

Paz the Martyr: V3 Esports vs Sengoku Gaming

It is hard to argue that V3 Esports have more individually talented solo laners than Sengoku Gaming. Paz has been one of my favorite players in the LJL for a long time, but even I have to admit he might be past his prime.

In contrast, apaMEN tops the charts in every laning metric for top laners, having the highest Gold Difference, Experience Difference, and CS difference at 15 minutes. Excluding Game 1 of V3 vs SG, he had Paz beat by 100 CSD@15 over the rest of the series. Pirean similarly dominated the midlane laning phase, and also tops the charts with highest Gold and Experience Difference at 15, and 2nd only to Aria in CSD@15.

And yet, V3 is winning. Paz and Ace have higher KDAs than their Sengoku counterparts. Why is this?

Let's not beat around the bush too much. Bugi and Archer are good. Really good. While stats don't tell us everything, Bugi dominates the jungle in the same metrics of GD, XPD, and CSD@15, while Archer is on par with Yutapon. Notably though, Bugi dominates first bloods in the LJL, being involved in 78% of first bloods in games V3 plays. The closest other player in the league is Ace, who sits distantly behind at 50%. V3 knows this, and chooses to give them resources.

A long time ago, I posited that you can only have so many carry players on a team before they cannibalize each other of resources and none of them end up being particularly effective.

Perhaps the most famous example of this is the SKT roster of Khan, Clid, Faker, Teddy, and Mata. This team struggled heavily during the first half of LCK 2019 Summer, dipping as low as 1-5 before they started understanding that someone needed to play more supportive. Clid started playing less Lee Sin and Elise, and instead picked Sejuani and Trundle, and the team started winning again.

Sengoku Gaming is suffering for the same reason that no one is playing supportively. We can look at their champion picks through summer and compare them to V3's to start to paint this picture.

apaMEN's most played champion is Aatrox, Paz's is Ornn. After LeBlanc, Ace's most played champions are Galio, Karma, and Sett, where Pirean is playing Zoe, Twisted Fate, and Azir.

Their junglers though are playing similar champions. Lee Sin, Nidalee, and Graves all have high plays from Blank and Bugi, while the latter sprinkles in Lillia.

And don't give me that "But YutoriMoyashi is playing supportively! Archer is playing Kalista where Yutori is playing Jhin, Ezreal, and Ashe!" We both know it's because Yutori's Kalista is bad because his laning phase is bad.

Sengoku Gaming is trying to field four champions that need gold and resources, and they suffer for it. As we'll examine here, it's not just about champion picks, but some of the general decisions they make throughout the game. Today, we're going to look at a few of the decisions these two teams made in their most recent series.

Again, as a caveat, there is too much League of Legends to talk about, so we're painting broad strokes here people. If you want more details, buy my book. (I am not actually writing a book)

To start off with, what a well executed lane swap from V3. The Sion B5 pick looked like something they had in mind and definitely had practiced, and I think it shows a little bit of the mentality of the team in a microcosm. Paz doesn't get to do much for most of the game because they're busy getting kills on Bugi and Archer. Paz just happens to get some CS because he's Sion and can nab some minions when he dies.

<https://clips.twitch.tv/PrettiestMotionlessAnacondaBloodTrail>

This happens a few times.

But the thing that's noteworthy about this game is how much they focus on giving Archer gold. After taking 4 plates off of the top turret, V3 takes Rift Herald and swaps Archer down to the bottom lane to do the same thing, and he ends up getting gold from 9 Turret Plates this game.

They ride this insane gold lead for pretty much the rest of the game, and Paz goes so far as to build a Zeke's for Archer. Some Sions will build Locket and Knight's Vow, Paz is the only Sion this season to build this item.

In Game 2, we see the model generally crumble, as both Paz and Ace are given champions that are never going to have priority early on in their lanes, and therefore do not have the opportunity to move to help Bugi get the first bloods he so desires.

This is honestly pretty subtle, but I want to point out a few things that happen in the following short clip.

<https://clips.twitch.tv/TrappedTiredSparrowDerp>

1. Raina is leaving bottom lane before the wave has been pushed in. Supports don't have to do this, choosing instead to push the wave into turret. Raina is sacrificing his experience to Archer
2. Look at who is moving first to help the jungle skirmish. This is one of the only times this series where Pirean and apaMEN move first reactively, rather than proactively

Unfortunately, V3's composition doesn't scale particularly well this game and SG's superior laning power in apaMEN and Pirean are strong enough to get them the win.

The following clip from Game 3 is an example of apaMEN and Blank's desire to play individually well hurt them. apaMEN has worked pretty hard to get the wave position back onto his side of the map. This means he's not in a position to help. On its own, this line of play is totally fine.

Blank just lost control of the bottom scuttle crab due to a misplay from Enty, and is now choosing to take the top scuttle. Again, this line of play is totally fine in isolation, but it has the following effect.

<https://clips.twitch.tv/ArborealPiercingArugulaCorgiDerp>

Again, this looks pretty simple. It's a collapse where Paz moved after crashing a wave. True. But I present to you, dear reader, that this is part of a larger stylistic choice. May I present to you what happened a full minute earlier.

<https://clips.twitch.tv/EphemeralChillyVanillaPhilosoraptor>

I want to point out a couple of really subtle things that happen during this small section of video.

1. In a similar fashion to Game 2, both Paz and Ace start pushed under their own turrets and simply can't afford to move initially, to Sengoku's credit
2. Paz leaves his lane in a potentially disastrous lane state
 - a. The lane is pushing towards apaMEN where Paz would struggle to get control again
 - b. The odds of finding a kill in this skirmish are very low by the time he leaves
3. Paz drops a ward in a place that protects Bugi from invades but is unlikely to spot out a gank

. This is especially dangerous because of the previous statement, Paz is likely to be extended onto the red side of the lane in the near future

So what does all of this mean? It just goes to show how much V3 and Paz himself are willing to sacrifice because they know Bugi is that good. He's not just losing resources, he is choosing to give them up for just a chance that Bugi gets some more.

He makes a similar style of play a few minutes later.

<https://clips.twitch.tv/ChillyDignifiedGrassEleGiggle>

There are good teams who would not have made this play. This huge wave is crashing, and with Bugi's presence V3 can choose to push Yutori and Enty off of the turret and deny all of that gold and experience. Take a tower plate or two, call it a win. Which it is.

However, that's not what Paz or V3 do. Paz chooses to teleport down here, sacrificing any semblance of control he had over the top lane wave, in order to get an even BIGGER win for Archer and Bugi.

Immediately after getting back to lane, he abandons wave control yet again! He doesn't even get an assist this time.

<https://clips.twitch.tv/TacitEncouragingWombatWutFace>

And then he chooses to give another kill to Bugi. Making another conscious choice to accelerate his jungler.

<https://clips.twitch.tv/PerfectSuccessfulShallotMcaT>

This style of play isn't without its pitfalls though, as we see here when Raina literally pulls his punches.

<https://clips.twitch.tv/FairCorrectStingrayRalpherZ>

The rest of Game 3 is mostly V3 flexing their gold lead while Sengoku become more and more desperate to make a play.

To be entirely honest, Game 4 doesn't showcase this style very heavily. V3 shows off an unusual style of League of Legends that reminds me more of Overwatch, but we can talk about that another time.

In the end, it remains difficult to argue that V3 have the best players in the LJL. They're winning because they do a fantastic job of allocating resources to a handful of players, and our unsung, selfless hero Paz might finally be on track to represent Japan on the world stage once again.

Author: [Joushi_TV](#)

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