Black Luster Soldier - Envoy of the Beginning was the unbanning that generated the most hype heading into September 2011. However, the most impactful change on the September 2011 Forbidden and Limited list was the return of Heavy Storm.

The "Heavy Stormless" era that spanned September 2010 through the summer of 2011 forced players to utilize new tricks such as Seven Tools of the Bandit and Trap Stun in order to handle trap heavy strategies such as Gravekeeper's or T.G. Stun. Although Heavy Storm is a singleton non-searchable power card, the impact it has had on formats is unmeasurable. The sheer existence of Heavy Storm caused players to evaluate which spell or trap cards were worth committing to the field, and reconsider plays that required overextension of the backrow. As a result, trap heavy decks such as Gravekeeper's were unable to fully commit their hand to the field unless they found access to the singleton Solemn Judgment or a copy of Starlight Road.

The banning of Heavy Storm changed that. Seven Tools of the Bandit became a logical counter to Trap Stun, opposing Seven Tools but also powerful traps such as Solemn Warning. As a result, decks such as Gravekeepr's could counter trap removal (ex. Trap Stun) while also protecting their own tempo positive plays (ex. flip Gravekeeper's Spy and search Gravekeeper's Descendant).

With the unbanning of Heavy Storm, these strategies faced the new reality that every game could be swung by the activation of Heavy Storm. This often led players to overcompensate during deck design and incorporate multiple copies of Starlight Road. Although effective at times, these deck building decisions reduced the overall effectiveness of previously tier one strategies.

This became even more apparent when the first YCS of the format took place in Toronto, Ontario.

YCS Toronto 2011 is easily one of the most memorable events in Yu-Gi-Oh history. The Top 32 was filled with players who had previously made their way into the Top 32, and of course, it was ultimately won by Billy Brake. Billy's back-to-back YCS victories will remain one of the impressive feats in Yu-Gi-Oh history when you consider how much Tengu Plant was under the radar heading into YCS Toronto.

That might seem crazy to think with the benefit of hindsight, but the September 2011 Forbidden and Limited list did a good job reducing the overall power level of the Tengu Plant variants that saw success over the summer. Pot of Avarice was limited to one. Debris Dragon was limited to one. Lonefire Blossom was limited to one. Formula Synchron was limited to one. T.G. Hyper Librarian was limited to one. Trishula, Dragon of the Ice Barrier was limited to one. Surely this was enough to phase out the resilient plant based strategies?

Needless to say, it was not. Take a look at Billy Brake's winning decklists from YCS Toronto and YCS Columbus.

YCS Toronto	YCS Columbus

Main Deck: 41 Monsters:23 Monsters 22 3 Reborn Tengu 3 Tour Guide From The Underworld 3 Tour Guide From the Underworld 3 Maxx "C" 3 Reborn Tengu 2 Thunder King Rai-Oh 2 Thunder King Rai-Oh 2 Effect Veiler 2 Caius The Shadow Monarch 2 Maxx "C" 1 Sangan 1 Debris Dragon 1 Effect Veiler 1 Dandylion 1 Spore 1 Lonefire Blossom 1 Lonefire Blossom 1 Glow-Up Bulb 1 Glow-up Bulb 1 Spore 1 Dandylion 1 Caius The Shadow Monarch 1 Debris Dragon 1 Black Luster Soldier – Envoy of the Beginning 1 Spirit Reaper 1 Gorz, Emissary of Darkness 1 Black Luster Soldier – Envoy Of The Beginning 1 Gorz, The Emissary of Darkness 1 Sangan 1 Spirit Reaper Spells: 13 2 Enemy Controller Spells:13 2 Mystical Space Typhoon 2 Mystical Space Typhoon 2 Enemy Controller 1 One For One 1 Heavy Storm 1 Dark Hole 1 Dark Hole 1 Heavy Storm 1 Monster Reborn 1 Foolish Burial 1 Book Of Moon 1 Pot of Avarice 1 Mind Control 1 Pot of Avarice 1 One for One 1 Mind Control 1 Book of Moon 1 Monster Reborn 1 Foolish Burial 1 Scapegoat 1 Scapegoat Traps: 5 2 Solemn Warning Traps:6 2 Solemn Warning 1 Solemn Judgment 1 Torrential Tribute 1 Torrential Tribute 1 Call of The Haunted 1 Trap Dustshoot 1 Solemn Judgment 1 Trap Dustshoot Side Deck: 15 2 Gemini Imps Side Deck:15 1 Doomcaliber Knight 2 Cyber Dragon 1 Thunder King Rai-Oh 2 D.D. Crow 1 D.D. Crow 2 Leeching The Light 1 Mystical Space Typhoon 1 Mystical Space Typhoon 2 Leeching The Light 1 Dust Tornado 1 Dust Tornado 2 Shadow – Imprisoning Mirror 1 Chain Disappearance 1 Debunk 2 Debunk 2 Mind Crush 2 Dimensional Prison

2 Bottomless Trap Hole

1 Chimeratech Fortress Dragon

Extra Deck:15

1 Black Rose Dragon

1 Ancient Fairy Dragon

1 Stardust Dragon

1 Orient Dragon

1 Scrap Dragon

1 Brionac, Dragon of The Ice Barrier

1 Trishula, Dragon of The Ice Barrier

1 Formula Synchron

1 T.G. Hyper Librarian

1 Armory Arm

1 Ally of Justice Catastor

1 Number 17:Leviathan Dragon

1 Steelswarm Roach

1 Leviair The Sea Dragon

1 Number 39: Utopia

Extra Deck:15

1 Formula Synchron

1 Armory Arm

1 Ally of Justice Catastor

1 T.G. Hyper Librarian

1 Orient Dragon

1 Brionac, Dragon of the Ice Barrier

1 Ancient Fairy Dragon

1 Black Rose Dragon

1 Stardust Dragon

1 Scrap Dragon

1 Trishula, Dragon of the Ice Barrier

1 Number 17:Leviathan Dragon

1 Leviair the Sea Dragon

1 Number 39: Utopia

1 Steelswarm Roach

The story behind this deck is actually quite remarkable. Although it took the plurality of Top 32 slots, Tengu Plant was largely overlooked heading into YCS Toronto. For example, deep into Day 1, I recall opening a match against Alexander St-Louis with a normal summoned Lonefire Blossom. He was taken aback by the presence of a plant strategy this deep into the tournament. St-Louis would go on to finish in the Top 4 of that event. Even some experienced and skilled duelists assumed the September 2011 Forbidden and Limited list had finally ended the reign of plant strategies.

The "rebuilt" variations of plant strategies were the byproduct of a lot of work behind the scenes. Long before the days of Discord, duelists still communicated within their circles to refine decks and discuss side deck options. For example, my car to Toronto included Jessy Samek, Joe Bogli and Paul Clarke. All four of us decided to run plants. In the weeks leading up to the event, we were all in communication about some of the deckbuilding decisions. To this day, I bet Samek wishes we were able to find a way to justify a copy of Cyber Valley to combo with One for One. Unfortunately, Valley was too much of a liability due to the existence of the newly released Leviair the Sea Dragon.

The actual plant decks that were played at YCS Toronto mostly included the same core principles and many of the same tech choices (ex. Scapegoat + Leeching the Light). This was the result of communication amongst a core group of approximately 25 duelists from all around the country. The fact that the "best" deck in the room at YCS Toronto was largely unknown to the majority in attendance is a testimony to the benefit of playtesting and trusting your core group of friends.

But enough about plants. There were other decks in the room too. The assumed "best" deck heading into YCS Toronto was Agents - usually incorporating Tour Guide from the Underworld in order to reliably summon the newly unbanned Black Luster Soldier - Envoy of the Beginning. Although YCS Toronto will always be known as the site that Billy Brake broke through to win in his 10th YCS top, his finals competitor Nicky Lacaille brought a very traditional version of Agents.

Nicky Lacaille

Monsters: 30

- 3 Tour Guide From the Underworld
- 3 The Agent of Creation Venus
- 3 The Agent of Mystery Earth
- 3 Mystical Shine Ball
- 3 Master Hyperion
- 3 Effect Veiler
- 2 Tragoedia
- 2 Genex Ally Birdman
- 2 Archlord Kristya
- 1 Honest
- 1 The Agent of Miracles Jupiter
- 1 Chaos Sorcerer
- 1 Sangan
- 1 Gorz the Emissary of Darkness
- 1 Black Luster Soldier Envoy of the Beginning

Spells: 9

- 3 Pot of Duality
- 3 Mystical Space Typhoon
- 1 Dark Hole
- 1 Monster Reborn
- 1 Heavy Storm

Traps: 1

1 Trap Dustshoot

Extra Deck: 15

- 1 Gachi Gachi Gantetsu
- 1 Leviair the Sea Dragon
- 1 Number 17: Leviathan Dragon
- 1 Number 39: Utopia
- 1 Armory Arm
- 1 Ally of Justice Catastor
- 1 Magical Android
- 1 Brionac, Dragon of the Ice Barrier
- 1 Black Rose Dragon
- 1 Ancient Sacred Wyvern

- 1 Stardust Dragon
- 1 Scrap Dragon
- 1 Trishula, Dragon of the Ice Barrier
- 1 Ally of Justice Decisive Armor
- 1 Gaia Knight, the Force of Earth

Side Deck: 15 2 D.D. Crow

2 Cyber Dragon

3 Thunder King Rai-Oh

1 Mirror Force

1 Torrential Tribute

2 Bottomless Trap Hole

2 Dimensional Prison

2 Dust Tornado

Believe it or not, there was a few week period of time in the immediate introduction of the XYZ mechanic that monsters such as Sangan and Reborn Tengu would activate upon "leaving the field through detaching." This led to the belief that decks such as Agents were simply unbeatable due to their ability to utilize Tour Guide into Sangan more effectively than any other strategy. Even with the change to that original ruling, Agents were still a fine tuned strategy. You were always fearful that an Agents opponent could win the game in one turn through the use of boss monsters such as Archlord Kristya, Chaos Sorcerer, Black Luster Soldier and Master Hyperion. However, it was also difficult to actually defeat a deck that had access to Maxx "C", Effect Veiler, Gorz and Tragoedia. The combination of advantage engines, boss monsters and hand traps made this a difficult strategy to defeat.

Some players, such as the previously mentioned Alexander St-Louis even incorporated a small trap lineup. The fact that this deck could be built in multiple different ways made it an especially difficult matchup.

Alexander St-Louis

Monsters: 27

3 Master Hyperion

2 Archlord Kristya

- 2 Tragoedia
- 1 Gorz the Emissary of Darkness
- 1 Black Luster Soldier Envoy of the Beginning
- 3 The Agent of Creation Venus
- 3 The Agent of Mystery Earth
- 3 Tour Guide From the Underworld
- 3 Mystical Shine Ball
- 2 Herald of Orange Light
- 1 Effect Veiler

- 1 Sangan 1 Honest 1 Genex Ally Birdman Spells: 8 2 Mystical Space Typhoon 2 Gold Sarcophagus 1 Mind Control 1 Monster Reborn 1 Dark Hole 1 Heavy Storm Traps: 6 2 Solemn Warning 2 Bottomless Trap Hole 1 Trap Dustshoot 1 Torrential Tribute Extra Deck: 15 1 Trishula, Dragon of the Ice Barrier 1 Stardust Dragon 1 Scrap Dragon 1 Thought Ruler Archfiend 1 Ancient Sacred Wyvern 1 Black Rose Dragon 1 Gaia Knight, the Force of Earth
 - 1 Magical Android
 - 1 Ally of Justice Catastor
 - 1 Armory Arm
 - 1 Ally of Justice Decisive Armor

1 Brionac, Dragon of the Ice Barrier

- 1 Leviair the Sea Dragon
- 1 Number 17: Leviathan Dragon
- 1 Gachi Gachi Gantetsu

Side Deck: 15 3 D.D. Crow

- 3 Thunder King Rai-Oh
- 2 Puppet Plant
- 2 Forbidden Lance
- 1 Mystical Space Typhoon
- 2 Smashing Ground
- 2 Dust Tornado

Another standout deck with the Top 32 of YCS Toronto was piloted by Team Overdose standouts Anthony Alvardo and Dale Bellido. Karakuri would go on to find its way into the Top 32 of the following YCS in

Columbus. Karakuri was a deck that could also take advantage of the newly unbanned Heavy Storm. Combo decks such as Karakuri benefit from trap decks planning for a long game by not overextending into the backrow.

Anthony Alvarado and Dale Bellido

Monsters: 20

- 2 Cyber Dragon
- 2 Thunder King Rai-Oh
- 3 Genex Neutron
- 3 Karakuri Ninja mdl 919 "Kuick"
- 1 Karakuri Watchdog mdl 313 "Saizan"
- 1 Karakuri Strategist mdl 248 "Nishipachi"
- 3 Karakuri Merchant mdl 177 "Inashichi"
- 3 Karakuri Komachi mdl 224 "Ninishi"
- 2 Effect Veiler

Spells: 12

- 1 Pot of Avarice
- 3 Pot of Duality
- 1 Dark Hole
- 1 Mind Control
- 1 Heavy Storm
- 3 Mystical Space Typhoon
- 1 Monster Reborn
- 1 Book of Moon

Traps: 8

- 1 Mirror Force
- 3 Fiendish Chain
- 1 Trap Dustshoot
- 2 Solemn Warning
- 1 Solemn Judgment

Extra Deck: 15

- 1 Trishula, Dragon of the Ice Barrier
- 3 Karakuri Steel Shogun mdl 00X "Bureido"
- 1 Scrap Dragon
- 1 Stardust Dragon
- 1 Black Rose Dragon
- 2 Karakuri Shogun mdl 00 "Burei"
- 1 Naturia Landoise
- 1 Brionac, Dragon of the Ice Barrier
- 1 Naturia Barkion
- 1 Ally of Justice Catastor
- 1 Naturia Beast
- 1 Steelswarm Roach

Side Deck: 15
2 Maxx "C"
2 Closed Forest
2 Dimensional Prison
2 Dust Tornado
2 Royal Decree
1 Torrential Tribute
2 Leeching the Light
2 Debunk

With that being said, there were still trap heavy decks that saw success at YCS Toronto. Two different variations of T.G. trap based decks saw success. As you will notice, both needed to compensate for the newly unbanned Heavy Storm (ex. Dark Bribe and Starlight Road were cards not likely to see play while Heavy Storm was banned).

Tyler Nolan	Robert Boyajian
Monsters: 14	Monsters: 20
3 Reborn Tengu	3 Effect Veiler
3 T.G. Rush Rhino	3 Maxx "C"
3 T.G. Striker	3 Reborn Tengu
3 T.G. Warwolf	3 T.G. Rush Rhino
2 Beast King Barbaros	3 T.G. Warwolf
	2 T.G. Striker
Spells: 6	2 Thunder King Rai-Oh
3 Pot of Duality	1 Black Luster Soldier – Envoy of the Beginning
1 Book of Moon	
1 Dark Hole	Spells: 6
1 Monster Reborn	3 Pot of Duality
	1 Pot of Avarice
Traps: 20	1 Dark Hole
2 Starlight Road	1 Monster Reborn
2 Solemn Warning	
2 Bottomless Trap Hole	Traps: 14
2 Skill Drain	3 TG1-EM1
2 Call of the Haunted	3 Horn of the Phantom Beast
3 Horn of the Phantom Beast	2 Solemn Warning
2 TG1-EM1	2 Bottomless Trap Hole
1 Torrential Tribute	1 Trap Dustshoot
1 Dimensional Prison	1 Torrential Tribute
1 Solemn Judgment	1 Solemn Judgment
1 Mirror Force	1 Starlight Road
1 Dark Bribe	

Extra Deck: 15 Extra Deck: 15 1 Trishula, Dragon of the Ice Barrier 1 Gaia Knight, the Force of Earth 2 Stardust Dragon 1 Naturia Barkion 1 Scrap Dragon 1 Trishula, Dragon of the Ice Barrier 1 Black Rose Dragon 1 Brionac, Dragon of the Ice Barrier 1 Black Rose Dragon 1 Brionac, Dragon of the Ice Barrier 1 Naturia Barkion 1 T.G. Wonder Magician 1 Orient Dragon 1 Number 39: Utopia 1 Ally of Justice Catastor 2 Stardust Dragon 1 T.G. Hyper Librarian 1 Gachi Gachi Gantetsu 1 T.G. Wonder Magician 1 Number 17: Leviathan Dragon 1 Number 39: Utopia 1 Ally of Justice Catastor 1 Steelswarm Roach 1 Scrap Dragon 1 Number 17: Leviathan Dragon 1 Scrap Archfiend 1 Chimeratech Fortress Dragon 1 Orient Dragon Side Deck: 15 Side Deck: 15 3 Cyber Dragon 3 Mystical Space Typhoon 3 Mystical Space Typhoon 1 D.D. Crow 2 Smashing Ground 1 Trap Dustshoot 1 Heavy Storm 1 The Transmigration Prophecy 2 Mind Crush 2 Mind Crush 2 Light-Imprisoning Mirror 2 Liberty at Last! 1 Mirror Force 1 Breaker the Magical Warrior 1 Starlight Road 1 Dimensional Prison 2 Chain Disappearance 1 Closed Forest

A few other strategies found their way into the relatively diverse Top 32 of YCS Toronto (Chaos, X-Sabers, Nordics (!), Monarchs) but none reached the popularity as those previously mentioned.

The following YCS in Columbus, Ohio gave Tengu Plant decks another opportunity to shine, making up the plurality of Top 32 slots. Columbus is also memorable due to the newly released Dark World structure deck. Although no Dark World decks were able to place in the Top 32 of YCS Columbus, the deck would find success later in the format at YCS Kansas City.

Vincent Mireles	Jonathan Nagel
Monsters: 16	Monsters: 16
3 Grapha, Dragon Lord of Dark World	1 Tour Guide From the Underworld
3 Broww, Huntsman of Dark World	1 Fabled Raven
3 Snoww, Unlight of Dark World	2 Beiige, Vanguard of Dark World
3 Beiige, Vanguard of Dark World	3 Broww, Huntsman of Dark World
1 Brron, Mad King of Dark World	3 Snoww, Unlight of Dark World

1 Fabled Raven

1 Sillva, Warlord of Dark World

1 Sangan

Spells: 16

3 The Gates of Dark World

1 Heavy Storm

3 Dragged Down into the Grave

2 Pot of Duality 1 Terraforming

1 Foolish Burial

1 Dark Hole

2 Mystical Space Typhoon

1 Card Destruction

1 Monster Reborn

Traps: 8

1 Mirror Force

1 Skill Drain

1 Trap Dustshoot

1 Deck Devastation Virus

2 Mind Crush 1 Dark Smog

1 Solemn Judgment

Extra Deck: 15 1 Stardust Dragon

1 Trishula, Dragon of the Ice Barrier

1 Ancient Sacred Wyvern

1 Brionac, Dragon of the Ice Barrier

1 Dark Highlander1 Colossal Fighter1 Ancient Fairy Dragon1 Ally of Justice Catastor

1 Fabled Ragin

1 Black Rose Dragon

1 Mist Wurm

1 Number 39: Utopia1 Steelswarm Roach1 Wind-Up Zenmaines1 Leviair the Sea Dragon

Side Deck: 15

2 Light-Imprisoning Mirror

1 Skill Drain

1 Deck Devastation Virus

2 D.D. Crow

3 Grapha, Dragon Lord of Dark World

1 Malefic Stardust Dragon

1 Malefic Cyber End Dragon

1 Sillva, Warlord of Dark World

Spells: 12

3 The Gates of Dark World

1 Card Destruction

1 Monster Reborn

3 Dragged Down into the Grave

2 Dark World Dealings 1 Allure of Darkness

1 Foolish Burial

Traps: 13 1 Dark Deal

2 Mind Crush

1 Trap Dustshoot

1 Solemn Judgment

1 Return from the Different Dimension

3 Reckless Greed 1 Dark Smog

2 Skill Drain

1 Deck Devastation Virus

Extra Deck: 15

1 Wind-Up Zenmaines

1 Steelswarm Roach

1 Number 39: Utopia

1 Number 17: Leviathan Dragon

1 Leviair the Sea Dragon

1 Trishula, Dragon of the Ice Barrier

2 Stardust Dragon

1 Scrap Dragon

1 Black Rose Dragon

1 Orient Dragon

1 Brionac, Dragon of the Ice Barrier

1 Ally of Justice Catastor

1 Cyber End Dragon

1 Ally of Justice Decisive Armor

Side Deck: 15

2 Leeching the Light

2 Bottomless Trap Hole

1 Dark Smog

3 Mystical Space Typhoon

2 Gozen Match

2 Bottomless Trap Hole	2 Deck Devastation Virus
2 Gozen Match	1 Dark Hole
1 Mystical Space Typhoon	1 Heavy Storm
2 Dimensional Prison	1 Mirror Force
2 Royal Decree	

The question at the time for Dark World players was always whether or not to include power cards such as Dark World Dealings or Card Destruction if it meant adding mirror match liabilities. After the historic failure of Dark World decks at YCS Columbus, Dark World players began incorporating these game breaking cards in more regularity. Less mirror matches meant less of a liability and the upside against every other deck was too much to pass up. As a result, we began to see a few Dark World decks in the top cut of events for the foreseeable future.

Most of the time when people go back to play "Tengu Plant" format the decision is whether or not to include Dark World. This decision is essentially the question of whether or not you are going to play consistent with YCS Toronto or Columbus. Going further into the format opens the door to the release of Wind-Up Zenmaines and Rescue Rabbit (Photon Shockwave) or Wind-Up Carrier Zenmaity and Inzektors (Order of Chaos). I've elected to at least point out some of the anti-Tengu Plant variations of Dino-Rabbit that saw success at YCS Kansas City. Although there was one final YCS in Atlanta at the end of the format, it is MUCH more appropriate to profile the WInd-Up loop, Inzektors and Dino-Rabbit next format.

Bobby Brake

Monsters: 17 3 Kabazauls

- 1 Neo-Spacian Grand Mole
- 3 Jurrac Guaiba
- 3 Sabersaurus
- 1 Sangan
- 3 Tour Guide From the Underworld
- 3 Rescue Rabbit

Spells: 13

- 1 Dark Hole
- 3 Dimensional Fissure
- 3 Forbidden Lance
- 2 Smashing Ground
- 1 Book of Moon
- 2 Mystical Space Typhoon
- 1 Monster Reborn

Traps: 11

- 2 Dimensional Prison
- 1 Trap Dustshoot

- 2 Bottomless Trap Hole
- 1 Mirror Force
- 1 Torrential Tribute
- 2 Solemn Warning
- 1 Solemn Judgment
- 1 Starlight Road

Extra Deck: 15

- 1 Chimeratech Fortress Dragon
- 1 Ally of Justice Catastor
- 1 Trishula, Dragon of the Ice Barrier
- 1 Stardust Dragon
- 1 Brionac, Dragon of the Ice Barrier
- 1 Steelswarm Roach
- 2 Leviair the Sea Dragon
- 1 Number 17: Leviathan Dragon
- 1 Wind-Up Zenmaines
- 1 Number 39: Utopia
- 2 Evolzar Laggia
- 2 Evolzar Dolkka

Side Deck: 15

- 1 Mystical Space Typhoon
- 1 Debunk
- 1 Smashing Ground
- 2 Fiendish Chain
- 2 Cyber Dragon
- 2 Spirit Reaper
- 1 Mind Control
- 2 Leeching the Light
- 1 Starlight Road
- 2 Shadow-Imprisoning Mirror

Historic Tier List

Tier One

Tengu Plants

Agent Variations (trapless, trap heavy, T.G.)

T.G. Variations (with or without Skill Drain)

Karakuri

Dino-Rabbit (post Photon Shockwave)

Tier Two

Chaos

Dark World (after YCS Columbus)

Hero Beat

Gravekeeper's

Tier Three

Gladiator Beast

X-Saber (up until YCS Columbus. Darksoul was ruled differently going forward)

Monarchs

Nordic

Blackwing