

Gimmick or Gameplay: Addressing the GP Mario Beach Problem

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1 Introduction

Since the dawn of 1.03, and well over seven years before I even installed CTGP for the first time, GP Mario Beach was added to the pack. It was a time of pioneering for the game, and the introduction of the speed mod really was revolutionary for its time. Mario Beach has remained popular ever since, currently listed as **12th** in terms of popularity. That being said, over the years we have changed not only our pack but the community attitude towards speed mod tracks as a whole. Iconic tracks like Sunset Circuit and Suzuka Circuit, both prominent and somewhat popular speedmod tracks, have since been removed. While it may have once been very unique and interesting, over time speed mods have managed to lose the public's interest and have even gone so far to become loathed by a majority of the community, and I believe we have reached a point where it is time to give the community the choice to leave arguably the most iconic speedmod track behind.

2 Ratings, Ratings, Ratings (and a bit of popularity for the hell of it)

One of the most important aspects aside from popularity when we consider keeping a track in the pack is its public ratings. To say Mario Beach is strongly disliked would be an understatement. Every update since I have been on council, we have repeatedly been asked "When is Mario Beach getting removed" or "Why isn't Mario Beach on the removal poll" to such an extent that I genuinely have never seen a track so unanimously disliked by all sections of the community. For example, let's take a look at Peaks, a track commonly regarded as *the most* controversial track in the pack.

With a track like Mushroom Peaks, there are decently consistent placements near the bottom. That being said, competitive views it in a slightly different light. As a decently experience comp player myself, Peaks for most high tier players is a non-issue since everyone has played it so many times, it's just a complete circus and always gives crazy races. This type of nuance provides a

<u>Mushroom Peaks</u>	Remove	Neutral	Remain	Placement
All	54%	12%	34%	216th
Competitive	47%	14%	38%	203rd
Casual	57%	11%	32%	217th

good environment for the track, and that's something entirely lacking for Mario Beach.

<u>GP Mario Beach</u>	Remove	Neutral	Remain	Placement
All	53%	19%	27%	217th
Competitive	69%	15%	15%	218th
Casual	48%	20%	32%	216th

While admittedly Mario Beach does slightly better with casual players than Peaks, it does over 20 points worse with competitive. I will elaborate more anecdotally, but this is far and away the most hated track in competitive, even more so than every banned track. You can imagine the absurdity of most competitive players preferring to play tracks that the community deems unanimously to be "uncompetitive" over Mario Beach, and even then that barely scratches the surface of how despised it is amongst competitive.

Alas, I digress. Mario Beach does have a relatively high popularity compared to most tracks (ranked 12th), yet it is still dwarfed by Peaks which nearly triples its play-rate. Is that enough though to deem it acceptable for removal?

3 ASDF Course and Suzuka Circuit: Popularity isn't everything

In the last year we removed both ASDF and Suzuka, and while they were both disliked for separate reasons they were ultimately united across one issue: popularity. At the time of removal from what I can gather from archived discord messages since the bot no longer tracks popularity, Suzuka had a pop value of 222 and ASDF had 386. At the moment, GP Mario Beach is only 6 above where ASDF was with a pop count of 392. I would argue this is well within the margins of removal relative to both Suzuka and especially ASDF, and due to past removals I reckon given similar scenarios removal could be argued for. Let's compare specifically with ASDF now with regards to the rating polls.

<u>ASDF Course</u>	Remove	Neutral	Remain	Placement
All	73%	12%	16%	218th
Competitive	69%	13%	19%	218th
Casual	74%	11%	15%	218th

While ASDF did poll substantially worse in all categories aside from competitive, it was removed as a result due to its overwhelming hate from all sections of the community. While it is slightly toned down from casual players, it ultimately does receive a majority of players asking for its removal.

4 But then, by this logic, wouldn't we also remove Peaks???

I would argue the issue with Peaks is similar yet very different. People don't dislike Peaks for the same reasons they dislike GP Mario Beach. With Peaks, it's more often than not a skill issue or respawn issue. People think the track is too difficult (especially from a casual perspective), and from a competitive standpoint there are blatant issues with respawns and shock as a whole. That being said, some of those things many view as detriments is also often the sole reason the track is picked. It's picked because of how silly and chaotic it is, it's picked to cheese VR off low-rated players, it's picked just for the sheer insanity of 4 minutes on a mushroom track where anything can happen. Here's a perfect example of a stereotypical peaks race that happens in high tier competitive rooms: *TheDreadedMushroomPeaks*. It also has a large amount of tech like the shroomless shroom cut, wall bounce, ending shroom cut, mushroom skip at the 1st and last ramps, and even mushroom edge abuse used in the current World Record. There are countless tutorials teaching how to take each shortcut and strat, and they've been around for years at this point. The track has several flaws, but the beauty in it lies within the nuance of its potential for incredibly chaotic races, genuinely produces insane races at rates unlike any other track in the pack.

GP Mario Beach has none of that. It is a 7 lap track with absolutely 0 tech and a speedmod. There are no shortcuts, no interesting turns, no strats, there is nothing that sets it apart and makes it remotely interesting. If people are looking for a flat track with 7 laps and no cuts, they just pick Baby Park as it does everything that Mario Beach does but better. You can't even snipe people because players are moving faster than you can throw items, which leads to less player interaction. The common consensus for its selection is that casuals love the speed of the fastest track, but even they had more people asking to remove it than keep it. The TT leaderboard is also nothing special. Keep in mind the track has **14** chains in TTs with the current shroom spot. While there are some interesting tops, it's nothing like the old ASDF leaderboard. The only thing going for this track is the speedmod, and even that inherently kills much of what you and I know as Mario Kart at such high speeds.

Now this isn't to say that speedmods can't work well. Canyon Run is still in the pack and plays incredibly online, and is still thriving in no small part due to that speedmod. It's just that GP Mario's is 2x speed, over a track that frankly would struggle to be more boring. No, by this logic Peaks is not in danger of being removed by any of the reasons we have listed above for Mario Beach.

5 Wrapping it up

It has become unequivocally clear that the continued presence of GP Mario Beach in CTGP is a burden on the community. The track's persisting popularity should not deter us from realizing that its entertainment value has noticeably waned over the years, especially within the competitive realm. The underlying issue with Mario Beach is not its speedmod, but rather the lack of compelling gameplay it offers. Unlike Peaks, which has been embraced for its chaos and challenging terrain, Mario Beach falls flat with its seven laps of monotony, lack of technical elements, and its speedmod that ironically impedes the typical player interactions intrinsic to the game we both know and love. This makes Mario Beach a relic of a bygone era, no longer aligned with the evolving dynamics of the game. Drawing comparisons with tracks like ASDF Course and Suzuka Circuit, both of which were removed despite their popularity, it becomes evident that popularity is not the sole determinant for a track's inclusion in the pack. The sentiment of the community, especially the competitive players in this case who contribute significantly to the game's longevity and vibrancy, holds much importance.

Given these observations, and considering the overwhelming demand for the removal of GP Mario Beach across all sections of the community, the time is ripe for reassessing its place in CTGP. Retaining a track should be based not only on popularity or historical significance, but also on its capacity to contribute positively to the gaming experience. Our community thrives on challenging, engaging, and evolving gameplay. Therefore, we must be willing to move past nostalgia and take decisive action for the betterment of our game. In this light, the least we can do is let the community be heard and add GP Mario Beach to the removal poll, paving the way for tracks that promise more excitement, diversity, and complexity that truly reflects the spirit of not only CTGP, but Mario Kart Wii as a whole.