead discuss the plan moving into the next map? OR, do you disregard the next map, and instead talk about the previous map, and lack the focus of preparation for improvement on the map to come? This rock and a hard place way of spending our valuable time is neither effective nor efficient. Instead I would reissue my countless previous proposals. SCRIM THE SAME MAP REPEATEDLY. Call it 4 times, in each respawn mode. (Eg: 4 HPs, 4 Controls HPs on Fringe, Controls on another map, alternating sides) This general principle is something called "spaced practice". A good example of this can be seen in students preparing for a test:

Studies show that in the weeks leading up to an exam, students often spend very little time preparing for it. Only when there are just 2 or 3 days left do they intensively "cram" for the exam. This usually leads to poor results. In the rush to absorb large quantities of information, important details are glossed over or lost. It is difficult to thoroughly process important concepts and to integrate them in a meaningful way. Repeating information over and over in one sitting is also often wasted effort; any learning benefits from such efforts are usually lost (that is, forgotten) even just a few days later.
The benefit of distributing learning over time is commonly known as the spacing effect. This effect has been demonstrated in over 200 research studies from over a century of research. Generally speaking, multiple practice sessions over time results in better long-term memory than a single practice session or an equivalent number of repetitions.

- Plan a "spaced" learning schedule with diversity between days to emphasize mental acuity and remove boredom
- Spend time preparing for each map at regular, periodic intervals determined by necessity and intensity.

- Introduce new materials in succession. Shift focus periodically while remembering to return to former material as a refresher (Focus on fringe for the majority of one week, return to it bi-weekly to maximize learning and application)

This poses another question, if we shorten scrim blocks and add time for conversation, what does the flow of practice look like day to day? Well, let's work something out:

Daily Schedule	
	ACTIVITY
Time	
9:30 AM	Wake Up/Stretch/Breakfast
10:30 AM	Personal Care/Hygiene
11:00 AM	GYM
12:30 PM	Post Workout Meal
1:00 PM	Warm Up
2:00 PM	First Set (4x HP, 4x Control)
3:30 PM	Walk, Stretch, Hydrate.
4:00 PM	Second Set (4x HP, 4x Control)
5:30 PM	Walk, Stretch, Hydrate.
6:00 PM	Third Set (4x SnD)
7:30 PM	Dinner/Team Dinner
9:00 PM	Leisure Time/Journaling
11:00 PM	Unwind for Bed
12:00 AM	Asleep

Daily Schedule	
	ACTIVITY
Time	
9:30 AM	Wake Up/Stretch/Breakfast
10:30 AM	Personal Care/Hygiene
11:00 AM	Time Outdoors/Leisure Time
11:30 PM	VOD/Mid Day Meal
1:00 PM	Warm Up
2:00 PM	First Set (4x HP, 4x Control)
3:30 PM	Walk, Stretch, Hydrate.
4:00 PM	Second Set (4x HP, 4x Control)
5:30 PM	Walk, Stretch, Hydrate.
6:00 PM	Third Set (4x SnD)
7:30 PM	Dinner/Team Dinner
9:00 PM	Leisure Time/Journaling
11:00 PM	Unwind for Bed
12:00 AM	Asleep

Daily Schedule	
	ACTIVITY
Time	
9:30 AM	Wake Up/Stretch/Breakfast
10:30 AM	Personal Care/Hygiene
11:00 AM	Warm Up/Counter Intel
12:30 PM	Mid Day Team Meal
1:00 PM	Tournament Round
2:00 PM	
3:30 PM	Walk, Stretch, Hydrate.
4:00 PM	Tournament Round
5:30 PM	
6:00 PM	Walk, Stretch, Hydrate.
7:30 PM	Tournament Round
9:00 PM	
11:00 PM	Unwind for Bed
12:00 AM	Asleep

Any of the many iterations of a schedule like this is not only one that would produce a sense of self care, but also a practical regime that is catered to a combination of performance enhancing physical and cognitive stimuli. (Can obviously be adapted to fit the needs of daily life for aspiring amateurs, students or those who work a regular degular)

Let's discuss the total map specific experienced earned in a single week of practice with this format in mind:

2 HP maps, played approximately 24 times each (alternating HP map between maps A and B on days A and B).

2 Control Maps, played Approximately 24 times each (alternating control map between maps C and D on days A and B)

5 SnD maps, all played 4 times, each week.

Total amount of days to gain this amount of repetition (in terms of maps played) for Maps A/B/C/D, with the former format? 12… Focused, coachable, and flexible. No more being forced to scrim another team's veto, no more effortless maps. A cultural shift to appropriate and efficient practice scheduling and daily routines is necessary to elevate the level of professionalism, but also the level of effort and experience gained throughout each and every day we dedicate ourselves to the toy.

But, I digress. Let's refocus on the format currently in hand. The 2pm, 4pm, 6pm scrim blocks (or should be) that include all HPs and Controls in each scrim. The adapted daily routine would lend itself more toward a format such as the following:

	Daily Schedule
	ACTIVITY
Time	
9:00 AM	Wake Up/Stretch/Breakfast
10:00 AM	Personal Care/Hygiene
10:30 AM	GYM
12:00 PM	Post Workout Meal
1:00 PM	Warm Up
2:00 PM	First Set
3:50 PM	Walk, Stretch, Hydrate.
4:00 PM	Second Set
5:30 PM	Walk, Stretch, Hydrate.
6:00 PM	Third Set
7:30 PM	Dinner/Team Dinner
9:00 PM	Leisure Time/Journaling
11:00 PM	Unwind for Bed
12:00 AM	Asleep

	Daily Schedule
	ACTIVITY
Time	
9:00 AM	Wake Up/Stretch/Breakfast
10:00 AM	Personal Care/Hygiene
10:30 AM	VOD
12:00 PM	Mid Day Meal
1:00 PM	Warm Up
2:00 PM	First Set
3:50 PM	Walk, Stretch, Hydrate.
4:00 PM	Second Set
5:30 PM	Walk, Stretch, Hydrate.
6:00 PM	Third Set
7:30 PM	Dinner/Team Dinner
9:00 PM	Leisure Time/Journaling
11:00 PM	Unwind for Bed
12:00 AM	Asleep

	Daily Schedule
	ACTIVITY
Time	
9:30 AM	Wake Up/Stretch/Breakfast
10:30 AM	Personal Care/Hygiene
11:00 AM	Warm Up/Counter Intel
12:30 PM	Mid Day Team Meal
1:00 PM	Tournament Round
2:00 PM	
3:30 PM	Walk, Stretch, Hydrate.
4:00 PM	Tournament Round
5:30 PM	
6:00 PM	Walk, Stretch, Hydrate.
7:30 PM	Tournament Round
9:00 PM	
11:00 PM	Unwind for Bed
12:00 AM	Asleep

The incorporation of more DEDICATED Vod time, as well as a slightly earlier time to rise is necessary with the current format. Less time can be dedicated to progress per map in game daily, and thus more strenuous review is necessary to explain and devise solutions.

Yes, practice. So, unsurprisingly I have several divisive theories about how practice itself should be done, but let's first talk about the theory behind the madness. What is practice? Is it just mindless repetition? How do we go about to ensure improvement of our results when the game loads up for real?

Practice refers to the repeated application of skills or knowledge to improve one's abilities. In the context of competitive performance, whether in sports, academics, or any other field, practice is crucial for several reasons:

1. **Skill Development:** Practice allows individuals to hone and refine their skills. Through repetition and focused effort, athletes, performers, and professionals can improve their technique, accuracy, and efficiency in performing tasks related to their competitive field.
2. **Muscle Memory:** Regular practice helps develop muscle memory, which allows actions to be performed more automatically and with greater precision. This is especially important in sports and performing arts where split-second decisions and precise movements are required.
3. **Confidence:** The more one practices and sees improvement, the more confident they become in their abilities. Confidence is a key factor in competitive performance, as it helps individuals perform under pressure and believe in their capacity to succeed.
4. **Preparation:** Practice prepares individuals mentally and physically for the demands of competition. It helps them anticipate challenges, develop strategies, and adapt to different scenarios that may arise during competitive events.
5. **Consistency:** Regular practice builds consistency in performance. It reduces variability and enhances reliability, ensuring that individuals can perform at a high level consistently over time.
6. **Improvement and Adaptation:** Through practice, individuals can identify weaknesses, areas for improvement, and new techniques. This continuous learning and adaptation is essential for staying competitive and evolving in response to changing conditions or opponents.
7. **Mental Toughness:** Practice often involves pushing oneself beyond comfort zones, which builds mental toughness and resilience. This mental strength is crucial for overcoming setbacks, handling pressure, and maintaining focus during competition.

Overall, practice is not just about repetition but about deliberate, focused effort aimed at improvement. It is the foundation upon which competitive excellence is built, providing the skills, confidence, and mental resilience necessary to perform at the highest level.

With regards to preparation, and mental toughness, many of my philosophies regarding coaching style have been called strange. Others, I have been told, use flawed methodology, and are ineffective or damaging. To this I say.. Well, I don't care what you think. Some examples:

My preference for scheduling scrims is and always has been - A lesser team for set one, a slightly stronger team for set 2 and the strongest available team for set 3. The methodology:

When a team practices against lesser competition and gradually increases the level of competition, this strategy is commonly referred to as "progressive overload" or "progressive difficulty."

1. **Progressive Overload:** This term is often used in sports training and fitness contexts to describe the gradual increase of stress placed upon the body during exercise (Or in this case, the brain during practice and competitive stimulation). Similarly, in team practice scenarios, progressive overload involves starting with easier opponents or situations and then progressively increasing the difficulty or challenge.
2. **Progressive Difficulty:** This phrase directly reflects the concept of starting with lower levels of competition or easier tasks and systematically moving towards more challenging opponents or scenarios as the team improves.

The underlying principle is to build confidence, skills, and teamwork gradually, ensuring that the team can handle progressively tougher challenges as they become more proficient. This approach allows for a structured development process where the team can learn, adapt, and grow in a controlled manner before facing more formidable opponents or competitive situations.

In addition, many researchers have spoken to the validity of variance in practice and repetition to increase the breadth of knowledge gained. Anyone in life, regardless of station or experience can teach you something you didn't know.

- **Exposure to Different Styles and Strategies:** Facing a variety of opponents exposes the team to different playing styles, strategies, and tactics. This broadens their understanding of the game and prepares them to adapt to different challenges.
- **Development of Adaptability:** Teams learn to adjust their gameplay and tactics based on the strengths and weaknesses of each opponent. This improves their overall adaptability and versatility.
- **Mental Toughness:** Dealing with different levels of competition helps in developing mental toughness and resilience. Teams learn to handle pressure and setbacks in various contexts.
- **Preparation for Unknown Challenges:** Facing diverse opponents prepares the team for unpredictable situations they might encounter in actual competition where they may face unfamiliar teams.
- **Motivation and Focus:** Playing against different opponents keeps the team motivated and focused during practice sessions, as each match presents a new challenge to overcome.

Especially in challengers, for the beginning stages of open tournaments as well as the middling stages of international LAN tournaments, it is imperative that this versatility and mental toughness is honed on a daily basis.

Moving on from the "Step Up" scrim system, let's discuss one of my personal favorites. NO COMM SCRIMS 😀

Removing team communication during practice in a setting where communication is typically extensive can have several benefits:

A. **Focus on Individual Decision-Making:** When communication is restricted, players are forced to rely more on their own decision-making abilities. This helps in developing their situational awareness, anticipation skills, and ability to make quick and effective decisions under pressure.
B. **Improving Non-verbal Communication:** Without verbal communication, players often rely on non-verbal cues (the movement or lack thereof from the arrows on the mini map). This can enhance overall team cohesion and understanding, as players become more attuned to each other's movements and intentions.
C. **Encouraging Initiative and Leadership:** With limited communication, players are encouraged to take initiative and make decisions independently. This fosters leadership skills among players who might not typically take on leadership roles when communication is more freely allowed.
D. **Stress Testing Team Dynamics:** Removing communication forces teams to rely on their established strategies and routines. It helps identify weaknesses in coordination, teamwork, and understanding of roles that might not be as apparent when communication is present.
E. **Building Trust and Unity:** Overcoming the challenge of restricted communication can build trust and unity within the team. It fosters a sense of collective responsibility and encourages players to support each other more effectively.
F. **Preparing for Noise and Distraction:** In competitive settings, external factors such as crowd noise or adverse conditions can disrupt communication. Practicing without communication prepares teams to handle these distractions and maintain effective performance under challenging circumstances.
G. **Enhancing Problem-Solving Skills:** When communication is limited, teams must find alternative ways to solve problems and adapt their strategies on the fly. This cultivates creativity and flexibility in approaching different game situations.

In essence, while communication is crucial in team sports and competitive settings, deliberately restricting it during practice can yield significant benefits in terms of individual development, team cohesion, adaptability, and overall preparedness for competitive challenges. It encourages players to develop a deeper understanding of the game and each other's roles, ultimately contributing to improved performance when communication is allowed in actual competition.

In addition, bringing this topic full circle to the idea of cognitive function. Arousal management is a key factor in the competitive process, as was mentioned before. During games, teams that scream at one another have a singular and distinct disadvantage. The constant stimuli is over arousing them, their mentalities working into a fervor, the slightest mistake can lead to a crash, a reverse in momentum. However, should they learn to control this through communication, the tone, pace, and intensity therein, it can become another tool in the cognitive discipline necessary for success that EVERYONE on the team can participate in. (“Set the tone” as it were)

A calm environment plays a crucial role in facilitating arousal management, some examples of this are to follow:

Reducing Anxiety and Stress:

A calm environment helps to minimize external stressors and distractions that can elevate anxiety levels. When athletes or competitors are less anxious, they are better able to maintain optimal arousal levels conducive to peak performance.

Promoting Focus and Concentration:

A calm environment supports better focus and concentration. Competitors can direct their attention fully towards the task at hand, whether it's a game, match, or performance, without being distracted by noise, chaos, or external pressures.

Enhancing Mental Preparation:

In a calm environment, athletes can engage in effective mental preparation techniques such as visualization, positive self-talk, and mindfulness. These practices help them to mentally rehearse and simulate competitive scenarios, which contributes to better arousal control during actual competition.

Facilitating Recovery and Relaxation:

Between competitive events or during breaks, a calm environment allows athletes to relax and recover effectively. This promotes physical and mental recovery, ensuring they are refreshed and ready to perform at their best when they return to competition.

Encouraging Positive Team Dynamics:

A calm environment fosters positive team dynamics and communication. Teammates are more likely to support each other, communicate effectively, and maintain a cohesive and harmonious atmosphere, which can help regulate arousal levels across the team.

Improving Decision-Making:

High levels of arousal can impair decision-making abilities due to heightened emotional responses. In a calm environment, athletes are better able to make rational and strategic decisions, which are critical in competitive situations.

Supporting Consistent Performance:

Consistency in performance is often enhanced in a calm environment. Athletes can more reliably reproduce their training achievements and execute their skills with precision when external distractions and disruptions are minimized.

Overall, a calm environment provides a stable foundation for athletes to manage their arousal levels effectively. By reducing stress, enhancing focus, promoting recovery, and supporting positive team dynamics, athletes are better equipped to achieve and maintain the optimal level of arousal necessary for peak performance in competitive settings. This is especially true when in a cognitive competition such as esports. The less your brain has to handle, the more you can rely on the practice and muscle memory you have ingrained through hours of arduous practice hours.

Coaching System:

As a coach, the entirety of my system and outline for success lies in reducing the overall “mental stack” of my players. What is the “mental stack”? It typically refers to the accumulation or load of mental factors and considerations that a competitor must manage and process during their performance in order to produce a desired result.
In Call of Duty terms, an enormous amount of factors are encompassed within the phrase “mental stack”, anything from whether your opponent has a trophy system, to where they are spawning, whether they used their tacs, what weapon they have, their personal tendencies, map design, hardpoint time, control ticks, bomb timer, the list goes on and on.
In the competitive arena, the concept of the mental stack encapsulates the intricate web of cognitive, emotional, and strategic factors that athletes navigate during performance. It represents the mental load and resources players must manage effectively to optimize their competitive edge. This includes processing game strategies, making split-second decisions under pressure, regulating emotions to maintain focus, and adapting to dynamic game situations. The mental stack also encompasses attentional focus, where athletes must prioritize relevant cues while filtering out distractions.

So how, then, do I intend to minimize the “mental stack” when an enormous amount of variables are outside of the player’s personal control? Find out next time on, “Another Page in this Novel..Z”.

In general however, successful management of the mental stack involves honing mental skills such as resilience, decision-making, and self-regulation, allowing players to perform consistently at their peak and overcome challenges in high-stakes environments. Ultimately, understanding and optimizing the mental stack is crucial for enhancing competitive performance and achieving success in sports and other competitive pursuits. Many of the psychological tips and tricks that have been discussed thus far from breathing to proper communication are all inherent benefits to a player’s mental stack. Calming of the mind, environment, and focus on the goal help massively in deterring the negative effects of an overencumbered stack.

Flow, how I love flow (buzzword btw)

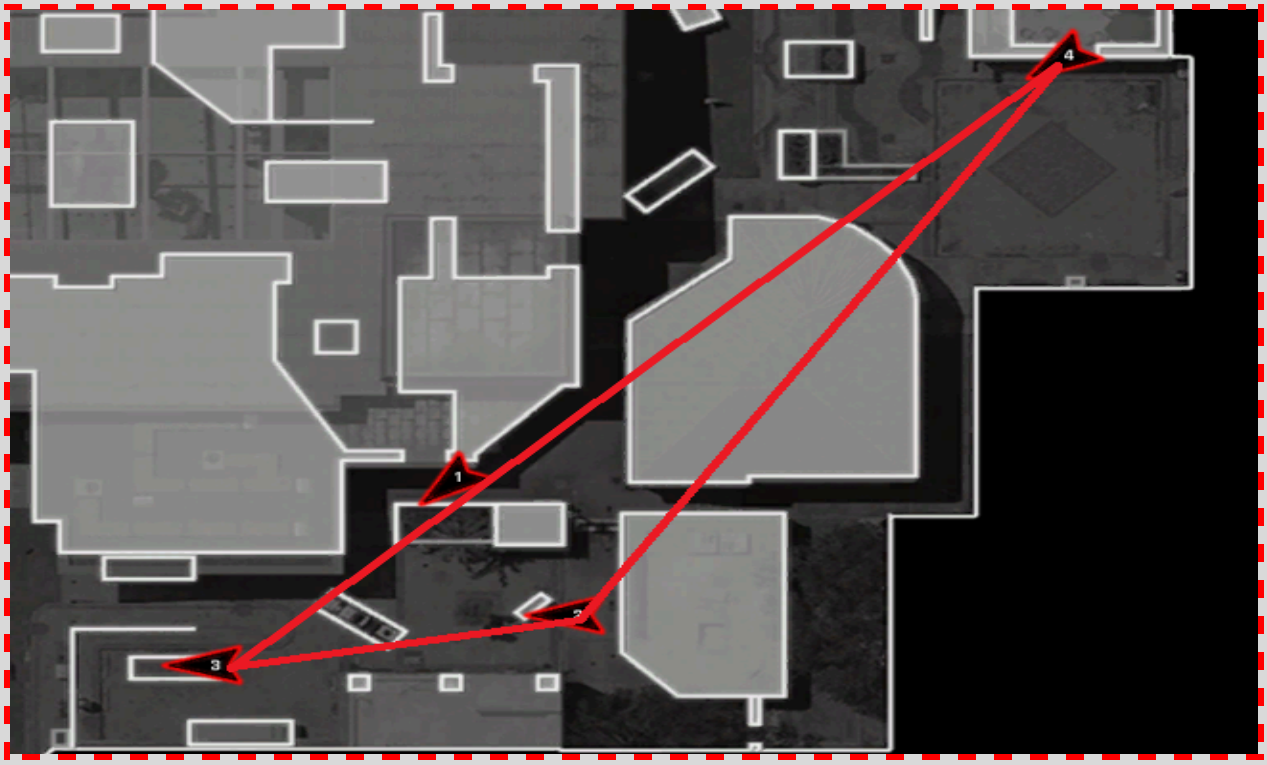
Most people in Call of Duty conceptualize flow as the coverage of every possible avenue of approach in the order of proximity. But before we can dive into how “Flow” functions on the map, let’s try to understand its true definition and causal factors:

1. **Flow:**
    - **Definition:** Flow in movement refers to the smooth, uninterrupted coordination of actions and gestures among individuals. It involves a sense of effortless interaction where movements blend seamlessly, creating a unified and cohesive visual or kinetic experience. Envision a magnet, each player the opposing pole to their nearest counterpart. The closer you get to one another, the harder you push each other away in a positive direction (on the map). Overall, each arrow is attempting to solve a piece of a greater problem, total seamless teamwork to achieve the solution.
    - **Correlation:** Achieving flow in tandem movement requires mutual understanding, anticipation, and alignment among participants. Each person must be attuned to the movements of others, adjusting their own actions to maintain synchronization and harmony. Flow enhances the aesthetic quality and effectiveness of collective movement, whether in dance routines, synchronized swimming, or team sports like rowing or cycling.
2. **Pace:**
    - **Definition:** Pace in tandem movement refers to the speed or rhythm at which individuals perform their actions relative to each other. It dictates the cadence and energy level of the collective performance.
    - **Correlation:** Maintaining an appropriate pace is essential for sustaining flow in tandem movement. Consistent pace allows participants to anticipate each other's movements and adjust their timing accordingly. Whether it's the tempo of a dance routine, the stroke rate in rowing, or the bumping of arrows on the mini map, pace influences the fluidity and coherence of synchronized actions, enhancing the overall impact and effectiveness of the performance.
3. **Timing:**
    - **Definition:** Timing in tandem movement refers to the precise execution of actions and gestures in relation to each other. It involves initiating movements at the right moment to align with others and create a seamless sequence.
    - **Correlation:** Good timing ensures that participants in tandem movement are in sync with each other. It involves anticipating cues, reacting promptly to signals from teammates or partners, and maintaining rhythm throughout the performance. Effective timing enhances the synchronicity and visual appeal of collective movement, reinforcing the sense of flow and unity among participants.
4. **Tempo:**
    - **Definition:** Tempo in tandem movement refers to the overall speed or pace of the entire performance. It sets the rhythm and energy level of the collective action.

- **Correlation:** Adjusting tempo strategically can influence the dynamics of tandem movement. It allows participants to modulate the intensity and expression of their actions, creating variation and highlighting key moments within the performance. Consistent tempo facilitates sustained engagement and connection among participants, contributing to the fluidity and cohesion of synchronized movements.

Flow promotes a sense of immersion and control, reducing feelings of anxiety or stress that can arise from performance pressure. When competitors are in flow, they feel confident in their abilities and trust their teammates, leading to a more relaxed and composed mental state. Flow requires quick decision-making and adaptive responses to maintain synchronization with others. Competitors develop sharper decision-making skills as they anticipate movements, adjust their actions in real-time, and make split-second judgments to maintain flow. This enhances their ability to think strategically and act decisively in competitive situations. It promotes efficient use of mental energy by focusing it on immediate actions and movements. It is commonplace to experience a state of effortless performance where actions flow naturally, conserving mental resources for sustained engagement and performance throughout the competition. Players in flow with one another often feel a sense of joy and fulfillment from their synchronized performance, contributing to a positive emotional state that supports overall mental well-being. Yet again, reducing the mental stack of the individuals in question is a side effect of this discipline. But what are some general flow tips from my coaching perspective?

TRIANGLES. Yup, triangles. Too often people view flow as simply filling what is open, but accurate and precise flow will always take place in the form of a triangle.



But why? What makes this shape so special?

Support and Movement:

Triangles facilitate effective support play and movement outside the point of engagement. Each point of the triangle represents a player offering options and support to teammates, they can join the fight, extend the triangle for a positional play, or send a pinch. This structure encourages players to position themselves strategically, constantly in motion and forcing overcorrection on the part of the opponents, thus increasing the oppositions mental stack, while reducing their own.

Dynamic Interchange:

Triangles support dynamic positional interchange among players. As players move within the triangular structure, they create space and overload situations, forcing opposing teams to adjust and creating openings for their own teammates. This fluid movement and interchangeability are essential for breaking down compact setups and exploiting gaps in the break attempts of opposing teams for re-pinches.

Spatial Awareness:

Triangular formations enhance players' spatial awareness and decision-making. By understanding and utilizing triangular holds and breaks (Even the 3/1 originates as a triangle), players develop a sense of where their teammates are and where they should move to maintain effective advantage over the map’s constantly tumultuous control.

Rather than continue in depth with specific mode examples or specific system rules, let’s first talk about the creation of a culture, how each one of the cognitive, and physical strategies employed in this framework help accomplish that creation.

Creating a Culture

Creating a culture in a competitive team setting is essential for establishing a cohesive and high-performing environment. Culture shapes the values, attitudes, and behaviors that define how team members interact and work towards common objectives. A strong team culture fosters unity and cohesion among players, encouraging mutual trust and respect. It provides a clear identity and purpose, guiding individuals to align with shared values and goals beyond mere athletic achievements. This alignment promotes accountability and responsibility, where each team member takes ownership of their contributions and strives for excellence. A resilient culture enables teams to navigate challenges and setbacks with determination and adaptability, viewing adversity as an opportunity for growth rather than defeat. Effective communication and collaboration are nurtured within this culture, enhancing problem-solving abilities and decision-making processes. Leadership and mentorship thrive in such an environment, empowering individuals to lead by example and support each other's development. Ultimately, a strong team culture

not only drives individual and collective performance but also lays the foundation for sustained success by fostering a positive and supportive atmosphere where every member can thrive and contribute to achieving team goals.

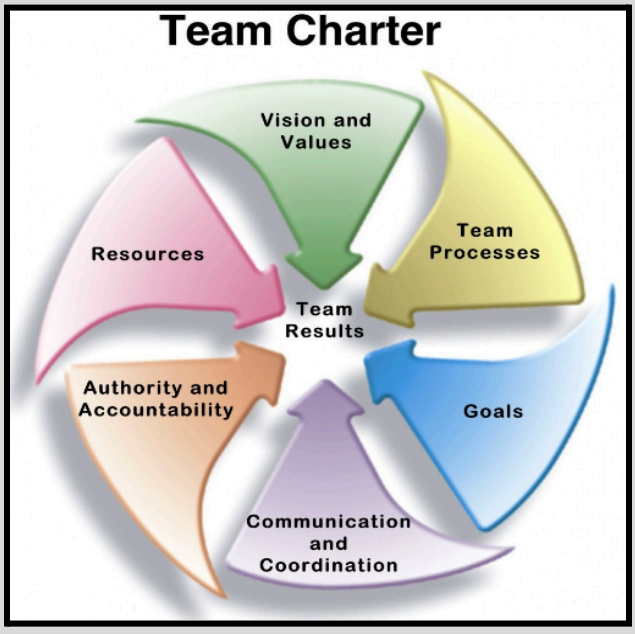
As a coach, team cultures under my tutelage would follow a semi rigid standard that include the following:

- High Work Rate and Intensity
- Tactical Discipline and Versatility
- Attention to Detail and Preparation
- Development of Young Talent
- Ethical and Fair Play
- Passion and Commitment
- Strong Team Spirit and Unity

My cultural philosophy not only shapes playing style and performance but also instills values, principles and lessons that resonate deeply within the teams I lead, creating a lasting impact on players' careers and teams I work with.

One Charter to Rule Them All?

Creating a team charter is a valuable tool to assist in shaping and reinforcing team culture:



A team charter serves as a foundational document that plays a crucial role in creating and nurturing a positive team culture. By clearly outlining the team's purpose, mission, goals, and values, the charter provides a shared understanding and direction for all team members. This clarity helps align individual efforts with collective objectives, fostering a sense of unity and commitment among the team. Moreover, the charter establishes behavioral expectations and norms that guide interactions and relationships within the team. It ensures that team members understand their individual contributions to team success and are empowered to take ownership of their tasks. Overall, a well-crafted team charter not only strengthens team cohesion and morale but also provides a framework for continuous improvement and adaptation, fostering a culture where individuals thrive and the team collectively achieves its goals.

Phase 2:

Into the Game:

Understanding How Modern "Roles" Function

Before we can get into roles in modern Call of Duty titles and with the advancement of the game in general, we should go back and talk about what once was (what is no longer, please stop this).

These roles can vary slightly depending on the game mode and team strategy, but generally, they include:

1. **AR Slaying Flex:** A baiting style of play considered "methodical" whereby a player consistently controls lanes and fights in ways befitting their weapon, rather than in the naturally occuring pace of the game.
2. **Sub Slaying Flex:** A more aggressive but simultaneously bait heavy style. Typically consisting of plays within an area of effect, "Second Sub Slayers" are individuals who are the second line of the trade cycle, slowing the tempo between player 1 (TBA) and player 3 (AR Slaying Flex).
3. **Sub Objective:** A dedicated sub machine gun player, typically setting the majority of the pace for the team and unnaturally skewing the overall tempo negatively. They may also handle specific roles such as objective play (capturing flags, planting bombs), providing utility (like smoke grenades or tactical equipment), or being the baited player in the majority of situations. (haha)
4. **Main AR (Anchor):** Rotated at 30, sits on head glitches, minimal participation in the trade cycle, one of, if not the most archaic roles that people can claim in modern titles.

While specific roles can provide clarity and focus within a team, having versatile players who can fill multiple roles effectively can significantly strengthen a team's competitive edge. It requires a balance of individual skill development and team coordination to maximize the benefits of versatility in a competitive Call of Duty environment. With the inclusion of a charter, cognitive training, and a definitive hierarchy, the ability to maximize this efficiency and skill ceiling skyrockets. Players can be interchangeable when they are struggling, strategies can be adaptable in real time. Team synergy is more natural and fluid, versatile players often have a better understanding of different roles and perspectives within the game. This understanding can enhance overall team synergy and communication, as players can anticipate each other's actions and needs more effectively. When building teams, addressing issues with innate talent and intangibles should be preferable to role constraints in this regard.

In keeping with the theme of modern roles, let's harken back to the idea of triangular flow. A true role within the game is not to use a specific weapon, but to properly execute within that triangle where and when necessary. Time does not wait for your AR to back up while your Sub takes his place. Doing what you HAVE to do, is always superior to doing what you wanted to do before the game started. Realistically, roles on any given team now are as follows:

1. Do
2. What
3. You

4. Have
5. To
6. Do

Simple, right?

General Tips for Improvement

Get to a teammate. Much of competitive Call of Duty across all modes is predicated upon numerical advantage. Eventually, you reach a point where the vast majority of arrows you will run into can “shoot back”, this is especially true if by happenstance or design they are near a teammate. Two arrows are always better than one, three is better than two and so on. Aside from the obvious of having double the amount of guns, teamwork plays a massive part in success. More arrows = more options and versatility.

It is OKAY to die. Almost every issue with modern day Call of Duty stems from unpredictability or a lack of consistency. This problem is magnified by old world standards of play such as “valuing your life”. It is impractical to believe that each life’s value ENDs when you die. This is to say, death is a part of the cycle of life, even outside of the game. Everyone does it. There are times when dying is practically viable. Dying guarantees an outcome, a spawn is now open, information is now gathered, HOPEFULLY, damage is done. Blocking more than one spawn, splitting the team’s numbers, dividing goals, these are all side effects of OVERPLAYING your life.

White time is “good” time. I am sure you have heard this before, but it actually applies whether you are winning or losing. Would you like the point gap to increase? Would you rather the time be red because you expedited your break attempt and bottled it? White time is ALWAYS good. If you lack map control, hold your lane until you have it. If you have a numerical disadvantage, hold your lane until you no longer have it..

Slow the game down. This is not to say that your tempo, or pace on the map should grind to a halt, it is instead to say that you MUST slow the game down in your own head. Expedite your processing speed, while simultaneously decreasing the pace of the visualization your mind is producing of the game you find yourself playing.

This phenomenon is commonly known as "racing thoughts." It's a subjective experience where a person feels that their thoughts are speeding up or racing, often faster than the reality of events or external stimuli around them. This can occur in various contexts, such as during times of anxiety, as a symptom of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or in response to stress or during periods of heightened emotional arousal. (Playing for a championship perhaps?)

How do we combat these racing thoughts? With the same cognitive control techniques we have discussed at length,in addition to the use of clear and calm communication. Something as simple as “we’re only down 20” after 5 hardpoints that felt like unending war can change the momentum of the game from negative to positive.

ASK QUESTIONS. This is the single most important rule for general improvement and I don't just mean during VOD time. Of course during the review everyone should be participating, asking questions, discovering solutions as a group, but more importantly it is necessary to ask questions IN THE GAME. No one in their right mind should think less of you because you are asking questions. Something like "what do I need to fill?" or "what is open?" or even "Can I pinch p4?" Are all questions that will make you AND your team better not only in the long term, but right in that very moment. Communication is a conversation, not intermittent bursts of yelling and player positions. (More on this to come).

Hardpoint

Hardpoint is a competitive game mode in professional Call of Duty where teams compete to control a rotating "hardpoint" location on the map. Points are scored over time for each team holding the hardpoint, with the goal of reaching a set score or having the most points when time expires.

That is how the internet defines the mode. I suppose it isn't wrong. Truth be told though, it isn't the whole story. There are an incredible amount of factors that go into building a genuine understanding of the mode

Styles of Play

Let's begin by saying I don't believe in the idea that a truly GREAT team has any one style of play that they utilize every spawn, of every hill, on every map, of every game title. Harken back to when we previously discussed roles and how fluidity is far more important in current generation COD than the rigidity of old. Giving yourself more options is NEVER an issue so long as you have the practiced mentality of compartmentalizing and the practiced decision making to choose the correct one among them. With that said I believe Call of Duty can be boiled down to 3 styles of play across all teams who compete within the title, some of you will recognize yourselves, or teams of the past within these descriptions, others will think the game far simpler and if that be the case I am confused as to how you made it this far to begin with:

Style 1 - Abusing the Fundamentals:

To start with you have the traditional methodology of Hardpoint. The process is very simple. Rotate > Anchor a spawn > Stack / Crossfire > Anchor rotates. Simple enough in its execution and effectiveness. If you win the rotation, you "should" (key word here) "SHOULD" win the hill and eventually the game through disciplined, determined, and consistent effort. A good way to look at this would be the story of The Tortoise and the Hare. Call of Duty very quickly became a fable in its solution to the problem of how to win. As in the original, the Tortoise defeated

the more naturally gifted Hare in a race through grit and determination. It continued its methodical slow pace throughout the duration of the challenge and ultimately won after overtaking the arrogant Hare who decided to let its foot off the proverbial pedal due to the magnitude of its lead. In a way this is a warrant to the idea that abusing the fundamentals through consistency and discipline will net you far more opportunities to win than you should have otherwise. But, before we check this off as the optimal method for victory let's continue the discussion.

Style 2 - Abusing the Gift:

Opposing the notion of methodical, determined, and consistent effort from the Tortoise comes the abuse of the natural gifts given to the Hare of the fable. While it is true the Tortoise "won the race" it is more accurate to say the Hare lost it. The original plot of the fable was that in knowing it would win the Hare chose to race the tortoise almost completely for fun. The lead it amassed at the start was so enormous (similar to the difference in talent between say the top 5 players in Call of Duty and the fringe players who fall in and out of the league consistently or who have never made it *ahem*) the Hare believed it could simply take a nap and win the race whenever it felt like it. How many times in the history of COD have we witnessed first hand a roster of incredible skill, arguably the best of their time, start a year with the expectation that they couldn't possibly lose, and fall short every single tournament? Whether you're someone who wears green, red, or blue, you can remember a time when this was your team. But, what would happen if that roster never let its foot off the pedal? What would happen if Hare never took a nap? The tortoise wouldn't have stood a chance, to call it a race would have been for posterity rather than a reflection of reality. Because in reality, the Hare isn't racing the tortoise, it is racing itself. To put this in Call of Duty terms, a roster composed of the greatest talent can only lose if they cease the effort required to maintain diligence in perfecting their craft KNOWING they are in fact the favorites to win. This brings us to the style in question: ABUSING the gift naturally given to the Hare is a viable way of winning. While it is true that these rosters failed to reach their maximum potential by squandering their efforts, they also won many games they otherwise shouldn't by abusing their natural talent and affinity as players. In challengers specifically, too many coaches, observers, casters, and even fans are willing to right off a team who wins abusing their talent (myself included) as a one off. "Well, eventually a better team will just beat them" "It's not that they're good, they're stupid, everyone else just sucks too, when teams get better, they'll lose". These statements are commonplace every year of the COD cycle and ultimately lose validity as the year goes on. More and more teams win simply because they have amassed better players who can make any play they want regardless of circumstance and win it.

What then is the right answer? Abusing talent but creating inconsistency through a lack of determination? Or is it perhaps forgoing individualism for a greater purpose, acting as a unit with discipline and effort at the cost of the x-factor that makes you, you? The truth is, both of these options are without any real merit. The Tortoise is banking on the idea that the Hare's arrogance will allow him to use his discipline to win (the talented players will run it down and the skill gap isn't actually big enough to get run over) and the Hare is banking on the idea that the Tortoise is so slow and useless it can do whatever it wants and still win the race (they're terrible and going to get run over). What then is left? Obviously, just do both. There are times when you need to abuse your talent, and times when you need

to play as a collective with discipline. However there is more to it still, everyone who is anyone has gotten to a point at least once in their careers when they understood this principle, either that their talent wasn't going to win it for them or that they just simply weren't good enough anymore. The latter retired and the former won something with a team before ultimately getting bored and losing again. Let's talk style 3, the "Ronin Method" as my critically acclaimed haters and the miscreants of COD have coined it. I myself call it, "the U".

Style 3 - "The U"

Though it is slightly unfair to have generally classified the former two playstyles into vague descriptions, while then describing my own style in detail with a designation (The U) and exact guidelines it would be impossible to isolate 11 years of Call of Duty into a single style with a name. Rather, there have been so many iterations of teams, with different players, coaches, organizations etc all slightly adapting the former two styles without changing the basis that it is far simpler to classify them as such and move on. Hopefully you can forgive the indiscretion to those before me in doing so and we can move on. As for the U, what is it? The U is a style of play that aims to create consistency THROUGH abusing talent. A blend of both the Tortoise and the Hare? The Hortoise? Who knows. But a team with the talent of the Hare and the diligence of the Tortoise is the ultimate goal of every roster. In saying that which seems so obvious, one would wonder why it hasn't happened yet. In truth it has, Cold War Faze was without question the closest team to having achieved this combination of styles. The proof is in their result. With talent at every position and a dedicated, diligent structure, they dominated the year. Winning less than they likely should have but having produced a result consistent enough to be called the greatest season of COD in the modern era.

How does the U accomplish this solution to a multi-generational problem that is COD Hardpoint? The U shape places players strategically around the objective of the mode, allowing everyone within a given setup the opportunity to express their skill rather than relegating a player to "anchor a spawn" or simply sit on a hill and hope their teammates can win the game for them. Everyone is involved:

As you can see here on this protocol example, rather than funnel a single side or hold a spawn by standing on it, the proper setup is more fluid and forward. The discipline of the Tortoise creates the shape, the natural pace and talent of the Hare gives the flow. In this example p1

teamshoots with lighthouse, lighthouse teamshoots with hill, hill can shift to teamshoot with lighthouse or boat, and boat can teamshoot with hill. Not a single player finds themselves in a 1v1 for more than a second without help. How do we progress when the hill is under pressure? The U is a specific shape of setup that allows adaptation regardless of the spawn or direction of pressure. Let's say in this example the first player to die in the setup is the player holding a corner at the boat. The immediate reaction from the player p1 should be to push bottom blue and re-pinch the players running up field to the hill. The entire shape simply refills the closest player's position as if the flow were drawn with arrows on the map. (Imagine the image of a slinky being pushed down the stairs. It maintains its momentum because as the side on the step contracts, it pushes the other, expanding and taking the next step in a similar action of motion):

In doing so, the player who died out of the initial setup will spawn into the lane which they have to fill for the flow to remain proper. This makes the map easier to play as everyone has a designated position without having to think about each spawn or adjust in the moment.

Adaptation comes naturally, as long as the person in the center of the U does not die first, the edges naturally extend, contract, or flip based on necessity. Should the spawns flip before a kill happens for example, the following easily occurs and the setup remains intact with the same shape (One side retracts *boat player runs back* and the other extends *Mid players run forward* and turn):

The result = a U reformed:

Seeing this in action leads to the next logical step in gameplay. If we hold this way, how do we rotate?

Rotating

I assume anyone reading this is familiar with this concept so rather than describe it in detail I will just skip to the point and tell you that it is quite terrible as an individual action. What I mean by this, is that if you are rotating out of cadence with the remainder of the game, ergo someone is leaving at 30 seconds to rotate to the following hill against the grain of the current setup to “chain hills” you have fundamentally misunderstood the changes that come with varying spawn systems and increased natural game tempo compared to the early years of the mode.

In choosing to rotate, a team can easily outnumber yours, forfeiting the previous hill time. Now that you have rotated, you are functionally controlling an opposing quadrant while leaving the back of the former open. Your teammates will spawn on you, the opposing team will spawn on the pinch. Here is an example:

In this scenario, red team 3 decided to rotate from the back of p3 to get forward progression toward p4, as the blue team advanced on p3 they wiped his teammates, losing one of their own members. Due to the positioning of both

teams, red player 3 spawned his teammate garage, and blue team spawned their teammate T. Some might see this as a victory, spawns for new! But let's weigh the cons for the sake of argument.

Firstly, the blue team now assumes control of 80% of the map. Secondly, they are also in control and collecting the remaining 30 seconds of the former hill, giving them ample time to communicate calmly, secure a preference of side, and break the coming hill before the lock symbol leaves the screen. Third, a natural pinch has been created, lending to the idea that the blue team has complete freedom to make decisions on what happens next. Fourth, the red team has been forced into a line by their lack of control, contrarily the blue team has formed a natural triangle, and a 3-1. (If you skipped to this section and don't understand why that matters, congratulations, you trolled yourself)

I suppose the next logical step from discussing rotating would be to discuss

Good vs Bad Side:

Before a single soul gets their knickers in a pretzel, I am NOT saying there is no such thing as a "good side" in colloquial terms. There are naturally sides that have closer spawns to the current hill, better head glitches, easier rotations out, better routes to reinforce, etc. I AM saying however that the good side is NOT what you think it is. Those things are all well and good but what happens when you are unable to win a gunfight? What happens when you are being chained and can't manage to rotate out of the closer spawn (naturally further from the next hill). How many more times will you say "If we die we rotate" before realizing that you are not only losing, you have failed to prepare for the future and will eventually lose that as well. For all intents and purposes, the vast majority of "bad sides" for the various hills are simply "good sides" for the hill coming. Playing ahead in this way EG: choosing the bad side now (but being there already) so you can be at the next hill early naturally will always be superior to spending 25+ seconds fighting for the "good side" of the current hardpoint. MAXIMIZE WIN CONDITIONS WITH EACH PLAY. (Everything should be giving you a plan B in the same life, not in the next one). Constantly pressuring old time from the side the following hill will spawn is efficient and multifaceted. A single staggered player is actually an anchor, rather than someone who has to sprint through quadrants causing fluctuating influence and "randomness,

simply slowing down as the last player in line or playing the cutoff equates to being the tip of the triangle for the future.

Triangles:

Blue - P1, Red - P2, Green, P3-4, Purple - P5.*

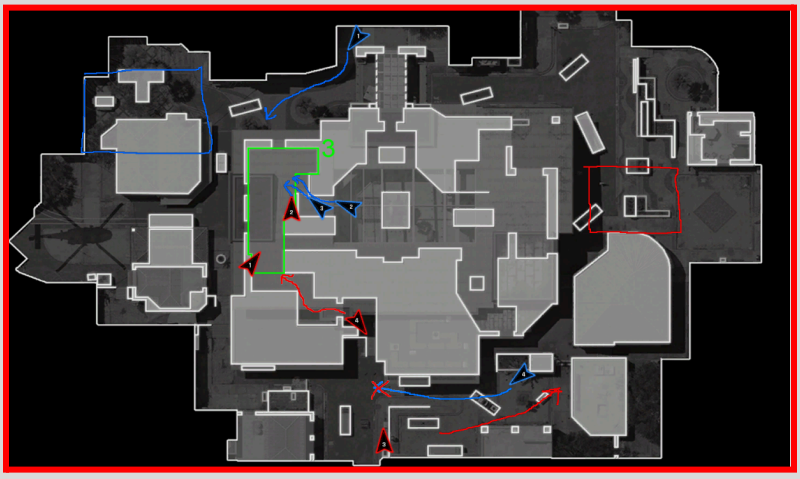
The stages of Scoring mentality: 40 > 60

+40 - 20, > 80 - 40 > 120 - 60 > 150 - 90 > 190 - 110 > 220 - 140 > 250 - 160… vs

+60 - 0 > 60 - 60 > 60 - 120 > 120 - 120 > 180 - 120 > 180 - 180 > 180 - 240 > 240-240 (coinflip ending)

Aside from the obvious that this scoring is within a vacuum, consistency IS the problem. When you risk big (60 for 60) you will always LOSE bigger (0-120 vs 60-60). Consistency comes from continuous small victories. Playing to win the map, rather than each individual point.

You'll notice that this conversation has somehow gone back to rotations. This is because all of Hardpoint is accomplished in a single fluid playstyle. See below:



In this scenario, the red team has not rotated, but instead are holding P3, from the "P4" side of the map, forfeiting the bridge and leaving the T spawn open. As the blue team forces its way through the bridge, and collapses on the hill, the 1 of their 3 1 (player

pinching boxed) leaves the farthest spawn open naturally, and dies. With both back P3 spawns open, he will spawn T and the red team can push through p2 to flip the map on its head with the box player being able to wrap back and pressure old time to maintain control and the newly created trap. Some may be confused by this. They may see this as a simple rotation. In some ways, this is correct, but in practice, you have skipped the step that ultimately requires you to win a wave of kills before rotating, and instead of guessing at flips or having to run for them, you allow them to happen naturally. In doing so, you have increased map presence %, increased information gathered by a significant % and eliminated many of the variables that can cause randomness. The harder you try to conform to standard or old fashioned ideas, the more “random” the game will become. If you want to win p3, stack p3. If you want to win Rio, play for p4 on p3, and the same can be said for every rotation on this or any map.

Here is a list of general rules that ALWAYS apply to Hardpoint in the current Call of Duty era:

- Never rotate to a lock symbol (choose a side of the coming hardpoint, and play from there)
- Never accept a numerical disadvantage on old to rotate to new. Either you are late, and outnumbered on new, or early and are outnumbered at old. Wait, collect points, and break a side as 4 to maintain a constant numerical advantage.
- Never split evenly when breaking or holding.
- Maintain a triangle (U) to the best of your ability.
- Push pace (this does not mean run at red dots, it means fight for control of the map off of point)
- Eliminate enemies outside of the Hardpoint prior to breaking when numbers are equivalent.
- Stack tacticals as a team (all 4 stuns/flashes) prior to throwing your lethals (frag/semtex)
- Play to win the map, and not the current point.
- Tighten triangles on delayed holds to ensure immediate support from point to point, and deny the attempted isolation of the opposition.

The next stop on this logic train may very well be the least popular. Spawns

Spawns:

Let’s talk about that logic thing for a minute. Given the idea that “luck” can not always be bad, a system repeatedly influenced in a similar way will continue to produce a similar result. Although this does not necessarily mean that a system is good it does infer that a system exists if an undesirable result is produced on a regular to semi regular basis with consistent variables and repeated testing. With that being said, I would refer to the current Respawn System as “Quadrant Parameters” as opposed to the previous “Primary/Secondary” system we are conditioned to. Through time I have set these in game requirements for spawn control/manipulation:

1. Positive quadrant pressure (Numerical/Visual)
2. 50% (or more) quadrant control using PQP
3. Avoidance of safety lines (areas near or close to another quadrant/60% or more of the map away from the current Hardpoint.
4. Avoidance of excess separation between players with the same influence. (On the same team)

5. Fighting away from pressure, not into it.
6. Always having at least 1 player alive while in advantageous position/dying as 4 when in a pressured situation.
7. Enemies will always spawn in the closest Primary spawn with net neutral/negative influence.

Although this spawn system was originally introduced in games with 5 people, it is possible to maintain control of the game with only 4. To do this, tighten your setup, institute limits on aggression from the players on the edges of that setup, limit repinching to routes within the same quadrant or through neutral (empty) ones while someone HARD anchors, and ALWAYS stand still for a few seconds before making an aggressive play if half of the enemy team is alive.

That said, let's address the elephant in the room, that being the general perspective of the game and the spawns that control it. It is important first to understand as was previously stated that no system producing similar results on a consistent to semi consistent basis can be truly random. “Randomness” implies a lack of defining principles that would allow almost anything to happen. Although it sometimes seems this way, how many times have you been genuinely shocked? To follow that up, how many times have you NOT been shocked? Do you often find yourself questioning the validity of a certain spawn in Hardpoint or exclaiming “THEY SHOULD HAVE SPAWNED OUT”? Well, would that not by definition mean that the game is consistent? Even if it is consistent in a way you disagree with or dislike?

I have spent the better part of 10 years playing/watching competitive Call of Duty, and now 3-4 at the highest levels of amateur play, in some cases even stepping foot into the franchised/professional world to answer questions or help out. I am well aware of what the competitors want. Three lane maps, longer ttk, less multipliers, better map design, “old spawns” (Team anchoring spawns in the back, other team spawns out, no parallels). This is NOT the world we find ourselves in.

To address my position on how this mode is played, and how the spawns work, I think it is probably best to start out by making one thing PAINFULLY CLEAR. I do not advocate that this system is good, or enjoyable, but competitive? What sounds more competitive to you? Knowing you can't step foot over a certain line, having to learn these lines, having to continuously fail to improve or just running to the other side of the map anywhere and that being the only route you ever have to take on the map? I think if we look into our hearts, like it or lump it, it is more competitive than ever.

I do however believe that as competitors it is our job to respectfully object and then move on. We have to know these things. We have to comprehend the depths of the system which defines our careers and capitalize on the weak mentality of those who would complain or quit rather than adapt or learn.

On the topic of perspective, an ideal game could be compared to a well paved highway. Constantly progressing forward, a smooth ride where the only thing players have to worry about is what is in front of them. A race on a road

like this is subject to tragedy if and only if the driver makes a mistake. Newer gen titles however, (MW2019 onward) are more comparable to a dirt road. Bumpy, slippery, and hazardous, by definition unrefined. When racing on the paved highway, should the highway turn off to the right, one would simply need to turn their wheel in that direction, however… on a dirt road, this is not the case. “I’ll put it simply: if you’re going hard enough left, you’ll find yourself turning right.” A classic quote from Doc Hudson, and in racing terms a jewel of knowledge applicable to all aspects of life.

Wait Ronin, what does this matter? What is the point of this metaphor?

Firstly, let’s explain the metaphor in its original subject matter. The process described by Doc is called counter steering. When your car is sliding into a turn in any particular direction, let’s say a left turn, the right side of your car is leading into that turn. If you turn too far to the left, the right side of your car will spin farther forward and the car will begin to spin out. Opposingly, should you choose to turn the wheel to the right, your car will continue to slide in the same direction and not spin out.

How does this apply to Cod? Why are we talking about Disney movies?

Well, I like Disney movies, they tend to teach good life lessons. As for how this applies to cod, you could say, when turning left on a dirt road causes you to spin out, you find yourself in a bit of a cycle, no? Spin cycle? The dreaded spawn trap? No kills for 30 seconds straight, getting slammed on your necks, hating yourselves for having purchased the game. Yeah, around these parts, we turn right to go left and never enter that cycle.

You might be wondering a few things, firstly, whether or not I am completely insane. The short answer is yes I am. Furthermore if you’re still here and trying to learn something, you may be wondering how to apply a dirt road racing metaphor from a “kids” movie to the competitive environment of a first person shooter video game. Let's dive into that.

When you get down to the nitty gritty all the metaphor really says is when you find yourself sliding out of control, do the opposite of what you’re trying to do and you will in turn do what you wanted to do all along. Have you noticed the commonality of teams who find success all having really high break percentages but simultaneously AWFUL rotation percentages? They are subconsciously applying this metaphor to their gameplay.

An old school mindset would tell you that if you want to hold a Hardpoint for an extended period you should rotate to the point early, set up and hunker down. In this game however the majority of points are gained by teams who FAIL to rotate and instead pressure old time to create numerical disadvantages for the opposing team to contend with. In a fast paced game such as this, WITH a respawn delay (which I agree is necessary for competition) one can apply pressure to a new hill simply by killing the opposing player on the old one.

Kill > Pressure > 4 v 3 > repeat.

It seems all fine and dandy, really it just seems like I am telling you to run around and gun people to bed. In some ways, I am. In a general sense however what I am telling you is to do everything in the game as 4.

Why is this?

To be as straightforward as possible, 4 is a bigger number than 3. I am not telling where to go, what direction to pressure, where to nade or how to go about pushing whatever lane you choose to push, simply that going together as an entire roster will ultimately yield a positive result. Four is greater than three, three is greater than two and so on. By following the steps you can create an advantage with a pick either with gun or nade, apply pressure on this weakened lane and force a flip using the same 4 dead method people complain about daily. In addition and MOST IMPORTANTLY, playing this way ensures that unless an opposing team hits old as 4 while you are holding or stacks old as 4 while you are late breaking, they CAN NOT go 4 dead minimizing the total number of times an "inconsistent" spawn will occur.

Won't playing better players make this playstyle obsolete?

No, quite the contrary actually. Better players cannot risk a pinch, nor can they risk stacking on nades or team kills. The best players in the game tend to rotate, hold lanes from depth and rely on timings. The world in which I am describing removes cod timing from the equation. Constantly pressuring having an enemy dead at all times even at the cost of 2 of your own lives. Better players tend to put themselves at a numerical disadvantage more frequently due to their self confidence which is why the majority of awkward spawn clips you see come from professional players, they are simply playing a different game. Moreover, when it really comes down to it, I remember being told something a year ago that stuck with me. "If I do this and Cell is sitting on a heady top 3, I am screwed" and it made me think for a second. Wow, they are probably right, if Cell throws two pumps it's joev. For a moment I didn't respond, and then I said simply "Yeah well, if you didn't do this and Cell was sitting on a heady top 3, you'd be screwed anyway". It's really that simple. You aren't beating anyone but yourselves trying to perfect a game meant to assist the weak and poorly skilled. You have to play INTO the system, not against it.

One of the most overlooked and underappreciated parts of a team's dynamic is how that team allows its individuals to flourish. It is true that a system makes a team more consistent, but it is also true that to some a system can restrict them in a way that diminishes their cap within that team.

It is incredibly important to realize that giving players the freedom to be themselves improves not only the quality of the team's environment but allows the players to achieve their highest individual level of skill. With this playstyle, players are restricted only in their initial area of play. How they go about applying pressure after initial picks/pushes, trading kills, where they stack nades from, is completely irrelevant.

A typical question: Why are pickup teams so successful? Why do these teams with less structure and "headless" players dominate?

The answer is as simple as it gets. Teams without a structure but with at least a basic knowledge of Call of Duty subconsciously play quickly AND to trade. It is the fundamental base of this Hardpoint strategy and therefore they thrive. As they progress and attempt to put a structure in place as correction for mistakes in game, they slowly move away from the “8s” style of play, and in turn, they stray further from what originally made them successful.

Rather than attempt to overshadow the speed and aggression of a more loose style of play with slowed structure, it is instead advisable to implement a structure BASED on that tempo, becoming the definition of controlled chaos.

Speed, Pace, and Tempo.

Okay let’s be real, how many of us actually know what the difference between these words are? How many players have been classified as slow* (speed) when they are sitting in POWER POSITIONS on the map for a long period of time (pace) and their team is still effectively pressuring and controlling the map? (tempo). It is important to clarify these words for the coming segment, and to help explain why rotating in this game is so challenging and most of the time, a mistake.

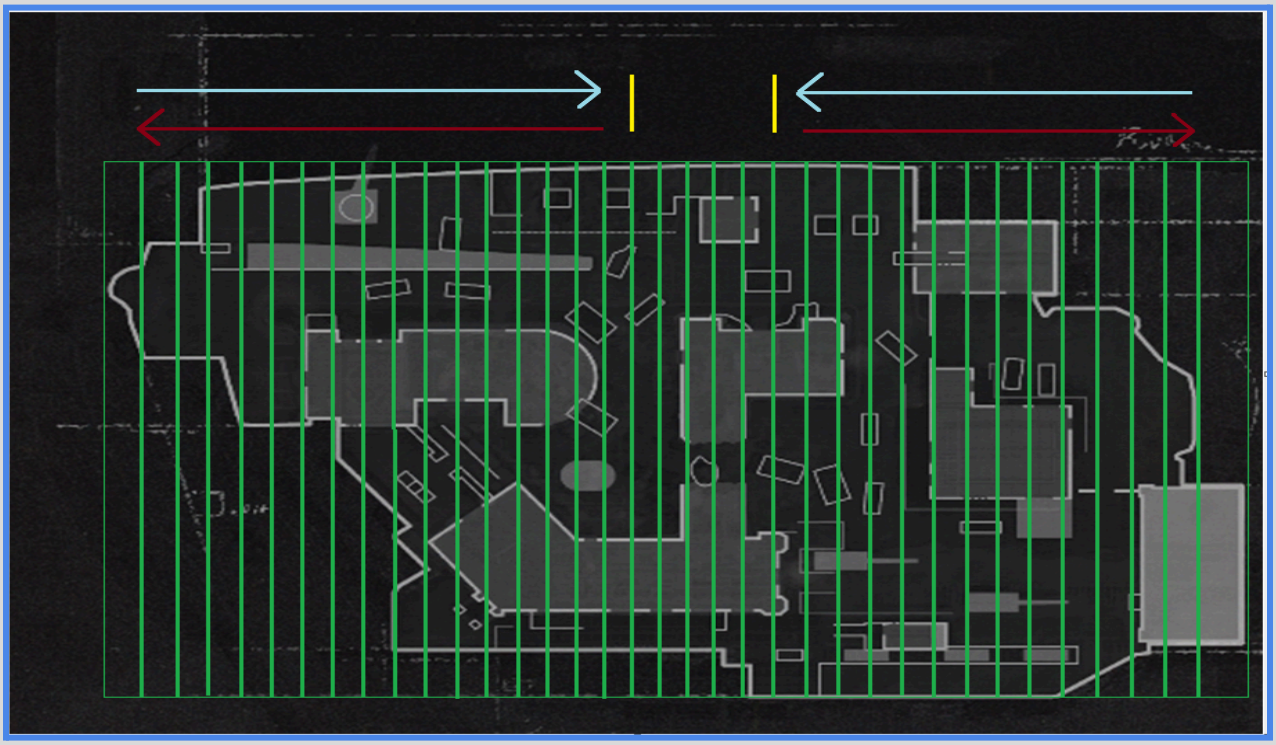
Speed refers to the time it takes to travel a certain distance, hence why it is typically measured IN distance. (Miles or Kilometers per hour) This means that calling a player slow means that they tend to travel less distance during the duration of a map than someone else, whether that distance is lateral or longitudinal.

Pace refers to the number of operations that happen in a given time period, it is not measurable in something like mph but instead is number and can often be broken down to high, (good) low, (bad), and average (neutral). Call of Duty maps are two dimensional on screen but in game are 3 dimensional planes of existence that represent real life geographic locations. This means a player can be slow (speed) but have good pace by being where they need to be doing what they need to do or seeing where they need to see with little to no motion required. You can be fast and go nowhere (think Usain Bolt running on a treadmill), and you can be slow and achieve the same goal, (think telescope vs rocket ship).

Tempo is a different beast entirely and although is typically used in reference to music, can be used instead as a culmination of both pace and speed. This means, in a general sense tempo can be thought of as lines of scrimmage from one side of a given map to the other, where pace and speed intertwine to create the *motion* of the game. An easier way to think about it would be, tempo = pressure.

Yes this is an older map, but I already had the graphic made so spare me the attitude. It’s berlin in case you’re 12 years old

tempo



Now that we are on the same page with speed, pace, and tempo, let's discuss why it is relevant to rotations in CoD. Let's say the green lines represent tempo, and each line represents a level of pressure slowly increasing in pace (getting closer together) as they approach the 50 yard line of scrimmage on any given map. (Berlin in this case)

The red line represents negative pressure caused by retreating away from the line's epicenter, the blue representing positive pressure as you progress forward. (these lines are relative to your starting location and not to the 2d representation of the map) Yellow, represents neutral pressure, liken this to standing still looking at a wall, neither visually nor physically encroaching on a forward line.

With this in mind, rotating backwards ALWAYS leads to a net loss in pressure whereas rotating laterally (on the same line of scrimmage, in the case of CoD to a cutoff, say from p5 to clutch steps) will keep you neutral.

This leads to a very obvious solution to rotations. If you are spawning in the negative (behind old) always push through old to gain both pressure and numbers. If you are spawning in the positive (between old and new) rotate to a cutoff to remain neutral and allow players behind you to move forward (positive tempo) to create additional pressure. Mathematically this would be represented as 0 (neutral) + 1 (positive) = 1 (positive).

This is going to seem petty but if you're still on the fence about this playstyle or feel conflicted that it doesn't promote "playing ahead" (remember turning right to go left means this playstyle is doing just that, but let's say you were a chick hicks fan) the names of the modes themselves give away how they are meant to be played.

The mode is called HARDPOINT. Play the point hard. That is how you win. Pressure old, rotate by creating numbers advantages and pressure through the strong side of the map.

Control is called CONTROL, not capture the point. Even with ticks being relevant, teams will notice quickly that cutting the map, spawn killing and capturing the point by extension is the definitive way to play the mode. AKA: CONTROL THE MAP.

These modes are explicitly named to verify the conclusions of this powerpoint and although they possess nuance due to differences in map design and meta they are fundamentally the same NO MATTER WHAT.

Hot Pocket:

What? Random much? I suppose it could come across that way. But essentially this is how I describe the steps to Hardpoint. The whole of COD just like anything else has steps to EVERY process. Imagine you're getting a shower and you dry off before you even get in. Doesn't really make sense does it? Well for the most part, whether you're using the U or you're making a line, everything happens in an order of operations, very similarly to the making of an old Hot Pocket. (recently found out they did away with the little sleeve by the way, are we serious with that?)

For those of you who may not be built like me, or aren't familiar with a Hot Pocket in general, they are microwavable enclosed pizza pockets. Really tasty, but either way when they did have a sleeve, you had to follow the steps written on the package:

1 - Remove the hot pocket from the film

2 - Place the Hot Pocket in its sleeve

3 - Place the sleeve on a microwave safe plate

4 - Microwave on high for 2 minutes and 30 seconds

5 - Let stand for 1 minute before eating (caution, contents will be hot)

Or something like that Idk, I swear I don't have it memorized that would be ridiculous and indicate a larger problem 😀.

Let's say you don't put the Hot Pocket in its cooking sleeve. Well, though it will surely cook, the outside will fail to crisp up and you'll have a soggy mess. Just aint the same for the connoisseur ya know?

In COD terms:

1 - **Hold a side**: (This can be top, bottom, left, right, back, front. It doesn't matter. Remember no such thing as "good" side) The game will almost always tell you what side is yours based on your initial spawner, revisit the "good" side discussion for more info on this but if you don't do this first step you can kiss any semblance of control goodbye.

2 - **Play a wave**: Having control of a side guarantees the game plays out at a pace you dictate. If you're breaking, you choose when to make a play, holding, they have to come to you. Either way you can take your time and play out a single wave of kills. Skipping this step means you lose the control you fought for originally while taking a side. Moreover, taking the game a wave at a time ensures you keep the opposition in front of you, giving you the opportunity to slow the game and count names more accurately.

3 - **Take Map**: After your initial wave, extend the U on the winning side and take control of the map. Hold crosses once again and prepare for the second wave. (I am hoping at this point it is becoming more self explanatory)

4 - **Play the Second Wave**: See step 2.

5 - **Flip the Map**: This can mean one of 2 things, you will give up the back if you're holding from the opposite side of new, extend forward and leave the close primary spawn open for the opposition or 2, you will run forward and force a flip by TAKING the opposing spawn by force off of the second wave.

This process is repeated over and over again in a cyclical pattern. You want 12 hot pockets when the game is over and you want them ALL to be edible. Would sure be a waste if you lose the game and had 11 soggy Hot Pockets don't ya think?

Shapes, Shapes, Shapes:

We've spent a good deal of time talking about the "shape of play", the U, and its functionality, in addition to triangles and their permeation throughout competitive sports/esports, but now it's time to discuss the shapes of maps themselves and how this influences gameplay. Map shape is a determining factor in the location of hardpoints. They can't be right next to one another and tend to swap sides back and forth. (This is another reason for the good/bad side argument as well as the U shape of play). With that being said, the hardpoint location in congruence with the spawn locations tend to determine which kind of hill you're dealing with.

Think P3 on the map Skyline. The map itself is a near perfect rectangle, the hill is located on the bottom middle of that rectangle a uniform distance from perpendicular spawn points for either team as shown (Red Primary, Yellow Secondary)

This hardpoint is what can be referred to as a “stacking” hill. Spawns are located in proximity to such a degree that in forming the “U” shape, you are always putting yourself at a disadvantage numerically. This means that the formation of the U shape to hold the hardpoint comes AFTER the hardpoint is secured rather than preemptively before as with old generation rotations. Simultaneously breaking this hardpoint also requires a different approach. Rather than flooding time with numbers and sending a pinch (the typical 3-1 approach) the opposite is superior here, wherein 3 players would take a route to influence the closest primary spawn, or create an advantageous angle (going mid/cat to pinch) and 1 player would slow play your closest entrance to the hardpoint to create the tip of the U. In addition, the shape of the U itself changes. Under normal circumstances the base of the U would represent the player in the hill, hardpoints of this shape and location demand that the TIP of the U is the point itself, as there is no playable area of the map to the left/right depending on your side of control.

As you can see, the U is positioned differently than prior examples. It is far more narrow and the tip is the hill itself. This comes from two fold necessity, firstly, that players are close enough to re-hit quickly to secure time or contest, and secondly, so that if the hill is to be broken, the fill order immediately pushes out the other side at greater pace than would be possible on larger, wider, maps with hills in the vertical center.

Let's talk aggression for a moment. The U seems to be a very tactical and safe approach. Similar in many ways to traditional COD albeit spread out a little more and with a fancy line drawn through it. With that in mind let’s contemplate how we can make a “stacking hill” favor a more momentum based and aggressive playstyle.

Firstly take the image above:

Notice how a player is hard blocking? Stacking a side and another is very close in proximity to the hill to assist if need be? These circumstances allow for LONG pinches. A contrasting pressure hill (more to come) requires short simple pinches in order to maintain a side and prevent a single side or the other from being numerically taken advantage of. In this case however, the route from bottom bed, to gym, around to top T (white steps) and pinching

the front of the hill forces a deeper secondary spawn behind piano which is ideal for turning a stacking hill like p3 into a full 60 with less chaos immediately off of each player's respawn. The timing of this pinch is very dependent on the situation, but not taking this timing can make the difference between a 50 second hold, or a 20/20 bangout.

To contrast visually, let's look at P2 on the same map and note the differences in location resulting in differing fill order for the players spawning behind the hill, as well as the shape of the U:

A hardpoint of this kind, situated at the 50 yard line of the map vertically, and between the 20/40 yard line horizontally is what I would call a "pressure" hill. This is so because there are multiple avenues of approach with a single spawn located further from the rest, parallel vertically, and perpendicular horizontally to the hill itself. (A traditional "out" or "deep" spawn). Notice here how the setup can be far more compact, and no dedicated blocker is necessary. With the Hardpoint's proximity to the nearest primary/secondary spawns, the sheer pressure of bodies on this side of the map allows for a more active approach in the hold. This is a process commonly referred to as "creating layers" (I didn't come up with that one). By creating layers you allow yourself more opportunities, the distance required for the opposing team to travel is too great for an instant flip on your first death. More opportunities means a higher chance of success, naturally.

Reset Cheese

Given that we are human, and playing a video game, this U will eventually collapse. Everyone will lose their fight, (though it shouldn't be a 1v1 if we're playing correctly) and when this happens what comes next? To put it simply, it's the same old same old as far as the system is concerned. But let's discuss the steps:

Opposite the norm we attempt a route FIRST, we want to take our initial timings to flip the map. Consider Red Card p2, while spawning in the back. If you slam the back and succeed in getting kills initially, but fail in getting a full wipe to break, all you managed to accomplish was trapping yourself in the back spawn by your own positioning. Moreover, the distance from p2 to p3 becomes longer making the following waves even more difficult to maneuver.

This also limits the amount of attempts you have to flip the map at all. If your initial play is to the back, and you bang out time, you have to win a further 2 waves to flip the opposition to the back/parallel diner. The ONLY reason you should hit time is because you have no other choice. You have failed your initial attempt at a play and now have to play through time to stem the bleeding. This is a general rule of thumb applicable to almost any hill on any map in the current generation of the game. Assume map control and flip the map, if it fails, play through time and get yours.

Communication in the mix:

With a system like this, (or really any system, please don't fool yourselves) communication is the key to success. Another of the very few things the old guard and I can agree on is just how obscenely important communication is. Though yet again and I know it must be a shock to hear, I have an extreme disdain for how communication takes

place on most teams, as well as what teams find necessary to tell one another. (The “one shot” callout deserves jail time)

Let’s just jump into some simple steps for communication beginning with your respawn:

1 - **Spawns:** Now word to K CAMP there are levels to this slum sh*t. On one hand the bare minimum here is that you always call out where YOU personally spawn. This is a fine start, though it leaves much to be desired in terms of mental stack and alleviating thought requirements from your teammates who are likely still in the fight. The higher level of this is to call out where the opposing team is spawning, followed by what you have for your team. EX: “They’re spawning back blue, I am picking up your zip, stay top red” This is not only preferable as it helps your team with a greater level of information but also tells them you have their help, AND what you’re doing off spawn. Compare that to what is more common “Bro I got joked, such bullshit, guy would get slammed on LAN I promise. One’s sidewalk” ….

….

….

Do we see the difference?

2 - **Mid-Life Info:** Stop calling enemies when and if you lose a gunfight. Mid life information includes comms like “I am holding x”, “Let’s hit x”, “Can someone pick up my x off spawn”, “They crossed x”, “Hold the back”, “Play your life”, “I am getting a trophy in hill”, “I AM STILL HOLDING X”, (Yes contrary to popular belief you can in fact say the same thing twice if there is a disturbing amount of time between the first and second time), “I am pinching x, hard block and stay alive”, “I am forcing them to spawn x” etc etc. Complete thoughts, complete sentences, conversational tones.

3 - **In gunfights**: Woah, this may come as a massive shock but you actually CAN call out BEFORE you die. Ready here it goes. You’re in a gunfight right, as you’re shooting you say “They are mid gun… DEAD” or “They are mid gun, *you die* pushing bottom blue weak (or full health if you’re stinky on the sticks)” Notice here how you are not only comming WHILE in the fight but also the very LAST thing you talk about is whether or not the person is “one shot”.

And you repeat. I know, it's absolutely shocking but it is that simple. I don’t need to know how many people are one shot, I don’t need to know how badly you’re getting joked, or how stupid your teammates are. None of that is going to change the outcome of the game. Keep your head level and speak with intention. Have a conversation, don’t yell at one another like spastics.

Let’s talk. Literally, Your Tone Matters.

The tone of voice plays a crucial role in communication, especially in competitive settings where stress and pressure are high. Its impact on outcomes, both positive and negative, can significantly influence how teammates interact and perform.

Positive Effects of Tone of Voice:

Clarity and Precision: A calm, clear, and confident tone helps convey information more effectively. This is vital during critical moments in competition, as teammates need to understand instructions, strategies, and feedback quickly and without confusion.

Motivation and Morale: A supportive and encouraging tone can boost morale, increase motivation, and strengthen team cohesion. Positive reinforcement through tone helps players stay focused, confident, and determined, even in tough situations.

Trust and Cohesion: Consistent use of a positive, calm tone fosters an environment of trust and mutual respect. When teammates communicate with kindness or calm assertiveness, they are more likely to build strong relationships, which can lead to better coordination and teamwork.

Stress Reduction: A composed and reassuring tone can help reduce anxiety and stress, especially in high-stakes moments. This allows teammates to stay focused and make better decisions under pressure.

Leadership Influence: A leader or captain's tone can significantly impact team dynamics. A motivational or composed tone can instill confidence in teammates, which often results in better performance. Strong, reassuring leadership through tone can guide the team toward optimal outcomes.

Negative Effects of Tone of Voice:

Miscommunication: An aggressive or hurried tone may lead to misunderstandings. When a tone is harsh or abrupt, teammates might misinterpret messages, causing confusion or delays in decision-making.

Stress and Anxiety: A tense or impatient tone can increase stress levels within the team, especially when the competition is fierce. This can lead to mistakes, miscommunication, or poor coordination. A team member might feel they're being criticized harshly even if the intent is constructive, leading to reduced confidence and performance.

Diminished Team Morale: If the tone of voice is negative (e.g., sarcastic, condescending, or overly critical), it can lead to hurt feelings, resentment, and breakdowns in communication. This decreases team morale, causing divisions and making collaboration harder.

Reduced Trust: A harsh or demeaning tone erodes trust between teammates. When players feel that their efforts are not appreciated or are being harshly criticized, they may become defensive or disengage, weakening the overall team dynamic.

Increased Tension: A loud, aggressive, or confrontational tone in a competitive setting can escalate tension among team members. In a tense environment, teammates may focus more on their emotional responses rather than on achieving the team's goals, thus impairing performance.

The tone of voice can activate different psychological responses. A calm, positive tone triggers feelings of safety, comfort, and encouragement, which can enhance focus and performance. In contrast, a harsh or critical tone activates stress responses, like the fight-or-flight mechanism, which can diminish concentration, creativity, and problem-solving ability during competition.

In high-stakes competition, the tone of voice can either strengthen or weaken a team's performance. Positive tones enhance communication, trust, and morale, leading to better teamwork and outcomes. On the other hand, negative tones can breed misunderstandings, increase stress, and disrupt the team dynamic, ultimately hindering success. Coaches, team leaders, and players who are mindful of their tone and communication style are more likely to foster a cohesive and high-performing team.

Functionally ALL of these rules for communication can apply to any and every game mode within the COD competitive titles former and future.

Next up: the DREADED map 3 (yes control is terrible and has been for 7 years but, what are ya gonna do?)

Control

The primary objective in Control is for each team to either defend or capture two designated points on the map. Teams alternate between attacking and defending these points over multiple rounds. Or again, so the internet says.

Control ought to be played exactly how the game mode's title suggests. Controlling the map is the top priority, controlling your opponents and their decisions. In reality, it is a game completely predicated on overwhelming the mental stack.

The mode is far easier to describe and play than Hardpoint. Spawns are fewer, more set, and split between the assigned offensive and defensive sides (so long as you're not a complete sandwich). Let's talk about general control. No really, general control is the name of the game. Look below:

Commanding pressure beyond each point in these locations has become (and always has been) the definitive method for capture. By pressing forward, offensive teams cause deeper spawns. These defensive spawns delay reinforcements, and by definition force a choice. Do we A - chalk the point and give up the ticks towards a defensive round 5? Or do we B - fight for the point and risk losing both based solely on a lack of flow and cadence. This miserable choice is why pressing beyond points is almost always preferable to stacking them. Let's make a quick list of times when stacking IS viable offensively:

1. If you absolutely must stack last second to win the round.
2. If you are attempting to get a tick for side choice and the opposing team is out of respawns.
3. If you are going to completely win the game, not the round.
4. If you wipe 4 and only one point remains to capture.

These instances of stacking have little to no downside, and or are necessary to achieve victory. Under nearly no circumstance other than these expressed are there warranted reasons to do so.

With this theme in mind let's touch quickly on how to EXECUTE properly on the offensive side of the map.

In this hypothetical, your team has won the breakoff and are capturing B. One of your teammates has assumed control of Nest, and are forcing the most recent spawns for the opposition deeper into Gas. You have spawned directly behind your teammates and have a choice to make, do you follow conventional wisdoms? Hold the flank from spawn? Run toward B and then turn around? No. You have to “Rock The Boat”.

As the defensive team spawns, they will wrap the map on the initial retake, the majority will be taking routes toward the B site (in this case) whether that is through mid map, or directly, is irrelevant to the proper course of action as the offensive spawner. So, what is “**Rocking the Boat**”?

Rocking the boat is a nickname I personally gave to a playing style that integrates a similarly forward thinking mentality to my stance on Hardpoint. It is a directive and system that mandates a constant cycling of map pressure from one side to the other. Effective momentum (aka the thing you want) often results from a balanced integration of push and pull strategies. Push creates initial energy and direction, pull sustains that momentum by expanding it and reversing its direction before pushing again. (Pushing B pulls enemies there, Pushing A pulls enemies there, and so on and so forth maintaining constant momentum and tempo)

Picture a tennis player during a volley, cycling backhand and forehand shots from one side of the opposition's baseline to the other, and use visualization to imagine rocking the boat in this way on Invasion.

These are the effects in theory:

Depth and Pressure: Pushes that extend beyond the point of control force your opponent to move quickly and cover more ground. This can put them on the defensive, making it harder for them to set up for a strong break on the points you do control.

Creating Angles: By rocking the boat, you can create angles that force your opponent to retake in waves, stretching their numbers and ultimately resulting in 1v1s.. This opens up the map and gives you more opportunities to control the point.

Control and Consistency: Motion between points is fundamental to rallying multiple pushes without getting stuck on your own side of the map. Practicing when to diverge from reinforcing tendencies and “rock the boat” improves your mental fortitude, instills confidence when successful and promotes consistency by constantly touching one point or the other. (Ultimately every life is a form of currency and you are buying ticks. The more you touch, the more likely you acquire a tick with the lives spent, giving each one greater value.)

Setting Up for Attack: Play chess, they are playing checkers. Be proactive, they are reactionary. Force their hands.

Strategic Play: Rocking the boat can help you manage your energy and pace the game effectively. It allows you to dictate the rhythm of each wave and control the tempo of the match.

Rather than reinforcing late, or isolating yourself to hold the flank from spawn (where your teammates who perish will inevitably spawn anyway) it is a superior decision to wrap the map yourself in the inverse direction of the opposition.

See below:

The image displayed is a continuation of the previous hypothetical. As team red approaches B for the retake, and eliminates the forward player from nest, blue team has already begun their rotation toward the A site, rather than having reinforced B. This does several things as can be seen on the mini map.

First, as blue team forfeits the B street, and red team floods it, the players from the red team will spawn toward the B site (while still remaining in relative proximity to their designated spawn area) thus, the rotation back to A is longer and even MORE time is given to the offensive rotator.

Second, as the offensive player shifts his influence to the A street, his or her teammate will spawn in closer proximity, again, amplifying the tempo and control the blue team has on the map by making the A rotation a 2v1 on the spawning red rotator.

Third, both the initial blue rotator and the following spawner can watch the cross of the map, holding the mid pinch AND the deep pinch while executing their "rocking of the boat" this means that the advantages are twofold, apply pressure, get on A, but also, assist teammates at B with information, and in an ideal world, a frag on the flanking defender.

Should the initial rocking of the boat fail, and the teammates rotating to A do not assume enough control to force the defenders to mobilize and pinch the point, it is time to reset. Play your lives, get kills, do not be a hero or attempt a hail mary push onto one of the points. Instead, once kills are acquired, hop to the nearest point, communicate and then begin your rocking process AGAIN should the need to capture both points still exist. Think about it in this way; most of the time you are "going around" when B is captured and you need to get to A. Rocking the boat during the process is no different, it is just sooner, more efficient and is functional for nearly the same reasons.

A Little Bit of Theory

I do not expect players to KNOW everything, the styles of play I advocate per mode are useful not only due to their likelihood in bringing about victory but also in how they go about doing it. Narrowing the possibilities from 7 to 3, for example, would give a team the ability to instantly apply the knowledge of practice and deduce the most likely outcome. Let's say they guess wrong, would they not be less likely to find shock in that disappointment, having simply chosen wrong, as opposed to being caught completely off guard?

At the point where you forfeit the naivety that comes with believing in your own ability to see what is coming, it would be easier to blindfold yourself and use IT as an excuse for being unable to see, than complain that the mental strain of prediction has too many outcomes for you to be confident and concise in your decision making.

Obviously spawns are not set, as one would assume likely in a mode of this nature. You will not find a demolitonesk repeated spawn trap, no scrapyards to be seen. That said, what should your logic be going into the game to ensure the highest probability of control? (remember, control by the current "ronin definition", meaning to be knowledgeable of as opposed to be domineering of)

Here are some general rules and statements to provoke thought and understanding:

- Spawns are only set within a hemisphere and are likely to stay within a single quadrant opposite the closest objective control point to a particular origin point.
- Allow the game to choose your direction and approach.
- Play offense on both sides of the map
- Pinches and retakes should happen pre or ever so slightly post 50 yard line vertically and horizontally.
- 4 Stacks should occur if and only if 4 members of the enemy team are dead, and should otherwise be limited to 3 players.
- Nade stacking is the defining method to circumvent split pushes.
- Never rotate backwards.
- It is ALWAYS chalked.

It is important to address this first, be it offense, defense, or spawn logic will be a reflection of the impact caused by this single in-game mechanic.

Whether you're a studious person, and call it rocking the boat. An anime fan, who would call it the "reverse 100,000 demon drop" (Hinomaru Sumo, watch it if you haven't), or someone who recognizes patterns, the implication is the same. The game mode of control may be skewed towards the defense, however the offense is given all of the leeway in terms of fluidity. Let's say a team pushes through A point on Defense Protocol, and offensively, you spawn directly in front of the back gun with a straight line to B. They have negatively "rocked the boat". Metaphorically having gone to one side has caused the other side of the boat to rise up out of the water. (Think Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End). Now offensively, you have stacked the opposite side and sprinted to B, this rocks the boat in turn, and the defense is now forced to slide down the deck of the boat to the side on which you stand.

It is a necessity to realize that most of the control game mode is a butterfly effect, each movement has very blatant and drastic impacts upon the board of play (as opposed to the micro motion and nuance of HP), almost all of which can be categorized by the aforementioned mechanic.

With such drastic impacts from decision making and events taking place in the game, it is only natural to discuss the very start. The breakoffs.

Priorities

The first thing to happen in every single round is naturally going to be the most impactful. With this in mind, it is fair to assume some teams use the break of others, while some choose to create their own. In either case, everyone's primary objective should NOT be to quickly defend the point of attack from the opposition. Map control is TANTAMOUNT to success. (The mode is called control btw, in case anyone hasn't put 2 and 2 together or think it equals 6).

You might be wondering why I would recommend playing for map control rather than stopping initial ticks when round 5 defense is now decided by the objectives in question. The answer to that is quite simple in that the risk outweighs the reward. Sure, you may clean wipe the opposing team, preventing any tick and then spawn trapping them to infinity. Newsflash, if you can win every fight repeatedly strategy is useless, go nuts kings you simply don't need this or any in depth guide, you're the second coming.

Let's say for a second you do not win your initial fights, the enemy team will be acquiring ticks, increasing their tempo, keeping good pace and speeding forward on the map to trap you until a full capture.

A safer, less gunfight reliant strategy would instead be to allow hard commitment onto a particular site, controlling the map while the opposing team isolates itself, nade stacking and retaking before the third tick can occur, swiftly having prevented the close spawn on the opposite side, and setting a good pace/tempo yourself.

A very large number of people are going to be extremely hesitant to accept this line of thinking, and admittedly it is hard to portray as fact given its foundation.

It is my contention that defending a single point is far more beneficial to the end game than attempting to defend both. Reference first my contention on rocking the boat, and how this affects tempo. Losing the break, does not necessarily mean going 4 dead. How can 1 person alive, rebalance the boat? It is impossible.

Risk-Reward is conceptually difficult, and depends a whole lot on personal valuation. For the sake of argument and because it is my powerpoint let us go with my valuation and thus weigh the risks and rewards my way.

To begin, remember how I said offense is given more fluidity due to this boat rocking mechanic? Defense is far more limited to a single quadrant of spawns than a semi-rectangle (Half of a rectangle, quadrants 1 and 3, etc). (Vault offense p4/art vs Defense w/ back trophy, side trophy, close default, even FRONT trophy). This means that when offense is given control of tempo their level of manipulation is far more exact than that of the defense, and limits defensive spawns to a smaller circumference. Hence defensively, why losing the break or committing to both points increases the likelihood of promoting a losing tempo via numerical disadvantages and offensive map control.

Before anyone loses their cool, I am NOT saying you shouldn't try at all. But I am saying taking the boat and tempo factors into consideration should heavily influence your decision to chalk a point while losing regardless of tick oriented thought processes. You do not have a grav slam, MajorManiak was right at the time, it wasn't chalked, but now…. It's kinda chalked. (cooler if Dashy said it for surely)

If you take nothing from this entire control section I am BEGGING you to take hold of this particular tidbit of information and apply it to every single control you play on the offensive side of the map.

\DO NOT, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCE, ROTATE BACKWARDS.

If you spawn back p4 on Vault DO NOT run backwards to defend B.

NO, BAD, DONT, STOP, NEVER, IXNAY, ABSTAIN, BREAK THIS HABIT.

Think about it:

- Negative tempo.
- The guy spawn killing you is as useful as a poopy flavored lollipop.
- The gunfight is always disadvantageous in a game mode with set lives.
- Where you spawn provides information. (constantly changing bad)
- Fighting into the weak side.
- Promoting bad habits for Hardpoint.
- Reducing engagements in relevant locations.
- Killing your access to a free pinch.
- Always in numerical advantage running forward.
- Risk more than one life.
- Taking on the offensive team burden, they have to capture the point or kill you. If you stop them from doing the latter, they are forced to do the former.
- Nades win games, you don't have to be a hero.
- Team game,they are not with theirs, what are YOU doing?
- Failing to rock the boat aka: failing to play Control.

Search & Destroy

Straying away from the obnoxious and arrogant tone of infinite knowledge I have displayed thus far, I think it is only fair that I am completely honest and up front when it comes to me speaking on this particular mode. I wouldn't go as far as to say I am not an expert, obviously I have sat in on, played, and or watched more SnD than the vast majority of people living, but this particular mode is so very dissimilar to the others it becomes more and more difficult each year to "coach" on a technical level. SnD is a mode of such extreme independence, each life is it's own, and being that there is only one per round this particular game mode is easy to "over" coach. Let your players play. Strategies break down mid round, grenades get random kills (or planned nades DON'T get kills at all), team's make a read and hard counter you, etc. At the end of the day Search & Destroy is a player's playground. Comfort, talent, personal decision making, and adaptation, these are such humongous factors. This is not to say that teamwork as a whole doesn't exist. Of course it does. Traditionally speaking it is the difference maker. Specifics are so much more team dependent, strategies cater more toward the individuals on the roster and their comfort levels, but before I continue talking in circles let's discuss some generally applicable concepts that DO exist, and some coaching that CAN be done.

Preparation

Alright, so, as with the others (but definitely more so here) coaching in Search and Destroy starts well before the map begins. Preparation for maps 2 and 5 can include creating breakoffs, counter stratting, nade spots, wallbangs, and more. Let's talk about each one a little bit:

- **Breakoffs/Strategies**: In creating breakoffs you are taking advantage of the preparatory phase of competition to its fullest potential. These are set strategies that account for the first 15-35 seconds of the rounds in which they are used and tend to produce the most consistent parts of the game. Obviously as was previously stated, without giving away too much information, providing information on my own teams, or sticking my nose where it doesn't belong it will be difficult to discuss these in detail. That said, I have some recommendations regarding the general strategy for creating optimal breakoffs in SnD. Firstly, consider the map in question rather than your personal preferences. Some teams and players will appreciate a slower, more methodical pace. Others will want to run it down. Some will take the time to learn pre nades, others will use the timings created by not throwing them. The world is your oyster here so don't be afraid to get creative, but again step 1 should always be: **Consider the map**. I am a confident team builder in the singles Pokemon space, having competed at a rather high level in several tours. With that as a consideration I can say that creating strategies in SnD, particularly breakoffs, is a process quite similar to building teams, or at least, to building teams the way that I always have.

  As was said, the first step is in considering the map. Let's use Vault SnD as an example because it offers the most obvious avenues for consideration and makes the process easier to understand:

When considering the map, think offensively, never defensively. Defense will always have an inherent advantage regardless of a maps side skew due to the fact that Offense has an additional win condition. Defense can win by time. This is not a luxury the Offensive teams possess. Obviously, if the offense doesn't plant, or eliminate the opposition, they lose. In addition to this inherent

advantage, there comes the added repercussion that it is far FAR harder to play offense defensively than it is to do the opposite. With this in mind, and in most cases, trading defensive rounds becomes rather commonplace, and the first team to win an offense tends to win the map. Let's take a second to consider, also, that you can always have a player watch your pinch when playing either side aggressively, but it is almost impossible to play defense for 60 seconds and then up and decide you're going to walk up and plant the bomb. Relying on the opposing team scamming to allow this is a surefire way to pigeonhole yourself into a losing tempo. With all of this in mind, and in referencing the image above to begin **step 2** let's choose the A bomb as our target site. Now, ask yourselves WHY A is the choice you want to make. What benefits are there to choosing this site and how do we maximize those benefits in our play, quite literally **MAKE A LIST** (contrary to the colloquial corny way of thinking it isn't COOL to be lazy. It is okay to write things down. It is okay to care):

- Closest proximity to the Offensive Spawn
- Safest routes of access
- Easiest post plant set up
- Easiest escape post plant
- Easiest hold while stacked
- Safe with the addition of a trophy
- Single room with only 2 access points
- Multiple avenues of approach
- Solid offensive power position proximity etc etc.

You get the idea. Offensively speaking, the A bomb site is a treasure trove of options for aggressive teams and offers plenty of options for the more defensive players to remain useful while also being safe. Let's move on to the next step:

Step 3 - Now that you've chosen the A bomb site, you have to ask yourself "what are the necessary support choices to make this site choice effective". (for those of you who understand the Pokemon analogy, think of needing a ghost type as a spin blocker on your hazard stack team) If you look above, you'll see "safe with the addition of a trophy". So let's create a strategy surrounding a timing where one of your sub players has a trophy ready at the start of your offensive round. Next, after doing some research you've found that teams throw a grenade to the p1 door in the middle of the map from their spawn. This limits your avenues of approach, and funnels you toward the pool. (Remember we aren't thinking defensively yet. Don't worry about the defense pinching, or running at you. Only think about what YOU can do to aggressively take map control and/or get the bomb planted on the A site WITH your trophy). At this point you have established that you will need one of your players to push into the site with the bomb. They obviously cannot be alone, nor can they take the time to throw the trophy. This means that one other player will have to be with them, and that player will have to be the trophy player as well. 2 of the 4 player options have been taken now. So let's strategize by looking at the map with these things in mind.

Consider here that the red area is unplayable in the first 15/20 seconds of the round while you are aggressively taking the A side of the map. Now consider that 2 players are accounted for in this scenario as they are having to go directly to the bomb site, one will plant while the other throws down a trophy system and supports the plant with tacs.

Player 1: Quick plant to beat timings. Player 2: Trophy and tac support on the bomb site. Players 3 + 4 TBD

So what comes next? Continue the same line of thinking. We are aggressively taking this green area. Let's throw out another offensive plan of action. Let's have player 3 sprint up the close wall of cat along the top of the pool and get pushed up to the opposing team's cat hop. Laying down or throwing shoulders (again, SnD is about individualism) but not hard challing. We will call this player the "forward info player". This accomplishes several things.

First, being up this far is a good info grab, it is relatively safe as well, given the ability to back up to immediate safety in the pool to help/get help from the site. Second, it is somewhat unexpected, this goes beyond the standard taking of the site with safety from pre aimed ARs watching over you to the realm of hyper offense (also a pokemon reference) where you are predicting the opposing team's play and actively attacking them with the knowledge of that presumption (in this instance, you think they are going to push the flower bed steps near cat and try to pick your teammate back p2 heady or on the army truck. Popping up aggressively here can net you a surprise first blood and tons of control.) Here is how the map is looking now:

Let's review. We have chosen to execute a strategy on the A site based on its objective viability. We have established that we want to take an aggressive pace given the timings, and spawn proximity in our favor. After deciding on a core of 2 players taking the site and a supporting necessity of a trophy system. We have assigned 2 players to those roles and a 3rd to take aggressive angles for info. Given these roles we have established a playstyle for the strategy and deemed it "Hyper Offense". With that said we have 1 more player to place within the strategy. Step 4 - Call it, filling the gaps? Not literally but, maybe literally? Idk, let's see. Because we have chosen a "Hyper Offensive" strategy that requires aggressive angles and quick pacing, leaving the final player behind to watch the flank from a passive angle or hold a random corner would ultimately give them too much on their plate. This kind of gameplay is about fluid forward progression and getting the bomb down fast, with that in mind let's think of something aggressive the 4th player can do, within the green area, that maintains the quickened pace of play, and

properly alleviates one of the pain points of the strategy so far. In order to do this we must first make another list, this time, instead of being a list of pros, let's talk about WHAT BEATS US.

At first glance there are a few things that can circumvent this kind of strategy that are well within the norm of the meta.

- A fast flank through the middle of the map following up the pre nades and taking space.
- A fast deep pinch around gold.
- A fast push through the catwalk.
- A fast push toward the pool that overwhelms the forward info player.
- Well placed pre-nades that attack the pool push.
- Over aggression from the support players (forward info and trophy players) that results in being first blooded.

Now that we have some definitive answers to what we lose to. Let's brainstorm on how to circumvent these weaknesses. The first 2 issues stem from a push through the flank. As we discussed previously, we cannot afford to leave a single player on an island or to be overstimulated by watching too many lanes. This means that in order to defeat the possibility of a flank we will all need to be forward, and flip the map. Making the flank useless and using numbers to overwhelm the players on the opposing team's hold. The 3rd issue would be a fast push through the catwalk. The balconies here offer the option of using our tacs as we run through the pool to slow the push cat and even nade stack with the forward info player and the remaining player left to be assigned. Doing so allows the two running into the A site free reign without the need to slow down and throw their tacs before getting inside. We now have at least ONE part of the remaining players' jobs. To stun cat through the outer pool windows. The 4th issue comes from a push toward pool from the defensive spawn, whereby the forward info player is likely to be overwhelmed and teamshotted or tac spammed until they are out of the play. With this in mind it may very well be best for the 4th unassigned player to move up the map in the same general direction as the forward info player but which route should they take? If they were to go outer p2 to palms and slide between the planters they may be able to get info faster and help sooner. But, this means they can't throw the stun top cat and one of our original problems has arisen again. If they were to follow the forward info player on the same route, they could most certainly take the time to throw the stun, but would then be more susceptible to a well placed nade stack on the breakoff or future tac spam and the round will be lost in the first 10 seconds. We have likely reached an impasse here where this strategy seems to be falling apart, as we cannot cover the weaknesses with reasonable answers. But, instead of giving up, let's back up a step. If we know that sliding to the outer palms from p2 can get us reasonable info on players aggressing toward the stairs, and the only issue is not being able to throw the stun top cat. We can instead reassign the stun to a player who CAN throw it, this being the original "forward info player". They can take the close route as they were before, and throw a stun up into cat through the outer window. The fourth player now plays his faster timing to get outer palms, pushed up for info, and a teamshot which also prevents the following issue on our list of an overaggressive team push. Once the breakoff is completed, we will push through, flip the map and play to watch our own pinch from their side of the catwalk/hookah. Every one of the previously mentioned issues has been given a logical and objective solution. With that said, our strategy has taken shape, let's take a look:

Now I left this image rather large so we can discuss a key clearly. Remember here the green area was your original assigned area of play. The red are areas of threat and areas where we will lack presence given our positioning and decision to make a strategy surrounding an aggressive take of the A bomb site. The yellow circles are areas where our tacs will be used. We assigned this tac usage based on aggressive timings. 7 will be throwing a tac cat. 8 to the defensive spawn stairs, and 6 to the vault after getting down their trophy system.

Herein lies the rub of creating strategies. Nothing is ever perfect. Things will happen, players on your team will make mistakes, and surely enough the enemy team will make a play that just so happens to beat you. This leads us to the final step of strategy creation. Testing. Get in the game and PRACTICE. Yeah, I said it. Practice SnD. Do the strategy. Not once, not twice but 10 or 15 times. Then go back to the drawing board to make it better. Even if it is working HOW CAN YOU MAKE IT BETTER. Breakoffs aren't formed in November and used every offensive round on Vault until EWC. They are made, used, adapted, and sometimes thrown away. Sometimes you'll find you missed something in the prep phase you wouldn't know you missed until you tried everything out in real time. Don't be afraid of failing. Be afraid of not trying at all.

For reference, this is just one style of breakoff, to one site on the map. Remember the world is your oyster here. But try to stick to one of the five main archetypes, just like in pokemon team building. Think of them as a spectrum going from left to right based on aggressiveness and difficulty in relation to consistency:

In addition to the idea of the spectrum moving in difficulty from offense to stall, you can consider the center of the spectrum to be the location with the most options. Hyper Offense and stall, though fundamentally different, reduce your in round adaptation options. This is because flipping the map in the first 15 seconds, or not moving for the first

minute are both hard commits. The center of the spectrum gives more options both offensively and defensively with players making less linear and less final moves around the map. For a quick explanation (if it isn't obvious) of the remaining archetypes beyond the Hyper Offense used in our breakoff example we have the following:

- The offensive style (**Offense**) is similar in many ways to Hyper Offense but with far less aggression and limitations. Because we are not hyper aggressively forcing a flip of the map or attacking beyond the 60 yard line for info, we can be more passive with our defensive backbone and perhaps play the same highlighted green area but with from p2/our side palms or doubling our hallway/cat steps. We are still getting the bomb down aggressively, but we are fighting to keep control of our side of the map to prevent the flanking and reverse aggression issues or avoid nade stacks.
- **Bulky Offense (Passive Offense)** would be something that would extend the green playable area back toward your own offensive spawn, and perhaps you don't go for the plant right away but rather take your time getting control of the site later into the round by having both of the original site players play through pool slowly and take control of A after using their tacs.
- **True Balance** would be something similar to offense but rather than choosing a site to take control of, you would as traditionally put "play for picks" spread the map and fight from your 35 yard line to theirs using safe peaks, nade stacks, and team shots. After getting a pick, you would approach either bomb site with numbers based on your strategic mid round adaptation.
- For the sake of argument and to move slightly away from the pokemon theme we can move straight on to **Stall**. The classifications don't really matter and you can call it whatever you want but Stall would be more commonly executed as a counter strategy adaptation. Say the team you're playing against is almost exclusively a hyper offense team. They will take space, plant fast, and almost always give you scams. Stall would be your response here. You wouldn't spread the map, you wouldn't cross the 25. You would sit down in your spawn and hold an iron. In doing so, you stall out the round and patiently wait for the opposing team to make a mistake. This is more common defensively and almost only ever beneficial if you are knowledgeable of your opponents on an individual and personal level with the confidence that they WILL make a mistake

It is important to have a playbook that covers a variety of these playstyle archetypes. Adaptation to the opposing team and counter-stratting will come easier if the playbook is pre-established and well practiced. That said, **DO NOT** give up what you are best at without reason. If you are traditionally a slow team, don't just throw a bunch of hyper offense plays together and run it down. Play to your strengths. A good team can manage all of these archetypes at a competitive level. But a great team is a master of 2 and can keep you guessing without forfeiting their talents or natural advantages. Remember to follow the steps I discussed in creating your strategies and think back to the archetype when making decisions about where individuals should go and how they should execute.

This segways quite nicely into the second point. Counter-Stratting.

- Counter-stratting is part of the preparatory phase in which a coach will take time to watch the next opponent's VOD on a particular map. In doing so, the coach will gain knowledge of pre-nades, bomb site

favoritism, post plant setups, timings, individual player habits and more. They can then take a condensed version of the information (to save time) or a full replay (for more in depth and combined analysis) back to their team before the match begins.

Counter-stratting includes far more than just seeing where the opposition goes and saying “hey they like going B”. How they do it, when they do it, how often, who does what, who carries the bomb, who runs a trophy. All of this info is helpful to ensuring the success of your defensive hold or offensive aggression.

Let’s get a little more specific on what your counter-stratting should look like. One of the most important factors in hard reading or counter-stratting the opposing team is to understand that no matter how much information or preparation you have, your read can be wrong, your counter-strat can fail. This is the reason why the majority of hard reads (as was stated previously) fall into a very specific version of the “stall” archetype of playstyle. It allows you to make your hard read, play for a specific counter, but not commit too deeply, in case your read is incorrect. The vast majority of hard reads are in game adaptations, once more specific information has been gathered from actually experiencing the strategy a team can more properly consider the solution. That said, the other pieces of preparation such as nade spots and wallbangs are made even more useful when used in the hard reading process. Pre-nades on a typical basis are useful for information and on occasion will get you an easy first blood. But when combined with a hard read, a pre-nade’s success rate skyrockets for inherent reasons.

Nades

When it comes to something like nade spots, it is beneficial to break the idea down into two categories. Pre-nades, which can be planned as part of a hard read/counter strat at the beginning of the round, or a mid round planned nade for retakes or to take an enemy off of a well known power position. In either case, it really comes down to taking the time out of your day to practice. Maybe it is boring, maybe you think you don’t need them. But every advantage helps. Using both of these categories of nade in SnD can be a benefit. Most people spend their time learning pre-nades and throw 5 or 6 in a game without getting a single hitmarker. Maybe the reads were bad, or maybe the timing was off. But saving nades and planning a stack post plant can be more effective and consistent. I recommend a variety of both on every map. The work on how to throw them will depend on the title, and your desire to learn.

Wallbangs

I am willing to freely admit now that I won't be giving any wallbangs on the current title out in this doc. The reason for this section to exist is pretty simple. Wallbangs are incredibly useful, but can also be incredibly detrimental. Though they will win rounds, or make rounds incredibly difficult for the opposing team either while planting or while defusing, they lack consistency. Strategies based entirely on these wallbangs function either 100% or 0%. There is no in between. If the plant never happens, the wallbang is useless. A wallbang, very similar to talent, is a multiplicative factor to success, but is not the answer. With this in mind it is likely a good idea to use one as a mid round adaptation to a different strategy. In attempting to be as vague as possible, let’s consider Vault for a moment. Because it is so common to plant A, many defensive teams will have a preventative, or at the very least a strategy to contest getting the bomb down on that site. Let’s say, mid round, you rotate out, and get the bomb down on B

instead. Choosing to plant for the art side of the map and taking art control to give yourself the opportunity to clutch with the wallbang is a sensible decision, whereas planning the entire strategy around immediately getting the bomb down on the opposition side and being able to cross to their spawn is both foolhardy and for lack of better phrasing, stupid.

Though it may seem absurd to mention and likely is self-evident at this point in Call of Duty's life cycle. I highly recommend you spawn into a private match with a friend and shoot through ANYTHING. I have seen players wallbang entire buildings, multiple buildings, but not be able to shoot through a car window. You truly won't know until you try.

Tips

While Search is a very adaptable mode, subjective in many instances to the situation you find yourself in, there are some general tips that will help boost that win loss ratio up to snuff:

- **Get together**: Search is a one life mode, the worst thing you can do is offer the opposing team an opportunity for 1v1s. This is especially true in clutch situations where the ONLY chance an outnumbered opponent has is to purposefully forgo that numbers advantage of your own accord and take fights alone.
- **Vary your tempo:** As was previously mentioned, one of the most important factors in strat choice is variability. Changing things up keeps the opposition on its toes, if they cannot get a read on what will come next, they will likely be unable to properly perform hard reads or overcommit to any single bomb site.
- **If it's broke, you don't always have to fix it**: What I mean by this statement is that sometimes when a play fails, it isn't because the play is bad, or because they have a hard read, sometimes it is just because you were unlucky. Maybe you made a mistake on your own part? In either case, when a play catastrophically fails, one of the first thoughts running through the enemy team's heads will be "wow they're not doing that sh*t again". Ladies and gentleman, we gottem. You're damn right we're going to do it again. Be confident in the fact that you won't make that mistake again, or that bad luck isn't a permanent state of existence. You are capable of making plays work and barring some fundamental issue, there is no reason to forgo that confidence for fear of failure. Try it again. You have 6 lost rounds to work with, don't be afraid to lose a couple.
- **Avoid overreliance -** This can be overreliance on anything really. A single strategy, a single pre-nade, a single power position, a single defensive setup, a single wallbang, or even individual talent. Part of the appeal to Search and Destroy is that so many amazing and unpredictable things can happen. At the end of the day that unpredictability is exactly what defeats overreliance. You have to remember that for every nade, wallbang, or strat you have, there are 4 players on the other team (maybe even a coach if good ones exist) that are all using, thinking, and planning their own.

It is entirely possible that more will come for this document, adaptations and edits included. But with what is currently within, I am confident absolutely anyone can find an answer to the question of improvement or performance. With that said I want to leave you with a story that has stuck with me for a long time, one that has influenced so much of how I approach my 16 hour days coaching 3 different teams across different regions, languages and meta games.Every day you can decide: 1% up. Or 1% down. You never notice it from day to day because it's such a small difference. Pick one area of your life you love. And improve it by 1%. It's the most important thing you will do today.

Written by someone being trained by Bruce Lee:

"Bruce had me up to three miles a day, really at a good pace. We'd run the three miles in twenty-one or twenty-two minutes. Just under eight minutes a mile" [Note: when running on his own in 1968, Lee would get his time down to six-and-a-half minutes per mile].

So this morning he said to me "We're going to go five."

I said, "Bruce, I can't go five. I'm a helluva lot older than you are, and I can't do five."

He said, "When we get to three, we'll shift gears and it's only two more and you'll do it."

I said "Okay, hell, I'll go for it."

So we get to three, we go into the fourth mile and I'm okay for three or four minutes, and then I really begin to give out. I'm tired, my heart's pounding, I can't go any more and so I say to him, "Bruce if I run any more," — and we're still running — "if I run any more I'm liable to have a heart attack and die."

He said, "Then die." It made me so mad that I went the full five miles.

Afterward I went to the shower and then I wanted to talk to him about it.

I said, you know, "Why did you say that?"

He said, "Because you might as well be dead. Seriously, if you always put limits on what you can do, physical or anything else, it'll spread over into the rest of your life. It'll spread into your work, into your morality, into your entire being. There are no limits. There are plateaus, but you must not stay there, you must go beyond them. If it kills you, it kills you. A man must constantly exceed his level."