

Genuine parts and daily checks keep CP Plant Hire's TLBs in high demand

When Rudolph Nel was employed by large civil engineering companies, he often had difficulty hiring Tractor Loader Backhoes (TLBs) from plant hire companies as these machines were in great demand. So when Rudolph started his own plant hire company with his brother, JC, he made sure he had enough new TLBs to fill that niche in the market.

Rudolph qualified as a Civil Engineering Surveyor and spent some time 'working back' his time with the civil engineering company that had granted him a scholarship. Upon registering with his professional body, he went on to broaden his horizons with another company, but in the back of his mind he always had the inkling to own his own business.

"My brother, JC, is a silent partner in the business and he and I registered a closed corporation back in 1998. It took me a further few years to work as a surveyor in order to build some cash-flow before embarking on buying any yellow machines for our fledgling plant hire company," he says. "We chose the name CP Plant Hire from our first names, his being Corn  and mine being Philip."

When CP Plant Hire decided to buy their first yellow machine, they researched the market thoroughly but in the end, their choice of original equipment supplier fell on Bell Equipment. When asked what the reason for this was, Rudolph says animatedly: "Bell Equipment received us warmly and we felt instantly at home with them. Their then Sales Manager, Deon van Rensburg, went out of his way to organise financing through Bell Finance at Wesbank for us and made us feel as if we were already major clients of theirs."

Within three months of taking delivery of their first Bell 315SG 4x2 TLB in December 2002, demand for CP Plant Hire's Bell TLB was so high that the Nel brothers had no hesitation in buying a second similar machine. "Clients are quick to realise that when hiring a new machine, possible work stoppages due to equipment failure will be minimal and this leads to word getting around that CP Plant Hire is a serious player in the market with new and reliable equipment and operators," Rudolph says. "This was our happy experience and led to sustained and repeat business from a growing client base."

Two more similar Bell TLBs were added to the fleet in 2004, and when a price increase loomed in 2006 the Nel brothers acted on sound advice from Bell Equipment and bought two further machines prior to the increase.

"We're happy to see our machines work wherever our clients need them across the length and breadth of South Africa and as most are relatively new and delivering high mechanical availabilities, our confidence is further boosted by the fact that Bell Equipment has a wide footprint and is never far away with experienced technical personnel and the correct parts, should that need arise," Rudolph adds. "We have a policy to use only genuine parts and although they cost a little more, it really is worth it in the long run."

CP Plant Hire's own mechanic, Willem Fritz, does scheduled maintenance on their Bell TLB machines once the standard warranties have expired. Innocent Maputla, who also trains the operators and ensures that daily checks before and after operating the machines are carried out, assists Fritz. These checks include lubricating, tyre pressures, cleaning the cabs and blowing out air filters. The CP Plant Hire fleet of Bell TLBs now numbers 20 machines and spans the 315SG, SJ and SK model ranges. The machines are transported to and from clients using a Beaver-tail truck, which is based at the company's head office at Leeuwfontein, north-east of Pretoria.

"We believe our Bell TLBs are popular with clients due to them delivering maximum uptime through quality design

and build, our trained and experienced operators and the preventative maintenance that we're strict on," Rudolph says. "Most work applications involve loading trucks, digging and backfilling of sewage trenches, attending to storm water drainage and general housekeeping duties. In addition to their reliability is their average fuel consumption of 8 to 10 litres per hour, which is quite frugal."

CP Plant Hire normally sell their older Bell TLBs out of hand after 8 000 to 10 000 hours, and because they have full service histories they are eagerly snapped up.

Demand from clients for a slightly more robust digging tool saw CP Plant Hire acquire a Bell HX230E Excavator in 2013. "We've been well pleased with this machine as have our many clients," Rudolph says. "It is very popular for the digging of trenches and we, in time, will look to add a larger machine such as a 27-tonne model to this one. We also believe that our demand from clients can justify us owning a fleet of 30 Bell TLBs and that is our vision for the immediate future."

"We have over some years now had great support from Bell Equipment who has shown that they understand our business and appreciate the challenges we face on a daily basis. With that kind of support, we look ahead with confidence and this confidence saw us take delivery of five new Bell 315SK TLBs in March 2016."



(From left): CP Plant Hire's Mechanic, Willem Fritz, with the company's General Manager, Rudolph Nel and Bell Equipment Sales Representative, Danie Opperman.

