# An In-Depth Analysis of the Tearlaments Archetype

## The Heart of the Abyss - Core Archetype Mechanics

The Tearlaments archetype represents a fundamental shift in the strategic paradigms of the Yu-Gi-Oh! Trading Card Game. Its design philosophy centers on leveraging the Graveyard (GY) not merely as a secondary resource pool, but as the primary axis of gameplay. This is achieved through a revolutionary and self-sustaining engine that blurs the lines between setup, cost, and advantage.

### The Mill & Fuse Engine: A Paradigm Shift in Resource Management

At its core, the Tearlaments strategy is built upon a simple yet profoundly powerful gameplay loop: milling cards from the top of the Deck to the GY to trigger effects that initiate Fusion Summons.1 The main deck monsters, specifically Tearlaments Merrli, Havnis, and Scheiren, share a crucial, archetype-defining effect: "If this card is sent to the GY by card effect... You can Fusion Summon 1 Fusion Monster from your Extra Deck...".3 This mechanic fundamentally alters the game's resource economy. Actions that are traditionally considered costs or neutral setups, such as sending a card from the hand or Deck to the GY, become the primary catalysts for generating powerful board presence.

The Fusion Summon itself is also unique. Instead of sending materials from the hand or field to the GY, the Tearlaments fusion effect gathers materials from the hand, field, and/or GY and shuffles them into the bottom of the Deck.6 This creates a resource loop; key monsters are not permanently expended but are recycled for potential future use, preventing the player from running out of resources in prolonged duels.

This design philosophy creates a "cost-positive" system. For example, when Tearlaments Scheiren activates her effect to Special Summon herself, she sends another monster from the hand to the GY *by effect*.3 If that sent monster is another Tearlaments card, its effect to Fusion Summon will trigger immediately. The "cost" of summoning Scheiren thus generates an immediate and powerful play, resulting in a net gain of advantage rather than a loss. This self-sustaining cycle, where nearly every action fuels another, allows the deck to build formidable boards from seemingly innocuous starting positions and maintain pressure throughout the entire duel.

### Key Players: The Main Deck Monsters

The engine is driven by a core group of Main Deck monsters, each with a distinct role in initiating or extending the deck's plays. Their varied Levels and Attributes also provide crucial flexibility for Xyz and Link Summons.

* **Tearlaments Merrli**: As a Level 2 DARK Aqua monster, Merrli is a key starter. Upon being Normal or Special Summoned, she sends the top three cards of the Deck to the GY.5 While she has no inherent way to Special Summon herself, her on-summon mill effect is a reliable way to begin filling the Graveyard. Her Level 2 status makes her an ideal target to be sent from the Deck to the GY by the effect of Spright Sprind, providing a direct route to a fusion play.6
* **Tearlaments Havnis**: This Level 3 DARK Aqua monster functions as the archetype's primary hand trap. As a Quick Effect, when an opponent activates a monster effect on the field, Havnis can be Special Summoned from the hand, and upon doing so, she sends the top three cards of the Deck to the GY.3 This potent effect enables "Turn 0" plays, allowing the Tearlaments player to establish a board and disrupt the opponent during their own first turn.
* **Tearlaments Scheiren**: A Level 4 DARK Aqua monster, Scheiren serves as a powerful extender. During the Main Phase, she can Special Summon herself from the hand by sending another monster from hand to the GY, after which she sends the top three cards of the Deck to the GY.3 The act of sending a monster from the hand is an effect, not a cost, meaning it will trigger the Graveyard effects of other Tearlaments monsters.3 Her Level 4 status is also instrumental in making powerful Rank 4 Xyz monsters, most notably Abyss Dweller.10
* **Tearlaments Reinoheart**: This Level 4 WATER Warrior is the deck's premier Normal Summon. When Normal or Special Summoned, Reinoheart sends one "Tearlaments" monster from the Deck to the GY, providing a direct and targeted way to trigger a fusion effect.2 Furthermore, if Reinoheart himself is sent to the GY by a card effect, he can Special Summon himself (but is banished when he leaves the field) and then send a "Tearlaments" card from the hand to the GY, triggering another effect and extending plays.3

| Card Name | Level | Attribute | Summon/Activation Condition | Strategic Role |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Tearlaments Merrli** | 2 | DARK | On Normal/Special Summon | Starter / Spright Sprind Target |
| **Tearlaments Havnis** | 3 | DARK | (Quick Effect) Opponent monster effect activation | Turn 0 Interruption / Hand Trap |
| **Tearlaments Scheiren** | 4 | DARK | (Ignition Effect) Special Summon from hand | Extender / Rank 4 Enabler |
| **Tearlaments Reinoheart** | 4 | WATER | On Normal/Special Summon | Primary Normal Summon / Engine Starter |

### The Abyssal Arsenal: Spells & Traps

The archetype's Spells and Traps provide consistency, disruption, and recursion, with most possessing valuable secondary effects that activate when they are sent to the Graveyard.

* **Primeval Planet Perlereino**: This Field Spell is a cornerstone of the deck's strategy. Upon activation, it allows the player to add one "Tearlaments" monster or Visas Starfrost from the Deck to the hand, ensuring access to key engine pieces.7 It also provides a 500 ATK boost to all Tearlaments and Fusion monsters. Its most powerful effect, however, triggers once per turn when a Tearlaments monster on the field or in the GY is shuffled back into the Deck or Extra Deck (a condition met by their own fusion effects); this allows the player to target and destroy any card on the field.3 This transforms every Fusion Summon into a potential piece of removal.
* **Tearlaments Scream**: A Continuous Spell that provides a steady stream of mills. If a monster is Normal or Special Summoned while the player controls a Tearlaments monster or Visas Starfrost, Scream allows the player to send the top three cards of their Deck to the GY.7 This effect is not once per turn, meaning it can trigger multiple times. If Scream itself is sent to the GY by a card effect, it allows the player to search for any "Tearlaments" Trap card from the Deck, providing access to key disruptions.7
* **Tearlaments Sulliek & Cryme**: These are the archetype's primary forms of interaction. Sulliek is a Continuous Trap that can negate the effects of a face-up monster the opponent controls; as an added benefit, it then sends a "Tearlaments" monster from the Deck to the GY, extending plays while disrupting the opponent.2 Cryme is a Counter Trap that negates the activation of a Spell, Trap, or monster effect and shuffles that card back into the deck, providing a powerful, non-destructive answer to threats.4 Like the other support cards, both traps have secondary effects when sent to the GY, which help to recycle banished monsters or add monsters back to the hand.7

| Card Name | Card Type | On-Field Effect | "Sent to GY" Effect |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Primeval Planet Perlereino** | Field Spell | Searches a "Tearlaments" monster on activation; destroys a card when a Tearlaments monster is shuffled into the Deck. | None |
| **Tearlaments Scream** | Continuous Spell | Mills 3 cards when a monster is summoned. | Adds 1 "Tearlaments" Trap from Deck to hand. |
| **Tearlaments Sulliek** | Continuous Trap | Negates a monster's effects, then sends a "Tearlaments" monster from Deck to GY. | Adds 1 "Tearlaments" monster from Deck to hand. |
| **Tearlaments Cryme** | Counter Trap | Negates an activation and shuffles the card into the Deck. | Adds 1 banished "Tearlaments" monster to hand. |

### The Apex Predators: Fusion Monsters

The culmination of the deck's milling and fusing is a suite of powerful boss monsters, each offering a unique combination of disruption, removal, and resilience.

* **Tearlaments Kitkallos (Banned in TCG)**: The undisputed engine king of the full-power deck, Kitkallos was a Level 5 DARK Aqua Fusion monster whose power and consistency led to her being forbidden.5 Upon being Special Summoned, she could either add any "Tearlaments" card from the Deck to the hand or send it directly to the GY.7 Her second effect allowed her to target a monster on the field, Special Summon a Tearlaments monster from hand or GY, and then send the targeted monster to the GY. By targeting herself with this effect, she could trigger her third effect: when sent to the GY by a card effect, she would mill the top five cards of the Deck.2 This sequence—summon, search, summon, send self, mill five—could generate an explosive and often game-winning advantage from a single Fusion Summon.
* **Tearlaments Rulkallos**: The primary boss monster in the current TCG. This Level 8 WATER Aqua Fusion monster provides both protection and negation. She prevents other Aqua monsters from being destroyed by battle.5 Her main utility comes from her Quick Effect, which allows her to negate a card or effect that includes an effect that Special Summons a monster(s). To pay for this negation, the player sends a "Tearlaments" card from their hand or face-up field to the GY, which can, in turn, trigger another effect.4 Furthermore, if the Fusion Summoned Rulkallos is sent to the GY by a card effect, she can Special Summon herself back to the field, making her incredibly difficult to permanently remove.4
* **Tearlaments Kaleido-Heart**: The archetype's other main boss monster, a Level 9 DARK Fiend. Kaleido-Heart provides powerful, non-destruction removal. If he is Special Summoned, or if an Aqua monster is sent to the GY by a card effect while he is on the field, he can target one card the opponent controls and shuffle it into the Deck.4 Like Rulkallos, he possesses a powerful floating effect: if sent to the GY by a card effect, he can Special Summon himself and then send one "Tearlaments" card from the Deck to the GY, extending combos even after being removed from the field.4

## Weaving the Threads of Fate - Combo Theory and Application

Mastering Tearlaments requires a shift in mindset away from traditional, linear combo decks. Success is not found in memorizing rigid sequences but in developing the ability to adapt to the inherent randomness of the milling mechanic and make optimal decisions based on the resources available at any given moment.

### The Non-Linear Nature of Tearlaments: Probabilistic Gameplay

Unlike decks with fixed, one-card combo lines, Tearlaments operates on a foundation of probabilistic gameplay. There are no guaranteed outcomes, only favorable probabilities.9 A player's turn does not follow a pre-determined script; instead, it begins with an action designed to mill cards, which then presents the player with a unique set of resources in the Graveyard.

This transforms the player's role from that of a combo executor to a dynamic problem-solver. The core skill in piloting Tearlaments is the ability to rapidly assess a newly milled Graveyard and identify the most potent line of play available from that specific set of cards. It is a constant process of risk assessment, resource management, and pattern recognition. This dynamic nature is why the deck is considered to have such a high skill ceiling and why turns can often be lengthy, as the player is actively calculating numerous branching possibilities based on the cards they have milled.12

### Opening Gambits: Initiating the Mill

While there are no fixed combos, there are several common and effective ways to initiate the milling process and start the engine. These "openers" are designed to maximize the chances of hitting key Tearlaments cards in the Graveyard.

* **The Reinoheart Line**: This is the most direct and consistent one-card starter. The sequence typically proceeds as follows:
  1. Normal Summon Tearlaments Reinoheart.
  2. Activate Reinoheart's on-summon effect, sending Tearlaments Merrli from the Deck to the GY.2
  3. Merrli's effect triggers in the GY as Chain Link 1.
  4. Resolve Merrli's effect, using Merrli and the on-field Reinoheart as materials to Fusion Summon a monster like Tearlaments Rulkallos or a generic option like Mudragon of the Swamp.2 In formats where Tearlaments Kitkallos is legal, she is the primary target. The materials (Merrli and Reinoheart) are shuffled back into the Deck.
  5. This establishes an initial board presence and sets up further plays depending on the Fusion Monster summoned.
* **The Scheiren Special**: This line is an excellent extender and can be used to play around common hand traps like Nibiru, the Primal Being.
  1. Activate the effect of Tearlaments Scheiren in the hand.
  2. As part of the effect, send another monster from the hand to the GY. This can be another Tearlaments monster (like Havnis) to trigger its fusion effect, or a useful non-archetypal card like a Shaddoll monster to gain its GY effect.6
  3. Scheiren is Special Summoned, and the top three cards of the Deck are sent to the GY. Simultaneously, the monster sent from the hand triggers its own effect, creating multiple chains of advantage.
* **The Turn 0 Interruption**: The ability to play during the opponent's turn is a defining feature of the deck's power.
  1. During the opponent's Main Phase, when they activate a monster effect on the field, activate the effect of Tearlaments Havnis from the hand.3
  2. Havnis is Special Summoned, and the top three cards of the Deck are sent to the GY.
  3. If any Tearlaments monsters are milled by this effect, their fusion effects can be activated, allowing for a Fusion Summon that can disrupt the opponent's intended play sequence before it can be fully established. A more proactive version of this play can be made with Tearlaments Kashtira, whose Quick Effect to summon itself from the hand is not dependent on an opponent's action.6

### The Post-Mill Decision Tree

After a significant mill, the player is faced with a critical decision-making phase. The contents of the Graveyard dictate the entire course of the turn.

* **Prioritizing Fusions**: The first step is to identify which Fusion Monsters can be made and which is most suitable for the current game state. Tearlaments Rulkallos is the priority for establishing a defensive board with a powerful negation. Tearlaments Kaleido-Heart is summoned for aggressive removal. In many situations, generic Fusion monsters like Predaplant Dragostapelia (for monster effect negation) or El Shaddoll Winda (a powerful floodgate) can be the optimal choice.2
* **Resource Management**: A skilled player must decide which monsters in the GY should be used as Fusion Material and which should be preserved for other purposes. For example, leaving a Tearlaments Reinoheart in the GY allows for a potential revival play, while leaving other Tearlaments names provides materials for fusions on a subsequent turn.
* **Chain Blocking**: This is an essential technique for protecting key effects. When multiple effects trigger simultaneously in the GY (e.g., a milled Tearlaments monster and a milled Tearlaments Scream), the turn player chooses the order in which they are placed on the chain. By placing the most crucial effect—typically the Fusion Summon—as Chain Link 1, it becomes protected from negation by common hand traps like Ash Blossom & Joyous Spring, which must respond to the last link in the chain (Chain Link 2 or higher).3

### Achieving the End State: Typical Board Construction

While the path is variable, the destination often involves a combination of archetypal boss monsters and generic disruptive tools. These end boards are goals to work towards, not guaranteed outcomes.

* **Standard Board**: A common and effective end board consists of Tearlaments Rulkallos on the field, a set Tearlaments Sulliek, and a Rank 4 Xyz Monster. Abyss Dweller is the premier choice, as its effect can shut down opposing Graveyard-reliant decks, especially in the mirror match. Time Thief Redoer is another strong option, providing non-destruction removal and potential further mills.12 This setup provides a Special Summon negate (Rulkallos), a monster effect negate (Sulliek), and powerful GY hate or disruption (the Xyz monster).
* **Extended Board**: With a particularly fortunate series of mills, this standard board can be augmented. Tearlaments Kaleido-Heart is often summoned during the opponent's turn via a milled Tearlaments monster, adding a powerful piece of removal at a critical moment. Depending on the extenders milled, it's also possible to end on generic boss monsters like Baronne de Fleur or Spright Elf to provide additional layers of negation or recursion.12
* **The "Pass with GY Setup" Play**: In some scenarios, particularly when facing an opponent with numerous hand traps, the most prudent play is to end on a minimal board presence but with a fully loaded Graveyard and a Tearlaments Havnis in hand. This conservative approach baits out the opponent's resources and prepares for an explosive turn during their Main Phase, leveraging the deck's unparalleled ability to play on both turns.12

## A Symphony of Archetypes - External Synergies and Deck Variants

The generic nature of the Tearlaments engine—requiring only that cards be sent to the GY by an effect—makes it a remarkably flexible core that can be hybridized with numerous other powerful archetypes. These synergies have produced some of the most dominant decks in the history of the game.

### The Ishizu Engine: The Tier 0 Format

The release of the "Ishizu" cards (Kelbek the Ancient Vanguard, Agido the Ancient Sentinel, Mudora the Sword Oracle, and Keldo the Sacred Protector) propelled Tearlaments to a level of dominance rarely seen in the game's history, creating what is known as a "Tier 0" metagame—a format where one deck is so overwhelmingly powerful that it is the only competitively viable choice.5 This was not merely a case of strong support; it was a perfect symbiotic relationship between two engines.

* **The Millers**: Kelbek the Ancient Vanguard and Agido the Ancient Sentinel share a devastatingly powerful effect: if sent from the hand or Deck to the GY, they allow each player to send the top five cards of their Deck to the GY.16 For Tearlaments, this effect is an incredible accelerator. A single milled Kelbek or Agido can instantly fuel the Graveyard with ten or more cards, drastically increasing the probability of hitting multiple Tearlaments names and other key engine pieces. This solved the deck's only potential weakness: the variance of its smaller, 3-card mills.
* **The Shufflers**: Mudora the Sword Oracle and Keldo the Sacred Protector provide unparalleled Graveyard control. As a Quick Effect that can be activated from the hand or GY, they can banish themselves to target up to three cards in any Graveyard(s) and shuffle them back into the Deck.10 This effect is the ultimate disruption tool, especially in the mirror match. When an opposing Tearlaments monster activates its effect in the GY to Fusion Summon, a shuffler can be chained to return that monster to the Deck. Because the Tearlaments monster must use itself as material for the Fusion Summon, removing it from the GY causes the effect to resolve without effect, effectively nullifying the opponent's play.20

The combination of these two sub-engines created a deck that was not only hyper-consistent due to the Millers but also possessed the perfect in-engine counter to itself with the Shufflers. This feedback loop of power and control locked out all other strategies, defining the Tier 0 era.

| Card Name | Category | Strategic Function |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Kelbek the Ancient Vanguard** | Miller | Mass GY Fuel / Engine Accelerator |
| **Agido the Ancient Sentinel** | Miller | Mass GY Fuel / Engine Accelerator |
| **Mudora the Sword Oracle** | Shuffler | GY Disruption / Mirror Match Counter |
| **Keldo the Sacred Protector** | Shuffler | GY Disruption / Mirror Match Counter |

### The Kashtira Engine: Aggression and Extension

The Kashtira archetype offers a compact engine that provides free Special Summons, consistency, and aggression.

* **Tearlaments Kashtira**: This hybrid monster acts as the bridge between the two archetypes. It is a Level 7 monster that can be Special Summoned from the hand as a Quick Effect. On summon, it mills three cards from either player's deck, and if sent to the GY by an effect, it mills an additional two cards.5 Its ability to be summoned on the opponent's turn provides another "Turn 0" play similar to Havnis, but one that is proactive rather than reactive.14
* **Kashtira Fenrir**: A powerful standalone monster that can be Special Summoned from the hand if the player controls no monsters. Its on-field effects are twofold: it can search for any "Kashtira" monster (including Tearlaments Kashtira), and it can target and banish an opponent's face-up card face-down as a disruption.13

The Kashtira engine provides additional bodies on the field that can be used for Link or Xyz Summons, adding a layer of consistency and offensive pressure to the Tearlaments strategy.25

### The Branded Engine: A Tale of Two Fusions

The "Branded" engine, centered around Fallen of Albaz, offers another path to powerful Fusion Summons that synergizes remarkably well with the Tearlaments strategy.

* **Branded Fusion**: This is one of the most powerful Fusion Spells ever printed. It allows the player to perform a Fusion Summon using monsters from their Deck as material.2 The key interaction lies in using Branded Fusion to send Fallen of Albaz and a DARK Tearlaments monster (like Merrli or Scheiren) from the Deck to the GY. This single action accomplishes two things: it summons a powerful Branded Fusion monster like Lubellion the Searing Dragon (which can then lead to Mirrorjade the Iceblade Dragon), and it triggers the sent Tearlaments monster's effect to perform a second Fusion Summon.27 This makes Branded Fusion a one-card starter for two different engines simultaneously. The goal of this variant is to establish a board with both Mirrorjade the Iceblade Dragon (providing a banishing disruption) and Tearlaments Rulkallos (providing a Special Summon negate), creating multiple layers of powerful interaction.2

### Other Notable Alliances

* **Shaddoll**: The Shaddoll archetype also features monsters with effects that trigger when sent to the GY by a card effect. Milling cards like Shaddoll Beast to draw a card or Shaddoll Squamata to send another Shaddoll card to the GY provides additional value. The primary goal of this hybrid is often to use the Tearlaments engine as a consistent way to summon El Shaddoll Winda, a devastating floodgate monster that restricts each player to only one Special Summon per turn.4
* **Danger!**: The Danger! monsters all have effects that reveal themselves in the hand, forcing the opponent to randomly discard one card from the player's hand. If the discarded card is not the revealed Danger! monster, the Danger! monster is Special Summoned and the player draws a card. Because the discard is an effect, it will trigger any Tearlaments monster that is hit, while also putting an additional body on the field for Link or Xyz plays.34

## Navigating the Meta - Strategic Considerations

Piloting Tearlaments effectively in a competitive environment requires not only a deep understanding of its own mechanics but also a keen awareness of how to navigate common counters and adapt to the ever-shifting landscape of the Forbidden & Limited List.

### Playing Through Disruption: The Deck's Resilience

One of the deck's greatest strengths is its profound resilience. Its ability to generate advantage from the Graveyard and play on the opponent's turn makes it highly resistant to many forms of conventional disruption.

* **Resilience to Board Breakers**: Traditional board-wiping cards like Dark Ruler No More and Evenly Matched are often less effective against Tearlaments. While they can negate or remove the monsters on the field, they do not impact the Graveyard, which remains a fully loaded source of plays for the following turn. The deck's boss monsters also have floating effects that allow them to return to the field, further mitigating the impact of board wipes.16
* **Countering Graveyard Hate**: The most effective strategies against Tearlaments are those that directly attack the Graveyard.
  + **Dimension Shifter**: This is the single most powerful counter. By banishing any card that would be sent to the GY, it completely shuts down the Tearlaments engine for a turn.11 The primary counterplay is to negate its activation with a card like PSY-Framegear Gamma or, failing that, to use on-field monsters like Tearlaments Scheiren and Tearlaments Reinoheart to summon a defensive Xyz monster like Number 41: Bagooska the Terribly Tired Tapir to stall until Dimension Shifter's effect expires.11
  + **Abyss Dweller**: The second most potent counter. Its Quick Effect prevents the activation of any card effects in the opponent's Graveyard for the entire turn.4 The best way to play around Abyss Dweller is to remove it from the field with a card effect before committing to any milling plays.
  + **Targeted Banishment**: Cards like D.D. Crow or the Bystial monsters target a specific card in the GY to banish. These can be played around through careful chain-linking. If an opponent targets a Tearlaments monster in the GY, the player can chain a Quick Effect like Tearlaments Kashtira or an Ishizu Shuffler to move the targeted card out of the GY first. This causes the opponent's effect to resolve without a legal target, effectively "fizzling" it.11

### The Mirror Match: A War Over the Graveyard

In a metagame where Tearlaments is prevalent, the mirror match becomes a complex and skill-intensive battle for control of the Graveyard.

* **The Importance of Shufflers**: In the era of Ishizu Tearlaments, the mirror match was almost entirely decided by the timely activation of Mudora the Sword Oracle and Keldo the Sacred Protector. The player who could successfully resolve a shuffler's effect to remove their opponent's Tearlaments monster from the GY in response to its fusion effect would win the chain and gain a significant, often insurmountable, advantage.10
* **The Abyss Dweller Checkmate**: Outside of the Ishizu variant, the single most important card in the mirror match is Abyss Dweller. Summoning Abyss Dweller and activating its effect during the opponent's Draw or Standby Phase prevents them from activating any of their Tearlaments' GY effects for the entire turn. This is often a game-winning move, as it completely shuts down their engine.12

### Adapting to the Ban List: The Evolution of a Metagame Giant

Konami has frequently used the Forbidden & Limited List to curtail the power of Tearlaments. Key hits have included limiting the main deck monsters and Primeval Planet Perlereino, and most significantly, the banning of Tearlaments Kitkallos.5 These changes, however, did not eliminate the deck from competitive play but rather forced its evolution.

The ban list did not destroy the Tearlaments archetype; it reshaped it. The deck transitioned from a Tier 0 behemoth that won through overwhelming consistency and explosive power to a high-skill midrange or control deck that wins through superior resource management and tactical flexibility in a longer, more interactive game. Without its most powerful combo enablers, the deck becomes less about generating an insurmountable board on turn one and more about out-grinding the opponent over multiple turns. The core mechanic of fusing from the Graveyard remains one of the most powerful engines in the game, and its success now rests even more heavily on the pilot's ability to navigate complex game states with limited resources. This evolution has solidified Tearlaments' legacy not just as a powerful deck, but as one of the ultimate tests of player skill in modern Yu-Gi-Oh!.

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