

16th December Patch Analysis for Into the Nexus

By D.va

Disclaimer: These are my thoughts on the changes, and you are free to disagree with them in whichever way possible. I don't mean to trash your opinions with this, I just wanted to grant you a different look at things, so you can discover for yourself if there is something you might have missed, or if the guy writing all this is simply crazy.

Balance

- Gaining Unstoppable now prevents and removes Blinds.

Talking about the blind change, I first have to address a statement Kyle made, and that is that you were able to cleanse blinds before this change. That I am very certain is wrong, as cleanse never removed any negative effects. It just granted the target the Unstoppable-Status, and THAT in turn made the negative status-effects disappear. Therefore, I highly doubt blinds were cleanse-able before this change.

That of course leads directly into the change: Blinds are now cleanse-able! This affects primarily the auto-attack heroes like Raynor or Sgt. Hammer, melee assassins like Illidan and Samuro, as well as bruisers, Thrall, Imperius and Varian come to mind. This change also helps out tanks quite a bit though, who don't have the high DPS of an assassin, but usually have powerful AA's with a lower attack speed. The purpose seems pretty clear to fix Deathwings fantasy of the unstoppable dragon. Ironically, there currently exists a bug that allows Deathwing to be blinded; and he will actually miss his AA, this is not just a graphical error.

The strongest buff goes to the heroes that bring a cleanse themselves, either in their kit or as a talent. I found a partial list in the Hots wiki page (<https://heroesofthestorm.gamepedia.com/Unstoppable>), however I noticed several entries missing, so take that with a grain of salt.

The biggest winners are in my opinion:

- Sgt. Hammer (Siege Tactics at lvl. 4)
- Sylvanas (E, Haunting Wave [when teleporting])
- Zarya (Unstoppable Competitor at lvl. 13)
- The Butcher (E, Ruthless Onslaught)
- Raynor (Indomitable Resolve at lvl. 20)
- Imperius (Impervious at lvl. 20)

Honorable mentions go out to Yrel (Seraphim at lvl.20), Leoric if he uses his AA-Build (E, Wraith Walk), and Malthael if he picks Last Rites (Inevitable End at lvl. 13).

Besides the heroes that benefit from this change on their own, everyone can now be "de-blinded" by most supports using their respective cleanse-abilities.

Healers capable of granting Unstoppable are:

- Kharazim (Cleansing Touch at lvl.16)
- Li Li (Let's Go! at lvl. 7)
- Lucio (High Five at lvl. 10)
- Rehgar (Cleave at lvl. 7)
- Uther (Hand of Protection at lvl. 7)
- Whitemane (Intercession at lvl. 7)

While not straight-up cleanse-abilities, there are three more ways to grant an ally Unstoppable:

- Anduin (Trait, Leap of Faith)
- Uther (Divine Shield at lvl.10)
- Garrosh (Into The Fray at lvl. 7)

This is more of a "nice to know thing" if you play any of these heroes, but maybe it can be useful at times, especially Divine Shield on a melee assassin or Garrosh tossing someone after an escaping enemy that hoped to make his escape by blinding the other teams assassin.

There is however another form of CC-removal in the game, one that does not make use of Unstoppable, but rather just removes the negative status-effects outright.

These heroes are

- Brightwing (Trait, Soothing Mist)
- Malfurion (Nature's Cure at lvl. 7)
- Tyrande (Celestial Attunement at lvl. 16)
- Zarya (Cleansing Shield at lvl. 16)
- Lunara (Abolish Magic at lvl. 13)

Three of those list the specific CC they remove (Brightwing, Malfurion and Tyrande), while the others simply state "remove all disabling effects". I tested blinds interaction with the first three using Nature's Cure, and it indeed does not remove blinds. Since it removes silences however, I assume this to be more of an oversight to be fixed sometime in the near future. (Interesting tidbit I found doing this research is that Tyrande's ability is the only one to not remove roots. Maybe she doesn't want to anger her husband, given how into roots he is....) Zarya and Lunara's abilities do not outright state what they deal with and what not, but a test with Zarya's Cleansing Shield showed it does not remove blinds.

There is also a short list of heroes that actually got nerfed by this change. The first is Johanna, more specifically her Zealous Glare talent. Since blinds can now be removed, this talent increasing a blinds duration is not particularly useful anymore and became even more niche as it already was.

The other one is Cassia. Cassia got hit by the changes fairly hard, as her entire gimmick that sets her apart from other ranged assassins revolves around blinds. Basically cleanse against a Cassia now equals 20 armor on the cleansed target. In terms of talents there are three worth talking about. Seraph's Hymn received a buff, as it allows Cassia to use Blinding Light more often, thus reapplying blind onto a cleansed target sooner than usual. Inner Light will remain a strong contender to counter The Butcher or Hunt Illidan, as the Unstoppable those heroes receive ends with the stun, which in turn triggers Inner Lights blind after the Unstoppable wore off. The last talent that needs mentioning is Ring Of The Leech. This talent allows Cassia to heal of the damage she deals to blinded targets, allowing a player with quick reflexes and great overview to deny a cassia her healing. This in turn also forces Cassia to play more carefully if she relies on Ring Of The Leech for her sustain.

Experience Globes

Moving on into the XP-changes.

First of all, I wanna waltz right through three of the changes:

- Experience Globes will no longer time out while traveling to a hero.
- They will still expire if the hero moves out of range of the Experience Globe before it reaches them.
- Removed a .5 second delay before Experience Globes can be collected.

These I am fine with, nothing here makes me scream in protest. The .5 delay seems weird to me as I didn't notice it much, but on the other hand I don't really care about it being removed.

The last part however is easily the most controversial part about this, and I have some worries about it.

- Heroes who kill Minions with Abilities or Basic Attacks will automatically collect the experience from the Minions.

The big winner of this change are obviously all heroes with AOE-abilities. These are primarily mages that now once again can operate without fear of repercussion, as they are protected by their tank and healer.

That however turns especially the tanks role from a more active one that revolved around gathering globes back to being little more than a babysitter for the glorious range assassin who handles all the important stuff.

It also will lead to a generally more passive playstyle. Since the need to go out there and interact with the enemy team is now gone (unless your mage is playing badly of course), so everything will revert back to super-safe play.

Denying XP is also pretty much gone with this change. No longer has at least one member of the enemy team move up into your range, now XP can safely be gathered from range in a mere second. There is also very little counterplay available to such a playstyle, as the only way to prevent say, a blizzard, from killing / last-hitting your minions that does not involve you killing the enemy mage before he/she/it can put down their spell is putting up wave-wide shields. And only two heroes are capable of that, namely Tyrael with his lvl. 1 talent Justice For All, and Abathur using a combination of his lvl. 1 / lvl. 7 talents Reinforced Carapace and Networked Carapace.

The epitome of this playstyle is of course Azmodan. His Globe of Annihilation's cast range dwarfs that of other mages aoe-abilities by a significant margin, so now even killing the guy is out of the question. While I am aware that a lot of Azmodan players consider this ability to

soak minion waves from absolute safety the core of what Azmodan is, but I feel balancing-wise it presents a problem. Luckily Azmodan is commonly considered a bad hero (Hint: he can do more than toss globes on minion waves), so the problem stays localized to a small fraction of games.

This makes a player's skill in managing their lanes less important, as losing a lane is now very much salvageable by simply last-hitting the minions. Aggression and generally active play will no longer be rewarding, but most likely even become harmful to your team.

Let me explain this by using one of the most common aggressive moves as an example: Ganking the off-lane.

If your team sends up one player in order to create an advantage in this part of the map that means that they in turn give up their equal playing field on the rest of the map due to being a player "down". When you gank, it always starts as a roam; and the first thing you create with this is dread. Everyone, especially of course the off-laner who is without support close by, has to be wary of where the missing player might show up. Previously, this meant the off-laner would stay back and is forced to give up XP in his lane, or the enemy team sends one of their players to the off-lane to "cover" for your possible gank. In both cases you create advantage for your team in the off-lane, so it's up to the rest of the team to do something about it. If the enemy team decides to not respond to your possible gank by covering (sending a player away) they can now push their advantage against your team, as they are only three players. This advantage can express itself in them denying your other lanes XP, or by taking merc camps on both their and your side of the map. The bottom line that determines the success of roaming is: Can you deny more XP in the off-lane thanks to the 2v1 situation you created, or can the enemy team deny your team more XP by pressing their advantage on the rest of the map. You deny more XP you win, they gather more than you deny they win.

Previously (before the last-hit change), the pure dread could be enough to win you advantage on the off-lane by forcing the enemy laner to stay close to his fortifications. Now with last hitting this is a lot harder to accomplish and will pretty much always result in you having to actually commit to the gank. If you do, there are two possible outcomes: The enemy off-laner dies, or he survives. If you manage to kill him, you win. Flat out. The enemy loses all his XP in this lane, and maybe even more if you can take structures, take a merc camp etc. This is true both before and after the changes.

If he survives however, things go into "it depends" territory. Before the changes he could now be zoned out of XP by our off-laner, given you dealt sufficient damage to him/her. Now, he can just stay back and work on his last-hitting, for example a Blaze would throw fire from range to kill your minions. This alleviates the pressure on his team to make up for his disadvantage by a lot, in turn putting the pressure on YOUR team to prevent them from actually taking the lead.

The bottom line is that previously a gank could succeed much easier, rewarding those who made such aggressive moves. Now, only if you score a bullseye (killing the enemy hero) will you benefit for certain. Any other result will leave it up to your team to stem the tide now turning against them, and puts much more pressure on them just to not fall behind due to your aggressive move, let alone actually fall behind. Given the increased risks I would consider ganks a way too dangerous proposition to follow through, which leaves me with just passively playing the lanes and waiting for either my enemy making a mistake I can exploit, or the map forcing a teamfight due to an objective.

I know that this change did not only happen because of mages. It also helped out other heroes like those relying on poison (e.g. Lunara) by speeding up their rotations.

Summons were another big thing, again especially Azmodan with his Demon Lieutenant, but also Zagara and, to a much lesser extent though, Abathur. For Abathur I'm going to put a complete separate section, but I would like to address Azmo and Zag summons here. While it made it less punishing letting your pets roam free without your supervision since any minion killed will now be added to your XP-account, it also turns the game into a series of dice rolls. Since you can't control your summons, it will always be incredibly random how much XP a summon will collect; and that rubs me the wrong way. Soaking should be a skill and a resulting commitment, rather than a game of chance that randomly turns you into anything between MVP and useless.

Another aspect was the smoothing out the leveling process. The change leads to more equal leveling; both teams will reach certain important levels like 10 at roughly the same time if the game has not clearly shifted in favor of one team already. And I agree, that feels much better, knowing you have a chance to create a comeback, but it also means the superior moves of the other team or the mistakes your team make will now be much less relevant to the outcome, which does neither reward good play nor punish bad play (unless it is a complete one-sided game with one team dominating the other or one team making mistake after mistake).

It's not all bad and horrible for sure, but I think it also comes with its downsides that nobody seems to really care about; and I worry about that. That might be a result of the fact that most people are playing ranged assassins (in the top 100 leaderboard 49% are playing mostly ranged assassins on US, and even more with 57% on EU).

One thing I don't worry about however is the state of Abathur and The Lost Vikings. Both heroes are, in my opinion, in a very good state. The vikings community in general didn't complain or whine much about the changes, probably as they affect the vikings less. The Lost Vikings want to step into every lane they soak anyways to fuel their trait, which is an uncapped Regeneration Master and thus depends on health globe gathering. So a good vikings player will step out of his bush every wave anyways, and while taking the health

globe will also collect the XP globes on the way. The only ones impacted are of course the bad vikings players, however that feels fine to me – it is a hero with a high skill floor, so step up.

Abathur on the other hand ... oh Abathur. Your playerbase was (is?) crying up a river, cause they are suddenly confronted with the fact that they can no longer take advantage of players with little game knowledge. Again, let me explain how Abathur's doublesoaking works and why the XP-orb-changes did nothing to him.

First, what is doublesoaking? Doublesoaking describes the act of gathering XP from two lanes at the same time. This technique is majorly important for Abathur, as he can only properly participate in teamfights as a full hero once he reaches level 10 and his heroic Ultimate Evolution. Therefore, Abathur's first goal is to reach that level as soon as possible, so he doublesoaks.

This works by using the fact that Abathur can gather XP in two ways: By moving his body close to the XP-orbs like everyone else, or by using his Symbiote on any target, by which it will start acting like a hero and attract and absorb XP-orbs. Abathur's body is much weaker than that of your average hero however, so you need to make sure nobody is around to threaten you before moving your body out of your fortifications and into a lane. During the regular laning phase, that is literally impossible, but you also have teammates around soaking as well, negating the need for doublesoak.

When an objective starts on the map, be that a mapobjective or something like a boss on Cursed Hollow, that attracts everyone's attention, it is time for Abathur to make his move. He moves his body to the lane farthest away from where the fireworks are going off, and hides it in a bush for safety. Next, he puts his Symbiote on a minion in the next lane he wishes to soak and voila! - doublesoak is now in action.

The XP-orbs changed only one, technically small detail about this, but people are up in arms about it. Since XP-orbs don't magnetize to heroes out of sight because they are, let's say, in a bush ... ! Exactly, Abathur can't soak XP with his body anymore; at least not from inside a bush.

But is this really such a big deal as everyone is making it out to be? I say no, it is completely blown out of proportion. And while I generally am not a fan of using other peoples opinions as arguments, I have at least one very prominent supporter in this belief: Fan, former Tempo Storm HGC player, stated that after a practice game he considers Abathur to still be first-phase ban material. But on to my explanation:

First of all, the fact that Abathur would at least try to doublesoak is common knowledge by this point. Also, him hiding in a bush is of little value, as he periodically spawns locust, which walk out onto the lane and are a dead giveaway of his position.

The bad thing is: Those things are completely irrelevant. Even if you know where Abathur is, you can't do anything against it unless you play The Lost Vikings. Because every other hero is currently partaking in the big clobbering on the other side of the map, the only way to deal

with Abathur is for one of them to leave that brawl and run all the way to the other side of the map. And sometimes that works and you kill yourself a slug.

The thing is: It only works against the weak Abathurs, those that failed to adapt. First of all, a good Abathur will see you coming. That is because he has mined all common pathways to his location using his Toxic Nests. Those will also dismount you, so there is no way in hell you gonna reach Abathur in time before he either slithers or, using his "mount", digs away. I still see a lot of Abathur players using their mines to push waves, and that to me explains the tears of all those players that now have to actually use their brains.

And here is the worst: You just arrived where Abathur used to be like seconds prior, no slug in sight. But you start to hear dings. What's happening? That Abathur has told his team that you ran down to the other side of the map from the objective, slapped his Symbiote on one of his teammates melee heroes and they start closing the curtains by fighting a 4,5v4 (Abathur's Symbiote only counts as half a hero to me), but that is still more than enough to tilt this fight in his teams favor.

And that is only the bad part. If Abathur already reached level 10, things become a lot worse. Then he will not just Symbiote a teammate, now he will use his Ultimate Evolution. And that makes it a 5.5v4 fight. Yes, I consider the Ultimate Evolution like one-and-a-half heroes. That is because the Ultimate Evolution has 20% more spellpower, 20% more attack damage, and 10% more movespeed. Now it's seriously over. Your teammates might stand a chance against the Symbiote, but against the Ultimate Evolution? No. F...ing. Way.

The solution to the problem? There is none. Literally, there is no solution to this. Only a bad and a worse option. Or a Fenix with Planet Cracker. That will do too. So unless you have this mighty specific counter, the best thing you can do is stick to the fight, and try to take advantage of the fact that Abathur is only a full hero at level 10. Once he reaches 10, things are becoming hard, but the only way is to fight and hope you somehow make it.

This teaches us that it literally DOESN'T MATTER if Abathur sits in a bush while doublesoaking or not. Abathur players just need to move their bodies every now and then to keep up with the shifts of the minionfights. That is all.

So no, I don't see any problem with Abathur. Only that the bad ones are sorted out due to natural selection. Which is not a problem with Abathur, but the player.

The last thing I want to address concerning this Anomaly has nothing to do with the changes directly. My biggest concern is on a whole different layer. Kyle stated in ITN episode 298 (I believe it was 298) that Hots needs a developer with vision, who can carry Hots into the future as a successful and exciting game. And he crowned Alex Neyman, Senior Designer of Hots, to be that person, to be "our Icefrog". Someone that leads the game forward, and is willing to push radical changes through every now and then, because he and his team put hard work into it and are confident in what they do.

And now, just two weeks after its introduction, the devs are changing key parts of what the Anomaly was supposed to be. What they had developed and tested for nine months, where they brought us a blog post reeking of confidence explaining everything with great enthusiasm. All because a small part of the community decided they don't want to change their playstyle, they don't want, as Kyle calls it, puzzles to solve. They just want to continue like now into eternity, leaving all the problems at Blizzard, because it's their game right? So they have to fix it. But no changes!

I largely agree with Kyle: If not even the developers, the creators of the game have confidence in their own work, then how are we as players supposed to have any?

I am aware that this was only the first Anomaly. Maybe there always were people in the dev team that said "let's leave last-hit in, ranged heroes can't pick up globes, too dangerous".

And now the community response lead to an "ok, let's try it your way".

I'm just worried that this might set a precedent, a very dangerous precedent. If two weeks of intense flaming and whining, which most of what I saw was, the rational and calm discussions were the absolute minority and often got derailed by the same people over and over again, can lead to the developers throwing their work of nine months out the window just like that ...

I don't want to believe that, I want to hope that they sincerely believe that this change was for the better of the game and not just to appease the raging part of a community. I just wish I could be sure.

I love this game. And I want to see it grow. Not necessarily in player numbers, but as a more and more enjoyable experience.

Heroes

Whew. Now that that is out, onto the hero changes:

Tank

Anub'arak

Talents

- **Level 10**
 - **Locust Swarm [R1]**
 - Damage increased from 62 to 68.
 - Healing increased from 21 to 24.

This ability primarily struggles from being up against what many consider one of the strongest heroics in the game: Cocoon. However, it also is a very strong healing tool, something Anub'arak generally lacks as his sustain is shield-based. This requires an Anub'arak player to be very good at reading the battle so he can put up his shields exactly right, since missing a spike of damage is crucial due to, again, no heals in his kit. Locust Swarm makes up for this, just like you explained on the show, lowers his skillfloor pretty decently.

There is however something else this change might lead to: The sole reason Anub'arak is not considered one of the strongest tanks in the game is his below-average HP-pool. His shields are great a mitigating spikes of spell damage, but suffer from constant tickling by AA-based assassins. If Locust Swarm's heal would be able to make up for this weakness by providing enough heal for Anub'arak to sustain through a teamfight even against AA-assassins, this would instantly catapult him to the status of second best tank in the game, as he still sports the second best cc-abilities in the game, only slightly beaten by ETC in this regard. His still existing prowess in combating spell-based damage dealers might even make up for that slight shortcoming (the difference in cc is really marginal) in the right matchups.

As I am not an Anub'arak player myself I cannot say for sure if that point has been reached with this buff, so I would like to receive input from proficient Anub'arak players on the matter.

- **Level 16**

- **Debilitation [E]**

- Spellpower reduction duration increased from 4 to 5 seconds.

While applying a criminally underrated debuff (in general, not specific to this skill) to potentially multiple targets in the impact area, I doubt it is able to compete with the much more versatile Epicenter it shares this tier with. Epicenter just allows for more cc by slowing and stunning more often, coupled with increased survivability if Subterranean Shield is taken at lvl. 7.

- **Beetle, Juiced [Trait]**

- Additional functionality: Increase the Health of Beetles by 20%.

Beetle, Juiced is now meant to round out the Beetle-Build, and it does just that. I ran some numbers and the result is: This talent is only useful in the full Beetle-Build, that wants Beetles as its main source of damage and sustain, and therefore needs them to survive as long as possible.

I've compared the talents against various Aoe-skills and found that Beetles survive most with just Legion of Beetles spell armor, so if you just want to catch skillshots that talent is enough; Beetle, Juiced only increases the amount of HP the Beetles survive with. There is only one exceptions: A Keal'thas with fully stacked Convection can reliable roast Beetles with a single Flamestrike.

Overall I'm not sure if Anub'arak got easier to play, he is still very reliant on hitting all three of his skillshots (I consider shields in general to be skillshots, as applying them in time is a skill in and by itself) to keep his opponents in range to heal off of when using Carrion Swarm. But there is, as explained, the chance he might come from the shadows and start to tank everything, not just spell damage. And that is a frightening thought, as I remember the last reign of Anub'arak, and I dread his return to the throne.

Cho

Base

- **Surging Fist [Q]**

- Channel time to charge maximum distance reduced from 4 to 2 seconds.

Indeed a pretty decent buff, and one to mobility at that. Talent-wise only two Q-talents actually benefit from this change, those being Uppercut (the giant killer) and Frenzied Fists at lvl. 16, granting Cho 75% attack speed. Overall I feel like this is mostly a buff to the ability itself, granting Cho a quick chase- or escape-tool if necessary, rather than a buff to the corresponding talents. Uppercut is definitely the winner out of those though.

Talents

- **Level 1**

- **Calloused Hide [Trait]**

- Additional functionality: While Ogre Hide is active, Cho gains 15% Movement Speed.

This is kinda interesting, as mobility has always been one of Cho'galls weaknesses. I wonder, however, if 15% movespeed is worth giving up 25% damage on Gall. Not a Cho'gall player, would love some community input here.

- **Level 7**

- **Enraged Regeneration [Trait]**

- Additional functionality: While Gall's Ogre Rage is active, enemy Heroes who are hit by Gall's Dread Orb have their Healing reduced by 35% for 4 seconds.

Dread Orb is notoriously hard to hit on heroes, so I doubt there is much here.

- **Level 13**

- **Twilight Veil [Active]**

- Armor bonus increased from 100% to 200%.

Twilight Veil is now a strong contender for Molten Block I feel. If your goal is to prevent non-percent-based damage spikes against you, this is in my opinion now the way to go. A Cho'gall with tripled (!) health should be just as good as an invulnerable Cho'gall, only that this one can still deal damage.

Molten Block still is absolutely necessary if Cho is confronted by the likes of Last Rites or Seven-Sided-Strike.

Johanna

Base

- Health reduced from 2700 to 2625.
- Health Regeneration reduced from 5.625 to 5.469.

Kyle assumes more dead Johannas, and as hard as it is to believe (since Johanna is the hardest hero to die on in this game), I'm inclined to agree. People in this game are notoriously slow to accommodate to "invisible" changes, and I doubt this will be different. On the topic of her high ban rate: I don't think people don't want to fight Johanna. And I agree that tank mains don't want to be her (I at least don't want to play Johanna much as I think she is damn boring), and tank mains have alternatives ready, so they will only pick Johanna if her specific strengths are needed. I rather think that Johanna is so popular in the high leagues because there are so damn few tank mains! Looking at the top-100-leaderboard on the Hots-website, only 18% of US-players are playing tanks the most, and on the EU-side it's only 14%. For comparison, the remaining players distribute themselves 13% to bruisers, 16% healers, 4% melee assassins and a whopping 49% of players in the top 100 are primarily ranged assassin players. On EU we have 13% bruisers, 13% healers, 3% melee assassins and 57 ranged assassins. Now, with these numbers it's safe to assume a lot of non-tank mains need to fill as tanks, and if you don't play tank as your main role you are looking for an easy to play, yet still somewhat effective tank with high mistake-forgiveness. And Johanna fits that bill very well, which is why I think she sees so much play. Note that the dev comment stated she is the "most picked" hero rather than "the most effective" or "strongest".

Talents

- **Condemn [W]**

- Damage reduced from 58 to 55.

This change. My brain hurts. Like, not from this change, but from trying to quantify its impact. But I think I managed to tinker a pretty nice result (spoiler: not for Johanna).

If my line of thinking and resulting math checks out, Johanna lost some breakpoints here. The main problem was that I needed to somehow correlate minion HP and Johanna's damage output. Which is a problem as minion HP scales with time, and Johanna's damage scales with level. So I calculated the XP only from minions, and used that to figure out which level you should be at which time in the game. I used a three-lane map and assumed perfect soaking of all these lanes. Every other XP-income (hero kill, passive XP, etc.) was thrown out as that is completely unpredictable (yes, even passive XP, which might or might not be increased by destroyed forts). I also calculated with the HP of an archer minion, as that has more HP than the wizard, and your own minions will start hitting the enemies melee minions, reducing the damage you need to deal to those.

Using those numbers of my gametime-to-level-table to bridge the gap, I finally could put the numbers together and got results. I made calculations for both common Johanna clear combos I know of, which are

1. The low-resource variant. Used and recommended by ZaneHyde. It goes Condemn → AA each archer minion once, condemn again. It uses Eternal Retaliation at lvl. 4 for cd decrease and mana return.
2. The all-in. The combo Kyle uses exclusively. It goes like this: Shield Glare with Sins exposed → Condemn → Punish → AA the survivors to death or throw another condemn

Running the numbers with these two damage schemes showed me that a full-clear (the wave dies to the complete combo) happened pre-patch at level 14 for Combo 1 and at level 15 for combo 2. This value however changed drastically once I introduced the level 13 talent Roar into combo 2, which instantly put the full-clear at level 13.

Therefore, I introduced a third combo: Combo 2 with Roar.

This creates this table for comparison:

Combo	pre-patch	post-patch
1	14	16
2	15	16
3	13	13

But can we remedy this to achieve an earlier full-clear by adding more damage in? Sure we can. My first thought would be that the easiest way was to add another condemn to each combo. The result was this:

Combo	pre-patch	post-patch
1	2	4
2	3	4
3	3	4

Interesting fact: All these values can be raised to one level earlier by adding in literally any damage, as the wave survives with 4 HP pre- and 6 HP post-patch. So a single Punish or Shield Glare following the third condemn would finalize our instant-clear, and it is up to the player to decide if this is a worthy use of his / her resources (both Punish and Shield Glare have close to a 10 second cd).

Now lets look at time: Can we achieve the full-clear faster? Since neither Punish without Roar nor Shield Glare provide any meaningful damage to the combos, the only other damage source Johanna has is her AA.

If we add one AA to every combo instead of a condemn, will this improve our clearspeed?

Combo	pre-patch	post-patch
1	6	7
2	7	7
3	7	7

The answer for combo 1 is: No. With Johanna's attack speed close to 1.0 (it's 0.91) we come in at almost the exact time if we assume a standard 7-minion wave. Johanna takes about 3 seconds to hit every minion once, and Eternal Retaliation reduces Condemn's cd to pretty much 3 seconds. But while we can't create a time advantage, we can save resources using AAs to finish the minions one we hit level 7.

For combo 2 on the other hand, we gain some benefit of AA'ing the remaining minions to death. Since we need to hit every archer twice which that takes us about 6 seconds, and condemn has a 10 second cd we finish the wave about 2 seconds prior to condemn coming off cd.

Overall, we lose about 3 seconds time in each wave we clear, unless we picked Roar. This talent now becomes integral for fast clear, giving it an edge over Blessed Hammer it competes against. Is that delay important however? Well, it depends :)

But it makes one thing clear: The devs have hit Johanna where it hurts, as her survivability and waveclear were her biggest strengths she had over all the other tanks. And this will remain, since most of her fellow tanks have abysmal waveclear; only Blaze and Mal'Ganis feature above-average waveclear. I would guess that this nerf brings her waveclear close to

that of Blaze, and since I'm not a Mal'Ganis player, can't properly comment on this. Maybe Kyle can finish this thought for me, as he has experience playing Mal'Ganis.

Bruisers

Deathwing

Base

- Health reduced from 3200 to 2920.
- Health Regeneration reduced from 6.67 to 6.08.

This is actually not that easy to evaluate, as Deathwing's armor plates make changes to his health more complex than the simple number change might suggest. According to my calculations, this change equals a loss of 364 effective health at level 1. More milestones to show the development of this change would be a loss of health at level 10 of 518 and 767 at level 20. So overall not too big, but Deathwing should feel those, especially if he chases players behind their forts or keeps.

- **Incinerate [W]**
 - Damage reduced from 85 to 80.
- **Onslaught [E]**
 - Damage reduced from 42 to 40.
 - Damage at the end of the lunge reduced from 80 to 75.
- **Cataslysm [R]**
 - Periodic damage reduced from 12 to 11.

Only one thing to say here: Again, these numbers don't tell the full story. Deathwing's trait grants him 100% extra damage to heroes, so everything written down here needs to be doubled to actually show his teamfight values.

Since Onslaught has no damage amplifying talents or other interactions making this talent relevant to a specific playstyle, I didn't run the numbers for this change. I sure did for the other two though, and the changes turn out to indeed be minuscule. Incinerate loses 22 damage at level 20 for each hero hit, and Dragon Soul loses 16 healing per hero hit (level 20 values). Cataclysm's total damage, assuming a hero stands in the fire for the entire time and Burn beneath my Shadow was NOT picked, only drops by a flimsy 101 damage at level 20.

Talents

- **Level 1**

- **Draconic Might [Trait]**

- Healing reduced from 40% to 30%.

This talent will stay popular, mainly due to the Protected-status it grants on the loss of a plate, preventing further damage. This is Deathwing's main counter to percent-based damage heroes like Tychus or Leoric, who strip his plates one after another in a continuous stream of damage rather than in bursts like Greymane's Cursed Bullet. Against those heroes it often times prevents a lot of damage, as even in 0,75 seconds those heroes hurt Deathwing plenty. The healing part that actually got nerfed was also not majorly impactful, healing for 18 health less per AA at level 1, 25 at 10 and 37 at 20. This averages to a loss of healing per second of 12, 17 and 25 respectively. Even if you stack all AA-boosting talents Deathwing holds, you only lose out on 40 HP/sec without and 56 HP/sec with Destroyer's Rampage. While that would be massive for any hero other than Deathwing, to him that is less than one percent of his maximum health.

I expect that talent to still get picked to counter the aforementioned Tychus and Leorics, as well as teams that can talent into strong percent-based damage later on.

- **Level 7**

- **Skyfall [E]**

- Healing reduced from 5% to 3% maximum Health.

Skyfall's healing before that patch used to be 211 at level 7, now reduced to 115, a net loss of 95. But how does that affect Deathwing in the greater scheme of things? Simply put, you won't heal as fast in the air as you used to. Assuming every meteor from this talent hit a hero, you could heal from 1 HP to full in 28 seconds rather than the 40 seconds it would take with Dragonflight alone. Post-patch this number has been reduced to 33 seconds, meaning you have to stay at least 5 seconds longer in the air or give up on some healing, landing without full health and plates.

This affects this talent as a quick-heal and instant re-enter, but overall still holds great value due to its utility, and if you don't need to re-enter a fight asap, this talent still enables you to do so more frequently than without it. If you want only a stronger engage in the form of the cdr after landing on this talent, Death Drop does this better now.

Overall, this now offers Deathwing players a noticeably different level 7 tier, where each talent now amplifies one aspect of Dragonflight: Firestorm for global mobility, Death Drop for engage and Skyfall for healing. Which is a good thing, and allows exactly what the talent system was designed to do: Tailor your hero to your personal playstyle.

- **Level 10**

- **Burn Beneath My Shadow [R1]**

- Bonus damage reduced from 150% to 100%.

This one really hurt Deathwing. His Cataclysm damage at level 10 dropped from previously 2316 damage with this talent down to 1769, a loss of over 500 (547 to be exact) damage, given a player stood in the fire for the entire duration. And this becomes even worse the closer you get to 20, coming in at a loss of 809 damage, from 3428 down to 2619. This talent took it hard, man.

Now, will this result in a change in talents? Possibly, however I still feel like the whole second windup-time on Bellowing Roar feels way to long. Imagine Gul'dan's purple fear-thingy appearing, and then it starts channeling for 1 second before the effect actually goes off.

- **Level 16**

- **Elementium Plating [Active]**

- Shield amount reduced from 35% to 30% missing Health.

Elementium Plating's strength lies in the fact that it combines Muradin's Stoneform with Kerrigan's Chrysalis, without the downsides. Also, the only in-fight way to regain armor. I personally feel this talent is overrated for what it does, but it's definitely a lifesaver against Last Rites. Generally though, I believe people are sleeping on Gaze onto Destruction, as that talent alone should win you teamfights.

Quick Intermission: Just as interesting as what they changed is what they NOT changed. More specifically I want to point out two level 4 talents: Heat Wave and Dragon's Ire. Those are incredibly easy to trigger talents offering a great damage increase and have consequently drawn a lot of ire from the community, yet no changes happened here. You could argue that technically the nerfs to Destroyer Form's ability damage also nerfed Dragon's Ire, but those nerfs turned out to be very minor, barely affecting the talents power level.

Anyway, Deathwing will be fine with these changes, but I think his skillfloor jumped up a whole bit. This is firstly from the Skyfall-nerf which now forces you to either be more careful with your health or give up power in another area. Secondly, the Burn beneath my Shadow nerf made Cataclysm way less threatening of an ability, so Bellowing Roar might become the default pick, which requires a lot more skill to use properly rather than indiscriminately flying over the entire teamfight and even searing the outside part a bit for good measure. So yes, I am confident people who made up their minds on playing Deathwing will pull through and still be able to play him effectively; I however expect the number of Deathwings to drop

down again, which will not be to everyone's liking given the popularity of the hero (or, villain).

Thrall

Talents

- **Level 1**

- **Rolling Thunder [Q]**

- New functionality: [Passive] Increase the number of Chain Lightning bounces by 1. For 8 seconds after hitting an enemy with Chain Lightning, Thrall's next Basic Attack against them grants him a stack of Frostwolf Resilience. If the target is an enemy Hero, then he also deals damage to them equal to 2% of their maximum Health and healing for the same amount.

All right, my favorite lvl.1 Thrall talent gets a buff.. right? Well no. At least not in my opinion. Let's go over Thrall's level 1 talents, as Kyle is struggling to find a place for Crash Lighting.

Echo of the Elements is the safe level 1 talent. This talent gives Thrall an out when he needs to play safe, by transforming his primary range ability into a proper poke tool. This is accomplished by first reducing the mana cost of Chain Lightning, making it spamable, and finishes off with a second charge, elevating the cooldown.

It does not provide as much raw damage output as Crash Lighting, but is available earlier, making it the supreme laning choice, as it allows Thrall to get away with a passive playstyle his kit otherwise does not supply.

Crash Lighting is the blunt-force option at level 1. This talent turns Chain Lighting into an AoE-ability by pretty much making up for the damage difference between the primary target of Chain Lighting and the secondary bounce damage.

A late-game talent in its purest form, this talent requires a lot of work during the game, but rewards you with the highest damage output, turning you basically into your mage form. In numbers this turns your level 16 Chain Lighting damage from 759 into 1839, for level 20 it goes from 887 to 1967. This damage is of course spread out over 4 targets, but you still put so so much pressure on the enemy team. Basically requires Mana Tide at level 4 to keep your mana up.

And finally, Rolling Thunder. This was the aggressive lane-talent. By proccing the marks from the enemy minion wave each mark gave you 2,5% of your max health and 10 mana, turning you into the literate immovable object in lane, as you revived unlimited heals. It however

required you to step up and get those marks, so it supplied the aggressive player with a tool to trade damage with the enemy laner and having an effective recovery tool. This awesome power however has its downsides as well. If you lost your lane hard and got zoned out, you were stuck with little options. The same goes in a poke war, for example around an objective, where this talent contributed pretty much nothing, compared to its peers. It was a great supplement for the assassin-thrall build focusing on Windfury, trading survivability (no Ancestral Wrath) for damage (Mealstrom Weapon, Tempest Fury) once a fight broke out. You basically were an assassin with a solid lane phase.

This new variant doubles down on the healing part, but removes the mana-recovery completely. This will limit your in-lane sustain by putting strain on your manapool, for compete over the top sustain in lane by providing so much heal you can't keep up with taking damage. Mana Tide MIGHT be a way to solve this issue, but giving up Frostwolf Pack or Frostwolf Resilience (depending on the matchup) hurts the soul of the aggressive player. In a teamfight this talent is just as awkward as it used to be. It's no spamable poke like either of the alternatives, and makes you spread your damage in a fight, which is exactly what you don't want to do. The massive amount of heal might be nice, but I don't think Thralls healthpool allows for an actual tank playstyle, which would be this talents saving grace. Lastly, they added a one-time giant killer in by having marks proceed on heroes deal 2% max health dmg to the target. However, this is one Giant Killer hit every 7 seconds. If you consider that good, then you also have to accept Jaina's Frost Armor (lvl. 4, one charge of block every 10 seconds) as good. And we all know Frost Armor is bad, and so is Rolling Thunder's giant killer. If you want to play a giant killer bruiser, go for Malthael, Leoric or Imperious; they all have more damaging and more reliable tankbusters.

Varian

Talents

- **Level 20**
 - **Frenzy [R3]**
 - No longer increases Varian's Attack Speed by 15%.
 - Additional functionality: Increase the damage of Heroic Strike by 25%.

The talent is definitely better, as you already discussed. It makes Varian less susceptible to being kited by him not having to stick to his target all the time, while keeping his DPS the same (I didn't calculate that, I just assume that's what Blizzard did).

But a point you didn't bring up on the show: Should we take that talent in the first place? Glory to the Alliance is just completely bonkers, and even Demoralizing Shout is not to be

underestimated. So I think while this change is indeed helpful, it still doesn't get it even close to Glory to the Alliance.

Yrel

Talents

- **Level 1**

- **Dauntless [Passive]**

- Physical Armor duration increased from 2 to 2.5 seconds.

Wait for it Johanna, I got you soon! - Yrel, Crusader from a different world

- **Level 7**

- **Holy Avenger [E]**

- Additional functionality: Hitting an enemy Hero with Avenging Wrath at maximum charge also increases its damage by 25%.

This one I believe you are sleeping on. Usually, you had to pick Velen's Chosen at 13 to make this talent worth it, since you lacked the pure damage on Avenging Wrath. Now, that this talent handles this problem by itself, this opens up Yrel's level 13, allowing for either a utility pick into either damage reduction or increased slow, while still keeping the option to go all-in with damage. Just as a taste, with fully stacked Velen's Chosen at level 13 Avenging Wrath deals a whopping 782 damage. Technically every second. Shessh.

- **Level 16**

- **Templar's Verdict [W]**

- Damage increased from 6% to 7% maximum Health.

- **Divine Favor [Trait]**

- Cooldown reduction increased from 1.5 to 2 seconds.

- **Holy Wrath [Passive]**

- Bonus splash damage increased from 20% to 30%.

Yup, correct interpretation from you guys, this makes Yrel's level 16 probably her biggest powerspike in the game. Templar's Verdict remains as a counter-talent against frontline-heavy teams, it just does it even better now. Holy Wrath is very popular among Yrel players

as a reliable source of damage, even if you don't get value from the splash. Divine Favor feels very much out of place in this tier. Everything is damage, and there comes this utility talent. I don't see it having much of an impact though, as while Yrel could generally use the mana savings, I feel both damage options grant her so much more impact lategame.

- **Level 20**

- **Word of Glory [R1]**

- Additional functionality: Increase the amount that Yrel heals from damage received from 50% to 75%.
 - Range of allied healing increased from 8 to 12.

I know Yrel still has Seraphim, so why even look at this right? Yet, I could see this find a place as a specific counter to burst comps. With the healing range increased to 12, you can now fairly reliably heal your allies without having to fear an aoe-spell just burning the both of you away right after Ardent Defender ends.

I might be overly excited for these buffs to Yrel, but I was already looking to pick her up as I consider her sleeper-OP, so these buffs came just at the right time. Or the worst, if this turns Yrel back into a meta-pick, which I think is very much possibilities. She was just forgotten over the introduction of Imperius, the Chen-Rework and the resurgence of Thrall, and has lost none of her former strength.

Healer

Auriel

Talents

- **Level 10**

- **Resurrect [R1]**

- Resurrected Hero's Health increased from 50% to 100%.
- Delay before resurrection reduced from 5 to 3 seconds.
- Additional functionality: Auriel can now see her own ghost. If she presses R while dead, she will cast Resurrect on herself.

First of all: Resurrect IS bonkers. Just like you said. Maybe even more. Not sure that's possible though ;)

This talent will definitely bring in a lot of "worth" actions, a lot of yolo will be happening. And that might be a good thing if you play with your friends and you can all laugh about it when it happens.

My worries are outside this friendly or even coordinated environment. While this CAN allow assassins to go deeper, knowing Auriel can just bring them back, that also forces Auriel to go deep so she can initiate the ress. And having your healer go deep is usually a VERY bad idea (unless Uther, then it is even recommended). So I am afraid of a lot of people throwing fights and even games like "just rezz me LUL". Throwing because, in order to be ressed, you first need to die. And Catchup-XP is a thing. So a fight that starts with an advantage for your team can turn into an even playing field with a single death.

And lastly we have to talk about habits. People have habits, that's how we humans work. However, an assassin player developing the habit of just running in is a bad thing in my book. Cause Auriel might be able to ress him, nobody but her in the game can.

So now we had a long phase of "Resurrect is useless", now we have the phase of "Resurrect is bonkers". Can we find the balanced middle ground? I personally doubt it. The devs themselves stated that this is the hardest ability in the game to balance right, because simply bringing someone back from death requires no skill and is extremely powerful.

The changes they got right are the ress with 100% hp. Without this change, the talent would've stayed dead forever. If your teammate resurrects in a state that allows him / her to be killed immediately again, you just fed the enemy team XP. The only way I can think of they can change this is making it a fixed amount of health, so you ress assassins with 100%, but tanks or bruisers only with, say, 75%. The delay of 3 seconds is also a huge deal, as a lot

can happen in 2 seconds, so every second you get your guy in earlier is big.

Self-ress is also impossible to pass up, and I think as long as Rehgar can self-ancestral, Uther can self-D-Shield, Kharazim can self-Palm, etc. that is fine. She just joined the club of get-out-of-jail-free-button owners. Admittedly she has the easiest to use, but that is in the nature of the ability, and no number adjustment can change that.

One thing that also needs attention is the level 20 upgrade for Resurrect, Light Speed. The cooldown-reduction part might need some looking at, as the condition feels too easy to fulfill for the big reward, making Resurrect a 30 sec cd.

In general the question is if we can adapt to the change. I think most tanks should be able to deny Resurrect, they just have to adjust accordingly. On another note, Crystal Aegis is still alive and kicking, because as cool as it is to simply bring your teammates back from the dead, it's even better if they don't die in the first place. Resurrect should always be the fallback-ultimate, the one you pick if Crystal Aegis gets no value in a game. For example, Raynor doesn't care much about Aegis, he just gets his kill delayed a bit. On the other hand, Kel'Thuzad might get tilted if you can use your Aegis well. Know when to pick which ult.

For now this seems fine, but I might be heave(n)ly biased here, as Auriel is my favorite healer to play.

Lastly, I wanted to clear up something Kyle said on the show. He stated that old Resurrect at 50% HP hinders Auriel's healing output, since when she resurrects someone, she gains no hope during that time, while Crystal Aegis' explosion supplies Auriel with the hope for her next heal, be that for the aegis'ed target or another.

This statement is simply untrue. Once Auriel has started the Resurrect countdown, she can go do whatever she wishes to do. Also, her chosen ally hopefully (hehe...) supplied hope all the while, charging Auriel up as well. The only caveat I'm gonna give up here is the fact that Resurrect at 50% basically forced you to use your next heal on that target to prevent it from being blown up again right away. But Crystal Aegis' strength was never that it supplied hope, but that it interrupted cc-chains and caught burst damage. Also that Resurrect was simply bad expect in very niche cases.

Brightwing

Talents

- **Level 1**
 - **Greater Polymorph [W]**
 - Adjusted functionality: Increase Polymorph's range by 30%. If Brightwing hits an enemy Hero with Arcane Flare's center within 2 seconds of being Polymorphed, then reduce Polymorph's cooldown by 7 seconds and gain 50 Mana.

Why is Brightwing so focused on landing center Arcane Flares. A question that bugs me since the talents first change from a full-reset to a conditional cooldown reduction. And the only answer I came up with is that this is the compromise between old Brightwing that could burst heal with Gust of Healing which was removed in the 2015-06-30 Patch and the following version that existed until the 2018-09-25 Patch, whose gimmick basically revolved around the combination of Mistified and Hardened Focus to pump out consistent heals. That however was also troublesome in that as soon as Hardened Focus fell off, Brightwing's healing instantly stopped being relevant.

In the last rework she therefore received the ability to proc her Soothing Mist from Arcane Flare center-hits, so a skilled Brightwing can keep a consistently high healing output without conditions that can be interrupted from the outside.

And now they decided to double down on that feature, since good Brightwings already needed to hit her flares spot-on center in order to be a force, so they thought they could reward her more for doing what she is already doing. The change in this patch basically seems more like a "please-pick-me"-change rather than anything else.

Uther

Base

- Health reduced from 2156 to 2075.
- Health Regeneration reduced from 4.49 to 4.32.

Only one comment here: Garrett pointed out on the show that this was merely a less than 4% change, but remember that Uther hands out armor when he heals, even to himself. That makes every lost point of health a lot more valuable to Uther, since armor becomes stronger the more HP are behind it. And while I agree it's not a huge deal, it's also by no means a trifling change.

Talents

- **Level 20**

- **Bulwark of Light [R1]**

- New functionality: Divine Shield is also applied to an allied Hero with the lowest Health near its initial target, and its duration is increased by 1 second.

I'm not sure this change is really awesome. 60 sec Divine Shield was very strong, and gave you a lot of flexibility. This change seems to cater more to the fact that Uther is more consistently at the front lines himself, so he can D-Shield himself as well. Maybe it's also a bit of a callback to when Uther's Bulwark of Light granted Uther his own D-Shield on cast. On your comment of missing hypercarries: Greymane just got a nice buff hint hint wink wink. And holy cow also still lives. So there are plenty of reasons to pick Divine Shield, primarily in coordinated play though.

- **Divine Hurricane [R2]**

- Cooldown reduction increased from 20 to 40 seconds.

I feel you Garrett, I feel you. This change is a huge boost for tank Uther, since 40 sec is the magical number of can-use-this-twice-during-a-single-teamfight. And two Divine Hurricanes in one teamfight should be all it takes.

Also, you don't need to be tank Uther to make use of this change: Stunning the enemy assassins that just jumped your backline is also a game-winning move, if you can get your teammates to hit the tank of course (I don't understand why people flat-out refuse to attack tanks). This is known as a counter-engage, by the way, just in case you are not familiar with this term.

- **Divine Protection [Trait]**

- New functionality: Increase Devotion's Armor to 40, and its duration by .5 seconds.

This change is big. If you don't need the cc-immunity clause from your D-Shield, this might just be better than Bulwark of Light, since 40 armor is just enough to make every assassin cry when his beautiful damage just gets eaten up. Also, combined with the lvl. 1 talent Wave of Light this grants you a full second more on your Devotion, for a total of 3 seconds, bringing it up to the same duration as Divine Shield.

There we have it. The long overdue overhaul of Uther's lvl. 20. Since Redemption wasn't nerfed or changed in any way, and his base kit is also fully intact this makes Uther incredibly strong come 20. You now have a nice selection of tools, but that choice also means you must choose now: There is no longer just one right answer.

My guess looks like this:

- Bulwark of Light: When you need the additional cleanse for your melee mates, especially for melee assassins or bruisers (Illidan and Thrall come to mind from this patch)
- Divine Hurricane: If you are tank Uther or you want to counter a dive-comp using this as counter-engage
- Redemption: You get focused or want to run in with Divine Storm to die and get trait-heals off
- Divine Protection: You don't need the cleanse-component from Divine Shield or the Resurrect from Redemption, but still want a more defensive option

Melee Assassin

Illidan

Base

- Health increased from 1650 to 1725.
- Health regeneration increased from 3.44 to 3.59.

This is again bigger than I think you give it credit for. While Illidan does not boast Uthers armor gain he has a decent self-heal on his autoattacks. That makes him sustain fairly well in long engagements with his weakness being getting bursted down. And what helps against burst?

Talents

- **Level 16**
 - **Fiery Brand [Passive]**
 - Damage increased from 8% to 9% maximum Health.

Fiery Brand has been living in the shadows for a long time, and to be frank, this won't change that. Illidan is not designed to be a tankbuster in the first place, and granting him a giant killer that may or may not even proc doesn't help that case. You could of course argue that this is nice versus Deathwing, but I hope you have a solution for Deathwing before level 16 comes around.

Overall this health buff seems nice, and Illidans are (most of the time) a joy to watch. I as an almost complete non-assassin player however have no idea if this is enough to bring him to the limelight.

Samuro

While I am not the most avid Samuro player I still don't think Kyle can chalk that up under a pure buff, even to Samuro players.

Base

- Basic Attack damage reduced from 110 to 102.
- **Mirror Image [Q]**
 - Cooldown reduced from 18 to 14 seconds.
 - Duration reduced from 18 to 8 seconds.
 - Images now have their duration increased by 1 second each time they or Samuro use a Basic Attack against an enemy Hero.
 - Mirror Image Basic Attack damage increased from 9 to 11.

Quite frankly, this is not a massive nerf to his macro, this kills his macro. Flat out. Samuro could merc by using his Mirror Images to tank for him, now they won't stay for a meaningful period of time, forcing Samuro to take a lot more damage than prior. And that only gets worse if you remember this AA damage also got nerfed this patch. His awesome lane rotations were enabled by sending one Mirror Image to a different lane using Illusion Master, and then Image Transmission to this image once you cleared the lane you were in. With the reduction in timed life, this strategy cannot be applied anymore.

The idea to put your Mirror Images on an objective point and let them do the objective while you zone for them is cute, but has no merit to me. First of all, you are giving up your primary survivability tool here, and a mindful team will just kill you off if you engage them. Also, your Mirror Images do so little damage, even with his buff, that they will take ages to complete an objective on their own.

- **Wind Walk [E]**
 - Additional functionality: Samuro is healed for 1% of his maximum Health every second that he has Wind Walk active.

Healing is awesome, I will give Kyle that. However, the question is always: Is the healing meaningful, both in the amount of healing you receive, and in the playstyle you employ. First of all, the playstyle. As mentioned in the Mirror Image change, I don't think Samuro can macro anymore. If that would still be possible, that would make a heal very meaningful, but as it is, no. This leaves us with laning and teamfights. Healing in both is definitely useful, so let's look at the amount of heal for each situation. You heal for very small amounts, but for 10 seconds, which sums up to a 10% heal. Which isn't bad. But Wind Walk forces you to play super defensive while using it, otherwise your lane opponent will just break you out of it, canceling your heal. Still, it's something. Problem is, Samuro never lacked lane-sustain. The

Hearth-trick still exists, and that heals him for way more than one Wind Walk. Still nice for those people who don't know or lack the skills to execute that.

Now, how does his heal hold up in a teamfight situation. We already established the nature of his heal, so let's make this quick: It's useless for teamfights. You take a 10 second break from the fight to heal for only 10% of your max health. That isn't worth in any world I know of.

- **Image Transmission [Trait]**

- Cooldown reduced from 25 to 14 seconds.

That is a huge buff for his early game, as it severely opens up your ability to make aggressive moves due to more swaps available before you can pick up Illusion Master, generally lessening the need for that ultimate.

Talents

- **Level 1**

- **Way of the Blade [W]**

- Physical Armor reduction reduced from 10 to 5, stacking up to 3 times.
- Physical Armor debuff duration increased from 2 to 2.25 seconds.
- Additional functionality: Mirror Images now also apply the Physical Armor reduction.

This talent was the default for level 1, got buffed, and continues to be the default level 1 Samuro talent.

- **Way of the Wind [E]**

- No longer grants cooldown reduction to Wind Walk when attacking enemy Heroes.
- Additional functionality: Casting Windwalk heals Samuro for 5% of his maximum Health.

Oh noes! I loved that talent, and they took away the part I loved so much! My poor little cd... Ok, nevermind. But I really loved that talent, it made you so sticky you could chase and kill targets without masterful Illusion control.

The change overall, same problem with the base Wind Walk change: The number just isn't big enough in my opinion. It's surely a noticeable upgrade though, so should Samuro, despite

my first impression, still retain a solid macro build, I can see this being a big part of it. Also don't forget about the movespeed, you go faster than mount speed for 3 seconds!

- **Level 7**

- **Burning Blade [W]**

- Fixed an issue where Illusions did not deal bonus splash damage with Burning Blade when Illusion Master was picked.

- **Phantom Pain [W]**

- Bonus damage reduced from 45% to 35%.
 - Additional functionality: Now also reduces the cooldown of Image Transmission by 10% when Samuro Critical Strikes an enemy Hero.

- **Crushing Blows [W]**

- No longer gives Critical Strike 2 charges.
 - Cooldown reduction increased from 1.75 to 2 seconds.
 - Additional functionality: Critical Strikes against enemy Heroes increase Samuro's Basic Attack damage by 15% for 4 seconds, stacking up to 3 times.

This talent seems to be the be-all-end-all for Samuro. Crushing Blows grants him a big damage boost, combined with the cd-reduction for Critical Strike, which also gets boosted since Critical Strike's damage is based on Samuro's base damage.

Honorable mention goes out to Phantom Pain, that cd-reduction on swaps will make though matchups match more bearable for Samuro. Lost a ton of damage, though, and fills the niche of both improving your damage and survivability by a decent amount.

- **Level 10**

- **Bladestorm [R1]**

- Cooldown reduced from 110 to 25 seconds.
 - Damage reduced from 47 to 36.
 - Duration reduced from 4 to 3 seconds.
 - Removed functionality: Bladestorm no longer grants Unstoppable.
 - Additional functionality: Bladestorm now also grants Samuro 25 Armor for its duration.

Bladestorm, the iconic ultimate of Warcraft 3's Blademaster finally gets to see the light of day. From being a teamfight ability that would tell everyone to please kill this guy, it has been reborn into a macro tool of pure awesomeness. Right away from level 10 when you acquire

Bladestorm, you can instantly use it to clear waves of any size. One use, wave clear. That makes you a very useful addition for your team, enabling them to focus elsewhere while you clean up.

It also offers limited teamfight uses, primarily to finish off a fleeing enemy due to the range of the ability. It should, however, never be used as a damage tool, your AAs will deal more damage than Bladestorm even if not augmented by talents. Also never forget you can now get stunned out of Bladestorm; or rooted, effectively negating your damage.

Also, Kyle mentioned that it's a good counter to blinds, as it's a spell which obviously can't be blinded. I argue however that Samuro already possessed and continues to possess two ways to get rid of blinds in his base kit: Mirror Images and Image Transmission both clear all negative status effects on activation by placing you in stasis for 0,125 seconds.

- **Illusion Master [R2]**
 - Cooldown reduced from 10 to 8 seconds.

- **Level 13**
 - **Mirrored Steel [Q]**
 - Cooldown reduction reduced from 1 to .75 seconds.

- **Level 20**
 - **Dance of Death [R1]**
 - Damage increased from 25% to 30%.
 - Additional functionality: If Samuro hits enemy Heroes at least 25 times with Bladestorm, then reset its cooldown.

 - **Three Blade Style [R2]**
 - Mirror Image duration reduced from 36 to 16 seconds.

To sum it up: Macro Samuro is severely weakened, maybe even dead. The idea of using Mirror Image and Illusion Master to create in effect a global was cool, but is no longer possible. Bladestorm might be the saving grace here though, as it offers macro power and especially aoe – something Samuro was sorely lacking previously. In return for this he got

teamfight or, more generally, hero killing abilities Samuro just as sorely lacked. With this, he is now a serious danger for any hero, taking a short while to get going while he stacks his talents, but when he's finished, he will bring the pain. What we are witnessing here is not a buff, not a nerf, it is a complete and total paradigm shift for Samuro.

A question you also discussed was the question of Samuro's difficulty level after these changes, with Kyle passionately arguing for his skillfloor to have been reduced drastically, allowing for a lot more people to play him effectively. He argued so happily that Garrett finally caved in.

And I don't want to damage your brand spanking new shining picture of Samuro, but I believe you are only half-right. The part you got correct is a lot more people can now play him and actually contribute. He is still a melee assassin though, so he suffers from having to be close to a target while also being squishy himself. And the redeeming point Samuro has are his Mirror Images, and Image Transmission. This is a skill that will be needed, so I wonder if many players will actually stick with him or if it's more the hype going on right now and once people get wrecked in a game they will turn away again.

On the point of his ults: There is no "new player ult" or a "pro player ult". That comparison can only be made if both ultimates in fact have the same use-case, and that is very much not the case with Samuro. Bladestorm is now the macro ult, while Illusion Master takes on the spot of the teamfight ult. And if you try to macro with Illusion Master you will drastically fall off, just like if you try to teamfight with Bladestorm. And that is not a question of skill level. However, one point I concede to you: The Illusion Master trying to macro will fall off harder than the Bladestormer teamfighting.

Finally, I would like to end with the builds I feel like are worth trying out. As a macro player myself I will only test one, and maybe even abandon Samuro completely.

Teamfight Build (probably meta):

Way of the Blade → Mirage / Deflection → Crushing Blows / Phantom Pain → Illusion Master → Mirrored Steel → Press the Attack → Blademaster's Pursuit

Pick Phantom Pain against heroes that try to lock you down, the additional swaps this talent creates should drastically improve your ability to dodge whatever they throw at you. Default if Crushing Blow though, that talent just reeks of killiness.

Burst Build (I doubt this will work well):

Way of the Blade → Mirage / Deflection → Phantom Pain → Illusion Master → Shukuchi → Harsh Winds → Three Blade Style

Finally, the Marco Build:

Way of the Wind → Mirage / Deflection → Burning Blade / Crushing Blows → Bladestorm → Mirrored Steel → Press the Attack → Blademaster's Pursuit

If this last build works I'm gonna stick with Samuro, but I have, quite frankly, little hope, you just give up so much teamfight damage. That is why I thought of including Crushing Blows in this build, to remedy that somewhat, but Burning Blade is better against non-heroes.

If you test any of those builds, I would appreciate any feedback you can give :)

Ranged Assassin

Gall

Talents

- **Level 1**

- **Keep Moving! [Z]**

- Additional functionality: Increase the Movement Speed bonus of Shove from 25% to 35%.

This seems strong, basically granting sprint as your mount is noticeable. Together with the Cho-changes to mobility this becomes scary.

- **We See You! [Passive]**

- Additional functionality: Increase the number of Basic Attacks required to kill Eye of Kilrogg by 1.

Yeah I see you too ... I also see that this does nothing. Either you picked this talent already or you won't do so in the future.

- **Level 7**

- **Edge of Madness [Q]**

- Bonus damage increased from 8% to 12% per stack.

Now that Cho'gall can stick to targets much easier, this talent instantly becomes scary. Maddening even, if you will.

- **Level 13**
 - **Twilight Nova [W]**
 - Additional functionality: Reduce the cooldown of Dread Orb by 1 second.
- **Level 16**
 - **Leaden Orb [W]**
 - Stun duration increased from .75 seconds to 1 second.

You marked this change as the only highlight-worthy one, and with good reason. Stuns are always a reason to look twice, since it's the strongest cc in the game. Here however, I think Dread Orb in general is so hard to land on heroes consistently, that I think its inconsistency eats up its power. Even if the lvl.13 change synergises nicely with this.

- **Shadowsnare [Passive]**
 - New functionality: All of Gall's Basic Abilities Slow enemy Heroes by 15% for 4 seconds. This effect can stack up to 2 times.

Now THIS I would highlight. Potentially permanent 30% slows on everyone while Gall stacks up his Edge of Madness and Cho simply clobbers you (I may point to Runed Gauntlets, lvl 16) feels very strong. Also, consistent.

Greymane

Talents

- **Level 7**
 - **Incendiary Elixir [Q]**
 - Adjusted functionality: Reduce the cooldown of Gilnean Cocktail by 2 seconds. Upon quest completion, reduce the cooldown of Gilnean Cocktail by an additional 2 seconds.

This fully stacked brings the Gilnean Cocktail to 5 sec cd. That seems very strong and poses an alternative to the aa-focus on levels 1 and 7. While nowadays we mostly see Viciousness and Quicksilver Bullets, now the combo of Perfect Aim with Incendiary Elixir seems at least equally strong, maybe even better.

- **Level 20**

- **Unleashed [R1]**

- New functionality: Increase the damage of Go for the Throat by 25%. If Go for the Throat kills an enemy Hero, reset the cooldown of all of Greymane's abilities.

Oh baby. I'm totally 100% with Garrett here: I want to see what Greymane mains can do with this. We saw the potential of a full reset-talent with Qhira, and I feel like Greymane can do even more with this than she can. That is mostly because he has actual movement abilities, allowing him to reposition with every reset. Imagine this: Poking someone down, Go for the Throat for the kill, disengage (the skill) with stealth from Eyes in the Dark, repeat. That is exactly what Greymane needed, a way to stay relevant lategame, when chaining kills is no longer a viable option, and this opens up the entire game to him. Ah the possibilities. In my opinion THE level 20 talent for the best greymane players, the skill-check to differentiate good Greymane players from great ones.

(To explain what I consider a "skill-check": A skill-check is a talent or an ability that allows the hero to truly shine, without being integral to his kit, so you CAN play him without using the skill-check, but the masters will have it down and take their play to a whole new level. Other examples are Junkrats' Concussion Mine: You can totally play him and using the mine solely to blow yourself to safety if necessary, but the real great Junkrats can steer an entire teamfight with skilled use of this skill to reposition enemies and allies, creating zones, etc. , and Sylvana's lvl.13 talent Windrunner, which gives her better repositioning, but also resets the cd of her Withering Fire for more damage).

- **Gilnean Roulette [R2]**

- New functionality: Reduce the cooldown of Cursed Bullet by 20 seconds and its damage to 30% of the enemy Hero's current Health.

This talent feels like a trap to me. Sure, it makes the Cursed Bullet spammable, but what do you use it for in the first place? It is usually your engage-tool, take a piece out of the enemy and then burst him as a worgen. So why not change your style you ask? Because of how the Cursed Bullets damage is calculated. It is "targets CURRENT health", not targets maximum health. So if you shoot a target repeatedly with this, you will do less and less damage, as the targets health decreases. And we already talked about spreading damage in a teamfight with Thrall and his new Rolling Thunder and have come to the conclusion that it's not a good idea. Besides that, the reduced damage this talent gives to your Cursed Bullet will even weaken it in the role we use it, our engage will worsen due to the initial peace being 10% smaller than originally.

One of you, I don't really remember (I'm sorry!) compared this change to Lucio's and Brightwing's level 20 upgrades for Sound Barrier and Emerald Wind. The big difference from those examples to this here is that neither Lucio's nor Brightwing's upgrades reduce the abilities purpose. Lucio still gets the same strength for his shield, and Brightwing still pushes people for the same time and distance. Here we change the core part of the ability, the damage, which changes the entire use-case.

So feel free to try this, but for the reasons above I don't expect successful results.

- **Tooth and Claw [Trait]**

- Additional functionality: Increase the damage of Razor Swipe by 100%.

Nicely done balance team, nicely done. A buff to this talent was necessary, because ranged splash will always be stronger than melee splash, simply because autoattacking from range is easier than autoattacking from melee. And this is one of the smoothest changes ever to buff a talent: no complete overhaul, no raising a number sky-high, just adding a nice little tidbit that perfectly fits in with what the talent already makes you do. I once theorycrafted a possible buff for this talent might be to raise his trait-given armor in worgen form to 20 with this talent, but this here is just as nice.

Finally, Garrett called for careful evaluation of Gilnean Roulette due to high excitement levels in the community, and I agree with his point: Cursed Bullet always only wounds the target, never kills it (unless it's literally at 1 HP), so you need followup to confirm the kill. On the other hand, Go for the Throat does exactly the opposite: Now you get the finishing move, but need to get the target to "killable" health level before you can jump in and claw his/her/its face (if applicable, given we have so many monsters) off. The answer? You're both right!

Because: It depends. Yes it does. Sometimes you just need to kill this giant black dragon breathing fire, or that ogre arguing with himself (with his other self?), but even that Sonya with the incredible dizziness-resistance sometimes sows so much chaos in your backline that this one just has to die. Like now. Right now. In this case Cursed Bullet is your tool for the job, as it has burst written all over it and everyone is hitting that Sonya anyways to get her out of their respective faces. Also good to quickly kill Ultimate Evolutions.

Another time however you fulfill a more traditional role in your team comp. Your tank has the enemy frontline tied down, and your Li-Ming chucks Arcane Orbs in there. Now it falls to you to finish off the kills that your Li-ming sets up, and be honest right here, today you just felt like going for some throats anyways.

So, evaluate your role in the team, pick the right tool. Just don't pick Cursed Bullet for Gilnean Roulette, you will be missing out. Just like you are missing out if you don't pick any talents that benefit your human form. Both a full human and a full worgen build can be done, but I feel neither is the strongest, because you always miss an important part of Greymane. The right mixture will allow you to release the beast in a way your opponents just won't be able to resist.

Nazeebo

Talents

- **Level 1**

- **Thing of the Deep [Passive]**

- Spell Power bonus reduced from 10% to 5% for each quest completion.

Ahhh Nazeebo. One of the assassins I actually play and can give proper thoughts about. Now, first of all however, I NEED to address Kyle's statement about Nazeebo being more fun than useful, and not bringing what a team needs. Lemme tell you, the only thing a Nazeebo can't bring to a team is healing.

Of course, disclaimer here, other heroes can bring all that easier. Nazeebo's biggest weakness in my opinion is his high burden of execution, which leads many people to try Nazeebo once, notice they don't do so well, and switch back to their former assassins. Or they see Nazeebos randomly farting off in the distance, because they are Nazeebo and they are gonna toad that fort on the other side of the map from the teamfight because that is what Nazeebo does. Quite frankly, like Nova, a lot of Nazeebo's weakness comes from people's inability to adapt their talent-builds on the fly as well as a lot of negative hearsay; remember Fan calling Nazeebo the worst hero in the game? And he is not even wrong, if you play Nazeebo and expect performances comparable to, say, Valla or Falstad who also occupy a mixed spellcaster/autoattacker-role, you gonna be sorely disappointed. Nazeebo comes with a whole 3 skillshots in his kit, has no movement aka. escape-ability, and his autoattacks are also nothing to write home about. They're solid, yes, but nothing special.

What Nazeebo brings however, is a whole lot of flexibility. While other heroes, like Raynor, come into the game and are pretty much locked into what they can and can't do, Nazeebo can change his strengths and weaknesses as the game goes on to accommodate for different situations.

And this leads us into his talents, of which I will here only address the nerf in this patch. I will however, write a second document for you with a commented rundown of Nazzebo's talents, to proof my earlier point of Nazzebo's talent flexibility. It will be in the zip-Archive.

Thing of the Deep's purpose has always been that of a utility talent. It didn't increase damage, it increased Nazebo's ability to use his abilities. You rightfully named Zombie Wall as the spell that benefits most from Thing of the Deep, and you are correct. The reason is that Zombie Wall is Nazebo's utility spell. Most people believe it's purpose is to catch people inside so you can blow them up with the rest of your animalistic arsenal. And that leaves to many people being disappointed by Nazebo, as they can't reliably pull off that move. The problem is they tried the most difficult move on an already fairly difficult hero. And without proper (and long, very long) practice, that won't come to them. The correct way is to look at your Zombie Wall like you look at Tassadar's Force Wall, it simply blocks off movement. Use it this way, and you will be very successful with this ability.

Thing of the Deep granting a Spell Power bonus total of 20% however meant that the talent suddenly was no longer a utility talent anymore, it now was both a utility AND a damage talent. And that resulted in the expected way, people had all the utility to use, without having to give up damage. It was never the utility alone that made the talent so strong, it also wasn't the damage they tacked onto it – it was that the talent had both at the same time. Now people can still increase their damage somewhat, but have to choose: If you want serious damage, you need to pick something else; otherwise you can totally keep picking the talent and become something similar to Tassadar, a mage with some damage, but his big value is his utility.

Zagara

Talents

- **Level 16**

- **Jagged Barbs [Trait]**

- Attack damage bonus increased from 30% to 40%.

For the last change, I again mostly agree with you. The numbers are looking really cool, but what if your creep is not there? No more numbers. And this is the core problem, the same is true for Protective Coating at level 13, creep just isn't consistent enough if your opponent has an idea of what that pink glibber does. Endless Creep from level 20 goes a long way mitigating this problem, but we all know that building for level 20 is not exactly advisable. Adding some properties that increase creep tumors health or grant it spell armor are probably

necessary to fix this situation. Add them to Protective Coating for example, the talent is underpicked (with good reason) anyways.

You also derailed a bit into roaches for a while, which is cool. Corrosive Saliva definitely feels good, but the uncontrollable nature of the roaches makes me shy away from it. If you could re-target these guys like Gazlowe can target his turrets, now that would be something. As it stands now, the damage is too random to build your entire gameplan around it.

To finish up you talked about Zagara in Stormleague and how she throws people for a loop, and to that I can only add: Welcome to the off-meta-world. I've been living here for a long time playing off-meta heroes, and while I have never played Stormleague due to roster troubles you also get to hear a lot in qm and unranked, so: This is just how it is. Sadface. The only way is to either to give up and pack it away, or throw it in their face and power through anyway. If you're good at your off-meta pick you're still gonna climb. You're a good example for that yourself, you climbed with REXXAR WAY before it was cool.

Those were my thoughts about this patch. I know I often times voiced (wrote?) differing opinions from your own, yet I don't mean to talk down on your opinions or tell you that you are wrong and I am right. I rather wish to spark a discussion, as this is only my, one persons, opinion, and the only way to improve it is to discuss it with others. I hope this grants you enough fuel to make something from it; and that you enjoyed reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it.

My regards to the two of you,

(read the next in D.va's voice)

Love,

D.va