

ALS Plant Hire renews its haulage fleet with 11 B40Ds

When the managing director of a plant hire concern specialising in contract mining tells you that after 25 years of using a specific articulated dump truck for the bulk of his mining work, he understands how to get the best out of that machine, you'd better believe him.

Such has been the case of ALS Plant Hire, the earthmoving equipment owning division of this well-known and diversified South African group with its headquarters in Potchefstroom. Recognised as a modern company, which has moved with the times, the group has a strong BBBEE arm and has long established representation in plant hire, haul road construction and maintenance, contract mining and roads construction. Other business ventures include property development, milling, aviation and beef and grain production.

"We needed to replace a fleet of 10 Bell B50D Articulated Dump Trucks (ADTs) that had given us superb production carrying large loads but now, at a time when each machine had clocked between 12 000 and 13 000 hours, it was time for newer ADTs better suited to a specific operation," says Erno Janse van Rensburg, Managing Director for ALS Plant Hire. "Due to a new contract we decided to buy 11 Bell B40D ADTs, with six of these fitted with coal bins and tailgates."

Bell Equipment's coal bin fitted to the legendary Bell B40D ADT is designed to haul a heaped 36 cubic metres of coal with a specific gravity (SG) of 1,2 as opposed to the standard bin carrying 22,5 cubic metres. Tailgates on the coal bins prevent possible spillage of clients' precious cargoes.

"We chose the coal bins for this particular operation in Mpumalanga as, although the coal is of good quality, the mining operation is tricky with much attention given to blasting the weathered sandstone in the interburden, meaning the layers of waste rock separating the coal seams and our mining techniques," Erno explains. "The sustainability of the operation is therefore dependent on our ability to mine selectively and when we do then reach the coal, we want to extract the maximum benefit and load as much as we possibly can. Bell Equipment's coal bin gives us that advantage."

On this particular mine, strip or rollover mining techniques are used, which translates into overburden being dumped nearby the mining operation for the ongoing rehabilitation process as strips of coal seams are mined out. The haul to the coal washing plant varies but never really exceeds 2,5km in one direction.

ALS Plant Hire took delivery of six Bell B40D ADTs in February 2016 and the balance of five machines in April. "Ideally we would have preferred acquiring these machines in the fourth quarter of 2016 but working closely with Bell Equipment's Sales Representative Kobus van Niekerk, with whom we have forged a solid working relationship over time, we decided to take the fleet earlier due to expected negative exchange rates," Erno adds. "There was no doubt in our minds though regarding our choice of ADTs from Bell Equipment as we know the machine so well and know exactly how we can extract the maximum benefit from our investment."

According to Erno, Bell Equipment's pricing added to the ease of their decision. "This fleet of Bell B40D ADTs was bought with standard warranties because we're so at home with the Bell B40D ADT especially and once the trucks are out of warranty we can dedicate one qualified mechanic to 10 machines," he says. "And once the machine is paid off we know how to extract further benefit out of what we call the 'second life' of the unit."

"Longevity of our Bell ADTs is assured by constant machine condition assessments (MCAs) and Bell Equipment does this for us during the first 2 500 hours of an ADT's life, after which we do that using our own or contracted mechanics. Bell Equipment has also convinced us that with using their branded lubrication oil changes can be pushed out to 500 hours from an earlier 250 hours, although we still believe in changing air filters and checking PTO couplings and propshaft oil levels at 250 hours."

"We as the ALS Group have probably committed 70% of our plant fleet to mining and competition is stiff," Erno says. "The ALS Plant Hire Division hires out machines to the ALS Mining Division on dry rates but they in turn work on wet rates with the mining client. This is where much of our competitive edge lies as our Bell B40D ADTs give us fuel consumption that certainly is the best-in-class, which all helps to give us lower cost-per-tonne production figures."

