US dealer input puts Bell Tracked Carrier in a class of its own

United States

Since Bell Equipment began in the early 1950s it has listened to customers to understand their equipment needs and worked with them to deliver the most effective solution. With Bell Equipment's latest product development, the Bell Tracked Carrier, a dealer advocate group from the United States made invaluable input to fine-tune the concept so that Bell was able to design and manufacture a product that delivers far more than the competitor machines.

Jesse Beasley, Chief Operating Officer for National Equipment Dealers (NED), was part of the group. NED consists of four companies including Four Seasons Equipment in Texas, May Heavy Equipment in North and South Carolina and Earthmovers Construction Equipment in Florida and is the largest Bell ADT dealership in North America.

Jesse recalls that it was during a dealer trip to South Africa when Bell first discussed developing a tracked carrier. "Looking at the Bell dealership group in the United States, a lot of them were selling a competitor product. Some of the larger dealers were into that business, Mitch Nevins being one of them with Four Seasons. He was a dealer and so Bell saw an opportunity to get into the market. While we were over there, they were kind enough to let us have some input on the concept and what we liked best about it, comparing the different brands and manufacturers. A lot of the group on that dealer trip ended up being involved in the process."

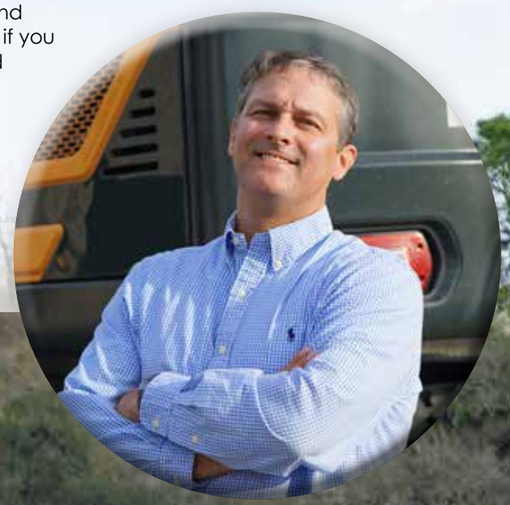
Tracked carriers are typically used in some of the worst underfoot conditions, where other machines would be unable to operate. Jesse said: "Ground conditions are often so soft that ADTs would be too heavy and get stuck. Sometimes the angle of attack makes it unsuitable for other machines because the machine is travelling directly up a hill and would end up slipping or rolling down.

Made to go anywhere, comfortably

"Bell listened to the robustness needed by the machine for the applications we were going to put them in. They really heard us when we said these machines are going to be put through their paces daily. Companies don't use a tracked carrier if they don't need a tracked carrier, so they are going to be in tough situations."

According to Jesse, the unique design of the undercarriage and choice of materials delivers this robustness. "Bell came up with a tensile design with a walking beam that keeps tension on the tracks and delivers extra ground pressure. The design is far beyond anything that is on the market and improves the ride. And if you look at the Bell Tracked Carrier there's a lot of metal on it. They didn't use plastics, they used stuff that somebody could drive through the woods. That was what all the dealers spoke about – this machine has got to be able to be put through its paces."

NED had the prototype Tracked Carriers for a while, which were placed with customers in the Carolinas who were able to put them through their paces. Jesse commented: "The Carolinas is the low country, it's below sea level so there's a lot of flooding. Many people build dams out there by damming up rice fields, so the trucks were out there for a while helping to build dams.



Jesse Beasley - Chief Operating Officer for National Equipment Dealers, LLC.

Santee Cooper, a South Carolina utility provider, who is the electrical co-op or company for the low country, had them for most of the time on projects where they were building ponds and levees.

"They performed excellently. There wasn't one person who had the Tracked Carrier who didn't like it and said they wouldn't purchase one, which is obviously great for us to hear. The whole time they were here they pretty much ran flawlessly, which is a huge benefit when you're trying to introduce people to a product or brand they haven't seen before."

NED has seven of the Bell TC11As and one Bell TC7A and sees a strong opportunity for the Bell Tracked Carrier to gain market share because of its design attributes. "Right now, the oil and gas industry is down but when oil and gas starts pumping again, those guys take these machines in groups, so I would think that the Bell product would jump at that stage."

Another benefit of the Bell Tracked Carrier, that Jesse believes will influence market share gain, is the fact that both models have been designed to include a lot of commonalities with their engine and filters. "It just makes them an easy platform for an end user/ owner to have in their fleet. It also helps that all the filtration is conveniently located behind the cab."

Versatile, user-friendly configurations

Both models offer different configurations on the backend to suit a customer's needs. The TC7A has a combination bin that can be used as a dump bed or a flat deck when the sides are folded down and the tailgate is removed. The TC11A can be ordered with either a dump bed or a flat deck.

"The preferred configuration differs from place to place and company to company," said Jesse. "Companies like Newman Tractor are going to put different attachments on the back of the Tracked Carrier just because they deal in pipeline work and work with pipeline contractors, whereas we're primarily dealing with people with dirt, so we'll have dump beds on ours most of the time. Newman was involved in the spacing of the bed in the back, the way attachments are taken on and off, and how the pumps were set up for those attachments.

"I demonstrated a truck against a competitor for a cement mixing application. They were going to put a cement mixer or a lime spreader on the back of the Tracked Carrier and one of things that highlighted the Bell machine throughout that demo was the way that they set the back up with removable panels. If you put something on the back of the truck you can still remove the panels to work on the hydraulics, whereas with the competitor machine you would have to remove the attachment. It's simple little things like that that lead to a sale. We won the demo based on the ease of putting the attachment on, the serviceability and the ride comfort. I believe that will help us sell the first Tracked Carrier to that customer when he's ready to purchase."

Commenting further on the comfort aspect, Jesse continued: "Some companies miss the cab comfort aspect of these types of machines, but if the operator is comfortable, he's going to get more work done. These types of trucks typically don't have a lot of suspension so the operator is taking a beating in the cab, but the way Bell has done the cruise control and designed the comfort of the cab the operator can stay productive all day long. At the end of the demo, it's about getting the job done and the operator climbing out with a smile on his face that is what is important in the hearts and minds of those buying those machines."