

Introduction

From Idolon:

For gameplay, I tried to score mostly on my emotional reaction when I realize I'm about to play the map. This doesn't always reflect the "objective" quality of the map's layout or gameplay, but I think it does generally indicate that fundamentally broken maps like Log Place or Oasis can still end up being more fun to play on than ones that work. A payload map that rolls or stalemates 90% of the time can still have spaces that are fun to fight in, and for that it gets a higher score (although still a low one).

Aesthetic scores are straightforward. How nice does it look? Does it feel like a real place? Does the detailing support the gameplay? How architecturally sound are the spaces? Are there any visual issues (missing textures)? Not much to clarify here.

Theme scores are based on how well integrated the theme is into the map. Some maps did integrate their thematic elements, but were easy to forget. The maps with higher theme scores usually took their thematic elements and let those drive the overall design. Essentially, how impactful is the theme to the map itself? How different or broken would your map be with one of those thematic elements removed?

Overall my scores are generally middling, which is both good and bad. There weren't any stellar stand-out entries, but most maps that were lacking in one department made up for it in another. Many of the maps submitted are still in development and will only get better.

I should also note that I changed the 40/30/30 weighting of the categories to 50/25/25 in my scoring spreadsheet, as I felt the calculated scores didn't accurately reflect how I felt about the maps, and I adjusted the weighting to better fit how I actually felt. However, seeing where the calculated scores and my original overall scores diverged made me reconsider my opinions, and some scores were adjusted (usually boosted) to account for this. Ultimately, the error is 0.5 at most, and an average error of about 0.2.

From LeSwordfish:

A quick note: I scored the theme based on both how naturally the given themes fitted into the map, and how challenging they were: a player who picks only basic themes done well will get less points than one who chooses hard ones and mostly does them alright.

Backwash

Idolon

Gameplay - 4.5

This layout tries some new things and some old things, but I'm not sure how much of either work out. It's all scaled decently (areas overall feel a bit small but not terribly so) and the overall layout makes sense, but there's certain things about the points and connectors that just don't work. I've left a lot of notes in the feedback page for the map, but I'll provide a short summary of the main points:

The interior connecting route is awkward because it's too good of a shortcut, since it leads right into the high ground of the lobby. Also the rest of the mid/2nd connectors aren't that good so it ends up being that much more important. Gullywash has a similar shortcut but it's not nearly as vital to control.

Forward spawn locations are weird. Specifically, the team that owns mid spawns too close to mid. Also you have to take a pretty weird path from every forward spawn to get the way you want to be going.

The lobby is really hard to push in either direction. Part of this might be spawn proximity, though I think this is also because nobody uses the lower routes of lobby. For the attacking team, going lower lobby isn't intuitive because you're more or less lead to upper lobby from the 2nd point. The defending team doesn't use lower lobby much because it's so exposed to upper lobby. (Note how other 5cp maps use the lower lobby as a flanky entrance... usually-ish. I'm oversimplifying).

Upper lobby also kinda sucks for both teams - attackers have to turn a blind eye to one door to use the other (and defense gets a pretty good sightline through the whole thing without even entering the lobby itself), and defense... well, I'm not sure exactly why it isn't working, but it isn't. The lobby reminds me of Badlands with the upper lobby entrance splitting into two doors facing each other, but the doors on Badlands get you directly into the final point area instead of going through some smaller passages. Also, Badlands point caps really quickly and has an extra flank to get in and out of last. (This is sort of a half-assed analysis but I hope it'll point you in the right direction.)

Aesthetics - 4.5

This map doesn't have a great sense of place. It's halfway to a consistent color palette, but the architecture feels a bit "buildings near each other" than a proper place. There's some sense of progression from mid to last, but the industrial buildings at mid feel out of place and the actual

exterior spaces themselves hardly change in character - they're all just open grassy areas. The geometry of last would actually lend itself decently to being a backlot to a larger industrial building (the spawns).

The other main detractor from the detailing is the lighting. Night lighting is pretty hard to do well (and one of my biggest regrets from organizing this contest was forcing people into doing night lighting, because it turns out that it's hard and limiting.) I would recommend bumping up the brightness of basically all lights.

Lastly, the brushwork and sort of architectural detailing itself leaves a bit to be desired. Some places (mostly the interiors) feel decent developed, but other areas feel like an alpha with textures. It feels more like rushing than bad taste, so I won't go far into this.

Theme - 5.5

Jungle is decently implemented into the theme, though I'm not convinced that it couldn't easily be alpine or desert with a texture swap. Seaside is also fairly inconsequential to the theme - I didn't realize there was water in the skybox until after playing the map a few times. The water within the lobby could probably be connected to the out of bounds space with some clever detailing, and would offer a better sense of place to the map.

Overall - 5

This map has potential, but needs some more time in the oven. It isn't hilariously broken as many in-development 5cp maps tend to be, and it can be some fun to spam at each other even while the match feels like a guaranteed stalemate, but ultimately it's just okay.

LeSwordfish

Gameplay - 6

There's a really solid map in here. The points all work in and of themselves (and though I could gripe about them not being super original, who really cares?). Each one is an interesting fighting area, even if mid is pretty small, and uses cover well. There are other areas that are small or cramped as well, and in some areas it's really too dark to see other players: I think you need a second, more considerate lighting pass.

The first main issue with it is that the map doesn't flow terribly well. Spawns face in weird directions, making it easy to run off towards the wrong end of the map. Some routes point you the wrong direction, or turn you through 360 degrees, or lead you off on an unexpected tangent: when I look at a doorway, I don't feel like I can adequately guess where it's going to take me.

This leads into the other issue, which is how much it stalemates: it stalemates a fair bit at mid/second, and an awful lot with second/finale. At mid/second there's two main routes and a smaller one, which is the right amount but one leads through the defender's route to second,

one leads directly into a height disadvantage compared to the point, and the “flank” takes you out so directly into the line of fire its almost comical. Second/last feels like a spaghetti junction of a connector, where defense has all the advantages - height, cover, health - and can easily fall back onto last itself, where they have a rock-solid sentry spot and the attackers advance through a massive killbox.

Like I said, there's a really good map in here somewhere - it's not there yet, but I hope you keep at it.

Aesthetics - 6

I like to see that you've really tried, with regards to aesthetics: it hasn't entirely come off but you've given it more effort than many. It sketches out an interesting area, but its too basic and blocky to properly look good. Most of the map doesn't really make sense, with oddities like three water levels, bizarrely shaped buildings, trucks in inexplicable places - it feels like the map wasn't really designed with any sense of how people use it or what it actually is. It's also really dark, and you can see the bright bottom of the night skybox. My only other complaint is that more could be done to make the finale feel “final” - it doesn't need a giant laser, but I wish there was more of an idea of what we were fighting over than a weird office/locker room.

Theme - 6

I can't say I felt “jungle” at all, but Seaside and Night were both done reasonably well. Symmetrical is a free square in this mode, and the objective under a bridge was really more under a plank.

Overall - 6

Chounai

Idolon

Gameplay - 3

The overall layout of this map doesn't really follow conventional arena design, and seems to suffer for it. There aren't any "lanes" to pick from the start of the round so much as different ways to approach the same middle fight, which leads to the map playing the same way most times. The extreme high ground in the center of the map seem to give an advantage to generalist classes over flanking classes or sneaky plays.

Aesthetics - 4

The basics are there, but it feels unfinished. There just isn't any fine detail, it needs more foliage, stains, junk props (there are a few but not many). The lighting, which I believe comes from Lumberyard, isn't doing you any favors, as the strong yellow sun tends to wash the scene out, and the steep sun angle doesn't create long interesting shadows. The sun angle also doesn't agree with the skybox, which seems to be from Viaduct. Interior lighting is serviceable but dull.

I also talk about this in the next paragraph, but I'm not convinced that this map feels like a place. The center of the map wants to be urban, but it quickly turns rural once you get into the back half of the map. It feels like an urban street got transplanted into a small community somewhere in the mountains.

Theme - 6

This map is unmistakably an Asian city. However, as I talked about in the previous paragraph, the map as a whole doesn't feel cohesive. There's also perhaps an argument for the middle being a bridge rather than a raised platform, but that may have just been a poor decision in the design of the contest than your fault.

Overall - 4

I like what this map is going for, but it falls short of a lot of things. I think it is underdeveloped in every area except what it *wants* to be.

LeSwordfish

Gameplay - 3

This varies a lot from the standard arena formula, mostly in ways to its detriment. There's no "loop" to it, and the heights are extreme: trying to cross through the map into the other half is really challenging, since there's a single massive no-man's-land, very vulnerable to snipers or enemies on the point. Once you're there, you have to fight your way up a height advantage: unless you're very lucky or your opponent is an idiot, it's a deathtrap. You end up just with two armies colliding with each other in the middle: no give or take, just mopping up how the first crunch plays out. The train feels sort of pointless, and some bits are very dark. The heights are very extreme: if one team can take control of mid, they completely dominate anyone below in the big empty killbox.

Aesthetics - 8

I like it! It's occasionally too dark, or too blocky and solid, but overall it really lands. Some areas are under-detailed, but the ambience - the lights, sound, fog etc is top-notch. My only real complaint is that the colours are washed out a bit - they could "pop" way more.

Theme - 7

All of these have been achieved reasonably well, though the "raised platform" kinda ruins the map - or, well, the implementation of most of it. None is especially challenging though. I was getting ready to complain about how the train was just shoehorned in to fit the theme but its not even in the theme? So... why?

Overall - 6.5

Guava Gulf

Idolon

Gameplay - 6

“Needs some more time in the oven” is a phrase that’s been coming to mind a lot this contest, and this map is no exception. The author already knows this, and this is a beast of a map in terms of scale so I’m just going to get right into the meat of things.

Payload race maps that work well tend to fall into two categories: “Lateral maps,” which are wider than they are long and have the carts explore the space, shifting the focus of the fights, and “linear maps,” which are longer than they are wide and have more of a push and pull to them, with teams running more directly at each other rather than trying to sneak around each other. Lateral maps include Hightower, Banana Bay, and Pipeline/Nightfall stage 3, while linear maps include Pipeline/Nightfall stages 1 and 2... ish. It’s not a perfectly clear categorization system but I think it works.

I think the main problems with Guava Gulf stem from the maps being a bit confused about which one of these they are. A good lateral map would ensure the entire width of the map is fun to play in, and a good linear map makes sure teams are running into each other at the middle.

Stage 1 and 2 are a bit of both and I think mostly run into issues because the fight for the final area is a bit messy. They feel like they want to be lateral stages, but ultimately the first half of the map always ends up being more fun to fight in than the second half because the space between the final points is chokey (for a good reason). If they could better support players moving through the first half of the map (closer spawns), and/or the chokey areas better supported fighting within them, it might work.

The third stage is weird. I need to play it more to make sure this is the case, but it seems like the team who wins the initial fight tends to carry all the way through and often times the tug of war aspect doesn’t end up mattering that much. I’m also curious how differently that sort of idea would play if the entire map was a tug of war section, with the finale involving you pushing the enemy’s cart into their own pit.

Aesthetics - 5.5

This map is pretty obviously not finished with its artpass, and there’s not much to comment on. The lighting is good for a night time map (though daytime might suit it better, especially if you want to show off the sea better on stage 3), and the color scheme is nice and consistent. Just needs more work.

Theme - 8

This map feels distinctively jungle and seaside. The sea comes into play in two of the stages, and the architecture is believably old ruins and the like. It all works, and I feel like the only reason I'm not giving this more points is because the detailing is only just sorta there. Kudos for being the best lit night map of the contest.

Overall - 6.5

This map is only matched by Oasis' artpass in terms of how ambitious it is, and while it has a ways to go in terms of refining the layout (and the eventual artpass), it has a lot of potential. If detailing wasn't a factor, this would be my #1 map (instead of simply being tied for first).

LeSwordfish

Gameplay - 7

I like this map a lot. It's got good scale & gameplay spaces, and the moment-to-moment navigation of the level is fun. It's a bit dark though, and can be hard to distinguish teams at a long distance. I also feel like the level is maybe a bit large - not as in overscaled, but as in sprawling. I've found that the long travel times can lead to it stalemating easily if teams are balanced, but the level flows well so you're not so split up when you arrive. In all three end cases the final point is not great in my opinion: your choices always seem to be to defend from miles away or to dogpile onto the cart itself. The only other area I feel doesn't work terribly well is mid of the last stage - there's a lot of routes in and out, and it feels like you could be attacked from any direction while crossing it.

Aesthetics - 7

It's not finished is the issue: when it is i'm confident it'll be absolutely stunning but right now its all just sketched out. Of what there is now I like a lot, but of course the gaps are very noticable. There's some wierd combinations of ancient and modern materials, and some dark areas, but where there is detail i like it, and its very atmospheric. The finale also feels like a proper endgame, which is nice. One other quibble I have is how all these tall flat walls will work in the mayan theme: you don't tend to think of high narrow walls in that aesthetic.

Theme - 8

I can't claim to be entirely convinced by "jungle" but seaside has been done extremely well, and it makes a great atmosphere out of Night. The objectives spend plenty of time in caves, and that also works well.

Overall - 7.5

Hazyfort

Idolon

Gameplay - 5

This map plays reliably. It doesn't tend to steamroll or stalemate. That's great! Unfortunately, I also just don't find it particularly fun, and I've had a hard time trying to pin down why.

A seems like it doesn't give defense too many strong places to hold. It's a wide layout, giving blue players a variety of ways to attack the point, which plays to the point's benefit. Using those side areas to attack or defend (especially the canal route was probably the most fun I had playing the map. However, the middle route is just kind of a flat open area with some cover. A good emulation of a medieval town, but not very interesting to play on, and also not obviously in favor of one team or another. If there's any part of the map that tends to roll, it's blue coming through this area.

I think B has two main flaws - the lobby, and the approach to the point. The lobby itself is pretty open, and if red has a good player on a flanking class that knows what they're doing, they can make blue team's life hell. Almost every part of the lobby connects to every other part, and it makes the whole thing unsafe for blue to try and hold in.

The approach to B is just a big dumb slope (dumb as in simple, not stupid), and little fighting actually seems to happen there. There's no cover within it and red has a pretty hilarious height advantage right over it. It's the worst route to attack on. It's also the worst route for a defender to push forward on, because they're always at a height disadvantage and they, just like blue, have no cover. Every interesting play on this map happens through the flanks.

Aesthetics - 6

This map does a good job at feeling like a real place. Placing a map within a town or a castle and maintaining a certain sort of architectural accuracy can be difficult, and this map does it pretty well! The lighting also lends a nice atmosphere.

The actual execution of details leaves a bit to be desired. Most of the fachwerk houses just don't feel right - they're a bit chunky, and the roofs tend to have very little overhang. Most of the windows also don't feel quite right. They're the correct size to fit between the beams, but they should also be framed in the same kind of wood, which they aren't. I also can't go without mentioning how a few spaces that are meant to be torch-lit are unplayably dark.

Theme - 9

This map had the most difficult/original theme to execute on of any in the contest, and it executed on it well. There's not much to criticize at all, other than that I wish the farm aspect came through better somehow.

Overall - 6

A solid effort from a relatively new mapper. Nothing spectacular, but nothing particularly lacking either, and it took on arguably the most difficult theme of any finalist.

LeSwordfish

Gameplay - 7

There are some things I absolutely love about this map, and some I really don't. The scale feels really solid to me, with large and small-but-not-too-small areas, and the different fighting spaces flow well into each other. Vertically, however, the scale is all off. It feels like most of the map is on one flat plane, with the only height changes being 256 or more: it makes the interesting drainage flanks much less viable, and leads to fights almost universally happening at a height parity (with the exception of last, where the "high" and "low" ground are so far from each other and so different as to stretch the combat out uncomfortably. For both points it feels like the only real place to defend from is to pile on the point itself and brawl there. I also have a note that describes the "lobby" between 1st and second as a "spaghetti junction" - having gone back and checked it in spectator, I can see now that that's not really true - but it feels like it. The passages are dark and unintuitive (I didn't find one until I fell into it).

Aesthetics - 8

Your theme - castle, farm - was a challenging one, but actually turns out really well. There's a relatively smooth transition between modern farmland and walled city, and I can totally believe in it as a real place somewhere in europe. I'm a big fan of the way this map looks - a lot of care and attention has gone into making it all seem like a coherent, believable place (though rather let down by having english, french, and german signs all in the same street - i wish I could ascribe a location to it other than "western europe and don't ask awkward questions", because if you told me it was a sunny evening in, say, brittany, i'd have entirely believed you). It's very atmospheric, too, (though there's a bit too much yellow in the air IMO) although some areas are very dark. It could do a lot better at guiding players - the lobby between points is probably not as complicated as it seems, but it's super dark and neither lighting nor detail density keeps me focussed on where I want to go. My other qualm is: half-finished/broken brickwork made with brushwork never, ever, ever looks good. Genuinely, find me one place in all of TF2 where it does. I'd remove the "building under construction" theme section entirely.

Theme - 9

You get bonus points for Farmland and Castle combining so well, and the objective on a bridge is a fun gameplay space as well.

Overall - 8

Ice Tower

Idolon

Gameplay - 4

The scaling of the map is decent, and I think the author has a good grasp on making a space that is at least interesting. However, the layout doesn't seem to function well as a proper KotH map or even a deathmatch arena.

The map is simply too wide. Players have such a variety in options to approach the point that a lot of the map tends to go unused. In a pub setting, you can't rely on teammates to stick together. When a map gets too wide, many fights will end up only being 1v1 or 2v2, and that just isn't very fun.

In addition, the various routes leading up to the point don't really seem to provide their own strengths and weaknesses. Most players seem to take the innermost (away from the cliff) route to the point most of the time, as taking the middle or train routes leave you very exposed and the cliff route is lonely (i.e. it doesn't feel relevant to the point). Routing out of spawn is also kind of a mess. I can never remember which doorway leads me where, and I'm not even really sure what my options are when leaving spawn, so I just find a route that seems to work.

Aesthetics - 6.5

This map has the opposite problem as Hazyfort - the details are all well-executed, but it lacks a sense of place. I don't know what this place is, and it doesn't feel consistent. Detailing at mid suggests something more industrial, but it quickly turns into nondescript wood shacks just a few feet over. The shacks near mid look relatively industrial, but have really nice clean metal doorways, and the building on the red side is marked "Hotel."

Theme - 6

An average implementation of the theme. Snow/Alpine, as indicated by how many maps picked the same theme, isn't a very difficult theme to work with, and I'm not sure how much of this map is definitely either - re-detailing this map as a desert would be pretty trivial. In addition, the train seems to be more or less inconsequential to playing the map, with some players even remarking that they didn't realize there was a train.

Overall - 5

A lot of effort went into this map, but it clearly lacks some of the forethought and planning required to make something great. Everything lacks a clear focus.

LeSwordfish

Gameplay - 5

Sadly, the layout of this map just doesn't do it for me. It's long and thin, but divides its gameplay spaces so harshly it also feels too wide: you end up getting into lots of small fights and living or dying before you reach the point dependent mostly on whether you run into anyone or not. There's an awful lot of clever ideas here, but it feels like you've tried to fit every neat gameplay space you could think of into a single KotH map, which means very many of them fall flat. It also means every space is very small, and with so much cover all of these little fights take place at point-blank range. (There's one space you can snipe from, but it's awkward to reach, completely in the open, and regularly gets run over by a train). The map is also mostly flat, with the only real height change being the crater around the point and the path by the deathpit. The back path is so long it fades into fog at the end.

I would consider, when/if continuing with this map, taking the far two routes (the path by the deathpit, the back route through the snow) out entirely, and then kind of squashing it to be shorter and wider.

Aesthetics - 7

It looks an awful lot nicer than it plays, with a sense of a crisp atmosphere, buildings that make more sense than some (though leave the "grain" posters out, where do they grow corn round here), and some creative texture choices. Some texture choices are just bad, mind (all that textured metal on struts!) but others work far better than expected. It does a half-decent job of guiding the eye to important places, though the point is almost completely hidden. The point is a weak space, aesthetically - the central building isn't convincingly smashed (it looks more like it's been melted) and though I love the tower, the ice going sideways doesn't entirely work, when we can see the gentle snowfall rather than the vicious blizzard that would be needed.

Theme - 7

The alpine snow is done very well, even if the "forest" is relegated to the skybox, and though the train doesn't entirely matter to the map overall (aside from occasionally running down the snipers) it's a more challenging inclusion than many.

Overall - 6

Log Place

Idolon

Gameplay - 6

What a weird fucking map. There's some really non-conventional stuff being tried in a relatively intelligent manner, but it isn't quite sticking. I played this a number of times throughout the finalist round and players haven't quite settled into a predictable way of playing the map, which is a testament to its layout... it just also needs a bit of a reality check.

I don't know how to talk about A in broad terms, so I'll just list a bunch of things. A sniper sitting relatively far behind the point is probably the most effective way of shutting down the dropdown onto A, which is weird, although not inherently bad? Putting a sentry up in the obvious place you put a sentry seems almost required to defend this point, since it immediately punishes anyone coming in from the dropdown. Red tends not to hold very far forward, and instead sits inside A. Not the worst thing in the world since A is pretty close to blue spawn, but there should probably be a bit more cover to support better deathmatching. Approaching the point from what seems to be the main route for blue leaves you very exposed, and I basically never did it ever. The route furthest in back is easily the most interesting and probably useful for blue, but it isn't very well advertised to blue and I would sometimes forget that it existed.

I'll begin talking about B by saying that blue really, really needs a forward spawn. It isn't a terribly long walk for blue, but it's enough of one that I hate making the walk every time I die, especially for how much of a meat grinder B can be. On the actual design of B: It feels a bit like Gorge in that the point is lower than where red spawns, and there's a ring of height advantage going around it. However, I think Log Place makes some changes that don't really work:

- 1) Red spawns too close. If blue wants to occupy the ring, they basically have to spawncamp.
- 2) The ring doesn't extend to blue's side. This is probably why the "main" route with the train on it is hardly used - blue is super exposed and has no height advantage.
- 3) The ring isn't particularly big and therefore doesn't support fighting on it very well.

In addition, from blue's perspective, the upper two routes are the most obvious to take. This isn't too bad, as I think blue can make decent use of them, but there's not really a good open space anywhere in the entire point for players to properly duke it out in.

Aesthetics - 3

It's still in alpha. Bonus points for a consistent color palette for the stuff that is textured.

Theme - 7

This map took the easy snow/alpine row but did something a bit more interesting with it. The out of bounds water feature, the little detailing that exists, and the map's very dumb name all go towards rooting this map in an alpine setting... a desert skin of this map would be possible, but it'd take more creativity than the other maps I've made this point on. The train feels kind of inconsequential, but I think that's just because the layout is very confused about what it wants to do.

Overall - 5.5

This map is just behind Guava Gulf in terms of "maps that made me think the hardest," and I really appreciate that a lot. It doesn't play like other maps of its kind. There's some interesting layout theory to talk about. It also needs a lot of work.

LeSwordfish

Gameplay - 5

I've had some good and some very bad rounds on this map. There are a lot of areas I like - I like the last point, and I really like the area before the first point (it's a horrible uphill slog, but somehow a really fun one), but the first point itself is horrible to take - I've never seen a team with a semi-competent engineer lose it, usually even despite multiple ubercharges. The combination of good sentry spots and a good raised position for attackers can make both attacking and defending miserable at the same time, somehow - which is a shame, because I really do love the hill up to the point. It perhaps would be better if the wide route was easier to find, and the low flank had more cover, they're two powerful flanks but both easy to lock down.

(I also dislike how you can shoot but not jump over that wall on the roof next to the point - it becomes much harder to use as a staging ground and impossible to use as a flank. I've also found the final point very challenging to capture at times but a) that's okay, it's a final and b) it's more fun to fail at. Some areas are also too dark. It's also perhaps on average a bit too big? Like... 20%? Even the first point, which is too small, feels almost like it was meant to be smaller but failed to be.

Aesthetics - 7

Okay but, do you know how water works? In that large amount, it spills sideways, not forming a "mound." I usually like to start with something positive but I completely lost my train of thought as soon as I saw that. It's going to be very nice when it's detailed since it's crisp and atmospheric, and I have half a sense of what everything is or will be from the basic brushwork - but I can't give it a good score for that given that there's so little of it now. It's also in several places very dark.

Theme - 7

The usual "Asymmetrical and Day are EZ applies" but I think the rest has been done well. The train feels a bit tacked-on but does interestingly change-up the dynamic of that particular area, and i'm more sold on the Snow/Alps combination than some other maps.

Overall - 6

Oasis

Idolon

Gameplay - 4

This map seems like it should work, but somehow the push and pull dynamic goes wrong in a majority of matches, which I believe may have to do with the overall width of the map. Having flank routes to allow players to get by each other is *of course* fundamental to a functioning map, but Oasis doesn't seem to funnel players together frequently enough.

Chokepoints before an open area often function as a gate that make it really difficult for red to push back at blue, offering a checkpoint beyond moving spawns. When red has many options for pushing through a choke the "wrong way" then it allows red to take over a space that it feels like blue should easily own. The lower route from the oasis towards town, for example, is a pretty powerful route for red, not only because it allows them to flank blue players on the other side of the main choke, but because they can push pretty much directly all the way back to blue's forward spawn while circumventing the main gameplay space.

There are also some questionable design decisions, especially for the design of the final point. Sometimes it seems to function, but as a red player, I'm constantly asking myself, where do I hold this point from? And there aren't any obvious answers. Holding the final point is less a matter of preventing blue from pushing *through* the main area and more about preventing blue from pushing *into* the main area. Designing a final point to be underground and at a height disadvantage is a novel and risky idea, and I have to commend the attempt - but I also have to judge the final product, and I don't think it's close to working.

Lastly, some gameplay spaces feel like they just need to be cleaned up. The oasis is a clumsy space to fight in, with small ledges in a cramped space making the bottom area kind of a mess and palm trees getting in the way up top.

Aesthetics - 9

Every time I write up an aesthetics review on a map that Freyja details, it ends up being pretty short, and this map is not an exception. I think there are some readability issues with the textures relating to how noisy/red they are as well as some missed visual cues in doorways, but that's about all there is keeping this from a 10. The amount of new content and the quality of the execution is about as good as you can ask for.

Theme - 8.5

This map checks all of the boxes and does it without feeling contrived. The town feels a little incomplete (it seems to pretty much just end right at the gameplay space boundary), but beyond that I can't complain. 8.5 is to make the score lower than Hazyfort's 9.

Overall - 6

The fundamental issues with the gameplay feel unexpected and somehow undeserved, but also cannot be ignored, and ultimately keep this map from being great. It has everything else going for it. I would recommend keeping at this map and making more than small tweaks to try and improve it, because there is a lot of potential here.

LeSwordfish

Gameplay - 7

I was hoping I could get away without giving this a gameplay score because I'm having a really hard time finding what to think of it. I feel like maybe I've never had a representative game on it - or maybe it doesn't lead to "good" games? - or maybe I'm just failing to justify why it deserves the 10/10 I want to give it because I know it's by good mappers?

Okay, well. Generally I have decent enough fun on this, though there are other maps I've more reliably enjoyed in the contest. The transitions between areas work, though get a bit small at times (it's almost Goldrush at points), and I like the first area, but both second (the pit) and last fall a bit flat for me. The pit is just such a pain to fight on because you can get knocked down into the spambox, where the routes back up are sufficiently small to be deathtraps and the pillars block sightlines to see what's up there. The finale has a bit of a spaghettification problem: blue seems to have a dozen complicated twisty routes to powerful elevated positions, while making any counter-push headway at all forces red to fight uphill: I've never seen any successful defense (against a competent team) anywhere after the start of the sphinx. I also have an issue with the number of tiny little edges and steps up and jump routes all over the place: it's a real pain to play as heavy since you can't go anywhere but the cart path with your gun spun up.

Aesthetics - 9

Take your 10/10 and go. Well, no, okay, a few small issues that hold it back for me: a lot of side and back rooms are practically empty, with the map seeming to fall back on "plain concrete, wood trim, nothing else at all" more often than really works for it. I also really dislike the use of the hieroglyph texture on the pillars, and if you want to use it for doors you need to distinguish doors that open and that don't better. I'm not personally a fan of the Sphinx for two reasons - firstly it's a bit meme-y, and secondly you never get to see it from far enough away to get the full effect. You kind of need to step back just to recognise you're not just fighting on big toes.

The greens and reds break up the bare yellow of the egypt theme so well. For all the good work you've done not making the outside monochromatic yellow, the interior is... kinda monochromatic orange? I like it a lot, but I feel like it could have used brighter green or stronger silver to stand out more from the three different dark red tiles colours. Mostly I'm griping for the sake of saying something: take your 9/10 and go.

Theme - 9

Desert/City/Spytech is maybe one of the hardest combinations on the board to pull off, and you threw yourself into it admirably.

Overall - 8

Snowcastle

LeSwordfish

Gameplay - 7

Snowcastle more or less works well, but I feel like the “flow” of the map harms it: It’s too easy to end up somewhere unhelpful if you’re not paying attention, and teams that get split up find it hard to reconnect. The three arrows in this image (<https://i.imgur.com/3DoiQYy.jpg>) show how I feel players naturally flow through the map out of spawn: the upper path turns them around and takes them into the (basically useless, deserted) courtyard areas. The green path turns them around just enough that they want to “flow” back towards spawn instead of towards the point: without actively focussing on looking around for enemies, I was very often getting confused, and fights are often 1v1 or 1v2, decided on which member happened to find themselves behind the other. The points are very easy to defend (mostly for engineers but pyros can get in on the act too) - not least because the only flank requires circling the whole map, and isn’t that helpful anyway: it’s very easy to throw up a defense that the enemy just has to throw themselves into en masse. The healthpacks under the points are nearly useless - by travel time, they’re ludicrously far from a fighting space. I’d be tempted to put health in the “courtyards” instead of there and on the bridge - it gives some reason to go there, and strengthens their use as a “staging point” from which to flank the last point. I like the mid, though.

Aesthetics - 7

I’m sure it’s very nice but I can’t see any of it. You’ve been perhaps a bit literal with the usual advice to light the gameplay space and leave the rest: everything above head height is nearly pitch-black, and I’ve only got a vague sense of the shape of this cool castle - which an awful lot of effort has clearly gone into, I just can’t see any of it. The other buildings are a bit sparse, really - lots of bare flat walls. It’s not super atmospheric since I can’t see anything - there’s no falling snow or anything. Two things I do love though are the big dark mountains in the 3dsky, and the cellars are really good.

Theme - 8

I can’t deny that any of these were achieved, and I like the castle a lot - I just feel that the objective being over a deathpit ended up largely to its detriment.

Overall - 7.5

Voltage

Idolon

Gameplay - 2.5

Easily my least favorite 2CP arena map of the contest. Points are directly outside of spawn, and choosing to defend it doesn't feel like a commitment or even really a choice, as a player can easily stand on the point to cap it and then push outwards. Part of this is also due in part to the design of the overall map, which isn't nearly open enough for arena to work. Dustbowl-esque design of easily spammable entrances into a well-defended area doesn't end up being very fun when arena's no-respawn policy actively discourages the kind of risky, suicidal behavior that Dustbowl requires to function.

Aesthetics - 4

The detailing isn't bad, but it is missing finer details that really flesh out a map. Many areas feel like an alpha with textures applied. Lighting in the main areas is dull, which lets down the overall look the map. I would also try to reduce the overall number of textures you use, although it probably feels inconsistent more because of the lighting than the texturing itself.

This score is lowered because of missing textures.

Theme - 6

I like what this map is going for in terms of its theme, but I don't think it is featured prominently enough or integrated all that well into the map's overall design. Many players commented on forgetting that this map was set in a city, probably in part because the outdoor areas aren't really designed in an urban way (presumably this is some backlot... but there's also boulders in the middle of it?) and because the out of bounds areas are easy to miss. Designing the layout to be more open and better following an urban architectural language would go a long way here.

Also, seeing what these turbines are connected to would help establish a theme. You could totally set this in the city as a power plant next to a waterfall in a canal that runs through a city, but instead it is just located between two nondescript city roads. This is probably because the map was rushed through development, but I'm judging what you've submitted.

I am giving this score a slight boost for trying something more difficult.

Overall - 3.5

There's some nuggets of interesting ideas here, but the core layout is flawed and the map as a whole is rushed.

LeSwordfish

Gameplay - 4

Here's my question for everyone who did 2cp arena: Do you know why arena has a control point? What problem does it try to solve? And what have you done to resolve that? This map is particularly prone to the problem Arena solves: the points are a long way apart and have lots of separate routes between them. This makes the game very likely to stalemate as it gets to low player counts, and a single engineer on each team can basically lockdown the entire game, with no break to the stalemate than somebody shrugging and charge-of-the-light-brigade-ing just to make it stop. The points and mid are both interesting areas, but it's all just a bit small, and it's arena so what happens a lot is I turn a corner, run into a guy coming the other way, he shoots me half a second before I shoot him, and I go off to make a cup of tea while the round lasts ten minutes. There's no central fighting area, just the split sides and small corridors, so you tend to get lots of miniature fights without any rhyme or reason. It would almost work better as symmetrical 2cp: at least I'd get to play the whole thing. A few of the routes also take you different directions to what's expected (I'm particularly thinking of the "exit" from the point that just turns you round and sends you back in). Also, the split cap is bad. If the big stalemate, hiding on different points, doesn't play out, you can have a small stalemate, hiding on the same point!

Aesthetics - 6

The detailing is very good, generally, particularly for an alpha. It's a coherent, believable place, with relatively few rookie mistakes, although the missing textures really badly let it down. Some effort seems to have gone into using lights and detail to drawing the player's eye but it doesn't entirely work - the point is practically hidden as a dark mass, and some important doorways are barely lit. The city feeling is hurt by the lack of a 3D skybox (and by how arbitrary the wall of buildings by the edge of the map looks), and you need to pay more attention to some little details like prop shadows and texture alignment. Overall though, I think it's very solid: I wish as much work had gone into the layout.

Theme - 6

Symmetrical and Day are the usual easy choices, but you've done a reasonably good job with both City and Snow - feels more Industrial than City personally, but I'm willing to give you partial credit. The objective on the raised platform is detrimental here as well as in Yanqing, though the split cap makes it worse.

Overall - 5

Yanqing

Idolon

Gameplay - 6.5

As far as 2CP arena goes, this is one of the better maps in the contest, although it started to show flaws (i.e. stalemates) after enough testing. While it does fall victim to the points themselves being too defensible, it doesn't fall into the trap of making the game *about* defending the points. Locating the points less than directly in front of spawn forces players to make a decision on whether or not to attack or defend from the start of the match - it's just that the fight for the points gets a little constipated.

Aesthetics - 7

A pleasant atmosphere with well-executed details, all while being a novel theme instead of blindly aping a Valve map. Overall the detailing is clean and effective, though a bit sterile, possibly because of the lack of variety in the detailing. Different locations in the map aren't visually distinct from one another - I offer a suggestion on how to change this in the Theme paragraph. The out of bounds scenery is nice.

Theme - 4

This map is distinctively Asian, but City/Town aspect is pretty much absent. While implementing the latter theme is sort of an arbitrary objective just for this contest, I think it would genuinely improve the map's aesthetics threefold. All of the architecture as-is is kind of samey, and doesn't provide the visual focus that the Great Wall really should have - detail the buildings on either side of the map as a settlement in the mountains and I think you'd have a much more visually distinct and interesting map. Good implementation of an objective on a raised platform, although not particularly bold.

Overall - 6.5

Overall, a map that shoots high and lands somewhere in the middle. Gameplay and aesthetics have a ways to go, but the fundamentals are all there and improving this map will require far less than scrapping it entirely. A 6.5 ties this map for first overall under my scores. Good job!

LeSwordfish

Gameplay - 8

As with the other arena maps, what have you done to resolve the stalemate issue? I think this is the best-constructed of the surprising crop of 2cp arena maps, but it does still stalemate very

easily. This is I think mostly because the routes are all small and easy to lock down. The point is a powerful position - can see three of the routes, height advantage over two, lots of cover - and there's no real reason not to just camp there indefinitely. Stalemates tend to happen less often than, say, voltage, because the basic layout is more solid and so people are able to move more purposefully through it - it's easier to get the opening hammerblow that means you don't end up entrenched.

Each of the four routes is pretty small, and at times picking which one you go through feels like a game of chance as to whether you're going to run into a player or not. I'd like to see more reason to pick some over the others. The overall layout is much better than most, though.

Aesthetics - 8

Its good, I like it: one could argue that it's a little flat and bland, but overall it's solid. The modern touches - the illuminated signs, the barriers - are probably meant to imply "city" but they just seem wierd. I like the combination of red wood and grey stone, and though i'd prefer more a little more color it creates a generally nice atmosphere. The displacements are good, the "broken wall" is no worse than that kind of thing usually is, the skybox is nice... it all works really well. It could be a bit more atmospheric though - a bit more 3dskybox and some fog, maybe.

Theme - 6

Asia yes, and done well. Symmetrical, Day, both done if both a bit easy. Objective on a raised platform... You did it, but I think it's to the map's detriment. City/Town... it's not really, though, is it? The core part of that is "people live here" and there's no signs of that. I'm not saying that this kind of cambodian ruin couldn't be a "city", but I think you'd have to work hard to sell it, and this map just doesn't do it for me.

Overall - 7.5

Idolon's Judging Log

I left a bunch of notes while playing the maps in order to try and record most of my thoughts as feedback as well as to remind myself how I felt about each map. I've included them here at the end, sorted by map and date.

Backwash

May 16th

- pretty dark. its night time but too dark for being playable in some areas
- i played pyro. it was hard to sneak up on people? some areas were decent for it but i had a hard time making myself useful
- forward spawns are in weird spots. lots of taking twisty routes to get where im going. the fwd spawn for attacking 2nd and the fwd spawn for attacking last are pretty close to each other
- lobby into last is kind of a mess. i think its because the attacking team has a hard time actually getting into the last area. its too thin and there's not enough cover for them to establish themselves beyond the doorways into the area so all the fighting happens through the doorways instead. not nearly as fun and harder to push

May 20th

- sometimes water reflections glitch out in the lobby sewer. presumably this is because the out of bounds water is at a different level and both waters are expensive - you can only have one visible expensive water level. if they are at different levels then source pukes. either make them level, ensure only one is visible at a time, or make one water cheap
- upper route in lobby is annoying to attack with because trying to use one route just puts your back towards the other and it's easy to get flanked. just not a safe position at all
- the innermost route i just don't think works because its both the fastest route and also kind of the best? it leads right into the lobby high ground
- the upper area of lobby is kind of awkward to navigate because of how small it is. i dont think having a big hole in the middle of the high ground is the best design here in terms of allowing rotations, its prone to players making mistakes

Chounai

May 16th

- too big. scout dominated
- left feedback about this but i think this map applied koth design to arena in a way that just doesnt work. a bunch of different routes and a developed "back end" area that serves little purpose because all the fighting happens on mid. if you look at the koth maps that were designed for arena, they're very wide and feature flanks around the point instead of flanks to the point.

May 25th

-still feel the same way about this one. the overall layout is designed as if it was koth, not arena, because of how it dumps every route into the same middle arena. a lot of classes aren't that viable in the middle either, and it favors power classes like soldier and demo. the high ground in the middle doesn't help this at all, once a team takes that spot over its very difficult to take it back and it more or less requires - you guessed it - soldier or demo to bomb it, since actually walking up there is very exposed. can't be sneaky unless you're playing in the back half of the map, which does happen, but mostly to counter someone else trying to be sneaky against you, not because it helps with attacking the objective

Guava Gulf

May 16th

-enjoyable! played demo and soldier

-a lot to cover here because its 3 stages lol

-scale feels alright. sometimes big, sometimes sniper felt powerful, but its not something thats gonna take a total rework to fix. acceptably open

-every stage feels like it suffers from the same issues regarding overall flow? which is to say that i think your map is trying to do something different with the overall structure of a plr map and its not entirely working. but i think it can with some adjustments.

really there's two ways to design plr as i see it: either its a big ol arena and the cart works its way around, changing the focus of the arena over the duration of the match (hightower, banana bay, nightfall/pipeline stage 3), or its a linear push/pull (pipeline/nightfall stages 1 and 2). this map is trying to be a bit of both, the focus shifts laterally but there's also a bit of a push and pull because the map is divided up more rigorously. i think the problem is the layout just isn't good in every area so as the focus shifts, the map gets wonkier to play. stage 1 and 2 especially. i need to stop writing this so i can play hazyfort but i think i got the idea across?? i'll clean this up later because i think its a really interesting problem and i have Thoughts i need to Express. this map has made me think the most out of any map ive played in a while. Thanks

May 20th

-last point is super hard to get into? playing it is a lot of walking through whats usually an empty battle field, shooting some enemy gamers to get up into where you can actually enter last, and then throwing yourself into a fuckpile

-imo the last stage tug of war thing is really cool but the finale should maybe just be right after the carts disjoin their paths? and then make it easier for each team to grab their own cart

-cause usually what seems to happen is one team grabs their cart from the other side (depending on the previous round winners) and the other team gets straight fucked. first round today didn't even have the carts touch, second round had them touch for... 10 seconds maybe? not very long. steamrolled, but then stalemated at the final area

-i think i like the 2nd stage more than i used to but what i said about it earlier still holds up

-dude how fucking RAD would it be if you won the game by pushing the enemy cart into a pit

Hazyfort

May 16th

-its alright

-pushing A feels a little... lost? like im not sure what the main route is. which isn't the entire issue, im not sure that Gorge A exactly has a main route either. but i have trouble establishing how the route im taking is going to lead me to the final point. i need to play it more to get a better feel but overall it just feels kinda aimless

-pushing B feels similar. the lobby is so interconnected that it doesn't feel like it matters too much what path i take. sorta like a 5cp lobby, except those are designed better - height differences and better cover within make the different entrances actually matter.

-really most of B just isn't that interesting... most of the area before B is a giant ramp with nothing in it. need to play it more

-the detailing has the level of polish you'd expect from a new mapper, but it has a good overall feel to it. its pretty

May 20th

-honestly dont know what to say about it. might be braindead at this point, ive played a lot of maps and its almost midnight

-i like the lower flank more now but its still kinda not great

Ice Tower

May 25th

-its too big

-lots of routes that im just not going to use because the map is so wide and a lot of the routes are hardly relevant to the objective

-the higher area, opposite of the cliff, is really annoying when the enemy team has good scouts or pyros. theres like 3 different routes to do the same thing so unless you have teammates pushing all three at the same time, they can flank you at the drop of a hat

-and i basically just dont want to use the other half of the map at all because of the mere possibility of an enemy sniper. there's not always one watching that area but it just makes me anxious looking at it so i dont use it

-the train isn't very consequential, though i think that's just because the map is so wide. it drastically effects that part of the map but hardly anyone is using that part of the map. one player didn't actually know where the train was

-most of the time the entire cliff half of the map is devoid of players. everyone goes to the other side because there's cover and its possible to make a push, unlike the rest of the map

-i feel like i'm repeating myself but thats basically all i have to say about the gameplay? its a pretty major flaw and you'd need to work on that before anything else really becomes relevant because i think you have a good grasp of how to scale something well and how to make interesting geo - its just the overall layout thats lacking

-detailing seems decently executed, the snow is good

-the buildings on the other hand are a bit odd. a red wooden building with fancy metal spytech door frames, with a "HOTEL" sign despite being in the middle of an industrial complex of some sort

-love the tower itself. kinda wish the rest of the map followed that direction with the theming, like how snowycoast or reactor looks. gorge-style industrial in the snow looks pretty kickass, but instead the buildings in this map look like what a deep-dream algorithm trained on tf2 sheds would generate. not to say that they look bad (some of the wood framing details are quite nice), it's just that the overall theme feels like a mishmash.

-last note is the ambient lighting is a bit dark for not artificially lighting some areas. im starting to think my monitor might be darker than most because i complain about this more often than anyone else i know, but i typically don't have this issue on valve maps and i think they're a good standard for lighting in tf2. keep all gameplay spaces well-lit (unless you really want an area to be sneaky, like some corner underneath a stair for hiding in)

-i talk a lot about how to fix this map, though id suggest learning from this and moving on. i don't know how much you'll get out of trying to fix this map because it's pretty much already in a complete state, and the changes would probably cut out a lot of the map's existing content.

Log Place

May 20th

-this map never ceases to be weird

-its 2018 and you aren't putting fwd spawns in?? cmon man

-in all seriousness i get bored of walking from blue spawn every time i die. cause i die a LOT on this map when attacking

-the low route is... well, i basically ignore it. its super open and just does not feel safe whatsoever. idk how safe it is in practice but it doesnt FEEL like it, and that's why almost nobody uses it

-it gets used so infrequently by blue that it functions as a flank for red

-uhhhhh i still dont like this map but i think i enjoyed it more than in the past? i gotta move on

May 25th

-pretty easy to camp red's left spawn exit

-only got up to like 7v7 so this test wasn't worth a lot

-A is pretty predictable. there's basically the one good sentry spot and blue tries to take it out and thats just always how the point seems to play out

-should probably swap that weird stack of cubes out with some actual stairs. it looks like a prop jump route but functions as stairs so it should just look like stairs

May 26th

-nobody actually stands on B. everything is about controlling the areas above B, which red basically spawns directly on. it's like gorge except the useful high ground is on the wrong side. spawn distance from the point is really critical imo, as is where the good ground to hold is located. both are kind of wrong on this map's B, unless you wanted to pull a badlands and make the cap time like 2 seconds

-note how gorge's very high ground isn't even directly accessible by red, yet it isn't overpowered. how can you do the same for yours?

-really important thing for a/d maps is to give red team something to lose. they have control of the whole point area before blue enters the picture, so you can put that wherever you want. consider how gravelpit C has the point nowhere near red's spawn (although this is partially because of blue's incredibly long walk to the fight). pretty much the only thing red has to lose in this map is that really high ground, which red can take back relatively easily because its so accessible from spawn... assuming that spawn exit isn't being camped. beyond that, there's hardly any push and pull for trying to take B - blue is trying to push the same area over and over.

Oasis

May 20th

-played as red, got steamrolled. switched to blue. we also won, though it was a struggle

-the first half of the map honestly feels easier than the second? there aren't a ton of open spaces to fight in, it tends to be a rather chokey fight (not inherently bad, though i would argue maybe it is?? not sure). the height advantage in general kinda shifts backwards to how you would expect though. not a great analysis of the map's problems but it is the obvious thing to point out

-the middle of the town (where A is) is awfully red. idk if its my monitor settings or what but red players were kinda hard to see

-last is weird. its like badwater last but red doesn't have a height advantage so it doesn't work, sorta. red can keep blue at bay decently but once they push underneath the bridge its usually blue's game. you're working with some pretty tight restrictions, putting a final point underneath a sphinx, but i just don't think it quite works.

-small notes i left in feedback:

-blue fwd spawn after capping A is weird cause there's two doors and the "default" door is the worse one. i'd rather be exiting the one on the right most of the time and using the left when we're getting camped at the other one. there's a dumb sightline looking right at it but that should be fixed by nudging some geometry around, not by gimping blue's fwd spawn

-there's invisible push things in tree canopies in the oasis, which makes sense. it also really fucks with a rocket jump's trajectory in some unpredictable ways, and the tree canopies aren't exactly out of the way. not sure what to do about this beyond trying to minimize the radius of that push or moving the trees out of the way. not addressing this at all would also probably be acceptable

-people keep telling me this map is good but i havent had a good round on it yet. i'm still holding out on it but i'm losing faith

May 25th

so we actually held last, which surprised everyone on the server. unfortunately im not sure the dynamic of actually holding last is all that fun. blue tries to push their way into the main room through a series of chokes and red's job is more or less to rotate between all the chokes and

make sure nobody gets through. its a weird game of micromanagement that didn't feel a lot like good ol' tf2 because most of the gameplay was still just happening in chokes.

lots of weird momentum problems all over the place, really. i think part of the issue is how, at every choke, each side of each exit is meant to be viable for each team. this enables, even encourages red to hold forward, which might not actually be good - if they hold forward and then all get creamed, blue can steamroll again.

a lot of successful payload maps are designed such that every capture point marks the end of an arena, and there's a pretty clear delineation between that area and the next, which houses the next CP - and red doesn't have that ability to hold forward. they're required to sit back and let blue come at them so that the giant group of blue players that's accumulated on the cart can be properly countered by a large group of red players - which would otherwise be spread out if red players could push forward. older maps (goldrush, thundermountain stage 2) are really obvious about this. newer, more modern maps (upward, badwater) are more subtle about it, but still follow the same formula.

oasis isn't quite as rigorous about it, and it allows red to hold forward in places that it doesn't seem like they're meant to be able to hold. the result is that the only thing that lets blue push forward is a total wipe of red, which then gives them a lot of momentum where they're not really meant to have it and red has a hard time recuperating.

May 26th

-i think ive more or less covered the larger issues with the map so i'll get into some specifics
-lots of little ledges to jump up on. A, for example, it kinda makes sense that you'd want to slow players down who aren't using the main path. however, taking the route to the right where blue eventually starts spawning is such an essential part of taking A and i don't think a jump route is appropriate. maybe a stair that runs to the side so players spend more time running up it (as opposed to stair that just runs forward/backward)?

-the trees within the oasis do a great job of selling the setting but they often get in the way of visibility. they could probably be better positioned in places that don't obscure vision, though i think part of that might also require expanding the area a bit from its original design.

-the lower area of the oasis is a nightmare to navigate. it's already kinda tight with 45 degree walls, which mess with player hitboxes in unexpected ways (you can't get as close to a 45 wall as a 90 degree wall since the player hitbox is a square that doesn't rotate), but having small ledges that require jumping everywhere makes it a pretty frustrating place to fight in.

-about ground textures: most ground textures in the game are relatively patternless. they're textured, but that texture is usually pretty subtle and fine. i THINK this is to help with readability, since its what you're looking at most of the time. because of this, i take issue with the stone ground textures, as i think they hurt readability a decent amount. this might also be because they're visually similar to the walls (which are the same color and have a relatively similar pattern). i think desaturating the color and dialing back the pattern would help a bit.

Voltage

May 20th

-this layout does not support fighting very well at all. the points are designed to be held against an onslaught, not a team without respawns. engies set up shop on the point every round and it was always a deathmatch

-the layout also is just kinda bad for fighting cause there's a lot of doorways. very divided into separate rooms and there's not much reason to go into them since camping your own point is such a good strategy

-i dont know how this became a finalist. we played one match before it pretty much completely fell apart

-actually on second thought thats kind of harsh. still, i dont like it

May 25th

-when you design an arena point to be so defensible, the game just becomes about defending that point. and defense's job is basically to drag the game out, which is what people really don't like about arena

-the point also kinda begs to be defended because there's like a million ways to get to it. i don't feel safe in abandoning my own point when an enemy could be waiting at one of 4 other doors that im not going through

-so funnily enough, the best way to play the map is aggressively. which isn't that fun either because a) anxiety about my own point but also b) the gameplay spaces just aren't all that fun

Yanqing

May 20th

-i enjoyed playing this more than snowcastle tbh

-need to play it some more to critique the layout but i think it has a decent push and pull to it. relatively easy to switch from offense to defense while also benefitting players who dedicate themselves to either task - the best route to attack a point also takes you the furthest away from your own, but if you go that way when leaving spawn then its not like you're abandoning your own point, y'know

May 25th

-maybe we just have some really stalematey players today because boy this map is dragging

-i talked a lot about defensible points on voltage earlier today and i think some of the ideas still apply, its just much easier to switch between roles

-that said i think if a team manages to split itself well between both halves of the map then basically every entrance is covered and you're spamming chokes, waiting for the other team to mess up. thats probably why the game was dragging today, half of each team would defend and the other would attack using the other half of the map and you just have two continuous battles of pushing through two small chokes each

May 26th

-same as last time, it stalemated a fair amount. it's better than voltage in that regard but its still about trying to push a few doorways and hoping you don't get fucked

-the upper doorway is probably the worst part. it's the good obvious way to attack the point and its just sort of become the meta that you basically need players there on both teams. most interesting plays happen through the bottom routes but i think they're mostly only good if the defending team forgets to, well, defend it