# The Dance of Mirrored Blades: A Comprehensive Strategic Analysis of the Mikanko Archetype

## Section 1: The Core Philosophy of Mikanko

The Mikanko archetype presents a unique and compelling strategic framework within the Yu-Gi-Oh! Trading Card Game. It deviates from conventional beatdown or control strategies, operating instead as a reactive "puzzle" deck that subverts the game's fundamental battle mechanics. Its core philosophy is not centered on overwhelming the opponent with raw attack power or negating their actions, but on manipulating the battlefield to turn the opponent's own strength against them. This approach creates a distinctive playstyle that is both potent and intellectually demanding, rewarding players who can master its intricate and often counter-intuitive principles.

### 1.1 The Art of Reflection: Weaponizing Battle Damage

The central mechanic that defines the Mikanko archetype is its ability to reflect battle damage. All main deck Mikanko monsters share a two-part effect related to battle: if they are not equipped with an Equip Card, the controller takes no battle damage from battles involving them. However, if they *are* equipped with an Equip Card, they cannot be destroyed by battle, and crucially, the opponent takes any battle damage their controller would have taken from that battle.1 The archetype's primary Ritual Monster, Ohime the Manifested Mikanko, possesses this damage reflection and battle immunity innately, without the prerequisite of being equipped.2

This mechanic fundamentally inverts the objective of the Battle Phase. For the Mikanko player, attacking an opponent's monster is not primarily about destroying it or inflicting direct damage in the traditional sense. Instead, the goal is to initiate a battle to trigger the damage reflection effect. The universal 0 ATK stat across all Mikanko monsters is a deliberate and critical design choice; it is not a weakness but the very element that maximizes the efficacy of their strategy.4 Since battle damage is calculated based on the difference in ATK, a 0 ATK Mikanko monster battling an opponent's monster ensures that the reflected damage is equal to the full ATK of the opposing monster. This transforms every opposing monster into a potential liability and a source of self-inflicted damage for its controller.

### 1.2 Two States of Being: The Equipped vs. Unequipped Dichotomy

The duality of the Mikanko monsters' effects creates two distinct strategic states: equipped and unequipped. In their unequipped state, the main deck monsters—Ha-Re the Sword Mikanko, Hu-Li the Jewel Mikanko, and Ni-Ni the Mirror Mikanko—act as defensive pivots. The player takes no battle damage from their battles, allowing them to remain on the field as passive walls that can absorb attacks without reducing the player's Life Points.6 This provides a baseline level of protection, enabling the deck to stall for time and resources while waiting for the opportune moment to strike.

The transition to the equipped state marks a dramatic shift from defense to aggression. The moment an Equip Spell is attached, the monster becomes an offensive tool capable of inflicting massive damage through reflection. This dynamic allows the deck to pivot its posture instantaneously. A field that appeared purely defensive can become lethal with the activation of a single Equip Spell. This constant potential for transition forces the opponent into a state of vigilance, as they must re-evaluate the threat level of the Mikanko player's board with every card played.

### 1.3 The Strategic Imperative: A Dedicated "Go-Second" OTK Strategy

The culmination of these mechanics firmly establishes Mikanko as a dedicated "go-second" One-Turn Kill (OTK) deck.8 The deck's win condition is predicated on the opponent having established a board of monsters to attack into.4 An empty opposing field neuters the deck's primary damage-dealing engine, making it difficult to win.5 Consequently, Mikanko players almost always choose to go second, allowing their opponent to commit resources to the board, which the Mikanko player then uses as fuel for their OTK.

This makes the archetype inherently reactive; its optimal lines of play are not predetermined but are instead dictated by the specific board state the opponent presents.11 The deck is not built to establish an unbreakable turn-one board of negations. Instead, its construction is focused on including a high density of board-breaking cards and consistency pieces that allow it to dismantle an opponent's setup and achieve victory within a single, decisive Battle Phase. This strategic posture has profound implications for deck building, favoring cards that can remove problematic opposing monsters or guarantee a target for the damage reflection mechanic.

The core philosophy of Mikanko thus creates a fascinating strategic paradox for the opponent. The conventional path to victory in Yu-Gi-Oh! involves summoning powerful monsters with high ATK values. However, against Mikanko, this very strategy becomes a liability. Each high-ATK monster the opponent summons directly increases the potential damage they will take from a single reflected attack. This forces opponents into uncomfortable and counter-intuitive decisions, such as summoning monsters in Defense Position, ending on a deliberately weaker board, or avoiding committing to the field altogether—actions that run contrary to the objectives of most other strategies. This psychological and strategic pressure is a key component of Mikanko's power, influencing the game before the Mikanko player even takes their first turn. Furthermore, this reliance on the opponent's board makes the deck highly dependent on the state of the competitive metagame. It excels in formats dominated by "combo" decks that build large monster-based boards, but it can struggle against control or stun strategies that utilize few monsters and rely on powerful Spells and Traps. This explains why board-breaking cards like the "Kaiju" monsters are not merely technical choices but are fundamental enablers of the entire Mikanko game plan, ensuring that the necessary conditions for its win condition are met, regardless of the opponent's strategy.12

## Section 2: The Cast of Dancers: An In-Depth Profile of Mikanko Monsters

The Mikanko archetype is composed of a small but highly synergistic cast of monsters, each representing a specific "dance" and fulfilling a distinct strategic role. Understanding the individual function of each monster and how they interrelate is paramount to piloting the deck effectively. At the center of this performance is the Ritual Monster, Ohime, who acts as the choreographer for the entire strategy.

### 2.1 The Heart of the Ritual: Ohime the Manifested Mikanko

Ohime the Manifested Mikanko is the undisputed centerpiece of the archetype and the primary engine that drives its consistency and power.2 As a Level 6 LIGHT Fairy Ritual monster, her importance is reflected in her two powerful, once-per-turn effects.

First, her Ignition Effect can be activated while she is in the hand: by revealing herself, the player can add any "Mikanko" card from their Deck to their hand, except another copy of Ohime, and then must discard one card.2 This effect is the deck's main consistency tool, providing unparalleled access to any piece of the archetype's toolbox. It can search for a combo starter like Mikanko Water Arabesque, an extender like The Great Mikanko Ceremony, a finisher like the generic Double-Edged Sword (via a search for Ha-Re), or a protective piece like Heavenly Gate of the Mikanko. The discard is not a mere cost but a strategic advantage; it allows the player to load the Graveyard with cards that have GY effects, most notably Mikanko Dance - Mayowashidori for its revival ability or Mikanko Reflection Rondo to be used with Ohime's other effect.3

Second, her on-field effect is a Quick Effect: she can target one Equip Spell in the Graveyard and equip it to any appropriate monster on the field.2 This effect is incredibly versatile, providing both extension and disruption. During the player's own turn, it can be used to re-equip a key spell. More powerfully, during the opponent's turn, it can be used to equip Mikanko Reflection Rondo from the GY to an opponent's monster, stealing it as a form of non-destructive removal and disruption.15 This makes an established Ohime a constant threat that the opponent must play around.

### 2.2 The Sword Dancer: Ha-Re the Sword Mikanko

Ha-Re the Sword Mikanko is a Level 3 FIRE Warrior monster and the archetype's dedicated searcher for its most crucial resource: Equip Spells. Her trigger effect activates whenever an Equip Card becomes equipped to her, allowing the player to add one "Mikanko" Equip Spell from the Deck to the hand.2

In practice, Ha-Re is the most common monster to be Special Summoned from the Deck by the effect of Mikanko Water Arabesque. This interaction is a cornerstone of the deck's combos. Activating Arabesque on an opponent's monster will summon Ha-Re and immediately equip Arabesque to her, which in turn triggers Ha-Re's effect. This sequence transforms a single spell card into a monster on the field, removal of an opponent's monster, and a search for another key spell, generating significant card advantage and setting up the OTK.4

### 2.3 The Jewel Dancer: Hu-Li the Jewel Mikanko

Hu-Li the Jewel Mikanko is a Level 3 WIND Psychic monster who serves as the defensive anchor of the archetype. She provides a crucial layer of protection with her continuous effect: while her controller has an Equip Card on their field, the opponent cannot target any of their "Mikanko" cards with card effects.2 This shields the entire board—monsters, spells, and traps—from some of the most common forms of interaction in the game, such as Effect Veiler, Infinite Impermanence, and Knightmare Unicorn.4

Additionally, similar to Ha-Re, Hu-Li has a trigger effect: when an Equip Card is equipped to her, the player can add one "Mikanko" Trap from the Deck to their hand.2 This most often searches for Mikanko Rivalry, a versatile trap that can equip a game-winning spell like Double-Edged Sword directly from the deck during the Battle Phase.4 Because of the powerful protection she offers, establishing an equipped Hu-Li is often the first priority when attempting to execute a combo, as it insulates all subsequent plays from targeted disruption.

### 2.4 The Mirror Dancer and the Spirit Dancer: Ni-Ni and Arahime

The remaining Mikanko monsters, Ni-Ni the Mirror Mikanko and Arahime the Manifested Mikanko, fill more specialized, niche roles within the strategy. Ni-Ni is a Level 3 WATER Spellcaster whose Quick Effect, usable during the opponent's turn while she is equipped, allows her to target and take control of an opponent's face-up monster until the End Phase.2 This provides a form of targeted disruption, making her a viable option for "go-first" builds that aim to survive the opponent's turn. However, she is often considered too slow or reactive for the primary go-second OTK strategy, which prefers to proactively break the board on its own turn.25

Arahime the Manifested Mikanko is another Ritual Monster, a Level 9 LIGHT Fairy. Her primary effect allows her to equip herself from the hand or Graveyard to a face-up monster on the field, provided there is another "Mikanko" card in the Graveyard.2 This provides a degree of recursion and can help extend plays or set up for a subsequent turn, but she lacks the searching power and immediate impact of Ohime, making her a less central part of the deck's core game plan.13

The design of the main deck monsters reveals a synergistic trio representing distinct strategic functions. Ha-Re embodies Offense and Consistency through her ability to search for the Equip Spells needed to execute the OTK. Hu-Li represents Defense and Protection, shielding the board and searching for traps to secure the game state. Ni-Ni provides Control and Disruption, interacting with the opponent during their own turn. A skilled player's decision-making process revolves around summoning the correct dancer for the situation at hand. The choice of which monster to summon with Mikanko Water Arabesque is therefore a critical strategic inflection point: summoning Ha-Re is a commitment to pushing for the OTK, while summoning Hu-Li prioritizes protecting the setup. This toolbox approach is further exemplified by Ohime. Her ability to search any card in the archetype, combined with a discard that simultaneously fuels GY-based strategies, shows that the deck is not built to follow a single, linear path. Instead, it is designed to use Ohime as a central hub to find the precise tool needed—be it removal, board presence, or a damage multiplier—to solve the unique puzzle presented by the opponent's board.

## Section 3: The Sacred Regalia: A Functional Analysis of Mikanko Spells & Traps

The Spell and Trap cards of the Mikanko archetype are the sacred instruments through which the dancers perform. They are not merely support cards but are integral components of the engine, providing the means to initiate combos, extend plays, deliver the finishing blow, and control the flow of the duel. They can be categorized by their primary function within the deck's overarching strategy.

### 3.1 Initiating the Dance (Starters)

The most pivotal starter in the deck is Mikanko Water Arabesque. This Equip Spell can be equipped to any monster on the field. During the Main Phase, its controller can activate its effect to Special Summon one "Mikanko" monster from the hand or Deck with a different original name from the monster it was equipped to. Upon resolution, Arabesque equips itself to the newly summoned monster, and the monster it was previously equipped to is returned to the hand.2

Arabesque is widely considered the best non-Ritual starter for its sheer efficiency.3 A single activation accomplishes multiple objectives: it provides non-destructive monster removal by bouncing an opponent's monster; it establishes board presence by summoning a Mikanko directly from the deck; and it immediately triggers the summoned monster's effect (Ha-Re to search a spell or Hu-Li to search a trap). This makes it an incredibly potent one-card combo starter. Because of its central role, Arabesque is also a major choke point for the strategy and a prime target for opponent's hand traps, particularly Ash Blossom & Joyous Spring.11

### 3.2 Extending the Performance (Utility & Recovery)

Once the initial play has been made, several cards serve to extend the combo or provide recovery. The Great Mikanko Ceremony is a Quick-Play Spell that allows the player to Special Summon one "Mikanko" monster from their hand, ignoring its Summoning conditions.2 This is the primary method for bringing Ohime to the field without the need for a formal Ritual Summon.3 However, its Graveyard effect is often even more impactful: during the Main Phase, it can be banished to send any "Mikanko" card from the Deck to the Graveyard. This effect acts as an archetypal "Foolish Burial," setting up the GY with key resources. Common targets include Mikanko Dance - Mayowashidori to enable its revival effect or Mikanko Reflection Rondo to be equipped by Ohime's on-field Quick Effect.3

Mikanko Dance - Mayowashidori is another crucial utility piece. While on the field, it provides effect destruction protection and can bounce a card on the field at the end of the Damage Step if a Mikanko monster battled. Its most important effect, however, resides in the Graveyard. Once per turn, it can be used to target a "Mikanko" monster in the GY, Special Summon it, and equip itself to that monster.2 This provides incredible resilience against board wipes and allows for follow-up plays, making it a key card to have in the Graveyard as a resource.11

### 3.3 The Killing Blow (Finishers)

The Mikanko archetype possesses powerful tools designed to end the game. Mikanko Reflection Rondo is an Equip Spell that functions as an archetypal "Snatch Steal." It can only be equipped to an opponent's monster, and while a "Mikanko" monster is on the field, its controller takes control of the equipped monster. The stolen monster's effects are negated, and it is sent to the GY if Rondo leaves the field.2 This serves as both powerful removal and a way to gain an additional monster for attacks or for Link Summoning.

While Rondo is a potent in-archetype tool, the most common finisher is a generic Equip Spell: Double-Edged Sword. This card increases the equipped monster's ATK by 2000, but with the drawback that both players take any battle damage from battles involving it. In the context of Mikanko, this "drawback" is transformed into the deck's ultimate weapon. When equipped to an opponent's monster that is then attacked by a Mikanko, the damage reflection mechanic ensures the opponent takes all the damage. This includes the monster's new, higher ATK value plus the additional 2000 damage from Double-Edged Sword's own effect, resulting in catastrophic damage that frequently leads to an OTK from a single attack.4

### 3.4 Setting the Stage (Control & Protection)

For situations where an immediate OTK is not possible, Mikanko has cards to control the board and protect its setup. Heavenly Gate of the Mikanko is a Field Spell that exerts significant pressure on the opponent. While a monster equipped with an Equip Card is on the field, it forces all of the opponent's monsters that can attack to battle an equipped monster. Furthermore, if a "Mikanko" monster battles, the opponent cannot activate cards or effects until the end of the Damage Step, providing crucial protection during battle.2 Its final effect allows a Mikanko monster that attacked to make a second attack on a monster by sending an Equip Card to the GY, which can also help facilitate an OTK.2

Mikanko Rivalry is a Normal Trap, searchable by Hu-Li, that allows the player to target a face-up monster on the field and equip it with an appropriate Equip Spell directly from the Deck.2 This card's versatility is its greatest strength. It can be used defensively on the opponent's turn to equip a protective spell, or it can be used offensively during one's own Battle Phase to equip Double-Edged Sword to an opponent's monster just before declaring an attack, creating a surprise OTK that the opponent may not have anticipated.4

The archetype's Spells and Traps are engineered to create a self-sustaining, "virtuous cycle." Starters like Arabesque summon monsters like Ha-Re and Hu-Li, which in turn search for more Spells and Traps. Extenders like Ceremony not only advance the board state but also stock the Graveyard, which then becomes a secondary resource pool for revival via Mayowashidori or disruption via Ohime's interaction with Rondo. This intricate design ensures that nearly every card either initiates a play or sets up the conditions for the next one, creating a resilient and recursive engine. This high density of powerful and searchable Equip Spells also makes the archetype exceptionally skilled at breaking boards through non-destructive means. Bouncing, stealing, and tributing (via Kaijus) are the deck's primary forms of interaction, rendering it uniquely effective against the many modern boss monsters that possess immunity to destruction effects.

## Section 4: The Web of Connections: Mapping the Archetype's Search and Setup Paths

The consistency of the Mikanko archetype is not derived from a high number of redundant starters, but from an intricate web of search and setup effects that allow a single key card to access the entire toolbox. Understanding these pathways—from Deck to hand, Deck to Graveyard, and Graveyard to field—is essential for navigating the deck's decision trees and maximizing its potential. The structure of these interactions is particularly well-suited for visual mapping, making it easier to comprehend the flow of resources within the deck's engine.

### 4.1 Primary Search Vectors

These are the effects that add cards directly from the Deck to the hand, providing immediate card advantage and access to key combo pieces.

* **Ohime the Manifested Mikanko (from Hand):** The most powerful search effect in the archetype. By revealing herself in hand and discarding a card, she can search for any "Mikanko" card—Monster, Spell, or Trap. This makes her the ultimate consistency tool, capable of finding whatever piece is needed for a given situation.2
* **Ha-Re the Sword Mikanko (on Field):** When an Equip Card is equipped to her, she triggers to search for any "Mikanko" Equip Spell from the Deck. This is the primary method for accessing the various "Dance" spells needed for extension and removal.6
* **Hu-Li the Jewel Mikanko (on Field):** When an Equip Card is equipped to her, she triggers to search for any "Mikanko" Trap from the Deck. This effect is crucial for setting up Mikanko Rivalry for OTK plays or disruption.20
* **Preparation of Rites (Non-archetypal):** This staple Ritual support Spell can search for any Level 7 or lower Ritual Monster, making it a direct searcher for Ohime the Manifested Mikanko. It can also recover a Ritual Spell, such as Mikanko Kagura, from the Graveyard, adding to its utility.4

### 4.2 Graveyard as a Toolbox

The Mikanko strategy treats the Graveyard not as a discard pile, but as a second toolbox. Several key effects are designed to either place specific cards into the GY or retrieve resources from it.

* **The Great Mikanko Ceremony (from GY):** Its effect to banish itself from the GY to send any "Mikanko" card from the Deck to the GY is a pivotal setup tool. It does not search to the hand but instead prepares the Graveyard for other effects, such as sending Mayowashidori for its revival ability or Reflection Rondo to be equipped by Ohime.32
* **Ohime the Manifested Mikanko (on Field):** Her Quick Effect is the primary way to utilize the GY toolbox, allowing her to take any Equip Spell from the Graveyard and equip it to a monster on the field. This effect is what makes the GY setup from Ceremony so potent.2
* **Mikanko Dance - Mayowashidori (from GY):** This Equip Spell's effect allows it to Special Summon a "Mikanko" monster from the GY and equip itself to it, providing crucial recovery and extension.35
* **Mikanko Rivalry (from GY):** After being used, this trap can banish itself from the GY when an Equip Spell is sent there, allowing the player to add an Equip Spell from the GY back to the hand for follow-up plays.44

### 4.3 Mikanko Search & Synergy Matrix

To consolidate these interactions into a clear, functional schematic, the following matrix outlines the key pathways for resource management within the Mikanko archetype. This table serves as a quick-reference guide to the deck's internal engine, illustrating how each component connects to the others.

| **Source Card** | **Effect Type** | **Searches / Summons / Sends** | **From** | **To** | **Notes / Key Synergy** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Ohime the Manifested Mikanko (Hand) | Ignition | Any "Mikanko" card | Deck | Hand | The deck's main consistency tool. Discards a card for cost, which can be used to set up the GY.2 |
| Ha-Re the Sword Mikanko (Field) | Trigger | "Mikanko" Equip Spell | Deck | Hand | Triggers when equipped. Key synergy with Mikanko Water Arabesque.6 |
| Hu-Li the Jewel Mikanko (Field) | Trigger | "Mikanko" Trap | Deck | Hand | Triggers when equipped. Sets up Mikanko Rivalry for OTKs or disruption.20 |
| Ohime the Manifested Mikanko (Field) | Quick | Equip Spell | GY | Field (Equipped) | Key disruptive play. Enables stealing monsters with Mikanko Reflection Rondo on the opponent's turn.2 |
| The Great Mikanko Ceremony (GY) | Ignition | Any "Mikanko" card | Deck | GY | The primary GY setup tool. Sends Mayowashidori for revival or Rondo for Ohime's effect.32 |
| Mikanko Water Arabesque | Ignition | "Mikanko" Monster | Deck/Hand | Field | Bounces a monster as part of its effect, serving as removal and a combo starter.27 |
| Mikanko Fire Dance | Ignition | "Mikanko" Monster | Hand/GY | Field | Extender. Can also give the opponent a monster from their GY to enable an OTK.47 |
| Mikanko Dance - Mayowashidori (GY) | Ignition | "Mikanko" Monster | GY | Field | Provides recursion and recovery from board wipes, banishing the monster when it leaves the field.35 |
| Mikanko Rivalry (Trap) | Trap | Any Equip Spell | Deck | Field (Equipped) | Versatile tool for offense (Double-Edged Sword) or defense (Mikanko Purification Dance).44 |
| Mikanko Rivalry (GY) | Trigger | Equip Spell | GY | Hand | Recycles resources for follow-up turns if an Equip Spell is sent to the GY.44 |

## Section 5: Mastering the Choreography: Core Combo Lines and Resulting Endboards

The "combos" within the Mikanko archetype are less about executing a rigid, linear sequence and more about applying a "board-solving algorithm." The player must assess the opponent's field and use the Mikanko toolbox to systematically dismantle threats, establish protection, and assemble the pieces for a One-Turn Kill. The following sequences represent common and effective lines of play that demonstrate this adaptive methodology.

### 5.1 Standard OTK Sequence (The "Arabesque" Line)

This is the most fundamental and frequent OTK line, relying on the deck's premier starter, Mikanko Water Arabesque.

* **Premise:** The opponent controls at least one monster. The player's hand contains Mikanko Water Arabesque.
* **Step 1:** Activate Mikanko Water Arabesque, targeting an opponent's monster. This initial step serves as removal, clearing a potential threat from the board.3
* **Step 2:** Upon resolution, Arabesque's effect returns the targeted monster to the hand and allows the Special Summon of a "Mikanko" monster from the Deck. The ideal choice is Ha-Re the Sword Mikanko. Arabesque then equips itself to the newly summoned Ha-Re.27
* **Step 3:** A new chain is formed. Because an Equip Card was just equipped to Ha-Re, her trigger effect activates. Use this effect to add a crucial Equip Spell from the Deck to the hand, most commonly Double-Edged Sword for the OTK, or another utility spell if needed.4
* **Step 4:** Deploy a board-breaking tool like a "Kaiju" monster or Lava Golem. Tribute the opponent's most problematic remaining monster(s) to Special Summon the Kaiju to their side of the field. This provides a high-ATK target and removes a key piece of interaction.4
* **Step 5:** Activate Double-Edged Sword from the hand, equipping it to the Kaiju on the opponent's field. This will increase its ATK by 2000.
* **Step 6:** Enter the Battle Phase and attack the Kaiju with Ha-Re. Due to the Mikanko damage reflection mechanic, the opponent will take all the battle damage. This damage will be equal to the Kaiju's original ATK, plus the 2000 ATK boost from Double-Edged Sword, plus the additional 2000 damage from Double-Edged Sword's own effect. This combination typically results in over 8000 damage from a single attack, securing the OTK.4

### 5.2 Advanced OTK Sequence (The "Ohime" Line)

This line demonstrates the power of the archetype's central monster, Ohime, and her ability to generate advantage and set up complex plays from the hand.

* **Premise:** The player's hand contains Ohime the Manifested Mikanko and at least one other card to discard.
* **Step 1:** Activate Ohime's effect in the hand. Reveal her to search for The Great Mikanko Ceremony. For the discard, send Mikanko Dance - Mayowashidori to the Graveyard. This single action searches an extender and sets up a recovery tool in the GY.2
* **Step 2:** Activate The Great Mikanko Ceremony to Special Summon Ohime from the hand, ignoring her normal Ritual Summoning conditions.3
* **Step 3:** During the Main Phase, activate the second effect of The Great Mikanko Ceremony in the Graveyard. Banish it to send one "Mikanko" card from the Deck to the GY. The target here is Mikanko Reflection Rondo, setting up a key piece of disruption and removal.16
* **Step 4:** As in the previous line, use a Kaiju to tribute one of the opponent's monsters.
* **Step 5:** Activate Ohime's on-field Quick Effect, targeting the Reflection Rondo in the Graveyard. Equip it to another of the opponent's monsters, taking control of it.2
* **Step 6:** If a Mikanko monster is in the Graveyard (e.g., from a previous turn or the initial discard), activate the effect of Mayowashidori in the GY. Target the Mikanko monster, Special Summon it, and equip it with Mayowashidori. If the summoned monster is Ha-Re or Hu-Li, its effect will trigger, providing another search.11
* **Step 7:** The player now controls multiple Mikanko monsters and a stolen opponent's monster, having removed two threats from the opponent's board. Proceed to the Battle Phase to secure the OTK through multiple attacks.

### 5.3 The "Go-First" Contingency Plan

While primarily a go-second deck, Mikanko can establish a respectable board if forced to go first. The goal is not to create an unbreakable field of negates but to establish a protected and disruptive board that can survive the opponent's turn, enabling an OTK on the subsequent turn.

* **Typical Endboard:** The most common go-first board consists of Hu-Li the Jewel Mikanko equipped with an Equip Spell (such as Mikanko Purification Dance for its bounce effect or Mikanko Dance - Mayowashidori for protection), with one or more "Mikanko" Trap cards like Mikanko Rivalry or Mikanko Promise set in the Spell & Trap Zone.11
* **Functionality:** This board leverages multiple layers of interaction. Hu-Li provides blanket targeting protection for all "Mikanko" cards on the field.20 The set Mikanko Rivalry is a versatile threat; during the opponent's turn, it can be activated to equip Mikanko Reflection Rondo from the Deck to an opponent's monster to steal it, or to equip a generic spell like Axe of Fools to negate a monster's effects.4 This setup is not designed to stop an opponent's entire combo, but it forces them to navigate multiple forms of interaction and often leaves them with a depleted board, ripe for an OTK on the Mikanko player's next turn.

The varied nature of these sequences highlights that player skill in Mikanko is less about rote memorization of a single combo and more about proficiently using its toolbox. The deck operates as a board-solving algorithm where the player must correctly identify the primary threats presented by the opponent—a targeting negate, a destruction-immune monster, multiple disruptive bodies—and then sequence their plays to deploy the correct "answer" from the archetype's arsenal.

## Section 6: The Ensemble Performance: External Synergies and Engine Integration

While the Mikanko archetype possesses a robust and self-sufficient internal engine, its true competitive potential is often unlocked through the integration of powerful non-archetypal cards and engines. These external synergies serve to either amplify the deck's core strategy, enhance its consistency, or provide alternative win conditions. The deck's minimal reliance on its own Extra Deck is a significant advantage, freeing up valuable space for these potent additions.

### 6.1 Essential Partners: The Kaiju Package

The inclusion of "Kaiju" monsters and similar cards like Lava Golem is not merely a technical choice but a fundamental component of the Mikanko strategy.4 These cards serve a critical dual purpose that is indispensable to the deck's success.

First, they are among the most effective forms of monster removal in the game. By tributing an opponent's monster as a summoning condition, they bypass nearly every form of protection, including immunities to targeting, destruction, and card effects. This allows the Mikanko player to eliminate a single, overwhelmingly powerful boss monster that would otherwise halt their plays.

Second, and equally important, they guarantee that the opponent will have a monster on their field for the Mikanko player to attack. This is crucial for enabling the OTK, especially against opponents who might otherwise end on an empty board or only small monsters.12 By providing a high-ATK body on the opponent's field, the Kaiju becomes the perfect target for damage reflection, turning a board-breaking tool into the final piece of the OTK puzzle.

### 6.2 The Consistency Engine: Diviner of the Herald

To bolster the consistency of accessing the deck's key Ritual components, many builds incorporate a small engine centered around Diviner of the Herald.26 Diviner is a Level 2 LIGHT Fairy Tuner monster with a powerful on-summon effect: it can send one Fairy monster from the Deck or Extra Deck to the Graveyard.

The standard play is to Normal Summon Diviner and use its effect to send Herald of the Arc Light from the Extra Deck to the GY. When Herald of the Arc Light is sent to the GY, its own effect triggers, allowing the player to search for any Ritual Monster or Ritual Spell from their Deck. This provides a one-card path to searching either Ohime the Manifested Mikanko or Mikanko Kagura, dramatically increasing the probability of opening a full combo. This compact and efficient engine (typically 3 Diviner and 1-2 Herald of the Arc Light) significantly elevates the deck's consistency and power ceiling without requiring a heavy investment in deck space.

### 6.3 The High-Ceiling Engine: Infernoble Knight & Isolde

For players looking to build a more combo-intensive, "go-first" variant of Mikanko, an engine involving Warrior monsters to summon Isolde, Two Tales of the Noble Knights is a popular choice.1 Isolde is a powerful Link-2 monster with two effects: on summon, she can search for any Warrior monster, and her second effect allows her to send any number of Equip Spells from the Deck to the GY to Special Summon a Warrior from the Deck whose Level equals the number of spells sent.

This engine aims to establish a formidable board that combines the standard Mikanko protection of an equipped Hu-Li with other generic boss monsters and negates. While this approach can create a much more oppressive endboard than the standard go-first Mikanko setup, it comes with significant trade-offs. It makes the deck more vulnerable to hand traps that can disrupt the initial Warrior summons before Isolde is on the field, and it can dilute the deck's focus, making the go-second OTK plan less consistent.10

The minimal reliance of the Mikanko core strategy on the Extra Deck is one of its greatest underlying strengths.4 Unlike most modern archetypes that require a specific and crowded Extra Deck to function, Mikanko's primary win condition is executed entirely through Main Deck cards. This liberates 12 to 15 Extra Deck slots for powerful, generic utility monsters. These can include board wipes like Divine Arsenal AA-ZEUS - Sky Thunder, versatile problem-solvers like Super Starslayer TY-PHON - Sky Crisis, or targets for external engines like Diviner (Herald of the Arc Light, Elder Entity N'tss) or even for spells like Pot of Extravagance and Pot of Prosperity. This inherent flexibility is a rare commodity in the contemporary game, allowing the deck to be highly adaptable and customized to counter specific metagame threats. Ultimately, the choice of which engine to pair with the Mikanko core reflects a fundamental decision about the deck's strategic identity. The Kaiju package reinforces its primary role as a go-second, board-breaking OTK deck. The Diviner engine enhances the consistency of that plan. The Isolde engine attempts to transform it into a more proactive, go-first combo deck. This demonstrates that "Mikanko" is not a monolithic strategy but a versatile core mechanic that can serve as the foundation for multiple, distinct competitive playstyles.

## Section 7: Identifying the Misstep: A Guide to Mikanko's Weaknesses and Choke Points

Despite its potent and unique strategy, the Mikanko archetype is not without its vulnerabilities. Its game plan, while powerful, is highly specific and relies on a particular set of conditions to function optimally. Understanding these strategic weaknesses, high-impact counter cards, and specific choke points is crucial for both Mikanko players seeking to protect their plays and for opponents aiming to deconstruct their dance of destruction.

### 7.1 Strategic Vulnerabilities

The core design of the Mikanko strategy gives rise to several inherent weaknesses that can be exploited.

* **The Empty Board Problem:** The deck's primary method of inflicting damage is by reflecting battle damage from an opponent's monster. Consequently, if the opponent controls no monsters, the Mikanko player's main win condition is completely shut down. An opponent who can clear their own board or deliberately chooses not to commit monsters to the field can effectively stall the game, forcing the Mikanko player to rely on less efficient, alternative damage sources.5
* **Reliance on the Battle Phase:** The entire OTK strategy is predicated on the ability to enter the Battle Phase and declare attacks. Any card or effect that prevents attacks or skips the Battle Phase entirely, such as Threatening Roar or the effect of Swordsoul Supreme Sovereign - Chengying, can completely halt the deck for a turn, often providing the opponent with enough time to secure victory.

### 7.2 High-Impact Counter-Cards and Strategies

Certain types of cards and general strategies are exceptionally effective at dismantling the Mikanko game plan.

* **Spell/Trap Removal:** The deck is critically dependent on its Equip Spells to enable its monsters' effects and protection. As such, it is extremely vulnerable to mass Spell and Trap removal like Harpie's Feather Duster and Lightning Storm. Resolving one of these cards can wipe away the entire foundation of the Mikanko board, leaving behind inert 0 ATK monsters.10 Continuous floodgates that prevent the activation of Spell Cards, most notably Anti-Spell Fragrance, are particularly crippling as they can prevent the Mikanko player from ever equipping their monsters in the first place.56
* **Non-Targeting, Non-Destruction Removal:** The Mikanko protection is layered but specific. Hu-Li protects from targeting, and the Equip Spells protect from destruction by card effects. Therefore, removal that bypasses both of these is the most effective way to break an established board. Cards like Evenly Matched, which banishes cards face-down without targeting, are devastating. Tributing effects, such as those from Kurikara Divincarnate or the summoning of Underworld Goddess of the Closed World using a Mikanko monster as material, are also highly effective outs.4
* **Blanket Effect Negation:** Board-wide monster effect negation completely neutralizes the Mikanko strategy. Cards like Skill Drain, Dark Ruler No More, and Forbidden Droplet will turn off the crucial damage reflection and protection effects of the Mikanko monsters, rendering them useless 0/0 bodies that can be easily run over in battle.4

### 7.3 Key Choke Points for Hand Traps

For opponents looking to disrupt the Mikanko player's turn before they can establish their board, timing a hand trap on a key choke point is vital.

* **Ash Blossom & Joyous Spring:** This is arguably the most effective hand trap against the deck. The two most impactful points to use it are on the hand effect of Ohime the Manifested Mikanko to prevent her search, and on the activation of Mikanko Water Arabesque to prevent the summon from the Deck. A successful negation on either of these cards can often end the Mikanko player's turn on the spot, as they are the primary conduits for generating advantage.5
* **Infinite Impermanence & Effect Veiler:** These targeting negates are most effective when used on a Mikanko monster *before* an Equip Spell is attached, as this will prevent their search effects from activating. They are also highly effective against non-Mikanko starters like Diviner of the Herald. However, their utility plummets once an equipped Hu-Li is on the field, as her protection will prevent any "Mikanko" cards from being targeted.
* **Droll & Lock Bird:** Because the deck's standard combo lines often involve multiple searches in a single turn (e.g., an Ohime search followed by a Ha-Re search), Droll & Lock Bird can be a high-impact hand trap, shutting down all subsequent searches for the remainder of the turn.11

The nature of Mikanko's defenses creates a tactical "checklist" for the opponent. The board is often immune to battle destruction, effect destruction, and targeting. This means the duel becomes a strategic exercise in identifying which type of removal is not on that list and finding a way to deploy it. The interaction shifts from a simple contest of power to a more nuanced problem of finding the right "key" to unlock the specific defensive "lock" the Mikanko player has assembled. Despite its powerful end goal, the deck's reliance on resolving one of a few key starter cards (Ohime or Arabesque) makes it feel fragile at these initial choke points. This creates a high-stakes, "all or nothing" dynamic at the beginning of the turn. If the Mikanko player can successfully resolve their first major play, their engine begins its virtuous cycle and becomes incredibly difficult to stop. However, if the opponent can successfully negate that single crucial activation, the Mikanko player's turn may collapse, leaving them with few resources and an open field.

## Conclusion: The Final Bow

The Mikanko archetype carves a distinct and memorable niche within the vast landscape of the Yu-Gi-Oh! TCG. Its strategic identity as a go-second, board-breaking OTK deck is defined by a singular, elegant mechanic: the reflection of battle damage. This core concept forces a fundamental re-evaluation of the game's objectives, transforming the opponent's greatest strengths into the instruments of their own defeat. The archetype functions less like a conventional deck and more like a complex puzzle box, rewarding players who possess not only a deep understanding of its intricate internal synergies but also the strategic acumen to adapt its reactive game plan to the infinite variety of board states an opponent might present.

The deck's power lies in its remarkable efficiency and resilience. Through a web of interconnected search, setup, and recovery effects, a single card can initiate a cascade of advantage, dismantling an established board through non-destructive means while simultaneously assembling the pieces for a decisive, game-ending attack. Its minimal reliance on the Extra Deck grants it a rare flexibility, allowing it to incorporate a wide array of powerful generic cards and external engines to augment its consistency and power.

However, this specialized strategy is not without its inherent weaknesses. Its profound reliance on the opponent's board and the Battle Phase creates clear avenues for counter-play. The deck is acutely vulnerable to mass Spell and Trap removal, blanket effect negation, and specific forms of non-targeting, non-destruction interaction. Its entire turn can often hinge on the successful resolution of a single key starter, creating high-stakes choke points that skilled opponents can exploit to halt the performance before it truly begins.

In the final analysis, Mikanko is a dance of high risk and high reward. It is a testament to creative card design, offering a playstyle that is both cerebrally engaging and explosively powerful. For those who take the time to master its choreography—to learn the steps of its combos, the rhythm of its resource management, and the flow of its reactive decision-making—the Mikanko archetype provides an unstoppable spectacle of mirrored destruction, proving that in the theater of the duel, the most devastating blow is often one's own.

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