

# Bell TLB is a game changer for Radius Civil Contractors



**Having experienced manual labour with a pick and shovel has made a Pretoria-based civil contractor so much more appreciative of the versatility he is enjoying using his Bell 315SL 4x4 Tractor Loader Backhoe (TLB).**

Philippus Rudolph Viljoen is known as PR to his family and friends. His father, who has the same names, had run his own civil construction company, PRV Construction since before PR Jnr could remember. It was to the latter that he turned when a budding career as a rugby player was cut short in 2005.

“When I started working for my dad, I literally started at the bottom, swinging a pick and shovel and, ironically, working on the developing township which is now the densely populated Midstream Estates between Pretoria and Johannesburg,” PR tells us. “My dad’s company acted as a sub-contractor to larger construction

companies and over time he gave me more responsibility, through which I gained experience of laying pipes, building roads and culverts and a host of civil construction tasks.”

A hankering to be self-employed led PR to learn all he could from his father and in 2011, he set out on his own under the name of Radius Civil Contractors. “I started out by approaching larger contractors to give me the work that they were too busy to attend to, and one of the first tasks that my staff of six and I handled successfully was the building of traffic calming humps in many of the roads in Midstream Estates,” he says. “This was followed by other small tasks such as sub-soil piping and pipe repairs and slowly but surely we grew in both experience and confidence.”

By the nature of civil construction, larger projects meant that PR could no longer use manual labour only. He hired



in TLBs, excavators and tipper trucks. “As any contractor will tell you, hiring in earthmoving equipment is great to get the job done but it really does eat into one’s bottom line,” he says. “I soon realised that to increase our profitability, I would need to own my own earthmoving equipment and by mid-2016 I started researching the market in earnest.”

PR is adamant that his father’s experience of owning an older model Bell 315 TLB, which is known as a tough and reliable workhorse, meant that he did not look too far. Along with Bell Sales Representative, Chris Botha, they structured a deal through Bell Finance and in early February 2017, PR took delivery of a new Bell 315SL 4x4 TLB and a Bomag BW120AD Tandem Roller.

“One of the best things we did with this new Bell TLB was to fit optional forks onto the front bucket,” he adds. “We handle a lot of pallets with paving bricks and the forks on the versatile Bell 315SL TLB mean that we don’t need an additional machine on our sites as the forks are easily managed and fold out of the way when we need the front bucket for loading material or backfilling trenches. Trenches are dug using the bucket on the rear boom and Bell must be a leader in its class here with the superior break-out force and easy reach this tool offers. I know as I had been operating the machine myself until an operator joined us.”

Current work tasks have not been light on Radius Civil Contractors’ new Bell 315SL TLB as soaking rains have made material handling heavy work. An average fuel consumption of 20 hours of heavy work for a 140-litre tank translates into fuel burn of 7 litres an hour, and this PR Viljoen finds quite pleasing.

“We are currently using our Bomag BW120AD Tandem Roller to compact base layers for brick paving and it is narrow enough to get into really tight corners and next to kerbs, making the eventual laying of the bricks a piece of

cake as compaction is up to standard across the entire surface area,” he explains.

Having learnt so much from his father, PR believes that any machine is only as good as its technical back up, with preventative maintenance being key to the longevity of equipment. For this reason he has signed a service agreement with Bell Equipment so that qualified personnel from the OEM’s Customer Service Centres will take care of the maintenance to 2 000 hours.

“I realise that this is a small beginning for us but I’m keen to establish a plant division which will service our civil construction division, and as it stands now Bell Equipment will be a big role player in our goal.”



PR Viljoen (left) with Bell Equipment Sales Representative, Chris Botha.