# Systematic Analysis of the Bamboo Sword Engine in the Yu-Gi-Oh! TCG

## I. Introduction to the Bamboo Sword Engine: Architecture and Classification

### A. Engine Definition and Historical Context (Draw vs. Lock Strategy)

The Bamboo Sword suite functions not as a traditional, cohesive archetype but as a generic, highly optimized **Spell Engine** within the Yu-Gi-Oh! Trading Card Game (TCG). The engine's purpose is singular: to maximize card advantage rapidly, often achieving an effective net positive draw of two or more cards in a single chain of actions. This aggressive consistency engine is generally leveraged in strategies where immediate resource generation or a decisive victory condition is paramount.

The historical application of the Bamboo Sword engine is characterized by a dual utility: its use in aggressive card cycling strategies, such as various Exodia First Turn Kill (FTK) builds 1, and its function within high-level control strategies aimed at denying the opponent's ability to play, known as the 'Bamboolock'.3 Consequently, the engine's primary value proposition is its ability to transform a minimal investment, such as the initial summoning of a utility Link Monster like Isolde, into a massive liquidity of cards, generating high consistency and a powerful card advantage loop.

### B. TCG Card Catalog and Core Functionality Mapping

The engine is defined by a small set of Spell Cards, each filling a specialized role necessary for the engine's recursion, activation, or payoff.

#### Core Draw/Search Component

* ***Golden Bamboo Sword***: This card is a Normal Spell and constitutes the engine's primary payoff. Its activation condition is straightforward: the player must control any "Bamboo Sword" Equip Spell on the field.4 Successful activation results in drawing 2 cards, an exceptionally efficient exchange of resources that drives the overall card velocity of the deck.
* ***Cursed Bamboo Sword***: Classified as an Equip Spell, this card is the absolute core of the engine's recursion and consistency. It possesses two relevant effects. First, it allows the equipped monster to attack the opponent directly this turn, provided another "Bamboo Sword" card controlled by the player is returned to the hand.6 Second, and most critically, if  
  *Cursed Bamboo Sword* is sent to the Graveyard (GY), its mandatory effect triggers, allowing the player to add 1 "Bamboo Sword" card from their Deck to their hand, specifically excluding another copy of *Cursed Bamboo Sword*.5 This search effect is overwhelmingly utilized to retrieve  
  *Golden Bamboo Sword* or, alternatively, *Burning Bamboo Sword* in lock-oriented strategies.

#### Lock/Control Component

* ***Burning Bamboo Sword (BBS)***: This Continuous Spell forms the foundational element of the 'Bamboolock' strategy. If, while *Burning Bamboo Sword* is already face-up in the Spell & Trap Zone, the player activates any other "Bamboo Sword" card, they may trigger its effect to skip the opponent's next Main Phase 1.6 This targeted denial of the opponent's principal summoning and resource management phase is the mechanism for proactive turn denial.

#### Fodder and Utility Components

* ***Broken Bamboo Sword***: An Equip Spell that states the equipped monster gains 0 ATK.9 This card offers no meaningful utility in combat or strategy. Its sole purpose in modern competitive variants is to act as uniquely named fodder necessary to satisfy the specific activation costs of generic utility cards, such as Isolde, Two Tales of the Noble Knights, or simply to ensure a "Bamboo Sword" Equip Spell is on the field for the activation of  
  *Golden Bamboo Sword*.10
* ***Original Bamboo Sword***: Another Equip Spell, providing the equipped monster with 0 ATK gain. Its unique utility allows the equipped monster to destroy all monsters the opponent controls if it inflicts battle damage by a direct attack.6 Furthermore, it has a secondary effect allowing the player to send the equipped card to the GY to equip 1 different "Bamboo Sword" Equip Spell from the Deck to a face-up monster. This effect is useful for cycling into  
  *Cursed Bamboo Sword* or enabling tactical mass destruction in specific combo lines, particularly those involving Power Tool Braver Dragon or Ninja archetype integration.11

## II. Search Mechanics and Resource Cycling (The Golden Draw Engine)

### A. The Cursed Bamboo Sword Recursion Chain

The efficiency of the Bamboo Sword engine stems entirely from its ability to generate resource parity through *Cursed Bamboo Sword*. The core interaction dictates that by manipulating *Cursed Bamboo Sword* from the Deck directly to the GY, the player immediately achieves a net gain of one card through the search effect before the ultimate draw payload is calculated.5 This critical resource movement is the initial setup phase.

The immediate priority for the search effect of *Cursed Bamboo Sword* is nearly always *Golden Bamboo Sword*.14 This is because the search converts the initial GY dump (often a cost for another card) into a powerful Normal Spell that instantly yields a +2 card advantage when activated, provided a Bamboo Equip Spell is on the field. This rapid conversion of a deck resource into multiple hand resources is why the engine is favored in Exodia and Infernoble Knight strategies that require high throughput. Competitive builds often reflect this focus by running maximum ratios: 3 copies of

*Cursed Bamboo Sword* and 3 copies of *Golden Bamboo Sword*.10 While

*Broken Bamboo Sword* offers minimal utility, 1-3 copies are still necessary in most competitive lists to satisfy the specific card economy requirements of external engines that interact with Equip Spells.11

### B. The Isolde Activation Protocol (Algorithmic Modeling)

The most common and effective method for initiating the Bamboo Draw Engine in the modern TCG relies upon the Link 2 Warrior Monster, **Isolde, Two Tales of the Noble Knights**. Isolde provides a structured two-step process that combines the necessary GY dumping of Equip Spells with the field presence needed for follow-up utility.

#### Isolde's Constraint and Deck Building

To start the combo, the prerequisite input state requires the player to establish two Warrior monsters on the field (or a single card that produces the two materials necessary to summon Isolde). Once summoned, Isolde’s second effect allows the player to send Equip Spells with *different names* from the Deck to the GY as a cost to Special Summon a Warrior monster from the Deck whose Level equals the number of cards sent.16

The requirement to send Equip Spells of *different names* establishes a compulsory deck building constraint. Since *Cursed Bamboo Sword* is limited to being sent only once per Isolde activation, the deck must intentionally incorporate functionally weak or redundant cards such as *Broken Bamboo Sword* and *Original Bamboo Sword*. These cards, despite contributing little to the win condition, are essential because they provide unique names necessary to pay Isolde’s cost, thus facilitating the summon of a higher-Level Warrior or maximizing the number of Equip Spells sent to the GY. This necessity means that the deck must deliberately run "brick" cards that increase the theoretical brick probability in the opening hand, simply to ensure the core draw engine can be reliably initiated.

#### Algorithmic Flowchart Template: Isolde Draw Engine Sequence (Net +3 Advantage)

The following sequence details the optimal line initiated by Isolde, designed to maximize card advantage and establish the recursion loop, often targeting *Infernoble Knight - Renaud* for maximum efficiency.14

Table Title: Isolde Draw Engine Sequence (Net +3 Advantage)

| **Step** | **Action/Card Activated** | **Result/Trigger** | **State Transition/Gain** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Summon Isolde, Two Tales of the Noble Knights. | Search Effect resolves (Optional CL1). | Search for specialized Warrior (e.g., Infernoble Knight - Renaud). |
| 2 | Isolde Effect 2 (CL1) Activates. | Send Equip Spells (e.g., 1 Cursed, 1 Broken) from Deck to GY (cost). 16 | Summons a Warrior (e.g., Infernoble Knight - Renaud). |
| 3 | *Cursed Bamboo Sword* GY Effect (CL1). | Mandatory effect triggers. Searches *Golden Bamboo Sword*. 7 | Hand Advantage: +1 (Golden). |
| 4 | *Infernoble Knight - Renaud* Effect (CL2). | If summoned or equipped, triggers to recycle 1 Equip from GY. 14 | Hand Advantage: +1 (Recycling Cursed Bamboo Sword). |
| 5 | Activate the *Cursed Bamboo Sword* (now in hand) on a monster. | Activates the "Bamboo Sword" Equip Spell requirement for Golden. | Field State: Bamboo Equip active. |
| 6 | Activate *Golden Bamboo Sword*. | Draw 2 cards. 4 | **Net Card Advantage: +3 (Golden search, Cursed recursion, 2 draws).** |

## III. Combo Modeling: The Perpetual Turn-Skip Lock (Bamboolock)

### A. Burning Bamboo Sword and the MP1 Denial

The Bamboolock is a highly disruptive strategy centered around preventing the opponent from entering their crucial Main Phases. The primary component is *Burning Bamboo Sword* (BBS). BBS is a Continuous Spell that must be established face-up on the field prior to its activation condition being met.8 Once active, if the player subsequently activates

*any* "Bamboo Sword" card (Equip or Normal Spell), *Burning Bamboo Sword* triggers, resulting in the opponent skipping their next Main Phase 1 (MP1).6 This prevents the opponent from conducting standard resource generation, summoning, or setting up their field.

### B. The Hard Lock Protocol (The Bamboolock FTK/Loop)

Achieving a truly devastating 'Hard Lock' requires more than just skipping MP1; the objective is total turn denial, forcing the opponent immediately from the Standby Phase to the End Phase. If MP1 is skipped via BBS, the game state must transition to the next phase, which is the Battle Phase (BP). If the BP is conducted, the opponent is permitted to enter MP2, where they can still utilize resources, special summon, or set Spells/Traps, thereby completely undermining the lock.

Therefore, for a reliable, competitive denial strategy, the engine requires the integration of generic, extrinsic phase-skipping cards to close the loophole. This necessity demonstrates that the engine's payload is not just the Bamboo cards themselves, but the systematic combination of *Burning Bamboo Sword* with two to three specific generic floodgates or Spells.3

The lock protocol requires three specific phase denials:

1. **Main Phase 1 Skip:** Achieved proactively via the resolution of *Burning Bamboo Sword*.8
2. **Battle Phase Skip (BP Denial):** This is the critical link. Historically, cards like *Thunder of Ruler* (a Normal Spell that skips the next BP) are used to enforce this denial.18 Without a guaranteed BP skip, the lock fails.
3. **Main Phase 2 Skip:** Achieved via the Continuous Spell *Terminal World*. *Terminal World* states that if a Battle Phase is not conducted during a turn, the phase sequence moves directly to the End Phase.3

When all three conditions are met, the phase transition sequence mandates Standby Phase → MP1 (skipped) → Battle Phase (skipped) → MP2 (skipped by *Terminal World* rule) → End Phase. This results in the opponent having no action window.3 Reports of BBS alone causing a full skip often rely on platform-specific ruling ambiguities or misinterpretations of phase transition rules, which are generally unreliable in sanctioned TCG play, emphasizing the mandatory nature of the multi-card lock setup.19

#### Algorithmic Flowchart Template: Bamboolock Protocol

Table Title: Bamboolock: Phase Skip Mechanism Analysis

| **Phase** | **Card(s) Required for Skip** | **Activation Condition/State** | **Outcome** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Draw Phase | (Optional: *Soul Devouring Bamboo Sword*) | Bamboo Equip monster inflicts Battle Damage. | Early denial, often compounding resource strangulation. |
| Main Phase 1 | *Burning Bamboo Sword* (BBS) | BBS face-up + subsequent activation of any "Bamboo Sword" card. 8 | Opponent cannot perform summons or resource management in MP1. |
| Battle Phase | *Thunder of Ruler* / Equivalent BP Denial | Normal Spell resolution or continuous effect. 18 | Opponent cannot attack; game state attempts to transition to MP2. |
| Main Phase 2 | *Terminal World* | Continuous Spell is face-up. 3 | If BP is skipped, *Terminal World* forces immediate transition to the End Phase. |
| **Conclusion** | N/A | Successful resolution of BBS, BP denial, and *Terminal World*. | **Total Turn Skip (Hard Lock) achieved.** |

## IV. Extrinsic Integration and Archetypal Synergy

The Bamboo Sword engine's generic nature makes it highly flexible, allowing integration into various strategies that prioritize explosive resource access or the activation of Equip Spells.

### A. Exodia FTK Variants: Maximum Card Velocity

In Exodia First Turn Kill (FTK) decks, the Bamboo engine's sole role is to act as an explosive draw accelerator, maximizing card velocity to quickly assemble the five pieces of Exodia the Forbidden One.1 The engine’s ability to generate Draw 2 for minimal setup cost (by reliably cycling

*Cursed* into *Golden*) makes it a vital consistency tool.

Historically, Bamboo Swords are almost always paired with other high-draw or consistency engines:

* **Royal Magical Library (RML):** RML gains spell counters rapidly because the combination of the Equip Spell activation (e.g., *Cursed Bamboo Sword*), the Normal Spell activation (*Golden Bamboo Sword*), and the subsequent Equip activation (recycled *Cursed*) results in a high volume of Spell Card activation in a short sequence.15
* **Toon Engine:** The use of *Toon Table of Contents* to search multiple cards, often pulling *Blue-Eyes Toon Dragon*, integrates with the overall spell-heavy focus and provides discard fodder for other draw spells like *Trade-In*.1
* **Destiny Hero Engine:** This engine utilizes Level 8 Destiny Heroes (such as *Destiny HERO - Dreadmaster* or *Destiny HERO - Plasma*) in conjunction with *Destiny Draw* and *Trade-In*. These cards provide additional Level 8 discard outlets and draw power, aligning perfectly with the goal of maximizing spell-based drawing.1

### B. Infernoble Knights: Resource Loop Generation and Utility

The Infernoble Knight archetype represents a prime modern application of the Bamboo engine, primarily because the deck inherently uses Isolde, Two Tales of the Noble Knights, as a foundational combo piece.

The key interaction centers on the **Renaud Recursion Loop**. Isolde's activation sends Equip Spells, including *Cursed Bamboo Sword*, from the Deck to the GY. This dump triggers the mandatory effect of *Cursed* to search *Golden Bamboo Sword*.14 Concurrently, if Isolde uses the card cost to Special Summon

*Infernoble Knight - Renaud*, Renaud immediately triggers its own effect, allowing the player to add the *Cursed Bamboo Sword* that was just sent to the GY back to their hand.14 This systematic loop results in a free search for

*Golden Bamboo Sword* and the complete recycling of the Equip Spell cost, granting a cumulative net +3 card advantage from the initial Isolde investment. This consistency boost allows the Infernoble player to dig deeper into their deck for crucial non-engine interaction or essential combo materials required to establish their complex endboard, such as Synchro Summoning *Baronne de Fleur* or *Infernoble Knight Emperor Charles*.22

### C. Power Tool Braver Dragon Strategy (The Modern Pivot)

The emergence of high-utility Synchro Monsters capable of interacting with Equip Spells has redefined how the Bamboo engine is utilized. *Power Tool Braver Dragon* (PTBD), a Level 9 Synchro Monster, is capable of equipping up to three Equip Spells with different names from the Deck or GY upon its successful Synchro Summon.13

This capability drastically streamlines the deployment of Bamboo Sword utility by circumventing the slower search and set requirements inherent to the *Cursed/Golden* draw loop. PTBD allows for the immediate field presence of Equip Spells for tactical application, focusing less on drawing cards and more on applying immediate, decisive effects.23

A primary application involves equipping *Original Bamboo Sword* 12 alongside two other highly potent utility equips. If PTBD, or a monster it empowers, can attack directly (an effect sometimes enabled by

*Cursed Bamboo Sword* or supporting archetypal effects, such as in the Ninja deck using *Meizen*), *Original Bamboo Sword*'s effect triggers, leading to a mass destruction of all opponent monsters.13 This pivot demonstrates a key strategic development: the engine's components are no longer confined to being a fragile card advantage mechanism but can function as battlefield control tools. The ability to instantly deploy

*Original Bamboo Sword* for a conditional board wipe, or *Cursed Bamboo Sword* for a direct attack enabler, transforms the engine into a versatile resource for mid-range and control decks, offering utility far beyond its reputation in glass-cannon FTK strategies.

## V. Countermeasure Protocol and Meta Adaptation

The Bamboo Sword engine, in all its iterations (FTK, Draw Loop, or Lock), is highly linear. This linearity makes it exceptionally vulnerable to targeted negation and disruption at specific, critical choke points.

### A. Critical Choke Points and Interruption Timing (Algorithmic Defense)

Effective disruption of the Bamboo engine must target the moment resource parity is attempted, or the primary engine piece is accessed.

1. **Isolde Initiation:** While negating Isolde's summon or its first search effect (the optional search) is helpful, the true choke point occurs when Isolde attempts to resolve its second effect by sending Equip Spells from the Deck to the GY.
2. **Cursed Bamboo Sword Search:** Negating the mandatory GY search effect of *Cursed Bamboo Sword* is the most lethal interruption. Since this effect directly searches *Golden Bamboo Sword* (the payload), hitting this step with a card like *Ash Blossom & Joyous Spring* immediately shuts down the entire draw loop, crippling the strategy’s resource generation.15
3. **Golden Bamboo Sword Payoff:** Should the initial search resolve, interrupting the draw resolution of *Golden Bamboo Sword* with *Droll & Lock Bird* severely limits the deck's ability to assemble its remaining combo pieces or Exodia parts, effectively stalling the FTK or Lock attempt.25

### B. Side Deck Strategy Against Bamboo Engine Decks

Counter-strategies must address either the high volume of spell activation or the necessity of specific continuous field states required for the Lock variants.

Table Title: Competitive Side Deck Protocol Against Bamboo Engine Decks

| **Counter Card** | **Targeted Engine Component** | **Effectiveness Rationale** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *Ash Blossom & Joyous Spring* | *Cursed Bamboo Sword* search or *Foolish Burial Goods* setup. | Negates the crucial search for *Golden Bamboo Sword*, preventing the card advantage gain necessary for the combo. 15 |
| *Droll & Lock Bird* | *Golden Bamboo Sword* activation. | Stops the powerful Draw 2 effect, critically throttling the card velocity needed to achieve FTK or Lock consistency. 25 |
| *Anti-Spell Fragrance* | All Spell Activations (Continuous Floodgate). | Forces all Spell Cards to be Set first and activated on the subsequent turn, delaying *Golden Bamboo Sword* and *Burning Bamboo Sword* activation significantly. 25 |
| *Ghost Ogre & Snow Rabbit* | *Royal Magical Library* / *Terminal World* / *Burning Bamboo Sword*. | Destroys Continuous Spells or Monsters upon activation, breaking the crucial Lock setup or interrupting the RML counter accumulation necessary for FTK variants. 24 |
| *Ghost Reaper & Winter Cherries* | Extra Deck Target (e.g., Isolde). | Prevents the primary Link enabler, making it especially effective against Isolde-dependent variants like Infernoble Knights. 24 |

### C. Vulnerability Analysis of the Lock Strategy (Consistency vs. Disruption)

While powerful when fully resolved, the Bamboolock strategy is inherently fragile. The deck suffers from a comparatively high "brick" ratio compared to top-tier competitive decks. This lack of inherent consistency stems from the compulsory inclusion of multiple copies of specific, low-utility Equip Spells (*Broken Bamboo Sword*, *Original Bamboo Sword*) required solely to satisfy the cost structure of utility monsters like Isolde, or the requirement to draw into three separate, unique Lock pieces (*Burning Bamboo Sword*, a BP skip, and *Terminal World*).11 Furthermore, both the FTK and the Lock are heavily reliant on resolving the entire engine chain uncontested on Turn 1. Any disruption forces a difficult defensive pivot, as the engine does not typically possess strong secondary win conditions or reliable recovery mechanisms.

## VI. Conclusions and Future Applications

The Bamboo Sword engine remains one of the most efficient pure draw engines in the TCG, defined by the recursive synergy between *Cursed Bamboo Sword* and *Golden Bamboo Sword*. Its strength lies in its ability to generate rapid card advantage, which historically enabled glass-cannon strategies such as Exodia FTK and the multi-card Bamboolock turn denial protocol.

However, modern analysis shows a tactical shift in the engine's application. The traditional reliance on the draw loop for FTKs is giving way to its utilization as a high-utility resource tool in complex combo decks, exemplified by Infernoble Knights, which utilize the engine to search core combo pieces while recycling costs, and especially in combination with *Power Tool Braver Dragon*. PTBD allows the engine to bypass its consistency issues by directly deploying high-impact Equip Spells, transforming the engine’s purpose from generating card value to providing immediate board control utility via cards like *Original Bamboo Sword*.

For any duelist facing a Bamboo engine variant, successful defense requires interrupting the GY effect of *Cursed Bamboo Sword* or throttling the draw velocity using floodgates or denial cards like *Droll & Lock Bird*. The engine’s structural dependence on resolving its linear combo ensures that targeted disruption remains the most effective countermeasure.

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