

# New Kobelco and JCB machines benefit Martmol Trading

When Martin Molewa was a bank teller, he learnt to count money. Jump ahead a few years, by which time Martin was a borehole contractor, and while laying water pipes with his own hands he learnt about the value of money and what it could buy in terms of mechanised means to make the job easier and faster.

"My parents, through their own entrepreneurial ventures, had laid the foundation in me to be similarly self-employed, which is what caused me to leave the banking world and start my own business," Martin says when we meet in his comfortable office outside Tzaneen. "This was back in 2007 and I did sub-contract work for borehole contractors, acting as the middle-man between the contractor and the client while also learning about the drilling business."

Martin tells that he was then still unattached and threw himself into the world of borehole drilling, working relentlessly and he soon owned his own drill rigs and regularly got down and dirty installing pumps and laying water pipes once underground aquifers had been breached.

"I now felt I owned the whole value chain around drilling for water and by 2010, started looking around for other opportunities related to civil construction," he says. "This I found in road construction for which there was a big demand in our Limpopo Province as the provincial government and local municipalities started making good on their promises of service delivery."

Keeping an open mind, Martin learnt about road construction as his business grew and he also learnt that hiring in earthmoving and road construction equipment, such as loaders, graders, trucks and pavers, costs dearly and had a real impact on bottom line profits. The answer to a more profitable business lay in owning his own yellow machine fleet and this challenge he



Bell Sales Representative, David Papi (left), chats to Martmol Trading owner, Martin Molewa, besides one of the latter's new JCB 3DX Backhoe Loaders.

**"They're powerful machines and we've used them extensively to dig and load material out of borrow pits, dig trenches for foundations and water lines and to load trucks."**

*Martin Molewa*



addressed head-on. His company called Martmol Trading, a combination of his name and surname, was by now well-known.

"One of the first pieces of equipment I bought in 2012 was a Bell 315SJ Tractor Loader Backhoe (TLB) which to my mind was best suited to our needs as a versatile tool," he says. "The other consideration was that the TLB should last a long time as durability was more important to us than efficiency."

At the same time, Martin was buying tipper trucks, rollers, graders and pavers, all the types of equipment essential to road construction. Martmol Trading was by then able to offer road construction services from base course to blacktop.

"It was reassuring to know that while buying earthmoving equipment from Bell Equipment, one was assured of technical support and the availability of spares as the company has a fully-fledged branch right here in Tzaneen to add to its wide national footprint," Martin adds. "More

Bell TLBs followed the first machine and we own several Bell TLBs in both the 315 SJ and SK ranges." "When it came to larger digging and loading tools like excavators, we again turned to Bell Equipment whose sales representative at the time assured us that the Kobelco range of machines had no beating in the market and the three Kobelco SK210LC-10 Excavators we bought have certainly proved that. They're powerful machines and we've used them extensively to dig and load material out of borrow pits, dig trenches for foundations and water lines and to load trucks."

Martin has through hard and diligent work, grown his company Martmol Trading exponentially and now employs 110 permanent staff across many disciplines and employs even more manual and casual labour in areas where his company undertakes projects. A subsidiary company owns five filling stations and distributes both diesel and petrol fuel. He also buys land and develops housing estates around Tzaneen.

"Bell Equipment recently transferred a new sales representative to our area, and I can tell my own staff about the results that persistence brings," Martin tells us with a broad smile. "David Papi has been relentless in his calling on us and it has certainly paid off for both parties as we've bought several new machines from Bell Equipment as a result."

These machines include three Kobelco SK220XD-10 and two Kobelco SK260LC-10 Excavators, one JCB CT260-100 and two JCB CT160-100 Smooth Drum Rollers.

Martin and his staff have been impressed with the efficiency the new equipment has shown as was plain to see when watching one of the Kobelco SK220XD-10 Excavators working on the site of a new road in the rural village of Skororo near Tzaneen.

We spoke to the Kobelco Excavator's operator who was excavating soft soil where the new road was to be built and loading it into 12-cubic metre tipper trucks in a matter of minutes. Victor Mukwevho has been operating a variety of excavator brands during his 15 years in this role and is full of praise for the Kobelco SK220-10's responsive controls and well-designed cab.

"This is the best machine I have ever worked in, and you can see that I load a 12-cubic metre truck in under five minutes because the hydraulic flows are so true with the Kobelco's engine sounding like it's merely idling," he says. "I also enjoy the machine's compact design which means that with no real tail swing, the Kobelco Excavator can work comfortably in areas with houses and powerlines nearby."

Martmol Trading's policy on machine replacement is based on when a piece of equipment starts costing too much to maintain, that equipment is then sold off on auction. This was the case recently when the company sold off some older TLBs and again turned to David Papi of Bell Equipment for replacement equipment.

The company now owns an impressive list of machines with the latest acquisitions comprising four JCB 3DX Plus Backhoe Loaders, three Kobelco SK220XD Excavators, two Kobelco SK260LC Excavators, two JCB 116D Rollers and one JCB 260-120 Tandem Roller.

"We have been pleased with the four new JCB 3DX Backhoe Loaders we've bought and have added front forks to further increase their versatility," Martin says. "All our machines are bought with standard warranties during which time we have the assurance that Bell Equipment does the servicing. Having the Bell Equipment branch on our doorstep in Tzaneen is a confidence booster as we know that even once a machine is out of warranty and we do the maintenance ourselves, spare parts can be obtained quickly, even if they need to be specially brought in."

A dynamic and energetic operator such as Martin Molewa is hard to rein in and he is now looking north of South Africa's borders to use his company's expertise on water supply projects in Zambia. He is also confident that earthmoving machines supplied by Bell Equipment will bring success in this new venture.

