

Prime Material Dragon – Old School YuGiOh Card Reviews

Prime Material Dragon is one of many powerful YuGiOh cards from the Phantom Darkness set. Of course, that set is best known for literally destroying competitive play for several months thanks to the printing of Dark Armed Dragon. One card that has become a bit forgotten though, is Prime Material Dragon, which thanks to its pair of abilities has more judge rulings tied to its name than most cards.

It might be surprising that a card that can both gain you life and prevent destruction effects hasn't seen competitive play in the Yu-Gi-Oh TCG since 2014. There really aren't any cards like Prime Material Dragon that can do all the things that it can. Through 2008, the year in which it was first printed, the golden Dragon was a staple in both Monarch and Dark Armed Dragon (DAD) decks. This was thanks to its two abilities:

- Any effect that would inflict damage to a player increases their Life Points by the same amount, instead.
- During either player's turn, when a card or effect is activated that would destroy a monster(s) on the field: You can send 1 card from your hand to the Graveyard; negate the activation, and if you do, destroy it.

Prime Material Dragon was mostly played for its ability to prevent the destruction of a monster or monsters on the field; but, the first ability to gain life whenever damage would otherwise be inflicted did come up. After all, burn decks did exist, such as Chain Burn, thanks to Chain Strike being printed in Cyberdark Impact. Fortunately, burn players could get around Prime Material Dragon with the continuous trap card Bad Reaction to Simochi, which would then turn the life gain back into damage.

There is also a funny combo with Dark Snake Syndrome and Prime Material Dragon, which ultimately gains both players such a ridiculous amount of life points that the game will inevitably end in one player decking out. This was one way you could "beat" Dark Armed Dragon decks, although it wasn't exactly a consistent or good strategy; but, this situation did happen as Chain Burn decks could stall for quite some time if they could keep Dark Armed Dragon himself from coming down and picking off burn's stall cards.

A common misconception about Prime Material Dragon, though, is that it could turn paying life points as a cost into life gain. This doesn't work because paying life points isn't inflicting damage. Of course, there were likely many local tournaments where sneaky players tried to get away with this. It's incredible how many forum posts people would literally post saying that you could gain 5000 Life Points by playing Cyber-Stein and activating his effect to summon a Fusion

Monster for the cost of 5000 life points. Other cards that people tried to use in this way were Mirror Wall, Power Bond, and even The Winged Dragon of Ra!

This same major misconception with Prime Material Dragon applied to several other popular cards that required *losing* Life Points as a cost. Another of these was trying to use it alongside Soul Charge to gain 1000 life points instead of losing 1000 life points for each monster resurrected with it. This still doesn't work, because although you're not paying life points, you're still losing life points as a cost, which in the rules of Yu-Gi-Oh is essentially the same thing.

One wonders how many games were wrongfully decided by the consequences of these misconceptions and people cheating their way to an easy victory because of them. Back in 2008, with some unscrupulous duelists clearly attempting to cheat their way to easy wins using Prime Material Dragon's first effect, some players called for it to be banned; this never happened, of course, because the reasons people asking for its banning quoted were people simply not reading the card properly.

How Would You Best Use Prime Material Dragon in 2008?

Besides some other corner cases with cards that would inflict damage, Prime Material Dragon basically existed to negate Bottomless Trap Hole, Mirror Force, Torrential Tribute, and other destruction effects. The only ways opponents could beat Prime Material Dragon back in 2008 were counter traps such as Divine Wrath, Pulling the Rug, or Solemn Judgment. It wouldn't be until the printing of Solemn Warning that players had a more cost-effective and less situational answer for Prime Material Dragon.

Fortunately, the next set after Phantom Darkness was Light of Destruction, and Judgment Dragon *sends* cards to the Graveyard rather than destroys, so Prime Material Dragon was powerless to do anything in that case; although it was still plenty handy against Lightsworn cards that did destroy like Ryko, Lightsworn Hunter.

Another deck Prime Material Dragon proved good against was Gladiator Beasts, as Light of Destruction brought with it the Beast's best Fusion Monster to that point in Gyzarus. Having Prime Material Dragon and a card in hand meant Gyzarus couldn't choose to destroy your monsters, and both Gyzarus and PMD have 2400 ATK.

The only way that the Gladiator Beasts could deal with it was to either crash their Gyzarus with the Dragon or use a bounce effect such as Compulsory Evacuation Device. After the printing of Intercept in The Duelist Genesis, some Gladiator Beast players would sideboard this not just against Monarchs, but to steal a copy of Prime Material Dragon.

What Was the Best Deck for Prime Material Dragon?

As we said previously, Prime Material Dragon ended up in a lot of top Dark Armed Dragon and Monarch deck lists throughout 2008. But, it would see play well into 2014 in a variety of strategies, mostly Dragons and Monarchs. The first top deck to feature Prime Material Dragon, though, wasn't any of these strategies, but instead Billy Brake's Perfect Circle deck which got Top 8 at SJC Houston in February 2008.

The one copy of Prime Material Dragon was actually in Brake's sideboard, and it was mostly to counteract the Magical Explosion First Turn Kill (FTK) decks that were still popular at that point. Prime Material Dragon absolutely hoses Magical Explosion since the trap card's effect does indeed inflict damage. Of course, Prime Material Dragon also meant Dark Armed Dragon couldn't destroy monsters with its effect without being destroyed itself; so, DAD would actually have to hit over the Prime Material Dragon instead with its 2800 ATK before it could clean up.

This is why pairing the Prime Material Dragon with Light and Darkness Dragon was so effective; the LADD would keep negating Dark Armed Dragon's effect and when all your monsters are destroyed because of LADD being destroyed, Prime Material Dragon would be a prime choice (pun intended) to be revived.

The best decks that could take advantage of Prime Material Dragon were Prime Monarchs (who typically ran two copies in the main deck) and Disaster Dragon all the way into 2010. This is because of Red-Eyes Darkness Metal Dragon being able to easily revive Prime Material Dragon from the Graveyard. These Disaster Dragon decks performed quite well and in some small part thanks to Prime Material Dragon being both a solid beat-stick and a way to ensure key creatures wouldn't be destroyed.

Prime Material Dragon in Duel Links

Interestingly enough, Prime Material Dragon is one of the trickier monsters to acquire in the Duel Links game. It's an Ultra Rare that you can only get through special events with the use of an UR ticket which are given out from such events. However, once you have a copy, it can prove very useful in certain Duel Links strategies.

One card that does work well with Prime Material Dragon is a continuous trap card called Aegis of Gaia. You gain 3000 life when it comes into play, but when it leaves play you take 3000 damage. But, because this is actual damage being dealt, Prime Material Dragon turns that into lifegain. This means you can gain 6000 life from a single card in combination with the Dragon. As a lowest rarity card in the Chaotic Compliance pack, this isn't a hard combo piece to acquire.

Another card to use alongside Prime Material Dragon is the equip spell Axe of Fools. The equipped monster gains 1000 ATK and has its effects negated, but its controller takes 500

damage to the controller of the monster. This card works both offensively and defensively, but with Prime Material Dragon on the field, you can put it on one of your own monsters and beat down with it while gaining life every turn. Just remember that if you have Prime Material Dragon and you put Axe of Fools on an opponent's creature, they will gain the Life Points.

Because the metagame of Duel Links is quite different than regular YuGiOh, many decks play very specific strategies and tend to be all in on them. If you know you're going up against a burn strategy, Prime Material Dragon is perfect to play. If you're up against a deck you know relies on using effects to destroy your creatures, again, having Prime Material Dragon at your disposal can easily win you a game.

All in all, Prime Material Dragon is a very useful card to either build a janky deck around Aegis of Gaia or just to have against certain match-ups in the Duel Links solo adventure. If you happen to grab a UR ticket, this is a great card to spend one on.

How Good is Prime Material Dragon in 2024?

Prime Material Dragon saw tons of play in 2008, but it was quickly outclassed by the Synchro monster Stardust Dragon when it came to negating destruction effects. Still, being a Dragon, especially one that's Light attribute, it continued to see quite a bit of play in various Dragon centered decks. In 2024, though, there are so many cards that serve as "omni-negates," cards that can negate anything for a minimal cost or no cost at all. This leaves Prime Material Dragon as a card that power creep has pushed out.

There is a place where Prime Material Dragon can prove powerful, however, and that's in the retro Edison format. Named after the Shonen Jump Championship that took place in Edison, NJ in April 2010. This format is so beloved by players as there was no best deck that took over the format. Unfortunately, that format ended with the release of The Shining Darkness in May. Still, because of the crazy competitive diversity of the "Edison" format, it's become the second most popular retro format to Goat Format, supported by tournaments with real prize support.

Prime Material Dragon stands as a great anti-meta card against some of the best decks in the format. Volcanics have a hard time as they can't use their Blaze Accelerator to destroy monsters, nor can they do burn damage with Volcanic Shell, as long as Prime Material Dragon is in play. Other popular decks such as Gadgets, Gravekeepers, and Gladiator Beasts (as we mentioned earlier) have a lot of trouble removing Prime Material Dragon, as well.

The only issue, though, is that Prime Material Dragon didn't really fit well into a lot of the best decks at the time. It was usually a sideboard card, at best. That being said, it does show up occasionally, but sadly rarely in a top deck list at the retro format tournaments being held for Edison format up to this day.

However, Prime Material Dragon and its very existence did do one amazing thing for the game of YuGiOh. It made decks that focused entirely on burn damage a bit trickier to play, since you never knew if a Prime Material Dragon was going to come down and ruin your day. The Magical Explosion FTK deck lost much of its competitive edge, as although it could still win on the first turn, if it didn't, and the opposing player was able to drop a Prime Material Dragon, suddenly the win condition was worthless. It could protect itself against most destruction and made cards that dealt damage worthless.

The Light-attribute Level 6 Dragon may be extremely outclassed in 2024 YuGiOh, but it's an important part of the game's history. Without this card, many decks wouldn't have had an answer to Gladiator Beasts, Gadgets, and other decks that relied on destruction effects to snowball their card advantage engines.

Prime Material Dragon is probably my favorite card from The Phantom Darkness because of just how versatile it proved for me and many other YuGiOh players back in 2008. It continued to be somewhat relevant all the way into 2014 before fading into obscurity. Technically, it's available on Master Duel, but no one plays it. Still, thanks to Duel Links, this little rattlesnake of a Dragon continues to grace in-game decks to this day.

~ Amelia <3