

We are now approaching Doom of Dimensions, and Yu-Gi-Oh! has undergone a few changes. With the banlist now out, I wanted to take a bit of time to talk about the current format and the changes made to the card pool.

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## How Is the Format Doing Right Now?

I just had my first WCQ in a while, and I did *okay*. I went 5-3 and placed 32nd out of 180ish players, doing *fine*. I did some misplays, got tilted by a couple of lowrolls, and made some mistakes that cost me one more game, which could have made me reach top cut.

Still, I think we're in a good spot with the format. The *Justice Hunters* decks are good, but they don't really outshine anything previously released this year; in fact, I'd argue that the lower successes of older strategies such as Mitsurugi, Ryzeal and

Maliss are less about raw power and more about players simply gravitating to Justice Hunters.

We are thankfully moving away from high-ceiling one card combo decks with Dracotail and VSK9, and while Yummy does have a few 1-card combos, the way it sequences its disruptions is really important, which could lead to it not having enough answers depending on how both players play into the board.

This is the best format that we've had since AGOV, and I hope it stays that way for longer. I was actually writing this article before the banlist got released, but they beat me to the punch, so let's talk about the changes.

## Changes in the Banlist

There are more a few cards that I think are creating problems for the game. I would like for Konami to tackle engines that provide too much advantage, cards that punish good play patterns, and certain decks which are still frustrating to play against.

### Banned: Number 67: Pair-A-Dice Smasher



I've really 180'd on this card. People thought it would ruin the format and it'd be a

menace, and as it turned out, it almost ended up being a downright bad card—while VSK9 has several ways to force it out, a lot of them lose to common handtraps. Notably, getting Imperm'd on 67 trades you 3 for 1, and while you can make him untargetable from Lupis, that's only after your opponent has already handtrapped you. I have even heard from some players that are not even running it because it is so situational.

With that said, it punishes no-handtrap strategies too much. We've had handtrap dominance for too long, and Number 67 forces people to consider not running breakers just because they might get locked out of the game by a greedy VSK9 player, even though a combination of handtraps and breakers, or just breakers, is completely viable right now. I'm therefore glad that this card is not in the game anymore so decks can be built in more ways than just slapping any possible handtrap.

## Banned: King of the Feral Imps



The Ryzeal engine is very well-designed, and by itself, does not pose anything even close of a problem. However, players have found too many ways to make Ryzeal bridge into other engines, and it often means that you get a full Ryzeal combo +

one other board from another deck. Normal Summon Ice is, in my opinion, comparable to Normal Summon Snake-Eyes Ash in terms of the advantage and disruption it generates.

King of the Feral Imps is just the biggest offender due to how it bridges into Mitsurugi. I'm a bit surprised more people aren't playing Ryzeal Mitsu. On an individual level I think both decks are fine, but when combined together, they are too strong, so banning the bridge seems like the most logical solution. I still would like Habakiri or Prayers to take a hit, as these cards are absurdly strong, but it is what it is.

## **Banned: Moon of the Closed Heaven. Unbanned: Fiendsmith Lacrima.**



While decks are not favoring the Fiendsmith engine that much right now, I do not like that every deck gets to turn any 2 bodies into so many pushes and disruption. The Fiendsmith cards themselves are really cool and I think they should be on the game.

Fiendsmith Lacrima is more of a problem, though. While time shenanigans are not a thing anymore, this card *will* allow Tract to fuse with extra Light Fiends in hand,

which might mean that the Engraver itself can give you two pushes. It also, for some godforsaken reason, recovers Light Fiends from the Banishment.

I think Engraver to 2 would have been a good way to make Engravers more vulnerable to GY hate, while also keeping Lacrima banned so that they can't recover them, but I guess this is what we'll have for now.

## **Banned: Splash Mage. Limited: Maliss <P> Dormouse**



Look, I fucking hate Maliss. This is a horribly designed deck that pseudoFTKs you going first, requires targeted hate in order to beat, and produces terrible gamestates for both players constantly. Sometimes one Imperm stops it, sometimes it plays through every handtrap in the game. I would rather see something like Red Ransom or White Binder go and just kill this abomination of a deck, but at least Splash Mage getting banned means Cyberseslop decks will have less ways to recover from disruption.

With Dormouse limited, this might be good enough to keep Maliss in the coffin for now. It will still be able to highroll you, and I would rather not have it in the game anymore, but at the very least it will be much more vulnerable to handtraps.

## Not banned: Archnemeses Protos



I have no idea why this card was unbanned in the first place, and this year has shown us that it is good enough to still see play. Infernal Banshee still has some cool interactions and it is only really a problem because it can get you to Protos. I hope they don't miss it next time.

## Limited: Ext Ryzeal



Like I said earlier, I don't think pure Ryzeal is a problem, even though Ext Ryzeal is a very powerful card. I do think that Normal Summon Ice Ryzeal was perhaps bridging into too much, but I do not agree with this change. This deck is fine, and we should just be careful with how many bridges Ice Ryzeal has.

## **Limited: Linkuriboh and Herald of the Arc Light**



This is the most tilting change for me. One of Yummy's most glaring weaknesses is its inability to deal with big bodies that force out attacks. Why the hell are they getting a card that will help them solve this issue? A few decks are playing Phantazmay and even Pankratops just to beat over Yummy monsters, and this card completely invalidates that.

I really wish they hadn't done this change, hopefully we'll realize that protecting boss monsters from battle is still very good even in 2025 and we'll ban this card in the next list.

Herald to 1 is a fine change, not all Yummy players did it, but getting a second Herald was a bit much when it did happen. This is a good change.

## **Consistency Hits: Limits to Cryston Inclusion, Vanquish Soul Razen and Stake Your Soul!**



Vanquish Soul was one of my biggest concerns for this format. This deck is awesome and I like what it does for the game, but it was perhaps too explosive in its first turn, often going with a full board and 6 cards in hand on their first turn if uninterrupted. Their board was not unbreakable, but they had so much follow-up the game was often over at that point.

That said, I think this is too harsh. Vanquish Soul had some very significant problems with consistency, and this might kill it. Limiting Ryzen or Stake Your Soul! might have been fine, but both is too much.

As for Inclusion, this will hurt some Cryston setups, but for the most part I don't think it's a big deal. They have a few ways to recover it from Banishment, so this just seems like a random consistency hit.

## Limited: Solemn Judgment



I'm both weirded out and fine with this. Solemn Judgment is one of the oldest cards in the game, and I like that old cards see still play. Importantly, this is also a Trap Card, which rarely see modern play. It wasn't even on every side deck, though it is seeing a decent amount of competitive play right now.

That said, going full combo from any deck and backing it up with a Solemn (or even 2) does feel pretty bad, as Judgment is almost exclusively used to ignore going 2nd cards and make otherwise fine boards almost unbreakable, so despite everything this might be a fine hit.

## **Relevant Returning Cards: Lightning Storm, Branded Fusion, Zoodiac Barrage, Zoodiac Trident.**



Finally, Drident is back again. The Zoodiac package is cool and might see some competitive play in rank 4 strategies that can spare a bit of Extra Deck space, such as Ryzeal. Barrage is an okay rank 4 extender, and also still a one-card Utopic Draco Future, and although I doubt it will see a lot of play, I think some people might experiment with it if they're willing to give it the Extra Deck space and the one Zoodiac name that it requires.

Lightning Storm is completely fine, though I wish they'd take away Duster; playing into Duster while going 2nd is completely miserable, while there are many ways to play around Lightning Storm. In practice I think people will just play 2 Storm 1 Duster so it's going 2nd impact is probably not very high.

Branded is a deck that I think people just underestimate a lot; this deck still grinds like crazy, has pretty good endboards, and has several good ways of breaking boards. Branded's biggest problem, and the reason it has started falling off since Poplar was printed, is that decks have needed an absurd amount of non-engine to be played, which has always been Branded's main weakness. That said, with the recent push for more engine-based decks, and with the recent Dracotail cards, Branded might have a chance in this format to be played, *if*, of course, the community still willing to try it out.

## Other Random Unhits: Phantom Skyblaster, Master Peace, Snake-Eye Ash and Poplar, Glow-Up Bulb, Morphing Jar.



I have a couple of friends toying around with Ash and Poplar as a Yummy engine, but I don't know if it'll be good enough as it requires a lot of deck slots for a ceiling that might not be worth it. I guess we'll see. I'd rather Original come back and we take away Poplar instead so other FIRE decks can use the Diabellstar engine, but it is what it is.

Master Peace is scary, but I don't think True Draco can keep up in 2025, especially with Card of Demise and other floodgates still at 1.

Glow-Up Bulb could see play in some future pile decks, but with card quality where it's at I think this card being unsearchable might not make the cut.

Morphing Jar and Phantom Skyblaster have almost no chance of seeing play.

## Not Hit: Mulcharmies and Droll & Lock Bird



I just wanted to mention these cards quickly since so many people are calling for hits to them, but I don't think we should. Mulcharmies are generally good for the game, though maybe there's a case to be made that Fuwalos is too powerful. Purulia and Meowls are mostly fine, though, and usually do what they're supposed to, even if it's annoying that they get negated by Ash.

Droll & Lock Bird should not go by any means, though. I know people hate "go fish" decks where Droll outright wins you the game, and it's really painful breaking boards going 2nd with some decks under Droll, but the fact that this card is not a mainstay of the game across formats should be evidence enough that it is actually not that good and only seeing use when you really can't stop decks with anything else. Almost all the time, when a deck hard loses to Droll, it is about to pseudoFTK you, and while I don't think Droll is an ideal solution to that, it is at least a solution to a lot of the crazier decks. It is starting to show its age, but I don't think this card should go, especially not without a replacement.

## Conclusions

Most of the changes in the banlist are good. Some cards are definitely missing, like a pure Mitsu hit (limiting Habakiri or Prayers would be ideal) and Protos surviving yet another banlist. A few problematic cards making the game worse are also gone.

That said, I am concerned about Linkuriboh coming back. VSK9 was almost for sure gutted in the banlist, and Yummy receives far better support than Dracotail in the upcoming DOOD, so Linkuriboh being released seems like a much more significant buff considering how much it covers the deck's weaknesses.

Maybe it will not be as big of a deal, who knows. But regardless, this is looking like a great format, probably the best since AGOV, and I look forward to preparing and playing my next events.