Halo 5 Altitude

Deconstruction

Description:

Halo 5 is a first party exclusive first person shooter for the Xbox One. Its focus is mainly to cater to the competitive crowd; however, it does have game types for the more casual player. Halo 5 is one of the many first person shooter games that utilizes the now trending advanced movement to vary the strategies and pacing in the gameplay. However, considering advanced movements has had such a great influence on the gameplay of Halo 5- naturally, the multiplayer map design would have to change from its traditional size and verticality capabilities to accommodate for the difference in gameplay.

In this deconstruction, I will be assessing a map named Altitude by looking at a couple of categories to study how the developers have constructed a map that supports many halos main pillars of gameplay: steady methodical gunplay, map control and spatial awareness, game type support and a heavy emphasis on teamwork/communication.
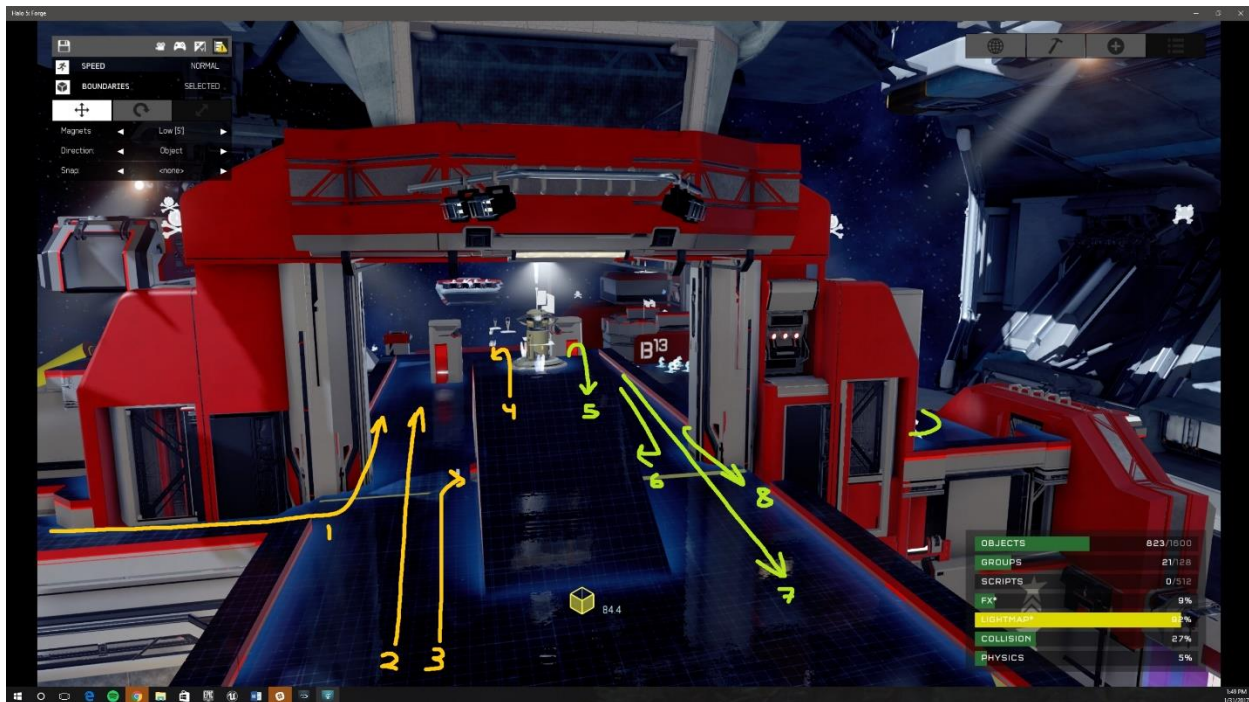
Path

Altitude is an inverted symmetrical map which aims to direct players to the center where most of the combat will happen. From the start, it has 5 paths which will all lead the player to the center of the map through some vertical variation.


Paths 2 and 4 will lead you to the bottom portion of the map where they will both eventually intersect. All the paths in the bottom lead to a room which serves as the bridge where players can cross to the other team's side without requiring the need for a jump.

Altitude is structured to be linear, kind of like a tug of war- except its inverted. Players must push into the enemy base in order to win. The center intersection is where players will meet and most the combat will take place.

In the picture above, paths 1 and 8 lead from both bases providing cover from the opposing side. Paths 4 and 5 lead from the very center while providing minimal cover however it is very likely that players will encounter opposition up there. Path 2 and 7 are like a death wish. Players don't really want to be there unless they are confident that they have a good shot at making it out alive. And finally paths 3 and 6 will allow players do drop down to the center and intersect with players who chose to take paths 2 and 4 (from the previous picture).

Finally, we have the paths that lead from the bottom to the top. Since altitude is an inverted symmetrical map, these paths will function in the same exact way however they will be located across the map from each other. This path is only accessible from the right side of the base facing forward (so right from blue team's spawn [left looking towards red] or right from red team's spawn [left looking towards blue])
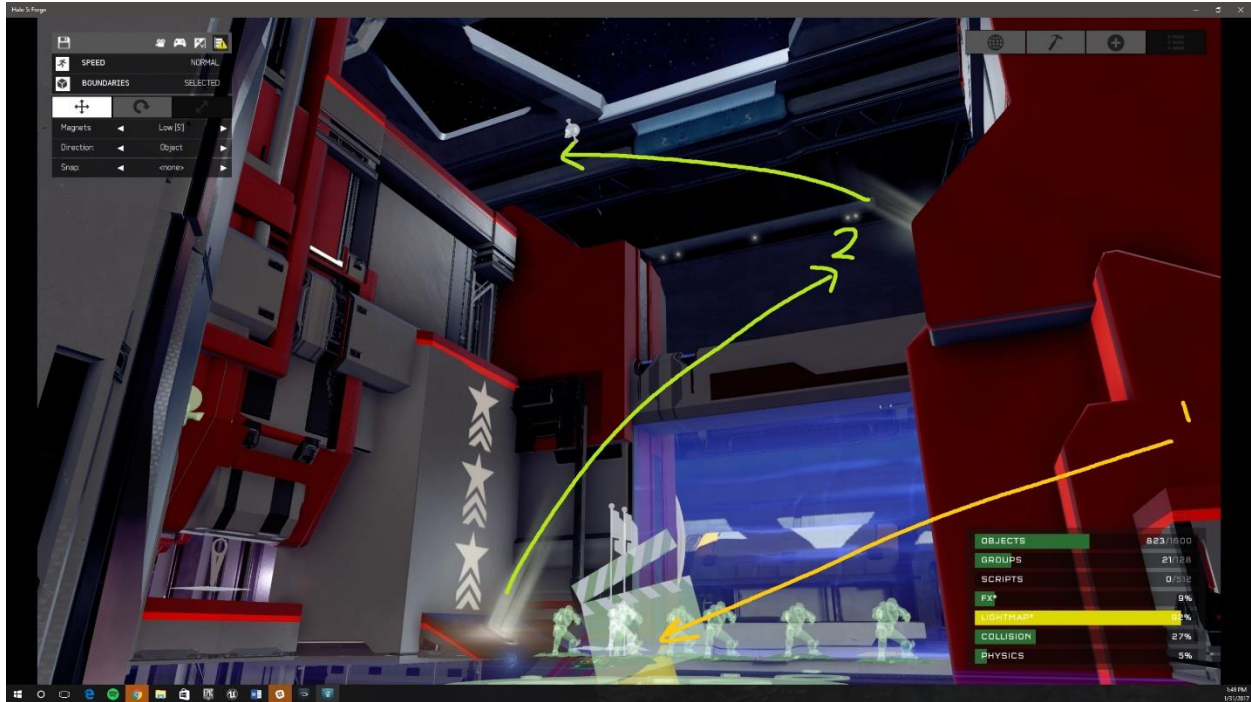
Path 1 will lead to the bottom center of the map where paths 2 and 4 from the first picture and paths 3 and 6 from the second picture intersect. However, path 2 in the picture above will lead back up to the bend that leads to the center map on the top floor (path 8 or 1 from the second picture).
This sums up the map flow in terms of the basic available player paths in Altitude.

Verticality

Altitude makes great use of the freedom of movement with halo 5s advanced movement mechanics and takes liberty in playing with the variations in height available for the player to use. This map wants players to be looking not just side by side, but up and down as well. They must take into consideration the risk and/or benefits of being above or below for every moment they play. This allows players to make use of the ground pound ability, surprise tactics, the man cannon (jump pads) or the bullet curving hydra rocket launcher. Moreover, the map is built to reward players for properly using its multiple 45 degree walls for well-placed grenades.

Since this map is symmetrical all these vertical advantages are present on both sides of the map except on opposite ends. Right from the game start, each team has 4 height advantage options. Path 1 (sniper tower) is positioned at a slightly higher altitude than the center of the map and the path that it is pointing (which on the opposite team's view, would be the equivalent to path 5). Path 2 would allow for a player to hide behind cover and wait for an opponent to approach from below, this gives the immediate advantage of aiming right down at their heads, throwing a grenade or ground pounding from above. Path 3 allows for a player to throw a grenade at the 45-degree slant, sending the explosive right down to the center intersection. Path 4 would let the player skip the intersection at the bottom and go straight to the bottom of the sniper tower located in the enemy territory making it a risky maneuver. However, could be very speedy and beneficial to an experienced player. However, Path 5 would provide problems for players. While it does lead to the center, it will leave the player expose to the players hiding in the opposing sniper tower.

Sightlines

The sight lines in altitude are intricate, making this map particularly difficult to deconstruct. However, it does follow some basics. From the very start, players have no sight of their opponents because of the massive wall separating the two teams from one another. Making the pacing of this map a lot less hectic and more methodical in its approach. Players will not have to immediately react from the start of the round, thus making it a more team/communication oriented map which is excellent considering that is one primary pillars of gameplay in halo 5. The sightlines allow for players to gain a vast amount of spatial awareness and enemy position.

When players spawn, they cannot see their opponents right away because of the massive structure that invites players to move forward. However, once players advance, things change and the complexity ramps up.

The sightlines can be broken up by levels, the top of the map being the most exposed and the bottom being the least. From the very top ramp which I will name sightline 1, players can see every opponent from every position except the bottom most level. In the top center area where most of the combat will

occur. Players who chose to go through position themselves at sightline 2 will be protected from the cross fire that will happen at the top bridge. However, they will be exposed to other players that are in the same position but on the other side of the map. Players looking though perched on the ledge at sightline 3 will see their opponents making their way to the bottom middle- however, their opponents will not see them. But it doesn't end there, along each portion of the map there are railings that support players who wish to play stealthily. I will demonstrate their benefits in the picture below.

Players who crouch alongside position 1, will not be visible to opponents looking from sniper tower. Players who crouch by position 2 will not be visible to players standing on the bridge. And players crouching alongside the back of their base at position 3 will not be visible at all unless approached from behind.

Advanced movements / Shortcuts / pro strats

Altitude rewards players who innovate in their approaches to each battle. There are many options to circumvent path limitations that basic players do not know how to get past. Moreover, there are places to hide from, perch over and/or ambush your opponents. In this section I will highlight how they all come together and demonstrate how Altitude makes use of them. Altitude expects the basic player to use all the paths and sightlines that I have highlighted in the previous section in order to move forward a fun and balanced action sequence. However, in each portion of the map there are sections that are catered to a more advanced crowd. Rewarding those who know how to use halo 5's advanced movement mechanics to their advantage.

In position 1 players can hide from the opponent's path that bends towards the middle, they will be comfortably positioned in a place where opponents can easily walk past without even noticing that someone was hiding there. Position 2 will allow players to stay hidden from the enemy sniper tower, cross fire at the bridge and the sightline that cuts through the center of the map from bend to bend. Position 2 will also provide player with view looking down towards any opponent who tries to cross over into the base without being noticed, this will provide players hiding in position 2 the ability to open fire, ground pound, toss a grenade or just simply provide their team with enemy position information. The downside to this position is that they can only go down. Position 2 leaves them unable to move or which much room to do anything than to move downwards making it high risk if they happen to be spotted. Position 3 will essentially do the same as position 2 except they will be provided with cover from friendly sniper tower. And finally position 4 will allow skilled players who know how to get the most out of the jump- supported with the advanced movements (sprint -> dash -> slide -> jump -> aim) to circumvent going through the middle, the bottom, using the jump pad or any other path for that matter; providing them with a straight shot from their base to the opponent's sniper tower, essentially giving the enemy sniper a surprise. If this process is executed successfully and stealthily, it will provide the player with a side view of the entire enemy team with a slight height advantage. Very risky, but very rewarding.