# An Exhaustive Strategic Analysis of the Sky Striker Archetype

## Section 1: The Sky Striker Doctrine: A Lone Ace Against the World

The Sky Striker archetype presents a unique paradigm in the Yu-Gi-Oh! Trading Card Game. It is not a deck that seeks to overwhelm the opponent with an unbreakable board of negations, nor does it rely on a single, linear combo to achieve victory. Instead, it embodies the philosophy of a lone ace pilot, engaging in a reactive, resource-oriented battle of attrition. Its core strategy is one of control, but this control is not achieved through proactive prevention. Rather, it is established through reactive dismantling and the gradual accumulation of card advantage in a simplified game state.1 The deck willingly cedes the initial board presence to the opponent, confident in its extensive toolbox of spells to break apart any established field and out-grind the adversary in the ensuing resource war. This entire strategic doctrine is governed by two fundamental mechanics that dictate every aspect of its gameplay, deck construction, and tactical decision-making.

### 1.1. The "Empty Main Monster Zone" Mandate

The single most defining characteristic of the Sky Striker archetype is a strict operational constraint: the majority of its powerful Spell Cards can only be activated while the player controls no monsters in their Main Monster Zones (MMZ).1 This mandate fundamentally shapes the deck's identity and forces a "less is more" approach to board presence, a stark contrast to contemporary strategies that aim to fill their board with multiple monsters.

This rule dictates that the Sky Striker player must operate almost exclusively through a single "Sky Striker Ace" Link Monster situated in the Extra Monster Zone (EMZ). Every turn follows a precise rhythm: summon an Ace to the EMZ, activate a series of potent spells, and then, if any other monsters were summoned to the MMZ (for instance, by stealing an opponent's monster with Sky Striker Mecha - Widow Anchor), that zone must be cleared before the Striker spells become active again.2 This creates a unique gameplay loop that rewards meticulous resource management and an understanding of how to leverage a single, versatile threat.

This operational constraint leads to a fascinating strategic paradox. While classified as a "control" deck, its turn-one board is often minimalistic and seemingly fragile, typically consisting of a single Link monster and one or two set Spell cards.3 Traditional control archetypes aim to establish a field of multiple negations to proactively stop the opponent from playing the game. Sky Striker does the opposite. It presents a minimal board and dares the opponent to commit their resources. The deck's true power is unleashed on the following turn, where it excels at going second to dismantle the opponent's established board using its highly searchable and recyclable toolkit.4 Therefore, its method of control is not about building a wall of "no," but about possessing the perfect "answer" for any threat the opponent can present, thereby controlling the game by systematically deconstructing the opponent's strategy piece by piece.

### 1.2. The "Spell Power Threshold": Achieving 3+ Spells in the Graveyard

The second governing principle of the Sky Striker archetype is its primary scaling mechanism: the "Spell Power Threshold." Nearly every "Sky Striker" Spell Card gains a powerful secondary effect if there are three or more Spell Cards in the Graveyard at the moment of its activation.1 This mechanic transforms the deck's spells from merely functional to overwhelmingly powerful.

For example, Sky Striker Mobilize - Engage! transitions from a simple search card to a search card that also provides a free draw, generating immediate card advantage.6 Sky Striker Mecha - Widow Anchor, a potent effect negation tool, gains the ability to permanently steal the monster it targets.7 Sky Striker Mecha - Shark Cannon evolves from a graveyard disruption tool into a powerful reanimation spell, allowing the Striker player to Special Summon the targeted monster to their own field.7

The strategic implication of this mechanic is profound. The deck's overall power level is directly proportional to the number of spells in its Graveyard. This incentivizes a deck-building philosophy that maximizes the spell count, often including generic, high-utility spells like Upstart Goblin for consistency, Pot of Desires for draw power, and various "board breaker" spells to supplement the archetype's own removal.5 The entire early game of a Sky Striker duel is a race to populate the Graveyard with three spells as quickly as possible, thereby "turning on" the deck's full, devastating potential. This threshold is the critical inflection point where the deck shifts from a defensive, reactive posture to an aggressive, advantage-generating engine.

## Section 2: The Arsenal: Card-by-Card Strategic Analysis

The effectiveness of the Sky Striker strategy hinges on the precise application of its compact but highly versatile arsenal. Each card, from the main deck pilots to the Link Monster "mecha suits" and the spell-based munitions, serves a specific tactical purpose. Understanding the individual role and synergistic potential of each component is paramount to mastering the archetype.

### 2.1. The Aces - Main Deck Pilots

The deck's operations are centered around a small contingent of main deck monsters, the pilots who command the powerful Sky Striker Ace mecha.

* **Sky Striker Ace - Raye**: She is the undisputed heart and soul of the deck, the central pillar upon which its entire grind game is built.9 Raye possesses two powerful, once-per-turn effects. Her first is a Quick Effect that allows her to Tribute herself to Special Summon any "Sky Striker Ace" monster from the Extra Deck to the Extra Monster Zone.9 This is the primary method for accessing the deck's toolbox of Link Monsters. Its Quick Effect timing is crucial, enabling the player to dodge targeted effects, such as Effect Veiler, or to reactively summon the appropriate Ace during the opponent's turn.1 Her second effect provides unparalleled resilience: if a face-up "Sky Striker Ace" Link Monster is destroyed by battle or leaves the field due to an opponent's card effect while Raye is in the Graveyard, she Special Summons herself back to the field.7 This recursive loop ensures that the Striker player almost always has a monster on the field to begin their plays, making the deck incredibly difficult to put away. Consequently, a primary strategy for defeating Sky Striker is to banish Raye from the Graveyard using cards like D.D. Crow or Bystial monsters, severing this critical line of recursion.4
* **Sky Striker Ace - Roze**: Functioning as the secondary pilot, Roze serves as a valuable extender and follow-up play. She can Special Summon herself from the hand whenever a "Sky Striker Ace" monster is Normal or Special Summoned, or she can be revived from the Graveyard if an opponent's monster in the Extra Monster Zone is removed from the field.7 While not as central as Raye, Roze provides the deck with the ability to put an additional body on the field for more advanced Link climbing plays or to apply more pressure. She is typically run at a lower copy count than Raye, often one or two per deck.5 A common and powerful play involves using Sky Striker Ace - Hayate to send Roze from the deck to the Graveyard, setting up an explosive One-Turn Kill (OTK) sequence with the spell card Sky Striker Mobilize - Linkage!.1
* **Surgical Striker - H.A.M.P.**: This monster is the archetype's dedicated problem-solver, an in-archetype board breaker. H.A.M.P. functions similarly to a "Kaiju" monster, allowing the player to Tribute one of the opponent's monsters to Special Summon it to their field.5 Its true strength lies in its searchability; as a "Striker" card, it can be added from the deck to the hand by Sky Striker Mobilize - Engage!. This makes H.A.M.P. a flexible, one-of solution for dealing with powerful boss monsters that are otherwise unaffected by or protected from the deck's standard suite of targeting and destruction effects, providing a crucial out to otherwise insurmountable threats.2

### 2.2. The Mecha Suits - The Link Monster Toolbox

The Extra Deck is the core of the Sky Striker's tactical flexibility, containing a series of Link-1 "mecha suits" that Raye can pilot. Each one is a specific tool designed for a particular situation, allowing the player to adapt their strategy on the fly.

| Link Monster | Attribute | Primary Function | Key Use Case(s) |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Sky Striker Ace - Hayate** | WIND | Graveyard Setup / Direct Damage | Attacking directly to send a crucial card like Raye, Roze, or a key Spell from Deck to GY, setting up a follow-up play with Kagari.5 |
| **Sky Striker Ace - Kagari** | FIRE | Resource Recursion | Retrieving a used Engage! from the GY to extend plays, or grabbing a specific tool like Widow Anchor for immediate disruption.9 |
| **Sky Striker Ace - Shizuku** | WATER | End Phase Search / Disruption | The standard turn-one end board monster. Searches a new tool during the End Phase and weakens all opponent's monsters by 100 ATK/DEF for each Spell in the GY.3 |
| **Sky Striker Ace - Kaina** | EARTH | Defense / Stalling | Summoned to target an opponent's monster, preventing it from attacking for a turn. This buys valuable time to assemble resources or survive a lethal attack.5 |

Beyond these core Link-1 monsters, the archetype employs higher-Link monsters as specialized problem-solvers. Sky Striker Ace - Zeke is a LINK-2 monster that provides crucial, non-targeting removal by banishing a monster it points to, as well as itself until the next End Phase. Sky Striker Ace - Azalea, another LINK-2, offers powerful targeted destruction; upon being Special Summoned, it can destroy one card on the field. If the player has three or fewer spells in the Graveyard, Azalea is then sent to the GY, but in a typical game state, it remains a potent threat.10 These monsters give the deck answers to a wider variety of board states that the Link-1 toolbox may struggle with.

### 2.3. The Munitions - The Spell Card Arsenal

The true power of the Sky Striker archetype lies in its comprehensive and reusable arsenal of Spell Cards. These are the munitions that allow a single Ace to control the entire battlefield. They can be broadly categorized by their primary function.

* **Consistency**: Sky Striker Mobilize - Engage! is the single most important card in the entire archetype. It is a Normal Spell that allows the player to add any "Sky Striker" card from their Deck to their hand. If the "3+ Spells" threshold is met, it also allows the player to draw one card.6 This card is the deck's primary starter, extender, and problem-solver, making it the highest-priority target for opponent's hand traps like Ash Blossom & Joyous Spring.11
* **Disruption**: Sky Striker Mecha - Widow Anchor is the deck's premier disruption tool. This Quick-Play Spell targets a face-up monster on the field and negates its effects for the turn. With three or more spells in the Graveyard, it also allows the player to take control of that monster until the End Phase.1 Sky Striker Mecha - Eagle Booster is a defensive tool that makes a "Sky Striker Ace" monster unaffected by other card effects for a turn, protecting it from removal or negation.
* **Removal**: Sky Striker Maneuver - Afterburners! is a Quick-Play Spell that targets and destroys one face-up monster on the field. If the spell threshold is met, it can then also destroy one Spell or Trap on the field.7 Its counterpart, Sky Striker Maneuver - Jamming Waves!, targets and destroys a Set Spell or Trap, and with the threshold met, can then destroy a monster. Together, they form the deck's primary one-for-one removal suite.
* **Recursion & Setup**: Sky Striker Mecha Modules - Multirole is the engine that fuels the deck's long game. This Continuous Spell allows the player, during their End Phase, to Set "Sky Striker" Spells with different names from their Graveyard, up to the number of "Sky Striker" Spells they activated that turn. These Spells are banished when they leave the field, but this effect allows for the repeated use of powerful tools like Widow Anchor and Engage!, generating immense value over several turns.7 Sky Striker Airspace - Area Zero is a Field Spell that provides consistency, allowing the player to excavate the top cards of their deck to add a "Sky Striker" card, and if it is sent from the field to the GY by a card effect, it can Special Summon a "Sky Striker Ace" monster directly from the Deck.7
* **Offense**: Sky Striker Mobilize - Linkage! is a Quick-Play Spell that dramatically increases the deck's offensive capabilities. It allows the player to send a monster they control to the Graveyard to Special Summon a "Sky Striker Ace" monster with a different Attribute from the Extra Deck. This enables rapid Link climbing, explosive Battle Phase plays, and is the key component in the deck's OTK sequences.1

## Section 3: Combat Sequences: Search Patterns and Combo Lines

Mastery of the Sky Striker archetype is not about memorizing long, linear combos, but about understanding the fluid, interconnected sequences that generate resources and control the board. The deck's plays are more akin to tactical decision trees than rigid scripts, adapting to the specific threats presented by the opponent.

### 3.1. The Resource Loop: The Hayate-Kagari-Shizuku Cycle

The fundamental operational sequence of the Sky Striker deck is a three-step resource loop that leverages the core Link-1 monsters. This cycle is designed to set up the Graveyard, recover key resources, and prepare disruption for the opponent's turn.

* **Step 1 (Battle Phase - Graveyard Setup)**: The sequence begins by summoning Sky Striker Ace - Hayate. Hayate has the unique ability to attack the opponent directly, even if they control monsters. After damage calculation, its effect allows the player to send any "Sky Striker" card from their Deck to the Graveyard.5 This is a precision tool for setting up the next step. The player can send Raye to ensure recursion, Roze to enable an extension play, or, most commonly, a specific Spell card that is needed for the current situation, such as Engage! or Widow Anchor.
* **Step 2 (Main Phase 2 - Resource Recursion)**: After the attack, the player Links Hayate away to summon Sky Striker Ace - Kagari. Upon being Special Summoned, Kagari's effect activates, allowing the player to target and add one "Sky Striker" Spell from their Graveyard to their hand.9 This is typically used to retrieve the exact card that was just sent to the Graveyard by Hayate.
* **Step 3 (Main Phase 2 & End Phase - Search & Disruption)**: The player can now use the Spell card retrieved by Kagari. Afterwards, they will Link Kagari away to summon Sky Striker Ace - Shizuku. Ending the turn with Shizuku in the Extra Monster Zone is the standard procedure. During the End Phase, Shizuku's effect activates, allowing the player to search their Deck for a "Sky Striker" Spell with a name different from any of the cards currently in their Graveyard.9 This search provides a fresh piece of disruption or a starter for the next turn.

This cycle is not only efficient but also strategically resilient. A critical aspect of this sequence lies in its interaction with common hand traps. The most powerful starter, Engage!, is highly vulnerable to Ash Blossom & Joyous Spring. However, Hayate's effect to send a card from the deck to the Graveyard activates after damage calculation, a part of the Damage Step where cards like Ash Blossom cannot be activated.13 Therefore, a skilled pilot facing a potential Ash Blossom can opt for this safer, albeit more resource-intensive, line. By using Hayate to send Engage! to the Graveyard and then retrieving it with Kagari, they can play around one of the most common forms of disruption. This demonstrates that for Sky Striker, the Battle Phase is not just for dealing damage; it is a core strategic phase for resource management and securing vital plays.

### 3.2. Standard Opening Gambit (Going First): The Minimalist Control Board

When forced to go first, the Sky Striker player's objective is not to establish an unbreakable board, but rather to create a resilient and interactive field that can survive the opponent's turn and transition into the deck's preferred board-breaking role.

The standard one-card opening play, requiring only access to Sky Striker Ace - Raye (or a card that summons her, like Reinforcement of the Army or Hornet Drones), is as follows:

1. Normal Summon Raye.
2. Immediately Link Summon Sky Striker Ace - Shizuku using Raye as material.
3. Activate any other available Spell cards. A common play is to use Sky Striker Mobilize - Engage! to search for Sky Striker Mecha Modules - Multirole and then activate it.
4. Set any remaining Spell cards, such as a copy of Widow Anchor if available.
5. Proceed to the End Phase. Shizuku's effect will activate, allowing a search for a key piece of interaction, most often Sky Striker Mecha - Widow Anchor if one is not already set.3

The resulting end board is Shizuku in the Extra Monster Zone, Multirole on the field, a set Widow Anchor, and Raye in the Graveyard.3 This board presents multiple layers of interaction. Shizuku passively weakens all of the opponent's monsters. The set Widow Anchor provides a powerful negation and potential monster theft. Multirole ensures that any Spells used can be recycled for the following turn. Finally, Raye's presence in the Graveyard means that if the opponent manages to remove Shizuku, Raye will immediately return to the field, ensuring the Striker player has a follow-up. This board is designed to trade resources efficiently, survive, and set the stage for a decisive counter-attack.

### 3.3. Board-Breaking Assault (Going Second): The OTK Potential

The Sky Striker archetype is at its most comfortable and powerful when going second. The strategy revolves around leveraging a high count of generic board-breaking cards, such as Lightning Storm, Raigeki, and Harpie's Feather Duster, in conjunction with the archetype's own removal tools to dismantle the opponent's established field.2 Once the board is cleared, the deck possesses explosive OTK potential, primarily through the use of Sky Striker Mobilize - Linkage!.

A common OTK sequence against an opponent with an empty field and 8000 Life Points demonstrates this power:

1. Normal Summon Raye and enter the Battle Phase. Attack directly for 1500 damage.
2. After the attack, activate Raye's Quick Effect, Tributing her to Special Summon Sky Striker Ace - Hayate from the Extra Deck.
3. Attack directly with Hayate for another 1500 damage (Total: 3000). Activate Hayate's effect to send Sky Striker Ace - Roze from the Deck to the Graveyard.
4. In Main Phase 2, activate the Quick-Play Spell Sky Striker Mobilize - Linkage!. Send Hayate to the Graveyard to Special Summon Sky Striker Ace - Kagari.
5. Upon summon, Kagari's effect activates. Target and add Linkage from the Graveyard back to the hand. At this point, with at least three spells in the Graveyard (Linkage and two others), Kagari's ATK will be boosted to at least 1800.
6. Enter the Battle Phase again (if not already there from the first attacks). Attack with Kagari for 1800 damage (Total: 4800).
7. Activate the second Linkage from hand, sending Kagari to summon Sky Striker Ace - Shizuku.
8. Attack with Shizuku for 1500 damage (Total: 6300).
9. Because an opponent's monster in the EMZ was not removed, Roze's GY effect does not trigger here in this specific line, but other variations of this combo involving Roze's summon can easily push the total damage over the 8000 threshold required for victory.1 This sequence highlights the deck's ability to convert a single monster and one spell card into a game-winning assault.

## Section 4: Strategic Integration and External Engagements

The true measure of a competitive archetype is not just its internal consistency, but its ability to adapt to and interact with the broader metagame. Sky Striker's longevity and consistent competitive presence are a testament to its unique deck architecture and its capacity to engage with a wide variety of opposing strategies.

### 4.1. Deck Architecture: The "Chameleon" Platform

The core engine of the Sky Striker archetype is remarkably compact. A typical deck profile will feature a very small monster count—often just three copies of Raye, one or two of Roze, and perhaps a single H.A.M.P.—and a very high spell count to consistently enable the "3+ Spells" mechanic.5 This lean engine is the key to the deck's greatest strength: its unparalleled adaptability.

This structural design frees up a significant portion of the deck, often 15 to 20 slots or more, for non-archetypal "staple" cards. This allows a skilled pilot to meticulously customize their build to counter the most prevalent threats in any given competitive format.1 This non-engine suite typically includes:

* **Hand Traps**: A robust lineup of cards like Ash Blossom & Joyous Spring, Effect Veiler, and Infinite Impermanence is standard, providing crucial disruption during the opponent's turn.7
* **Board Breakers**: As a premier going-second deck, cards like Lightning Storm, Raigeki, Harpie's Feather Duster, and Evenly Matched are critical for dismantling established boards before the Striker engine begins its work.2
* **Consistency and Utility**: Cards like Triple Tactics Thrust have become mainstays, offering the flexibility to search for either a powerful board breaker after being hit by a hand trap, or to search for Engage! to start the engine.2 Pot of Desires is another common choice, as it helps dig for key cards while simultaneously fueling the Graveyard with the spells needed to reach the power threshold.7

This ability to morph its non-engine package to suit the meta is why Sky Striker can be described as a "chameleon" engine. Unlike decks with rigid, multi-card combos, Sky Striker's game plan is reactive and flexible. It functions less as a standalone strategy and more as a highly efficient delivery system for the best generic cards in the game. Its consistent performance as a powerful rogue or Tier 3 contender throughout many different formats is a direct result of this unique adaptability.4 It survives and thrives not by being the most powerful engine, but by being the most customizable one.

### 4.2. Synergistic Alliances & Threat Assessment

While the pure build is the most common and often most effective, the compact nature of the Sky Striker engine has historically allowed it to be integrated into other strategies. Hybrid builds pairing the Striker spells with archetypes like **Invoked** or **Mekk-Knight** were once popular, as those strategies also tend to focus on the Extra Monster Zone while keeping their Main Monster Zones relatively clear.19 Though the limitation of key enablers like Sky Striker Mecha - Hornet Drones has made these hybrids less common, the principle of using the Striker spells as a versatile utility package remains a possibility.

However, the deck is not without its vulnerabilities. Opponents can employ several effective counter-strategies to dismantle the Sky Striker game plan:

* **Graveyard Hate**: The deck is critically dependent on Raye's recursion from the Graveyard. Cards that can banish her, such as D.D. Crow or the Bystial monster suite, are devastating and can often be game-ending if timed correctly.4
* **Anti-Spell Effects**: Any continuous effect that prevents the activation of Spell Cards, most notably Anti-Spell Fragrance, is a hard counter that shuts down the deck's entire strategy.11
* **Targeting Choke Points**: The deck has several clear points of interaction that a knowledgeable opponent can exploit. The two most effective are:
  1. Activating Ash Blossom & Joyous Spring in response to Sky Striker Mobilize - Engage! to prevent the search and potential draw.11
  2. Using Effect Veiler or Infinite Impermanence on Sky Striker Ace - Kagari to stop the recursion of Engage! or another critical spell from the Graveyard.11
* **Overwhelming Boards**: While adept at dismantling boards piece by piece, Sky Striker can struggle against strategies that can "flood the field" with numerous powerful monsters, particularly those with built-in protection or multiple negations. The deck's reliance on one-for-one removal can be overwhelmed, forcing the pilot to rely on drawing a non-searchable, mass-removal board breaker.4

## Conclusion

The Sky Striker archetype stands as a masterclass in game design, offering a high-skill-ceiling, control-oriented strategy that rewards patience, precision, and deep matchup knowledge. Its success is not derived from overwhelming power or unbreakable opening boards, but from its unparalleled tactical flexibility and resource management. The core mechanics—the "Empty Main Monster Zone" mandate and the "3+ Spells" threshold—create a unique and challenging gameplay loop that forces pilots to think turns ahead, carefully managing their limited on-field presence to unlock the full potential of their powerful spell arsenal.

The deck's true genius lies in its architecture. The compact and self-sufficient nature of its core engine transforms the deck into a "chameleon," a highly adaptable platform capable of integrating the most effective generic cards in the game to counter any given metagame. It is a deck that wins through attrition, systematically dismantling an opponent's strategy with the right tool for every situation, before closing out the game with a decisive, calculated assault. While vulnerable to specific counter-strategies like graveyard disruption and anti-spell effects, a skilled pilot can navigate these challenges through careful play and strategic side-decking. For duelists who relish a reactive, thought-provoking playstyle and the challenge of outmaneuvering their opponent in a complex resource battle, the Sky Striker archetype remains one of the most rewarding and enduring strategies in the Yu-Gi-Oh! TCG.

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