

Patch Notes Style Balance Proposal

Proposed Balance Changes

Disclaimer: This is an unofficial, hypothetical agent balance concept created solely for game design practice. It does not represent real or announced changes and is not affiliated with, created by, or endorsed by Riot Games.

v13.05 | Cody Cuento | 9/10/2026

Hey there!

So, after Neon was nerfed in patch 12.09 because “her movement and evasiveness are pushing too far into combat space,” I noticed that the skill gap between using Neon and countering Neon was too far still. One thing I noticed playing Neon was how she was able to make poor decisions, and still be left unpunished. These changes help to mediate those issues and create more opportunities for counterplay.

Furthermore, Miko has been seeing less and less play, and has been finding little success in professional VALORANT, so these changes are aiming to make him more viable. Specifically, his ultimate ability is in a weak spot, so buffs are in order.

Neon

- Neon’s access to another slide with her ult adds a layer of unpredictability to counterplay. Removing the refresh enforces healthy utility usage and decision making.
- Overdrive
 - No longer refreshes skill on activation

Miko

- Miko’s ultimate ability has been his worst ability since he was released, mainly because the advantage the debuffs give is not proportionate to it costing 8 points. His M-Pulse has seen less use since players got used to it as well.
- M-Pulse
 - Decreased windup from 1s >>> 0.75s
- Bassquake

- Decreased windup time from 1.6s >>> 1.2s
- Changed status effect from Slowed + Deafened to Concussed + Deafened

(View my full design rationale in sections 6-10 of my GDD below)

Game Design Document

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Reasoning | Cody Cuento | 9/10/2026

1. Overview

- This proposal is based on the current version of Valorant: v13.05
- Neon shows flashes of power unlike any other duelist in the game, which I believe is due to her access to her slide ability. The ability itself has a high skill floor, so a change to the ability itself isn't in order. Nerfing her ultimate to no longer refresh her ability encourages deliberate utility usage and better decision making.
- Miko has seen less play as time passed since his release, and a common issue players have is the weaker ultimate. Another aspect I noticed is that his concuss has lost its use as players got used to him, leading to a buff for his M-Pulse ability.

2. Agent Role and Identity

- Neon's role as a duelist is to break timings and take duels using her fast mobility and 1v1 potential. She has a high skill floor and a high skill ceiling, making her an agent that takes time to master. She challenges the ever-growing aim mechanics players are building by introducing new levels of horizontal speed.
- Miko's role as a controller is to break up areas of the map and support his teammates as they fight to take the space. He is known for his sound-based abilities and supportive capabilities. This includes a heal, stim, concuss, and a large AoE ultimate to debuff enemies caught within it.

3. The Problem

- Neon is breaking timings as intended according to Riot's own patch notes ([v12.09](#)), giving her a unique role in a team that nobody else can bring. However, her impact during gunfights is still too great, especially when chaining slides together using her ultimate. This adds a layer of unpredictability to a character who already breaks convention.

- Miks' supportive capabilities are naturally high, as his kit is focused on enabling his team. His ultimate is currently one of the weakest in the game, and that comes down to its windup time and debuff states. A slow windup gives passive enemies a longer period to run, hide, or push depending on their position relative to the ultimate. The slow + deafen combo makes for good positioning opportunities, but fails to deliver an easier kill for teammates trying to capitalize. Players have gotten used to his concuss, so its impact on executions has diminished and counterplay is far too easy.

4. Evidence and Assumptions (All stats are obtained from v1r.gg)

- Neon's pick rate in both competitive and professional games took a slight hit after her nerfs, but players realized over time that her kit functions the same way, just with less verticality.
 - '26 VCT Americas Kickoff: 19%
 - Waylay + Yoru meta
 - '26 VCT Americas Stage 1: Most picked at 78% pick rate
 - Waylay + Yoru nerfed, Neon meta after NS win Masters Santiago
 - '26 VCT Americas Stage 2: 72%
 - Post nerf, Neon remains dominant
- Miks sees a decent amount of play in competitive lobbies, but relatively NONE in pro play. Consistently having a pick rate under 1% across every region.
- Other agents such as Reyna and Clove see lower pick rates as well due to their selfish nature. Brimstone sees little play professionally, but fills specific niches on maps like Fracture.
- Miks being a team-centered agent with one of the longest smokes in the game SEEMS good on paper, but fails to realize it in game.

5. Design Goals & Constraints

- The goal with these changes is three-fold
 - Allow characters to maintain their identity and role on the team, balancing them to feel more in line with other agents
 - Supporting healthier decision making for all players, not only those who play the agents listed in these documents.
 - Follow design principles already stated by VALORANT game designers:



(image taken from [@penguinVALORANT](#) on X)

6. Proposed Changes

- Neon
 - Overdrive
 - No longer refreshes skill on activation
- Miko
 - M-Pulse
 - Decreased windup from 1s >>> 0.75s
 - Bassquake
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7. Design Rationale

- Have you ever encountered a rushdown style Neon who always seems to get the best of you when anchoring? So you decide to switch up your setup to counter her slide past the choke point; but this time, she pops her ultimate and slides again, nullifying the counterplay you set up.
- The reason VALORANT removed Neon's second slide was to decrease her mobility and encourage smarter decision making. Her ultimate essentially reverts this change for the round she activates her ultimate, depending on how she uses it.

- Miks finds the least impact using his M-Pulse (concuss) ability due to how easy it is to break. I wanted to follow similar design principles that Riot had when buffing Cypher in [patch 13.00](#). Changing his ultimate, I wanted to tune it in ways that aligns with the rest of the cast by comparing his ultimate to [Breach \(1.2s windup\)](#) and [Fade \[0.6s windup \(unconfirmed by game files\)\]](#).
 - Also, a deafening sound wave would realistically disrupt one's balance, so I thought it appropriate to change the slow to a concuss.

8. Player Impact & Tradeoffs

- At a high-level, counting abilities is a crucial part to preparing your next play. Neon losing her ability refresh allows for accurate counts by opponents and deliberate teamplay. Miks will regain his high assist counts found when he was released by tuning him to the level of players now.
- At a lower level, Neon's slide is a "panic" button, letting a player get away with mistakes they might not have otherwise. Activating your ultimate should be intentional, not another reason to make mistakes.
- With no way to playtest, there is no way for me to know whether or not the Miks changes are tuned properly.

9. Alternatives Considered

- Miks
 - Bassquake
 - Change angle of cone from 60 >>> 70
 - M-Pulse
 - Change the shape of the AoE from a circle to a rounded cone in front of the throwable.
 - Radius changed from 5.5m >>> 7m
- After evaluating these potential changes in-game I realized the angle of the cone does not cover sites in a reliable way, and changing the angle would just decrease the amount of utility

needed, which is a change I don't think should happen.



- For example, note the corners uncovered by the ultimate. Still healthy for the game as it encourages utility usage to clear.
- Neon
 - High Gear
 - Jumping consumes 15 energy
- This Neon change has been in my mind since before the nerfs in 12.09, but seems excessive now since players often only jump to peek corners now.
 - Back then, I thought it should consume 20 energy, but the slower jump is a great change, so I only went with 15

10. Playtest & Validation

- Neon's change is easier to observe than Miks', but without an experimental build at hand, it still poses a challenge
- Instead I would watch back personal VOD's against Neon and as Neon to see how one less slide would have potentially changed the outcome of a single fight, or even a whole round.
 - This change is successful if it leads to more teamplay for initial engagements before the ultimate is activated, seeing a notable difference of when Neon players choose to slide or not.
- Miks is harder to judge, as the numbers are harder to imagine through VOD reviews.
 - With the current voiceline, the ultimate would activate at "Right here! Right-"
- With an experimental build, I would observe site execution timings with the Miks ultimate, being successful if it is less likely for an affected enemy to kill the entry duelist.

11. Reflection

- To reiterate, this is a GDD made for game design practice on the game I'm most familiar with.
- Researching current design principles by VALORANT designers helped greatly with my decisions. I found that some things I thought were over tuned (such as Neon's timing breaking) were intentional when that has been such a big issue with players such as myself.
- I've noticed this for a while, but Riot does tend to over tune their balance patches, which I think should call for longer testing periods, but eventually they still hit the mark. For example:
 - Ares meta
 - Yoru Gatecrash duration
 - Cypher trapwire windup
- Looking at Miks feels like I'm looking at an agent who was tuned down last minute to avoid an overly powerful agent.

Thanks for Reading!