# The Nemeses Engine: A Metagame Re-evaluation Following the October 2025 Emergency Ban of Archnemeses Protos

## I. Executive Summary: The Protos Power Vacuum, Revisited

The "Nemeses" archetype, first introduced in *Eternity Code*, is a masterclass in modular card design. Its core philosophy is the transformation of the banished zone from a void of permanent removal into a dynamic, recyclable resource pool.1 This design establishes the archetype not as a standalone strategy, but as a potent, symbiotic engine. Its competitive identity, therefore, is defined *entirely* by the power and accessibility of its available payoffs.

For most of its existence, the engine's identity was split. After its most powerful payoff, Archnemeses Protos, was Forbidden, the engine's application pivoted to a more specialized role: enabling Thunder Dragon Colossus via Nemeses Corridor.1 However, the Yu-Gi-Oh! TCG Forbidden & Limited (F&L) list effective September 15, 2025, initiated a brief and chaotic "interruption" by moving Archnemeses Protos from Forbidden to Limited status.2

This decision proved to be a catastrophic miscalculation, underestimating the power of new, generic enablers in the card pool. The resulting metagame was so warped by the generic accessibility of Protos 4 that Konami was forced to issue an emergency F&L List, effective October 27, 2025, which promptly re-Forbiddened Archnemeses Protos.6

This report re-evaluates the foundational analysis of the Nemeses archetype in light of this "Protos whiplash." The "power vacuum" described in the original deep dive document 1 is not a historical event; it is the *current* and seemingly permanent state of the engine. With its "tyrant king" re-imprisoned, the Nemeses engine's strategic applications have once again snapped back to its more specialized, and balanced, secondary functions.

## II. Core Engine Analysis: The Post-Protos Toolkit (November 2025)

The function of the Nemeses engine's core components remains unchanged—each of the smaller monsters recycles a banished monster to Special Summon itself from the hand.1 However, the *strategic value* of these components has been fundamentally reassessed now that Archnemeses Protos is no longer the primary search target. The engine reverts from a "generic win condition" to a "specialized enabler."

The table below adapts the functional analysis from the original deep dive 1 to reflect the current November 2025 metagame realities.

**Table 1: Nemeses Engine Component Analysis (November 2025 Metagame)**

| **Card Name** | **Card Type** | **Core Function** | **Strategic Role (Post-Protos Ban)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Nemeses Flag** | Effect Monster | Searches any "Nemeses" monster from the Deck.1 | **Primary Engine Starter & Corridor/Eschatos Enabler:** The key consistency tool for accessing the engine's *remaining* payoffs. Its Pyro-typing also makes it generically searchable by other cards (e.g., Infernal Flame Banshee).[12] |
| **Nemeses Umbrella** | Effect Monster | Recovers a "Nemeses" monster from the GY to the hand.1 | **Grind Game & Recovery Specialist:** Role is unchanged. It remains a key component in recursive loops, particularly in Dark Warrior decks to recycle Nemeses Flag for multi-turn advantage.1 |
| **Nemeses Corridor** | Effect Monster | Recovers a banished "Nemeses" monster; enables Thunder Dragon Colossus.1 | **Primary Engine Payoff:** No longer just a "synergy piece." This is the engine's most potent and splashable win condition in the current format, enabling a powerful, anti-search floodgate.[4, 14] |
| **Nemeses Keystone** | Effect Monster | Adds itself from the banished zone to the hand during the End Phase.1 | **Self-Recurring Resource:** Role is unchanged. Provides a guaranteed follow-up and serves as repeatable banish or discard fodder, ensuring the engine can always be "turned on".1 |
| **Nemeses Adrastea** | Quick-Play Spell | Special Summons a "Nemeses" from the GY or banished zone.1 | **Combo Extender & Boss Reviver:** This card's value is diminished. While it can still revive Archnemeses Eschatos as an effect-less, 3000 ATK body or extend Link plays, its most powerful target (Protos) is gone.1 |

The critical shift is in the roles of Nemeses Flag and Nemeses Corridor. Flag reverts from being the "Protos searcher" to being the "Corridor searcher." Consequently, Corridor is elevated from a niche synergy piece to the engine's main strategic focal point.

## III. Case Study: The Forbidden King (Archnemeses Protos)

To understand the Nemeses engine's current state, one must analyze the card that defines its power ceiling. The brief, chaotic Sept-Oct 2025 "Protos-legal" format served as a violent confirmation of *why* this card was, and must remain, Forbidden.

### A. The Unparalleled Power of the "Attribute Lock"

Archnemeses Protos possesses one of the most devastating effects in the game's history. It must first be Special Summoned from the hand by banishing three monsters with different Attributes from the Graveyard or face-up field.15 Its effect allows a player to declare one monster Attribute; it then destroys all monsters on the field with that Attribute and, more importantly, prevents *both* players from Special Summoning monsters with that Attribute until the end of the *next* turn.1

Two factors compound this power:

1. **Self-Protection:** Protos itself "Cannot be destroyed by card effects".15 As a DARK monster, it can declare the DARK Attribute—the most common and powerful Attribute in the game 17—to wipe the opponent's board while remaining on the field completely unharmed.1
2. **The Lingering Effect:** The lockdown applied by Protos is *not* a continuous effect (like a Barrier Statue or Thunder Dragon Colossus). Once Protos's effect successfully resolves, the two-turn restriction "lingers" on the field, independent of Protos itself.18 This means that removing Protos from the field *after* its effect has resolved—using cards like Infinite Impermanence, Forbidden Droplet, or even Tributing it for a Kaiju—does *nothing* to stop the lock.18 The opponent is still forbidden from Special Summoning monsters of that Attribute.

This mechanism makes the card infinitely harder to counter than typical floodgates. The only viable counter-play is to negate the effect *on activation* (e.g., with Ash Blossom & Joyous Spring) or to disrupt its *summon* (e.g., with Bystial monsters or D.D. Crow).1

### B. The Catalyst for Emergency Banning: The Infernal Flame Banshee Combo

Protos's power was well-known from its historical dominance in Swordsoul decks, which naturally provided the diverse Attributes needed for its summon.1 The reason for its emergency re-banning was not its power alone, but its new, *generic accessibility* to virtually any deck.

This was facilitated by a simple, two-card combo utilizing a new generic Xyz monster:

* **The Enabler:** **Infernal Flame Banshee**, a generic Rank 4 Xyz monster (requiring any two Level 4 monsters). Its effect allows a player to detach one material to add any Pyro monster from their Deck to their hand.4
* **The Target:** **Nemeses Flag**, the engine's primary searcher, is a Level 2 Pyro monster.1

This enabled the following devastatingly simple and splashable combo line:

1. A player summons any two Level 4 monsters (a common play for decks like Kashtira, Springans, or any "Rank 4 spam" strategy).5
2. They overlay these two monsters to Xyz Summon **Infernal Flame Banshee**.
3. Banshee's effect is activated, searching **Nemeses Flag** from the Deck.12
4. The player then establishes a single banished monster. This can be done by using a card like Allure of Darkness, a Kashtira effect 5, or even by linking away Banshee for a monster like Haggard Lizardose.20
5. With a card in the banished zone, **Nemeses Flag** activates its effect from the hand, targeting the banished monster to Special Summon itself and shuffle the target back into the Deck.1
6. Once on the field, the Ignition Effect of Nemeses Flag is activated, searching **Archnemeses Protos** from the Deck to the hand.1
7. The player can then easily summon Protos by banishing three monsters with different Attributes, which are naturally set up by the initial combo pieces.15

This combo fundamentally broke the card's design. Protos was no longer a "king-maker" for a specific, Attribute-diverse deck like Swordsoul.1 It became a "generic tyrant"—a splashable two-card combo that allowed *any* deck to lock their opponent out of the game before the opponent even had a turn. This untenable state for the metagame forced the emergency ban.4

## IV. The Remaining Titans: Evaluating the Engine's Future (November 2025)

With Protos re-banned, the Nemeses engine's identity snaps back to its secondary (and now primary) applications. This section analyzes the viability of the two remaining payoffs in the context of the current November 2025 metagame.

### A. Archnemeses Eschatos: The Type-Lock Specialist

Archnemeses Eschatos is the "other" Level 11 boss monster. It is summoned by banishing three monsters with different *Types* and its effect mirrors Protos, but it locks a monster *Type* instead of an Attribute.1

This effect is, by nature, less universally devastating. The game features only six primary Attributes, making an Attribute-lock debilitating. In contrast, there are over 20 distinct Monster Types, making a Type-lock far more niche.1 Eschatos's modern role is not as a Main Deck win condition, but as a potent, matchup-specific *Side Deck* card. Its effectiveness can be precisely measured against the current metagame.

**Table 2: Eschatos Declaration Analysis vs. November 2025 Top-Tier Decks**

| **Target Deck (Archetype)** | **Key Monster Type(s)** | **Impact of Eschatos Declaration** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Snake-Eyes** [23, 24] | **Pyro** | **Devastating.** Locks out all core Snake-Eyes monsters (Snake-Eye Ash, Poplar, Oak, Flamberge Dragon), completely shutting down the deck's primary engine. |
| **Orcust** [23, 24, 25, 26] | **Machine** | **Devastating.** Locks out the entire Orcust engine (Cymbal Skeleton, Harp Horror, Wand, Girsu, Galatea), making it impossible for the deck to function. |
| **Fiendsmith** [23, 27] | **Fiend** | **High.** Locks out the core Fiendsmith engine, preventing its powerful Link and Fusion plays. |
| **Branded** [17, 23] | Fiend / Dragon / Spellcaster | **Medium.** The deck is too diverse. Declaring "Fiend" (for Aluber) or "Dragon" (for Bystials/Fusions) can be disruptive, but the deck can often pivot. |
| **Memento** [23, 28] | Various | **Low-to-Medium.** The Memento archetype uses a wide variety of Types (Spellcaster, Fiend, Beast, Sea Serpent), making a single declaration ineffective. |

This analysis confirms Eschatos's role as a "silver bullet." It is not a card to be played in the Main Deck, but it is an extremely powerful, searchable (via Nemeses Flag) option to bring in for Games 2 and 3 against specific, known matchups like Snake-Eyes or Orcust.

### B. Nemeses Corridor: The Colossus Enabler

With Protos gone, the "Corridor-Colossus" package is now the engine's premier play.3 As a WIND Thunder monster, Nemeses Corridor's inherent Special Summon from the hand (by recycling a banished card) perfectly fulfills the summoning condition for **Thunder Dragon Colossus**.1 Colossus, in turn, is a powerful floodgate that prevents the opponent from adding cards from their Deck to their hand, except by drawing them.1

This is the engine's new "splashable" payoff. While Protos was a *generic* floodgate (requiring only two Level 4s), Colossus is a *splashable* one. The "engine" is compact: one or two copies of Nemeses Corridor, one Nemeses Flag (to search it), and one Thunder Dragon Colossus in the Extra Deck.

Any deck that can (A) reliably banish a card to activate the Nemeses monsters and (B) has the deck space for this small package can now access Colossus's powerful anti-search floodgate. This is a far more balanced, yet still competitively potent, application for the Nemeses engine.

## V. Symbiotic Strategies: A Post-Protos Re-Assessment

The Protos banlist "whiplash" clarifies which hybrid strategies are truly synergistic and which were merely opportunistic.

* **Swordsoul Tenyi (Historical Analysis):** This deck was the original "King-Maker" for Protos, as its standard combos naturally filled the Graveyard with the FIRE, WATER, WIND, and DARK Attributes needed for Protos's summon.1 The brief Sept-Oct 2025 meta saw an immediate resurgence of interest in Swordsoul *because* Protos returned.3 With Protos re-banned, the deck loses its most powerful, non-engine boss monster, and the Nemeses engine is once again non-optimal for the strategy.
* **Thunder Dragon ("The Perfect Partnership"):** This synergy is *affirmed and elevated*. Thunder Dragon decks constantly banish their own monsters to activate their effects.1 The Nemeses monsters serve a perfect dual purpose: they *recycle* these banished Thunder Dragon names back into the Deck to be used again, while Nemeses Corridor simultaneously enables the deck's *in-archetype* boss monster, Colossus.1 The Protos ban actually *helps* this deck; Protos was often a less synergistic "bait" option, as the "fat" Thunder Dragon engine struggled to fit the diverse Attributes Protos required. The Corridor/Colossus package is far more streamlined and synergistic.35
* **Dark Warrior Link ("Infinite Resources"):** This synergy is *entirely unaffected* by the Protos ban. The engine's role here is not to summon a boss monster, but to enable the "Malicious Loop".1 Nemeses Flag and Umbrella are used to repeatedly shuffle the non-once-per-turn Destiny HERO - Malicious from the banished zone back into the Deck, generating a near-infinite stream of Link Material.1 This application remains as potent as ever.
* **Invoked ("Fuel for the Fusion"):** This synergy is *weakened*. The small Nemeses monsters provided a variety of Attributes (FIRE, WATER, WIND, EARTH) to fuel the Fusion Spell **Invocation**.1 However, this was often done in service of *also* summoning Protos.37 Without Protos as the ultimate payoff, the Nemeses engine is less compelling and must compete with other, more self-sufficient engines.37

## VI. Strategic Vulnerabilities and Counter-Play (November 2025)

With the engine's focus shifted to the Corridor/Colossus package and the occasional Eschatos, counter-play becomes more focused. The primary vulnerabilities remain the engine's reliance on the banished zone and its key searcher, Nemeses Flag.

### A. Banishment Prevention (The #1 Engine Counter)

The *entire* Nemeses engine—Flag, Umbrella, Corridor, and Keystone—is "dead" in the hand if the player cannot first establish a card in their banished zone to target.1

* **The Counter:** **Artifact Lancea**. This hand trap, when Tributed during the opponent's turn, prevents *either player* from banishing cards for the rest of that turn.41
* **Application:** Activating Lancea in response to the *first* card that would banish a resource (e.g., Allure of Darkness, a Thunder Dragonhawk effect) stops the Nemeses engine before it can even start. It also prevents any Nemeses monsters already in the hand from summoning themselves. Given the prevalence of banish-reliant decks in the 2025 meta 42, Lancea is a premier Side Deck choice that incidentally annihilates the Nemeses strategy.

### B. Search Negation (The Chokepoint)

The engine's consistency is almost entirely reliant on resolving the search effect of **Nemeses Flag**.1 Without it, the player cannot access Corridor or Eschatos.

* **The Counter:** **Ash Blossom & Joyous Spring**.1
* **Application:** Ash Blossom is a dual-pronged counter. It can be used to negate the **Infernal Flame Banshee** effect, preventing the *initial search* for Nemeses Flag.12 Alternatively, if the opponent already has Flag, Ash Blossom can be saved to negate Flag's *on-field effect*, preventing the search for Nemeses Corridor. This makes it the most versatile and effective "1-for-1" trade against the engine.

### C. Graveyard Disruption (Countering the Bosses)

While Protos is gone, Archnemeses Eschatos shares its summoning condition vulnerability. Its summon is an *inherent* Special Summon (it does not start a chain), but it *requires* banishing three monsters with different Types from the Graveyard.1

* **The Counter:** **Bystial** monsters (e.g., Bystial Magnamhut) or **D.D. Crow**.1
* **Application:** This is a high-skill-ceiling interaction. If an opponent attempts to summon Eschatos and has only *one* monster of a required Type in their Graveyard (e.g., one Machine monster), a player can chain a quick-effect like D.D. Crow or a Bystial (if the target is LIGHT or DARK) to banish that specific monster. When the summon attempts to resolve, the requirement of "3 different Types" can no longer be met, and the summon *fails*. The Archnemeses Eschatos remains dead in the opponent's hand.

## VII. Concluding Analysis: The Engine's Diminished but Enduring Role

The emergency ban of Archnemeses Protos in October 2025 was a necessary and decisive correction. The Sept-Oct 2025 format provided a clear, empirical answer: the power of Protos, when combined with modern generic enablers like Infernal Flame Banshee, is fundamentally incompatible with a balanced competitive environment.

The "Nemeses" archetype, as a result, has reverted to its previous, more balanced identity. It is no longer the format-warping, tier-zero-enabling threat it was for one volatile month.

The engine's future in the November 2025 metagame is one of a *niche, specialized tool*. Its competitive value is now tied to two specific, and much fairer, applications:

1. **The Colossus Package:** It is the premier, splashable engine for summoning Thunder Dragon Colossus via Nemeses Corridor, a strategy that remains particularly potent in the Thunder Dragon deck itself.3
2. **The Eschatos "Silver Bullet":** It functions as a searchable, meta-dependent Side Deck option, allowing decks to summon Archnemeses Eschatos as a devastating, game-winning counter against specific mono-type strategies like Snake-Eyes and Orcust.

Ultimately, the Nemeses engine is a powerful case study in modular design. Its power level is held captive by the legality of its boss monsters. With its "tyrant king" re-imprisoned, the engine returns to being a clever, tactical, and respected part of the competitive landscape, rewarding synergistic deck-building rather than offering a generic, game-ending floodgate.

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