

Analysis: Why gun stats rebalancing sparked public outrage

Bitsam informed the Era community of the gun specifications update lately, with several well-known and powerful firearms being affected. And this particular phenomenon is worth some thought.

Some of the guns modifications were appropriately corroborated with reasons, and it seems to emphasize on the management's shift from a cash-based gameplay to a skill-based one. This is so that the gameplay will be more fair as it will be based on personal competencies rather than financial capabilities.

The gameplay environment will be more fair and easier to survive after this change.

But why are many the players against it? Why are they responding like that?

First, this decision was made autonomously by Bitsam without prior discussion with the players', nor were there any obvious attempts to work on this change with other development staff members. Bitsam stated on his thread that his intention for starting the thread was to inform players of the change, rather than to discuss. This has apparently surprised players by its suddenness. Since the decision was made independently without prior consent from the community, nor were any suggestions taken in previously, it has very seriously left out the constructive advices and viewpoints of players – including veterans who may have developed a better understanding of the weapons they used than the admin. This is a poor decision-making course of action to take because it was made all by one person – who himself is bound to make mistakes in judgment.

It is evident from the fact that after the initial intention to change the stats of the Ghost M4 gun, the stats were further changed after some testing with the gun. This highlights the very fact that autonomous decision making has a high probability of erroneous choices. It could have been circumvented if Bitsam had consulted the community of players or admins before making the change. Hence, the decision-making protocol obviously needs some improvements. A team of weapons experts can be gathered to debate on the change beforehand, this would have made changing much more accurate and objective, instead of subjective.

And although I support the intention for the alteration, the choice-making procedure I find, is a disregard for the players – the majority of the community. No consensus can be reached like that, nor should the community function like that. After all, players are the stakeholders of the change and their opinions ought to be taken into account and possibly considered or reconsidered.

Second, lack of trust between the guns admin and the players. The facts that many players have voiced objections on the change in the thread clearly show that they doubt the admin's decisions. There is obviously a strong feeling of skepticism and distrust lurking in this matter. And the players were right to be doubtful of the decisions made because, as mentioned earlier, it was an autonomous, one-man decision that is bound to make misjudgments. The players cannot trust the reliability and accuracy of the modification, and thus they disagreed to it.

Bitsam has also failed to compensate the reduction of some of the gun firepower with another aspect of the gun ; I would say, there is a lack of “contextualizing” in this change. For example, to reduce the fire rate of a gun, a silencer could have been added to the weapon permanently and perhaps increase the accuracy of the weapon to make up for the decrease in fire rate. Bitsam has done it for some of the guns, such as the GM4, which he stated that he intends to give the gun an additional feature. This is called “contextualizing” in my opinion. By doing so, an aspect of the weapon is substituted with another and this would probably have quelled some of the disapproval. Of particular attention is the BAR gun, which has been “nerfed” as some of its stats have been changed to reduce its firepower – there were no significant attempts to contextualize the change, such as including a laser attachment or adding a new feature to the weapon that may not have increase its firepower but at the minimum make up for the firepower decrement. Therefore, the BAR gun is one of the weapons that sparked strong disapproval. This is probably the only way to stop or lighten the feeling of loss or having overpaid in players.

This whole saga also involves Era’s culture. The culture in the game is based so much on the self that most players are egoistic and self-centered. Players kill one another just for kill counts in the name of gaming, calls another a “noob” without regard for the recipient’s feelings. All these are signs of egotism and selfishness. To put it bluntly, players do not care about others. For kill counts, players kill others, thereby compromising the KD of those who were killed. This self-centered culture itself has a part to play in the reactions to the gun stats change.

How? And why?

Because of this culture, it has no doubt casted a egoistic virtual personality in almost all players in the game, whereby players will allow gun stats “nerfing” so long as it does not affect them. In fact, some would be happy that the powerful guns were deemed to be reduced in firepower so that they could used their guns , which were not negatively affected or thought to be so, to win the rest - and subsequently, to their killing advantage. On the other hand, this culture also caused those with guns have been affected to raise objections to the decision since they are self-centered, they will want their guns to be of high firepower so that they can exploit it to their advantage. This is how the culture has influenced reactions to the gun stats change.

There is also the possibility of a “Domino effect” which I will not rule out. The thread has had a few players genuinely against the decision initially, but this may have influenced other players – who may not be affected, nor were truly concerned about the matter – to follow suit in the objection. This cycle repeats itself with more and more players objecting because they conformed to the trend; if everyone’s against it, I shall be against it too. This is the mentality that may have led to the public outraged as with each cycle, the number of responses against the idea accumulates, thereby prompting more to do the same.

Because the gun stats were to be changed, it could also be that players were unwilling to expose themselves to new changes – poor adaptability. Players were

objecting to the change as soon as it was notified, without them even trying the guns out yet. And the only way for them to be against it is to imagine subjectively the consequences of the change. It usually turns out to be blindingly inaccurate because it is based solely on imagination that can sometimes be exaggerated. This inaccurate and most likely far-flung thought will then influence their opinions, causing them to be against the new weapons update.

When one does something new that differs from their routine, it will no doubt invoke in them the feeling of uneasiness. This is normal. And this is also one of the reasons why players were against the new modifications - they are not used to it.

Gun stats modifications are all about consensus-making. For a common understanding to be reached, appropriate measures must be taken, such as having players feedback on it first before proceeding. On the players' side, the intention for opposing ought to be genuine, with no hidden agenda of wanting the weapons to be good so that they can exploit it to their benefit or because everyone is doing it. From this case, it is evident that there were flaws in the decision-making procedure, but at the same time there were also hidden agenda in some of the players' reasons for disapproving. This only leads to distrust between the admin and the players, which will further impede on the smooth updating on the weapon stats.

In the next weapon update, I do look forward to a better protocol in choice making by the administrator involved and improved acceptance by players on the new changes. Let us be open to new suggestions and alterations because only by doing so, a consensus can be more easily achieved and decisions made can be more accurate and acceptable.

To find out more about my analysis and the opinion of the latest weapon rebalance, visit <https://lykspersonalblog.files.wordpress.com/2017/04/nerf-of-buff.pdf>

-LYK