

INTRO

Marvel Rivals is a game where you react.

Paladins is a game where you decide.

The difference in these design philosophies completely changes how much control you actually have over a match.

Seeing as these games are both hero shooters, I think it's fair that we can compare them, and to be completely honest, I've enjoyed playing Paladins more than Marvel Rivals; not to say that I don't enjoy Marvel Rivals, but the purpose of this video is to highlight what Rivals can pick up from Paladins that made that game (in my opinion) a unique, fun, (and less frustrating) experience.

If you're watching this video, I will assume that you already play Marvel Rivals, however, if you've previously played Paladins (or still play, the game is dead but the servers are still up if you want to give it a try) I'm sure you felt the difference in the way both games handle their team fights.

Rivals is built to be more accessible and fast paced, having less systems and rules in a match, but this makes them feel more chaotic. Team fights can last longer, and at times, feel like they just don't end, and in many cases, are messy from start to finish.

Paladins feels more structured, team fights feel coordinated and more reliant on teamwork, especially with the cauterize system present in every match.

This leads to a very important question:

What happens when a game removes complexity in order to make things faster and easier to play?

In this video I want to break down the key differences between these two games and show exactly what Marvel Rivals could learn from Paladins to make its gameplay deeper, more strategic, and honestly, more satisfying to play.

This isn't a "Paladins is better" video. And it's not a rant about Marvel Rivals. Because Rivals does a lot right. But at times, the fights can get exhaustingly long when compared to Paladins, where fights are much quicker and decisive all thanks to the system I mentioned previously: Cauterize. Which brings me to my first point.

Cauterize

So let's start with the titular Cauterize system. This used to be an item in the game's Item shop (which we will talk about later), but it was so important for the game that it was the item that everyone bought at the start of every game, leaving them with 3 other item slots instead of the intended 4. Because of this, cauterize was removed from the item shop and implemented into the system itself.

To explain what cauterize is exactly, it reduces the amount of healing you receive after taking damage. This triggers after you've taken damage from any character's basic attack and lasts for 1 second. Everytime you take damage from a basic attack, the duration resets. At the start of each match, cauterize would be active at 25% and gradually increase as the match goes on, stopping at a maximum of 90%

This would mean you are constantly being pressured and prevents any character from effectively being immortal through sustained healing, preventing situations like this:

[Insert video of a tank idling while all damage gets outhealed. If need be, host a custom match and have cnd, luna and invis keep hulk/thing alive from focused damage through healing]

I believe cauterize is important to incentivising teamwork and peeling for supports. Taking cover for at least one second would cleanse players off cauterize and allow supports to fully heal players. This would also incentivise supports to do more than healbotting.

Cauterize is also cause for team fights being much shorter, more decisive, and much more structured. (this would also prevent lord farming, because lets be honest, you have to earn those titles instead of farming for it).

This would force players to be more strategic and creative with their approaches to engaging in fights.

Understandably, this would bring about big changes in the meta, like a spike in importance for characters who can shield, which would block damage and allow for characters to cleanse cauterize and be fully healed without having to take cover.

This is what gives Paladins its structure. Because fights aren't just about who has more healing or more damage. They're about timing that pressure correctly. If your team is consistently dealing damage, you're not just lowering health bars— you're actively shutting down healing. Which means every fight has a natural flow. You engage, apply pressure, force someone low, and eventually, they have to back off because they aren't able to survive through constant damage, instead of fights dragging on endlessly. There's a clear moment where one team wins the engagement, and the other team has to disengage and reset. It makes fights feel cleaner. More readable. And a lot less chaotic.

This anti-heal system rewards teamwork in a very direct way. Because one person applying pressure isn't always enough, unlike when your whole team is coordinating damage. That's when healing really starts to fall apart and when targets become killable. At this point, it no longer becomes "Every man for himself". your team is contributing to a shared win condition.

And this is where support role becomes way more interesting. Because in Paladins, your job isn't just to heal through everything. You can't. The system doesn't allow it. Instead, you have to think about timing. You have to recognise when your team is under pressure and when they're actually safe to heal. You're watching for moments where Cauterize isn't active. Moments Where your healing will actually matter.

And because of that, supports do a lot more than just heal They Reposition, control space, and enable engages. They make decisions about when to commit resources and when to hold them.

They're actively involved in how the fight plays out and not just reacting to damage.

Now compare that to Marvel Rivals. Healing is much more consistent, reliable. And because of that, supports often default into just... healbotting. Which can make fights last longer— but doesn't necessarily make them more meaningful.

You end up in these situations where both teams are sustaining through damage, and the fight only ends when something extreme happens, like an ultimate, a mistake, or someone getting overwhelmed.

And this is where that difference in design philosophy really shows. Paladins creates limits, and those limits force players to work together, time their actions, and make decisions.

Marvel Rivals does not have these limits to make the game more accessible to play, but also makes fights feel less controlled.

Although, a system like cauterize would effectively make the anti-healing status effect useless; this is applied by hero abilities like Blades dash with his sword, Gambits spade card, and Venoms Ultimate. However, this can be easily rectified by replacing them with a debuff already found in the game: Vulnerability. This simply makes enemies take increased damage, and are already used by heroes like The Thing, Cloak and Dagger and Black Widows Ultimate.

Customization

Cauterize isn't the only system that makes Paladins unique. The biggest difference between these two games comes from how they handle customisation.

In Paladins, you don't just pick a character, you can build your playstyle using talents and loadouts. Marvel Rivals does not have either of these, but could execute them better than paladins did since, unlike paladins, you are able to swap to different characters in Rivals.

In Paladins, players don't have the option to adapt mid game by swapping characters, instead they have to use the item shop to do so (again, this will come up later), and they have to finish the game with exactly the same character, talent and loadout they've picked at the start of the match. In Marvel Rivals, adaptation comes from switching heroes. If your character isn't working into the enemy team, you're expected to swap.

Paladins allows you to build your playstyle. Marvel Rivals allows you to switch to adapt.

This works in Paladins is because of how layered its systems are. You have talents that can completely change how a character plays. You have loadouts that modify abilities, cooldowns, and survivability. You also have items that let you adapt mid-match to what the enemy team is doing. All of these systems stack together, which means one character can be played in multiple different ways.

The same support can be built for healing, or damage, or utility, sometimes even a hybrid of all three. So instead of a character being locked into one role, you define that role yourself. It's not just "who are you playing?", it's "how are you playing them?"

This is where skill expression really starts to open up. Success in Paladins isn't just about mechanics; it's about decision-making before the fight even begins. Choosing the right talent, building the right loadout, buying the right items, and understanding what your team needs and what the enemy team is trying to do. You're constantly making decisions that shape the outcome of the match.

From here on out, I will use my main from Paladins and Marvel rivals as an example to the things I will discuss: Mal'damba and Adam Warlock respectively

Now, I want to be honest, this is the part where I talk about Mal'damba's talents; but the characters kits in Marvel Rivals are already complex enough. So, I honestly think talents don't need to be considered when talking about stuff Rivals could pick up from Paladins, but they are still valid and could still work. So, where's the harm in discussing it anyway, we're allowed to have fun speculation sessions. If you aren't interested in hearing about talents in Rivals, you can skip to this point in the video [insert timestamp of when I'm done discussing talents].

Talents in Paladins are essentially different playstyles that changes a character's base kit. Every character starts with 1 talent and unlocks 2 more as they level that character. Mal'damba's abilities and talents are the following:

Abilities: (reworded for simplicity) [not voiced, just shown through gameplay]

Spitting Cobra - Fire a glob of venom from your cobra that deals 425 damage. Reloading tosses your cobra dealing damage and stunning the enemy if it hits. Applies cauterize on hit

Mending Spirits - Channel a quick healing beam at an ally at your crosshair location, restoring an amount of health over 3s. The Cooldown of this ability is reduced by 1.25s if you miss. This has infinite range

Gourd - Toss a potent alchemic gourd that explodes on the ground, dealing a small amount of damage every 0.2s to enemies and healing allies for the same amount every 0.2s.

Slither - Quickly slither forward, becoming Ethereal and avoiding damage for the duration.

Ultimate: Dread Serpent - Fire a dark vessel that explodes when it lands, causing all enemies close enough to flee in Fear at its sight.

Talents: [not voiced, just shown through gameplay]

Spirit's Chosen (Default Talent) - Mending Spirits heals an additional burst of Health instantly.

Ripened Gourd - Your Gourd deals no damage to enemies, but it Heals for twice as much.

Wekono's Wrath - Your Snake Toss projectile travels 60% faster and deals an additional burst of damage.

As seen above, Mal'damb's first talent is the default, providing decent healing with no sacrifice to damage, his second talent sacrifices damage for even more healing, and his last talent essentially turns him into a cc heavy DPS.

This allows players to choose different ways to play a character before a match; however, once chosen, a character and talent could not be swapped. In Marvel Rivals, a should talents be implemented into the game, the ability to swap to a different character should also allow players to swap to a different talent. This would allow players to adapt as the game goes on, and in a way, execute this system in a more forgiving way than Paladins did.

Now is the time where I have some fun coming up with talent ideas for Adam Warlock. His kit is pretty simple and does not really need much explanation. [I'm not putting the skills down again; I'll just show his skill list on screen]

Talent 1: Cosmic Rebirth – Adam warlocks' ultimate ability can now revive Allies more than once in its duration.

Talent 2: Lasting life stream – Avatar life stream now heals for a small amount for 3 seconds after the initial burst stream but no longer bounces between allies.

Talent 3: Adam Warlock now only has 1 use of his life stream instead of 2, however its healing amount is increased to a maximum amount depending on how much damage he does before using it.

These would allow Players to play Adam Warlock much differently each time depending on which talent they choose for him. Of course, these are only talents I've thought up on the spot for this section and may not exactly be good in an actual match. His first talent could encourage players to be more passive in a game, staying back and contributing to heals and small amounts of damage as a way to continuously farm ult charge. His second talent would allow him to play better as a pocket support, enabling and sustaining dive characters, or tanks holding the front line, and his last talent would incentivise him to play much more aggressively, allowing him to easily sustain himself or his team by continuously pumping damage into his enemies.

[end of the talents section]

[discuss skill cards and loadouts here]

Loadouts were the second half of the customization of the way players use their characters, and the part that I think would be more relevant to Marvel Rivals

So, what exactly is this system? Simply put, you have 4 cards for each ability that your character has, and you can put a total of 5 cards into your loadout. You have a total of 15 points to use to strengthen all of your cards, so naturally some cards will be stronger than another. For the purpose of this video, I will use 2 loadouts that I've built for Mal'damba: My support loadout, and my DPS loadout.

This is the build I use mainly for healing and utility:

[show build, explain what it does]

However, if I ever felt like I would rather be shutting enemies down with my stun reload, I would have to choose this DPS build before the match would start:

[show DPS build and explain what it does]

Although, unfortunately, once I've picked a loadout before the match starts, I will NOT be able to change this for the duration of the match. This is where I think Marvel Rivals would execute better. Since the game already lets you swap characters to adapt in the middle of the match, why not also let players swap loadouts to change the way you play your initial pick as well. This would allow for more unique and creative ways for people to play the game, allow for higher skill expression and allow players to create builds to better handle specific situations.

I won't make an entire card system for Adam Warlock here, but some examples of cards that could be of use to him would be: A card that would increase the healing of Soul Bond by 5%, and with each point assigned to this card, an extra 5% would be added to the damage reduction amount for a maximum of 25%

Or perhaps, a card that would increase his ultimate charge by 0.2% per hit with his charged shot.

Again, these might be broken when actually put into use, but these are also cards that I just came up with off the top of my head.

In Marvel Rivals, skill expression is much more focused on execution. Your aim, your positioning, and your ability usage. And while that's still skill, it's a narrower form of it.

Because of this, Paladins creates far more variety in how matches play out. You're not just seeing the same characters doing the same things every game. You're seeing different builds, different approaches, and different solutions to the same problems. Whereas in Rivals, once you understand what a hero does, that's the extent of that hero. And if your pick not working for the match, you'll either have to use an entirely different kit, or feed.

Of course, there can be different ways to play a character from their base kit, like a shotgun only punisher style, or a dive Peni Parker placing her nests behind the enemy and being a backline nuisance. Having a loadout would allow these characters to have builds specialized for this type of playstyle.

And once again, this ties back to player agency. Paladins gives you tools to adapt within your character. Marvel Rivals pushes you to adapt by leaving your character. One gives you control over how you play, the other gives you options on what to play.

And while that makes Rivals easier to pick up, it also removes a layer of depth that makes games like Paladins feel so rewarding over time.

Item Shop

The loadout system gives players control over how play their character, but once the game begins, those decisions are locked in. You can't change your talent, you can't change your build, and you can't swap characters. So, if something isn't working, you would need another way to adapt.

And that's where the item shop comes in.

If loadouts define how you play your character, the item shop defines how you respond to the match as it unfolds.

In Paladins, as the game goes on, players earn credits that can be used to purchase items. These credits would be earned via kills and healing. But most importantly they were also earned by staying on the objective. More often than not, you will find players pushing forward to chase kills and completely ignore the objective; this would either prolong the match or allow for it to be stolen back and force the attacking team to lose. In Paladins, you are rewarded 1 credit per second while staying on point, this would incentivise the team to stay on the objective. Although of course this would bring about the titular "Payload princess" archetype again; but I would argue that this would be better than the objective moving at a snail's pace unprotected, since it moves faster with the more people on it.

These items you buy with credits give you different advantages depending on the situation. You might buy items to increase movement speed, counter shields, or reduce crowd control. The important part is that you are constantly making decisions about what your team needs in that specific match.

Just as an idea of what the items in the game would offer you: [Show the item list and briefly explain what each one does]

However, you're limited in what you can buy. You can only hold four items at a time, which means you can't counter everything. You have to choose.

Do you want survivability?

Do you want more damage?

Do you want to more utility or to counter crowd control?

You have to decide what matters most in that moment, and that decision directly impacts how the rest of the match plays out.

This is what gives the item shop so much depth. It's not just about buying upgrades; it's about making trade-offs. You're constantly evaluating the enemy team, identifying the biggest threat, and deciding how to respond to it.

In Marvel Rivals, that type of decision-making doesn't really exist. Instead of adapting through systems, players adapt by swapping characters. And while swapping does solve the problem, it also replaces the need to think through it and be creative.

The game gives you an answer, instead of asking you to find one. Take for example, the newly added Tenacity system. Trigger conditions and the tenacity scaling are laid out in patch notes: 5.5s of CC duration or 6 effects in 7s; it purges CC and grants 30% tenacity which can scale to full CC immunity. It may not trigger very often, but

regardless, that doesn't change what it does: It gives players a get out of jail free card. Once this is triggered, it heavily impacts characters that rely on crowd control as part of their kit, like Rogue and Hulk in his ultimate form. More often than not, they will trigger tenacity simply from using their abilities or attacking, and players will get 3 seconds of cc immunity, completely mitigating the point of their abilities.

In Paladins, you don't get that kind of safety net. If something is causing problems, you have to respond to it using the tools you have. You have to make a decision, commit to it, and live with that choice.

Take for example resilience. This item at the max level, reduces the effects of cc by 75%. It doesn't make characters immune to crowd control, but it significantly reduces the effect of it. This would allow characters with cc built into their kits to still achieve the purpose of stopping the momentum of a player without the game straight up denying them this skill, and the victims of crowd control are still affected by it, but are no longer crippled or immune to it. Resilience simply makes it easier to deal with.

That's where player agency really comes in. The game doesn't automatically protect you or solve problems for you. It gives you options, but it's up to you to use them correctly.

Now, it's worth acknowledging that this system does come with limitations. Because you can only hold four items at a time, there are situations where you simply can't cover everything. You might need survivability and utility but also want cc reduction or ultimate charge. You can't have it all.

In theory, swapping characters in Marvel Rivals helps solve this. If your current pick can't handle the situation, you just switch to one that can. But there's a middle ground here.

Instead of relying entirely on swapping, a system like the item shop could exist alongside it, especially if players were allowed to respec their items during a match. This would let players adapt without completely abandoning their character, giving them more control over how they respond to different situations.

Of course, combining loadouts and an item shop would make the game more complex. It would add more systems for players to learn, which could make the game less accessible, especially for new players.

But that doesn't mean it shouldn't exist. A solution to this could be to separate these experiences. Keep the current version of Marvel Rivals as a more accessible "classic" mode, where players can jump in and play without needing to think about builds or items.

And then introduce a separate mode where systems like loadouts and an item shop are enabled. This would allow players who want more depth and control to engage with those systems, without forcing that complexity onto everyone else. However, I firmly believe that should this be added to the game, it should be a compulsory system in ranked.

At the end of the day, systems like loadouts and the item shop aren't just about adding complexity, they're about giving players more control. They allow for meaningful decisions, adaptation, and reward players for their creativity and understanding the game at a deeper level.

And that's something Marvel Rivals could benefit from without losing what makes it accessible in the first place.

Drafts and Bans

I don't have a transition into this section. In ranked Paladins, matches don't just start by throwing players into a hero select screen. There is a structured pick and ban phase, where both teams take turns banning and selecting characters before the match begins.

Bans are done in stages, and each decision matters. One team bans, then the other responds, and these decisions can influence what gets picked later on. It's not just about removing strong characters, it's about shaping how the entire match is going to play out.

This is what gives the system structure. There's a level of planning and strategy before the match even starts, and each of the highest-ranking players on each team are allowed to ban up to 4 characters of their choice (this amount is from the diamond + rank lobbies), for a combined total of 8 bans. This is not to say that the lowest rank players in the lobbies should not get a chance to ban; it's to introduce the idea of giving each player a chance to ban a character instead of leaving it up to a vote.

Now compare that to Marvel Rivals.

Instead of a structured system, Rivals uses a voting system where every player selects a hero they want to ban at the same time. The game then uses a probability system to determine which heroes are actually banned.

This creates a few major problems. First, bans aren't guaranteed, even if most of your team wants a specific hero banned, there's still a chance it doesn't happen. The system introduces randomness into what should be a strategic decision. Second, duplicate bans exist. If both teams vote to ban the same character, that counts as two bans used on one hero. This means fewer total characters are removed from the match. In some cases, you might end up with fewer bans than intended, simply because both teams picked the same target.

And third, everything happens at once. There's no back-and-forth. No adjustments. No reacting to what the other team is doing. Everyone votes at the same time, the system decides the result, and that's it. Granted, you aren't able to see what the other team picks, and you wouldn't need to; because when this was done in Paladins, you could see who the other team picks and could work towards banning a character before they pick it, or pick a counter to a character they've already chosen. This was mostly done because, we've established before, you aren't able to swap to a different character in the middle of a match. However, I still believe that we need a structured ban system in Marvel Rivals.

Comparing this to Paladins, where bans and picks happen in turns. One team bans, the other reacts. One team picks, the other responds. This creates a structured flow where each decision builds on the last one. And because of that, every choice matters more.

There's no randomness.

There are no wasted bans.

And there's always an opportunity to adapt your strategy before the match even begins.

This becomes even more important when you consider how large Marvel Rivals' roster is already becoming and will continue to grow. With more characters being added over time, the ability for each player to meaningfully contribute to bans becomes more valuable.

A system where players take turns banning would allow for more intentional decisions across the team. It would also allow for coordinated strategies, such as banning counters, protecting key picks, or forcing the enemy team into uncomfortable compositions.

In its current state, Marvel Rivals' ban system feels more like a suggestion than a decision.

In Paladins, it's the foundation of the match. Paladins gives players control over what the match looks like before it even starts.

Marvel Rivals reduces that control by introducing randomness and removing structure.

One system rewards planning. The other prioritises speed and simplicity.

Conclusion

And that's really what this whole discussion comes down to. This isn't about saying Paladins is the better game. Because it's not that simple.

Marvel Rivals does a lot of things really well. It's faster, more accessible, and much easier to jump into. You don't need to learn multiple systems just to start having fun, and not to mention it has a ton of very recognizable and loved heroes with more to come, and that's a big part of why it works.

But in simplifying those systems, it also removes something important - Player agency.

In Paladins, you are constantly making decisions, you decide how your character plays before the match even starts, you decide how to adapt as the game unfolds, you decide how to respond to the enemy team, and even before the match begins, you help shape what that match is going to look like.

In Marvel Rivals, a lot of those decisions are handled by the game itself. You adapt by swapping, you survive through built-in systems, you rely less on decision-making, and more on reacting in the moment.

And while that makes the game easier to pick up - it also makes it feel less controlled over time. That's why this isn't about making Marvel Rivals more complicated for the sake of it.

It's about giving players more ways to interact with the game. Systems like light itemisation, structured ban phases, or optional build paths through something like loadouts don't have to replace what Rivals already does well when they can exist alongside it.

You can keep the game accessible, while still giving players who want more depth the tools to explore it even if it through a separate quickplay mode.

Because the goal isn't to turn Marvel Rivals into Paladins and it's not to overload players with systems, it's to give players more control.