Topic	Drop Ships	Drop Zones
Match Time	15-20 Minutes	20-25 Minutes
Average RP Gain	200-300	50-150
Average Squads Ring 1	15	15
Average Squads Ring 2	8	12
Average Squads Ring 3	5	9
Average Squads Ring 4	3	7
Average Squads Ring 5	1	5
Average Squads Ring 6	1	3
	https://www.youtube.com/watc	Based on analysis of competitive

	h?v=w7AXym4YVJU&t=1s	ALGS Year 3 (2023) matches, particularly during high-level play such as the Split 2 Playoffs and Championship, the average squad count entering Ring 4 was approximately 12 to 15 teams.
https://algs.ea.com/en/news/pl-poi-drafts	https://algs.ea.com/year-6-rules.pdf	https://algs.ea.com/en/year-5/algs-open/standings https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wpvcvEamsFg

I have seen people arguing over Drop Ships and Drop Zones for a while now. My personal thought is that Drop Zones are leagues worse than Drop Ships. I am going to attempt to talk about every reason I can think of.

Around fall 2023, during the revenant rebirth event, I started to get into Apex. I played my first season pretty much solely in mixtape to get used to legends and guns, the next season I played in pubs to get used to the battle royale style, then the season after that I tried ranked and managed to get Platinum pretty easily. I managed it within the first 3-4 weeks, but stopped playing after that as I found it boring solo and I wanted to play some of the other games mentioned above. I decided a few seasons ago to play up to diamond, did it pretty handily, then stopped. Last season (season 27) I pretty much did the same thing. I got to diamond easily then stopped playing near as much. I averaged maybe 10-20 games per week last season. Total time played since I got into Apex is around 1700 hours, with the majority of that coming from season 20 when I put in over 1500 games. All of this is to say two things. Firstly is that I am very competitively driven, and secondly I have played plenty in both the Drop Ships and Drop Zones style of gameplay, enough to have a valid input on the systems and game styles.

Here I am going to go over the issues I have with Drop Zones. After that I will bring up the issues I have seen others having with Drop Ships.

Drop Zones were brought into Apex during August 2025, Season 26. This is the quote on Drop Zones by Respawn: "Drop Zones will start Ranked matches faster and fairer with squads automatically spread out across POIs. Before the match starts, you'll see a preview of your Drop Zone with a ping-able map for strategic co-ordination before locking in your Legends. Loot has been fairly distributed across POIs, so no Hot Zones here. Keep your head up, though. There's always the chance a neighboring squad will contest by skydiving in. Loot has been fairly distributed across POIs

Dev Note: Ranked matches should allow you to get into the match before it's over—bad drops can ruin that and lose you RP. Drop Zones means that all players will land at relatively the same time and have a shot at survival without waiting for the Dropship to unload. Contested drops are still possible, but limited and manageable: no more will half the lobby drop on the same POI. You'll get the best chance at loot in your assigned Drop Zone, but efficient looting is still important in case enemies invade"

POI-Point of Interest
ALGS-Apex Legends Global Series
LCQ-Last Chance Qualifier
PQ-Preseason Qualifiers
There was also a mention of the Drop Zones having the intention of making Ranked gameplay more similar to ALGS.

My issues with Drop Zones are plentiful. The first of these I want to bring up is the claim that Drop Zones were supposed to make ranked feel more similar to ALGS. Before it can be determined

if this is the case however, there needs to be an understanding of how ALGS functions.

ALGS, in regards to the dropping system, works as follows:

For Pro League Split 1, invited Teams and at least eight Teams that qualified from the Online Open are seeded in a snake draft by the following order of priority: Invited Teams, ALGS Year 5 Championship Finishing Rank, ALGS Year 5 Midseason Playoffs Finishing Rank, ALGS Year 5 Split 1 Playoffs Finishing Rank, Average ALGS Year 5 Pro League Split Ranking if the Team participated in both Splits, ALGS Year 5 LCQ Finishing Rank, ALGS discretion. Teams that qualified by winning an Online Open will be seeded by the date in which they won an Online Open, with earlier dates earning a higher seed and Teams that qualified via Total PQ Points will be seeded based on Total PQ Points.

A player designated as a "team captain" for their team will join a discord channel, and based on seeding will choose a POI they want their team to drop at across any of the maps that are being competed on. After every team has selected a POI, the order will be reversed and the selections will continue. Each team must pick a location on each map.

There is also a legend banning system that needs to be brought up. It works as follows: All legends will be available to select in the first match of a series, and after each match, the legend picked by the most Teams in that match will be removed from the pool of available legends for the remainder of the series. If an entire class of legends (e.g., Assault, Skirmisher, Recon, Support, Controller) are set to be removed at any point during a series, the legend from that class that has been banned the longest will return to the pool of available legends.

Now getting into Ranked gameplay. The way ranked worked in the Drop Zone system was as follows. Player(s) would join the game, a POI would be selected for them "randomly" across the map, they would pick legends, then drop at the POI at the same time as all other players. While there are clearly issues here, along with many nuances, I want to first go over the similarities. In both formats the players get dropped simultaneously across the map with no contests (two teams dropping at the same POI to fight) occurring. This is pretty much where the similarities end.

The first of the two clear differences in these systems is that Professional teams, even if they are later in the draft, get to have input as to where they are going to land. They can determine based on seeding what map they have the best chance of winning on, they get to pick a POI that they at the very least think will give them a higher chance at winning, and they then get to practice landing at that POI for looting patterns, best rotations, and what characters compliment their gameplay from those locations.

In Ranked gameplay, players will get dropped at a preselected POI with no input as to where they are landing nor a way to effectively plan looting patterns and rotations. The claim was that the map showing you your landing location would allow for planning, but you got to view the map for maybe 15 seconds total. This is not enough time for a group of randoms or players without microphones to effectively communicate and agree upon the best methods for landing, looting, getting evo, and rotating. For prebuilt squads, this is still almost an impossible task. Even with microphones, getting forced to land at a POI

that you do not normally go to will lead to confusion, poor looting patterns in which some players loot behind another or leave some places unlooted, and panic in trying to rotate afterwards. There are also some examples in which the POI does not have enough loot for a full squad such as Trident or Trails on Storm Point. As for rotating, ALGS teams getting to pick their POI allows for preparation, planning, and experience when leaving the POI. They also get to determine which places are more difficult to get out of and which are more likely to give them a better chance at winning. In the preselection method of ranked, players can get forced into certain POIs that are inferior in both loot quantity AND rotational capabilities. As an example of this, I would like to compare Cenote Cave to Zeus Station. As Storm Point is not currently in the map rotation and I do not have 30 people readily available to start a match with, I cannot give exact numbers for loot. This is coming from experience in that Cenote Cave is inferior to Zeus Station. Cenote Cave is located on the Southwest corner of Storm Point and on average has poor loot (quantity) spread across a relatively large POI. It also has a spider cave to fight should players want to engage with those. The rotational options are either East through standing water into Barometer, North through standing water and open ground into Armory Basin, or Northwest uphill into The Mill. The POI is also relatively covered, meaning that even should a player find an Evac Tower or scan a ring console, likely they will not have a place for the Evac Tower to place leading them to either walk in search for a place to use their survival item, or give up on flying and walk into a nearby area.

Zeus Station is located in the Northeast corner of Storm Point, a complete opposite location to Cenote Cave. It is a smaller POI, about half the size of Cenote Cave. It on average has equivalent if not more looting locations than Cenote, and much better rotational capabilities. From Zeus Station you are capable of walking South to either Lightning Rod or Command Center, or you can walk East to The Wall. Not only this, but there is a Jump Tower to allow you to fly almost to Cascade Falls or past Storm Catcher near the jump cannon which takes you right beside Launch Pad.

Cenote Cave is clearly a worse POI than Zeus Station. Hands down. The drop system forcing players to land in this location is hindering them compared not only to the teams around them, but also to the teams across the map. In the recent ALGS finals in which this POI Draft system was used, the team that selected Cenote Cave took home 18th place overall. Even professionals (Virtus Pro here) cannot make this POI work. In game one they got last, they managed first in game 8, and then 18th in game 9, the final game. The team that landed at Zeus Station, NinjasinPyjamas, managed to finish in 8th place overall. This evidence is solely to show that the POIs on the maps are not equivalent. As for what comes from this and how to fix it will come up later.

The second difference is the Legend Banning system. Each game in ALGS, the most picked legend gets removed from the data pool. This was to force teams to play different compositions and to show some more exhilarating gameplay. The legend banning system does not occur in gameplay at all. This is likely due to the system being too complex to officially

implement, as I am pretty sure even in the Pro series it is relying on the pros to not select the legends instead of making the legends unplayable. As for the "showing some more exhilarating gameplay" comment, a timeline needs to be established. On June 1st, 2024 (Year 4 Split 2), the POI draft system was added. The legend ban system was added at the start of ALGS Year 5, February 2025. The POI draft system was added to allow the professionals to be on a more equal playing field. They still get to select their POI, but they do not have to worry about contests as much, nor do they need to worry about getting a bad dropship for their POI. Overall it was to make ALGS more fair and more competitive. The legend ban system was added to make gameplay more exciting, and to force the professionals to break off from the META.

 Now I have a question. So POI Drafts (ALGS Drop Zones equivalent) were added, then in the next ALGS season a system to make gameplay more exciting was added? Why would they need their professional gameplay to be more exciting after just adding an entirely separate drop system that not only made games more fair overall, but allowed for more professionals to be alive at a time to fight at once? I also have an answer for this question. It is because even this ALGS equivalent of Drop Zones is incredibly boring. Spectators were losing interest as games all turned out the same way. A defensive team composition would move into the safe area before hiding and playing for their life for the rest of the game. It made professional gameplay stale and boring, so in the following season 8 months later they added a system to keep pros from playing solely defensive compositions. Requiring Pros to use characters more adept to fighting. In ALGS Year 4, the pick rate for the highest

three team compositions was 65.65% (Gibraltar, Newcastle, Rampart), 15.51% (Catalyst, Gibraltar, Newcastle), and 10.29% (Gibraltar, Newcastle, Valkyrie). In ALGS year 5 it was 5.39% (Alter, Catalyst, Newcastle), 3.17% (Ash, Crypto, Fuse), and 2.68% (Ash, Ballistic, Crypto). In Year 4 the most used team compositions made up a total of 91.45% of teams. In year 5, the total was down to 11.24%. The highest Legend Pick Rates in Year 4 were 99.78% for Gibraltar, 95.8% for Newcastle, and 69.42% for Rampart. In Year 5 the most picked legends were Ash at 30.36%, Crypto at 29.04%, and Fuse with 27.85%. To understand this, I am going to go into detail for each of these Legend Kits and Team Compositions.

Gibraltar- Gibby is one of three legends in the game with the fortified ability, in which he takes 15% reduced damage. Gibby is part of the "Support" Class. His passive is a gun shield, whenever he aims down sights, he gets a gun shield which will block 50 incoming damage. His tactical is an impenetrable bubble, and his Ultimate is an Air Strike.

Newcastle- The second of three legends with the Fortified ability. Also takes 15% reduced damage. Within the "Support" Class, has the capability to throw a mobile shield to take hits for him and his team. Can also place a large wall with the capability of stunning any enemy that walks into it, knocking back opponent legends when it gets placed, and blocking all projectiles for the first few seconds while it is charged. Is the only legend able to revive teammates while moving, and does so using a shield. Shield durability is based on the Knockdown Shield level.

Valkyrie- Prior to September 17th, 2024, Valkyrie was a Skirmisher Legend. Post that date, she is a recon legend. This

will go over her as a Recon Legend. Valkyrie is part of the "Recon" Class. She has the abilities of flight using a jetpack and the ability to fly her entire team using her Ultimate Launch ability. She can fly as well as, if not more effectively than an evac tower. Her Tactical ability is the capability to fire a spread of rockets over an area. The spread amount has changed multiple times in the last two years, so the exact numbers will not be listed. On average 15-20 rockets get fired.

Rampart- Rampart is part of the "Controller" Class. She is capable of placing down walls that allow for bullets to deal bonus damage when coming out of one side, but to reflect bullets coming from the other. A recent update during Year 5 gives her walls a ceiling as well. She has the passive ability that gives any LMG she holds more ammo, and the ultimate ability of a minigun.

Alter- Alter is part of the "Skirmisher" Class. She has the passive ability to steal one item from any deathbox within a certain range. She also is able to phase through walls up to 30m thick, placing a portal in which other players can follow through. She also has the ultimate ability to Place down a totem in which players on her team can teleport back to at any time should they be in the radius of it. Teleporting leaves a portal on the ground for others to use temporarily.

Catalyst- Catalyst is part of the "Controller" Class. She has the ability to barricade doors that other players cannot open, as well as giving them more HP, she can place down spikes on the ground that pop up only when an opponent gets close, and she can place a large wall in front of her that will blind any enemy that walks through it for a few seconds.

Ash- (Was an assault prior to rework in season 24) Ash is a legend in the "Skirmisher" class. Ash has the passive ability to dash in any given direction, giving her a sudden burst of speed. She has the tactical ability to throw a snare, trapping any player inside of it temporarily. She also can use her ultimate, a one way portal in a straight line.

Crypto- Crypto is a unique legend in the "Recon" Class. He has a drone of which all of his abilities revolve. His passive allows his drone to scan people, the ability to fly his drone is his tactical, and his ultimate is an EMP that damages all electronics and shields in the area.

Fuse- Fuse is a legend in the "Assault" Class. He has the capability of carrying extra grenades and firing them further than all other legends. He also has knuckle clusters, in which they hit a target, stick to it temporarily, and start doing tick damage for a few seconds. His ultimate was a ring of fire that covers a moderate sized area, scanning anyone inside and harming anyone (except teammates) and slowing anyone who steps into the fire.

Ballistic- Ballistic is a legend in the "Assault" Class. He has the capability of carrying three weapons at a time, more than any other legend in the game. He has the passive ability of a whistler, an automatically targeting bullet which deals 20 damage and applies an overheat to the opponent's weapon. Should the weapon overheat, the player would take an additional 30 damage, as well as not be able to fire their weapon temporarily. His ultimate ability would increase the movement speed and weapon handling of his entire team.

Now for team compositions. I will alternate between Years 4 and 5.

Gibraltar, Newcastle, Rampart- The point of this team was to play ultra defensive. Rampart would create walls for cover from which her team could shoot through for bonus damage, the Newcastle ultimate Wall would make sure grenades stayed out as well as giving more cover, and Gibraltar would use his impenetrable bubble to block opponents from shooting his team at all. His Ultimate could also be used defensively to create space and allow his team time to reset should they need it. (Spoiler, They didn't)

Alter, Catalyst, Newcastle- The point of this team was pure defense. The Catalyst could lock down buildings, but her ultimate would allow her team to walk through more wide open areas while still blocking the LOS of any opponents on the opposite side of it. The Alter would place her Ultimate in whatever location the Catalyst locked down, allowing the team to have a fallback whenever they needed it. From here the Newcastle could either use his ultimate to generate more cover for his team, or he could save it should a teammate go down. He can use the ultimate to jump on his teammate, allowing him to revive them. The team with a good fallback to defend, would then have the capability of playing as aggressive as they liked. Allowing any number of players to go aggress any opponents in the area, and if someone gets knocked, they can either force a revive with Newcastle or teleport back to the fallback, revive their teammate, and reset while holding their position.

Catalyst, Gibraltar, Newcastle- The Point of this team was relatively the same as the previous one, however Catalyst is

slightly worse at locking down spaces compared to Rampart, but in return being able to allow her team to rotate more easily.

Ash, Crypto, Fuse- Crypto here functions as the Anchor of this team. His drone combined with his invisibility allows him to fly around in his drone and both scan and damage enemies while still being able to respawn his teammates from any location within 200 meters of himself. The Fuse here allows the team to both pressure opponents and lockdown space. The knuckle clusters can force players to leave an area lest they want to take 100 or so damage. He also could throw grenades further, allowing him to be more accurate with them. His ultimate could be used both as a trap for some players, but also as a wall to keep opponents away from him and his squad. This method is commonly used indoors to keep squads from walking through multiple instances of fire simultaneously. The Ash on this team functions as Mobility. Her passive allows her to move ahead of the team, giving both of her allies a speed boost towards her. She also has her ultimate to clear large gaps, forcing her team into a new location suddenly. It can be a good escape or a good rotational tool. Her snare can also stop opponents from chasing her or her team. She is also much better at fighting than any other legend so far, as she gains 50 health or shield upon knocking down a player.

Gibraltar, Newcastle, Valkyrie- This team has a slight twist. Valkyrie is used to get her team into the safe area, from which they will sit in a defensible location until they are required to move. From here they will fly to their next location. Gibraltar and Newcastle do the same as previously mentioned.

Ash, Ballistic, Crypto- Crypto and Ash still function the same, but Ballistic rewrites how this team plays the game. Ballistic is

one of the best fighting legends in the game. His whistler being able to effectively eliminate a player from fighting temporarily and his ultimate giving his team better weapon handling and movement speed allows for his team to fight almost anything.

As anyone can see, the Year 4 teams were all built around defense. Finding or making cover and locking down the area. The Year 5 teams do have a defensive Composition, but it is rooted in offense. The Alter composition allows the team to be as aggressive as they want with the only limit being how many heals they have. The Ballistic and Fuse teams are much more geared for fighting as well. Compare the legend classes and the same can be seen. In year 4 there were 6 Supports, 1 Recon, and 2 Controllers. In Year 5 there were 3 Skirmishers, 1 Controller, 2 Recons, 1 Support, and 2 Assault Legends. Overall a more aggressive META compared to previous seasons.

In Year 3, the META was again different. Bangalore and Horizon being two of the most picked characters. Year 4 was just so incredibly defensive, boring, and stale. Every team was just hiding for the entire game. This is the same split that introduced the POI Draft system. This META is what Drop Zones was based on. This incredibly boring and Defensive META which required the head of ALGS to institute a new rule saying the most used legend will be banned after each game so as not to tank their viewership even more is what Drop Zones was inspired by.

Now to look at how well the Drop Zone system functions comparatively to POI Draft. The Drop Zone system is without a doubt a watered down, worse, and less fair version of the POI

Draft system. As mentioned before the players in the Drop Zone system have no input on where they land and some POIs are inferior to others both in loot and rotational capability. Other than that, it produces very similar results. The games almost always go until the very last ring, there are consistently hoards of players left regardless of which ring it currently is, and players fight, but don't kill. Drop Zone games almost exclusively end with players having thousands of damage and less than 10 kills. Most winning teams (from my experience) have around 15 total.

From here I am going to go into my personal issues with the Drop Zones system.
The first point I would like to bring up is that it cut out a significant portion of the gameplay loop. What is a gameplay loop? It is part of the experience every player has every time they play the game. For something like Rocket League this would be kickoff, shoot, defend, score. For Apex, this looks a little more like, select legend, fly to POI, loot, rotate, fight. The issue is this "fly to POI" section. The Drop Zones system completely cut this out. Players instead of having to choose a POI that works best for them and going to it, they instead get the decision made for them and just fall to the ground starting from a fixed point above their POI. The Drop Zone Ships are too low to the ground, and since you start with 0 speed, you cannot make it to certain places in the larger POIs such as Rift. This effectively cuts flying out of the guaranteed gameplay loop for players. Flying is an important part of the game, as shown both in general gameplay and in season 28 since Drop Ships have returned temporarily. Players flying in general gameplay are

unable to fly as well as they need to, sometimes with this being the difference between life and death. In landing, players are unable to fly to reach the POIs they are looking for now that Drop Ships are back. Cutting out such an essential part of this game is not healthy for player skill and growth.

This leads into the next issue which comes from a quote in the patch notes. It reads as follows. "There's always the chance a neighboring squad will contest by skydiving in." and a Dev Note says " *Contested drops are still possible, but limited and manageable... but efficient looting is still important in case enemies invade*". These are pretty much lies. The Drop Zone Ships as mentioned above are so low to the ground, sometimes you cannot even reach parts of your own POI, much less another one. And even should you insist on dropping at another POI, you will be so late that by the time you have a weapon, the other team will be geared and ready to fight.

I would also like to mention this section of the Patch Notes: *Drop Zones means that all players will land at relatively the same time and have a shot at survival without waiting for the Dropship to unload.* This section interprets as "It is impossible for all players to have a fair shot at survival with Drop Ships." Not true. Every other game in the genre, and Apex for more than six years used a drop ship system and it worked fine. Everyone has a shot at survival, it is up to the player to make the right decisions to do so.

This is one of the bigger issues I have with the system. "with squads automatically spread out across POIs." This does not claim the POIs are random, and come time for people to play the game, multiple players including myself are experiencing non-random drops. I made a spreadsheet. Most of the games

are on Olympus. I have 47 games on record. I landed at Turbine, Estates, Oasis, Hammond Labs, Dockyard, and Gardens once, Phase Driver, Fight Night, Somers University, and Solar Array twice, Power Grid and Hydroponics three times, Bonzai Plaza, Gravity Engine, and Rift four times, and Stabilizer, Carrier and Grow Towers 5 times. I was more likely to land at a POI twice than I was to land at it once. If it were random, across 47 games with around 23 possible drop locations, I should have landed at every location twice on average. Instead I never got to play from certain POIs and was forced to play from others multiple times in a row. The odds of landing at the same POI twice in a row should be .001 (.1%), three times should be .00008 (.008%), and four times should be .000003 (.0003%). Yet even with these odds, I manage to beat them by landing Stabilizer 4 times in a row then landing Rift 3 times in a row the next day. (2.9e-10) That isn't random. Not even close.

I would also like to mention this- *Ranked matches should allow you to get into the match before it's over—bad drops can ruin that and lose you RP.*   If players drop poorly, that is on the player. They need to learn from their mistake and not make it again. Not allowing players to make mistakes means they will not learn how to properly play the game. This is the exact opposite of what you want from a ranked gamemode. If a player is consistently losing RP, it is because they do not deserve to be in the rank they are in. These players are getting punished for playing out of their depth. The ranked system functions as a way to sort out these players automatically. The rank binning system also completely nullifies the rank system, allowing players to get to ranks they are not good enough to earn. What

is rank binning? Rank binning is something based on a hidden MMR value in the game files that puts players in games with other players with a similar value.

Here is an example. Say there are two friends. This season, they decide to play ranked separately. Player 1 we will say has an mmr value of 1. Player 2 we will say has a value of 100. Player 1 will play through silver, gold, and up into platinum only playing against opponents with an mmr value near 1. Player 2 will undergo the same process, but the opponents will have a value of 100. Now lets say once they reach platinum they decide to play together. The game puts players in games against players with the higher mmr value, so even though player 1 has an mmr value of 1, he will be in a game of mmr value 100 players. This puts the entire team at a disadvantage. The lower ranked player will be playing completely out of his depth and the higher ranked player will have a teammate that cannot keep up. This rank binning system leads to players earning ranks they do not deserve. Player 2 is clearly better than Player 1 based on mmr value, but due to the rank binning system, they both made it up into platinum. As you get into higher ranks, there are less people playing the game however, meaning that the bin size will grow larger and larger. This means that even in random queue, players with values of 1 and 100 can be paired in higher ranks. This system leads to some players being in lobbies they cannot compete in and other players having teammates that cannot keep up. Remove rank binning. Let players earn their actual ranks.

In the same line with rank binning, I would like to bring up this. *no more will half the lobby drop on the same POI.* This is not

something that I have experienced much at all in my time playing Apex Ranked. Only occasionally in low ranked games at the start of the season does this even have a chance at occurring. If players are complaining about too many players landing in the same place, it is up to the developers to figure out WHY. Is it only happening in certain ranks? Yes? We need to adjust something for that rank. No? Then there must be something about the location itself. It could be rotations, loot, or just that so many people are landing there. But if you either make the location worse to loot (or rotate from) or make other places on the map better to loot (or rotate from), this will become a non-issue. As an aside to this, I have seen many players online stating that certain areas of the maps do not get explored very much at all. If this is the case and it is determined to be a problem, the developers need to look at the locations that are being ignored and figure out what they can do to make players want to go there. The solution to players not experiencing what you made is not to take away their agency and force them to experience it anyway. The solution is to make players WANT to experience what you made. The same goes for food. If someone doesn't like the food you made, you cannot force them to eat it. In fact, that would be illegal. The same applies here (except for the legality).

Next I want to mention a point on looting. The patch notes stated *You'll get the best chance at loot in your assigned Drop Zone.* Loot has been fairly distributed across POIs." From experience, this does not ring true for me. I consistently spend a majority of my games running around with a gray backpack, five stacks of ammo, and little to no heals. I have even had games where I was finding more Amps than heals. This is not to

say I was finding many Amps, at most 3-5 early game, but I just was not finding heals.

Next I would like to continue talking about the issues I have with player quantities. As mentioned previously, the Drop Zone system leads to massive amounts of players at all times. The issue with this is fighting. Because there are so many squads, and players are recognizing this, early game fights rarely happen. If they do, the fight almost always gets third, fourth or fifth partied. Say the Stabilizer team pushes into Fight Night. Upon hearing shots, the teams at Carrier, Power Grid, and Terminal will all rush to the area. This immediately consolidates a quarter of the map in one POI (so much for stopping mob fights, right?). Because there are so many players here, fights normally go in one of two ways. Squads play from a distance, getting damage, before slowly backing out of the fight one at a time. This normally only ends with 1-2 squads dying per fight. (Hey, if the first ring closing leads to 15 or so squads left, and these fights are taking up a quarter of the players each, and these fights are happening all over the map, we figured out why there are that many players left!). The other option is that the first two squads go at it hard enough that one squad wins the fight before immediately getting third/fourth/fifth partied. This again leads to 1-2 squads dying. In both of these scenarios, even though 15 players are fighting, very few of them die with almost all of them getting some good damage. This leads to games where players consistently have purple armor because they have 1000+ damage with near 0 kills. Over and over again this occurs. People are fighting so much, but because of that, all players fighting recognize how many other players are fighting and then back away. This thought of "I should not be fighting

this" is not a thought you want the entire lobby to be thinking in a shooter game. This mentality leads to very few squads dying, meaning squads are only fighting when they are absolutely forced to by the ring. This also becomes an issue. The ring is there solely to MAKE squads fight. The issue is when it is the only thing making squads fight. If players are trying so hard not to shoot in a shooter game that games are almost always ending in the final ring, there is a design flaw.

I think that this entire Drop Zone system was hasty, unwarranted, and unhealthy.
To start with hasty, the entire system comes across as unpolished. For the entirety of season 26 and for the first half of season 27, 3/4ths of the time this system was implemented, the announcer was not even properly calling out the POI you were landing at. The voice line would end at "Your squad is landing at". Next is the lack of randomness I mentioned earlier. If players are not equally likely to get a good location as opposed to a bad one, then how is that gameplay supposed to be, and I quote "fairer"? If I am more likely to land at a location like Dome, Cenote Cave, or Devastated Coast as opposed to Zeus Station, Trials, or Lightning Rod, then that means the game is being biased against me. That is the exact opposite of fair, what was claimed to be the goal of this. Changing the entire drop system, something that is used again across every other game in the genre, only warranted two short paragraphs? You changed the way the entirety of Apex Ranked would work going forward with this change and barely gave it the time of day? Auras, the cosmetic that shows other people your rank, which is USELESS IN A GAME THAT MATCHES YOU AGAINST

PEOPLE YOUR OWN RANK got more text than this drop system. There are also only 4 possibilities for the inspiration for Drop Zones. Either the start of Year 4 Split 2, the end of Year 4 Split 2, The start of Year 5, or the end of Year 5 split 1.

If it was inspired by the beginning of Year 4 Split 2 (June 1, 2024), that means they immediately took the idea without seeing if it worked in pro play. But it does give them 14 months to prepare and play test this system. Unlikely considering the issues above.

If it was inspired by the end of Year 4 Split 2 (Sept 1 2024) then that gives them 11 months to add the system after seeing it in professional play. That means they would have seen how slow and boring pro play had become and decided to rip the system out and jam it into ranked anyway. (This is the best of the 4 for respawn).

If it was inspired by Year 5 Split 1 (February 2025) then it would give Respawn 6 months to steal the system and play test. This also means that they would have seen the addendum rule for legend bans to make the game enjoyable at all, but not waiting to see what difference it made. And still adding the Drop Zones system to Ranked.

The final possible inspiration time is post February 2025-June 15, 2025. Any time from here (We will go with the latest option) gives Respawn 5 or less months, for the complete end of Split 1 being 2 months. This is barely enough time to playtest such a drastic change to gameplay. This also gives them time to see that the system was boring, that the Legend Ban system was required to make it enjoyable, and STILL adding Drop Zones with no other systems in place.

I should not have to explain how poor of an idea it is to design such a fundamental system from the ground up based on the most boring season of professional play, nor should I need to explain why barely spending time on it at all is a bad idea. Whichever way this came to fruition, it does not work.

As for unwarranted, there were no real issues with ranked that needed to be solved this way. One of the main reasons I have seen that Drop Zones were added was to help with solo players gameplay experience. The issue is multifaceted however. Firstly, players have been giving Respawn ideas on how to fix solo experience for YEARS now. Secondly, there were plenty of these ideas from the community that did not involve rewriting the fundamental system of the battle royale genre. People have asked for the disallowance of certain ranked players to be limited to only 1-2 players in a party before queueing, a separate gamemode for solos/duos, or anything to keep Apex Predator 3 stacks from running rampant.

As for the unhealthyness of the system, that is the point of the majority of this script. It does not make gameplay fair, leads to people not actually fighting in a game designed for fighting, and makes overall gameplay boring and defensive.

Now I want to mention every issue I have seen people having with Drop SHIPS.

1. Solo Queueing sucks because teammates split off and die.
2. Solo Queueing sucks because you can get run over by Predator 3 stacks
3. There are not enough squads remaining, especially after the first ring closes.
4. Games are less competitive with less players in the lobby.

5. Games are too quickly paced
6. Some POIs never get visited
7. Players are supposed to Adapt

Solo Queueing sucks. Regardless of the drop system. With Drop Zones, while your teammates may not be able to land into a mob of people, they will still run at every fight they can later in the game. If people want to play aggressively, they will regardless of the system. The solution here instead is for the players complaining to play differently. I do not prefer playing any game solo, as I find solo gameplay in any game boring, Apex included. But I have done it. And I can still manage to go positive regardless of my rank. Play a defensive character or supportive character and spend the game keeping your team alive. A Crypto, Alter, Wattson, or any character with support perks can do this. Just play as an anchor. I have seen plenty of players running snipers in multiple games across multiple seasons. Use a character designed to help your team stay alive instead of trying to make other squads die out when solo queued.

Anyone can get run over by predators. It happens all the time. The solution is for better matchmaking, not rewriting the fundamental system.

As for the quantity of squads during the game, I personally am not experiencing this issue. I played only around 20 games before getting out of Silver during the Season 28 ranked reset. In that time only twice were there a less than 10 squads ring 1 or 7 ring 2. Every other time, both in Silver and up to my current rank of Gold 1, this did not occur. In fact, I was consistently having games with more than 15 squads post ring

1, 10 post ring 2, and more than 7 going into rings 3-4. All of these games have had a normal count of players throughout gameplay with endgames having 3-5 squads rings 4-5 on average. Games are not necessarily going to ring 6 in every game as they were in Drop Zones. The games are still lasting 15-20 minutes on average instead of going until the final ring closes. The competition is still there without the overcrowding of squads that refused to fight for the majority of the game. Game competition being determined by player quantity is a misunderstanding. Competition is not equivalent to more players. Fortnite is not more competitive than Apex because there are 100 players in the lobby instead of 60. In Apex, having so many squads at all times the way Drop Zones were making games go was leading to people poking instead of fighting. This led to more squads late in the game since no one pushed and no one died. By the time you get to an end game in rings 4-6, if there are too many squads and the ring pulls the wrong way you just lose. With so many squads games come down to fate at a certain point. Luck determining the winners is not competitive. Competition comes from equivalent skilled players actually fighting for the win. It does not come from the entire lobby flying to a building to hold, camp, and poke from. Some teams will do this, but it should not be the standard for gameplay especially not for two seasons (now three). I am not saying every player needs to push everything, nor am I saying Macro does not matter. It absolutely does. In fact going back to a previous point, Macro involves rotations. With so many players in the lobby, you cannot effectively Macro without flying. If you are dropped on the Edge of the map, you can get screwed over pretty easily by squads holding choke points.

Think Landing Downed Beast and needing to move into Checkpoint. The Mills squad can hold the choke north of Mills, the North Pad team can keep you from moving up, the Wall or Trident teams can hold the Choke past the North Pad team, and the team at checkpoint can hold the choke east of North Pad. The game should not be coming down to luck when it comes to Macro decisions.

Games are not too quickly paced either. See the points above. In my experience, even in lower lobbies games are going to rings 4-5 consistently, sometimes even going to ring 6. That is 20-25 minutes of gameplay. The difference is that people are actually fighting and playing the game during that time instead of only looting, camping, and poking.

Some Places on maps do not get visited near as often as others. This is true. Places in the center of the Map will get visited more as players are more likely to rotate through them (think Cascade Falls). This is not what is meant by this. This comment comes from the idea that players are not landing at certain POIs enough when the options present themselves. An example of this would be my lack of want to land at places like Cenote Cave or The Dome. But the issue goes deeper than players not visiting these areas. The issue is WHY players are not visiting/landing at these locations. The players are not going to these locations because they are WORSE. There is always a reason. It could be that loot is bad, it could be that rotations are bad, it could be that the team values KP more and wants to land contested meaning they cannot go to the location they prefer as others won't go there, or it could be that players just do not like the location. Regardless of which it is, these issues stem from either players or the POI itself. If a POI is going to gear you

inferiorly to another location or guarantee that you have a hard time leaving it, why would you go there? If you want to go to the location but you also value the early game KP more and other players are not going to the location, then you will not go to the location based on the other players. OR you could just not enjoy playing from a location and not want to be there. Regardless of which of these reasons, the solution is to look at the POI that is going untouched or the POIs around it and adjust them. As said before, make players WANT to go places. Also, by forcing players to land at certain places you can be forcing them to play a certain style. You could be forcing players who either only know how to or exclusively prefer to play Ring. By forcing these players to land at a location that lends itself to a Zone gameplay style, the players are either going to do worse leaving this POI by trying to play a style they are uncomfortable with or by trying to force playing the way they want to from an area that does not help them do that. (or vice versa) It's like cutting a steak with a spoon. You can do it, but there are other tools made specifically to do the job better. Don't force players to use spoons to cut their steaks. In ALGS pros get to pick a POI that lends itself to their playstyle. Not allowing players the agency to do this leads to people enjoying the game less and less.

This is the biggest one I have seen. Players are supposed to ADAPT. YES. Players are supposed to adapt. And they do. Again, players like myself have made it to the higher ranks with both Drop Zones and Drop Ships. Players are supposed to adapt to their legends, drop locations, loot, rotational options, teammates, and general gameplay.

The issue is that this doesn't happen most of the time.

With Apex being a Hero Shooter, players pick their "hero" or legend in this case. Normally in games like this, players develop a "Main" character for them to use. A character that best fits their gameplay style. Even when the character becomes bad and falls out of the META, people will still use it. This isn't adaptation.

Players are supposed to adapt to their loot as well. And they do. Except Respawn has spent updates in a row removing certain sections of the looting pool. Firstly Evo shields, then gold armor, then red armor, then helmets, the heat shields, and now knockdown shields and some backpacks. They also made all weapons, attachments, and ammo easier to find. The first bin you open is guaranteed to drop a weapon, arsenals have all weapons from a class, give you infinite ammo, and give you a free upgrade and sight. They have made almost everything easy to find except for heals, backpacks, Ultimate accelerants, and survival items. Except they recently have been working upgrades like this into legend abilities. Obviously wattson, conduit, lifeline, and octane for heals, Loba can give gold backpacks to the entire team, Crypto and the power booster amp makes ultimates easy to get, and the entire assault class can carry extra grenades. This leaves ONLY Evac Towers and Mobile Respawn Beacons as things that they have not made readily available at any given time, but they are working on that too. Almost every major legend update recently has involved a movement ability removing the need for evac towers, and they recently made it so every squad can use a respawn beacon once each, making the need for mobiles less prevalent. This is removing the need to adapt to loot.

As for rotational options, this is something players have to do regardless of Drop System or gamemode. Rotations are part of the battle royale genre. Drop Ships allow teams to decide where they rotate from, which does remove some of the adaptation as a team can just insist on landing at the same location every time. HOWEVER, this is why the Drop Ship does not follow the same line every single time. Players cannot land at places such as Trials, one of the best available looting locations repeatedly. Drop Zones also accomplish keeping players from landing at the same POI repeatedly, making them adapt to unique locations. But due to it not being random and being more likely to land at certain locations more, it also doesn't work all the time, same as Drop Ships. Professionals, being in three stacks, also do not have to adapt to their POI or rotations on a large scale. They can practice each POI for best looting patterns and rotational capability.

Adapting to teammates is a skill. Three stacking does remove this skill, meaning that players who are not stacked are at a disadvantage. These players that are not three stacked, should they want to continue playing ranked, should either join an LFG channel to find teammates, wait to play with friends, or adapt to their teammates. How do you adapt to teammates? Be THE anchor. Play something like Alter for callbacks, Crypto for respawns, lifeline, Newcastle, or Mirage for revives, or anyone with support perks for crafting respawn beacons. The best way to play solo from my experience is honestly to pretend you do not have teammates. What I mean by this is as the anchor, you make the call. Say that you are going to go to ring. Then do it. Go. Leave your teammates behind. If they die, craft them. If they get mad, so be it. If they leave, report them. Make sure you

play in what you determine to be the best way possible to WIN. IF you do, you are more likely to win.

General gameplay adaptations are the small scale things you do all the time. Look at the ring to determine where it will pull, when/where/how to rotate, which fights you should take, etc. This is what the Pros are really good at. In both systems you must do these, but which of these specifically is the most important changes with the systems. In Drop Ships you are spending a pretty even amount of time determining rotations and fights along with looting paths, etc. In Drop Zones you must focus HEAVILY on rotations specifically while ignoring fights. Getting caught out of the ring is almost a guaranteed death sentence. Especially for teams without a Valkyrie, the General Gameplay adaptations you must make change constantly in Drop Zones.

So what is the best way to FIX these systems?

Here are some of the ideas I have had.

Firstly, use heat maps to figure out which POIs are getting used less, where fights are more likely to end with kills, etc. From here, adjust the locations to make them more fair for general gameplay. IE remove the Jump Tower from Zeus Station and add it to Cenote Cave.

Next a raise in the minimum level requirement should occur. Level 20 is unhealthy. It leads to casual players in competitive, smurfs, and more cheaters. Bring it back up somewhere between level 50-100. Casual players will be forced to spend more time learning the game in Pubs, meaning less level 42 Gold 1s, players will smurf less as they won't want to get their alt accounts leveled up, and it will deter cheaters for the same

reason. If there is a system that flags if a player levels up too quickly or jumps levels, that is a start. Ideally placing a flag on this account to see if the account gets reported following this should deter most cheaters from the game.

Next, remove rank binning. Again, there should not be level 78 lifelines in the same lobby as level 952s who just haven't played much that season. If a player is bad, let them be in a low rank. If they're good, they can earn their way into a higher rank. Also, if an account does not play for say 2 full splits, it can no longer lose RP come time for rank resets. Should HELP in keeping out players who play up to diamond then stop playing for a while. Actually punish players. Rookie not losing RP is fair. Figure out what rank the player is first. Bronze not losing RP? Bad. Make them start at even just -10. It's not much, but it should keep silver from being the real lowest rank. Silver should start -25, Gold -35, Plat -45, Diamond -55, Masters - 65, Preds need more RP dependant on rank. Higher ranked players need more RP to progress. Rank 1 Pred should need much more RP than rank 750 Pred.

I say this specific system as players up to around Platinum can rank up solely on positioning. It means a player can be good at either Macro or Fighting, but they need to be good at both to reach the higher ranks.

Also, if players get reported for throwing, being AFK, cheating, whatever the reason, actually punish them. Bans need to be worth something. Make the timer only count down if players are actually playing matches. Also, send the players who reported a player a notification that the player has been banned or something. Give a notification. It shows that the devs are actually trying to fix the issues, and it's a small thing.

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