

# Constructo takes delivery of two Kobelco Excavators for mining contracts

**When two young engineering graduates decided to give something back to society by tutoring talented high school learners attending a high-performance sports coaching institution in Pretoria, little could they know that this would lead them to buying quality earthmoving equipment backed by a legendary large service footprint.**

Thomas Ngake and Lesego Tsoetsi had met at the University of Pretoria. Thomas qualified as a Mining Engineer and Lesego as a Chemical Engineer, and being firm friends, they decided that they would seek their fortune with their own company, supplying a variety of services to the mining sector.

"Our plans had looked good on paper but when reality kicks in it's not that easy to break into the mining world," Thomas says. "We spent around three years from 2014 to 2017 networking and to keep food on the table we tutored youngsters at the University of Pretoria's High Performance Centre."

"The first real mining-related contract we landed saw us stockpiling coal and doing general material handling at a large coal mine near Lephalale, which feeds the Medupi power station," Lesego says.

"To do this we had to hire in equipment like wheel loaders, rigid tipper trucks and interlinked side-tipping truck rigs."

And so, in 2017 their company Constructo Civil Construction and Mining Services (Pty) Ltd formally came into being.

The business partners soon found that while hiring in equipment was a solution to getting started in the mining services business, it was also expensive and had an indelibly negative effect on their profit margin which is so essential for any business to succeed.

"After eight months we had enough cash reserves to buy our own side-tipping 18-cubic metre truck rig, which we still have, but we realised we needed more yellow machines," Thomas explains. "This we found in two new JCB 3DX Backhoe Loaders which we bought in 2021 due to the popularity of the brand, which seemed to be the name associated most with this type of machine."

The two JCB 3DX Backhoe Loaders, now boasting around 2 500 hours each, have proved invaluable on many mining services contracts the young company has ventured into and are used for trenching, backfilling, digging and general housekeeping duties.

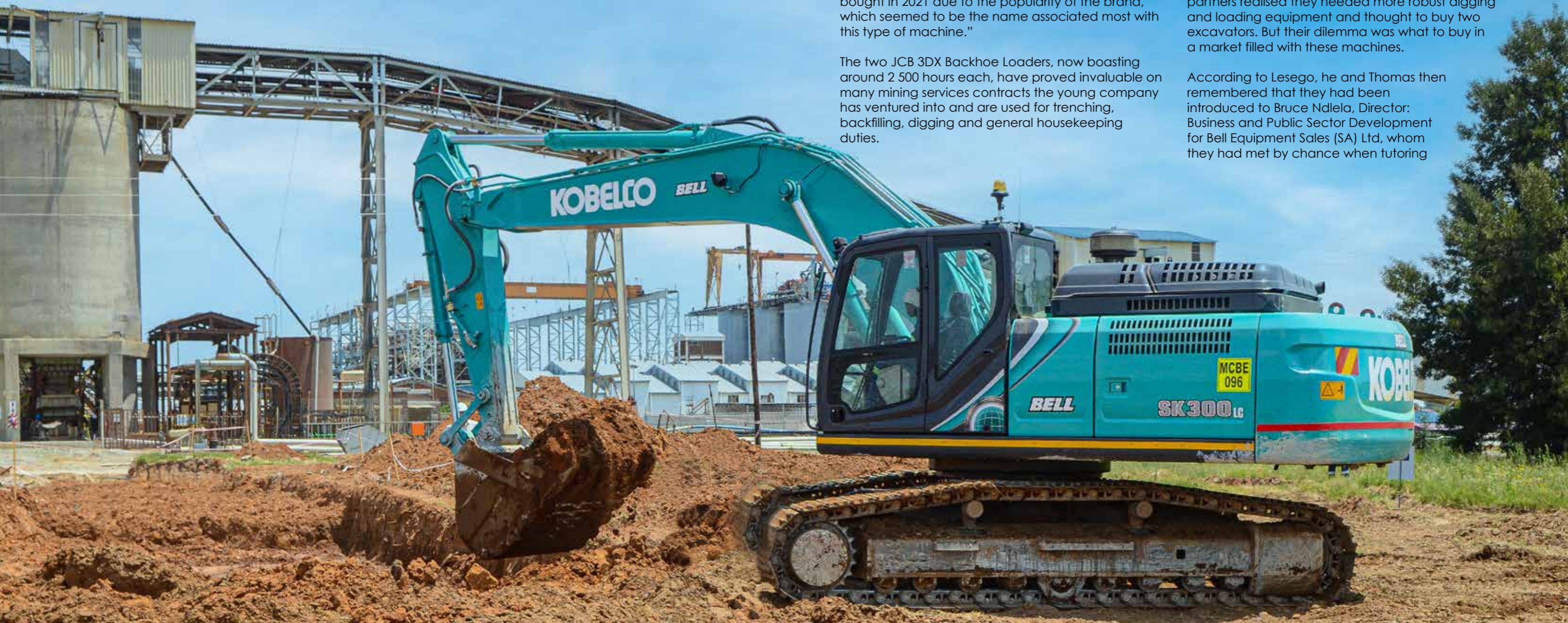
Nico van Rensburg is a backhoe loader operator and says the following of the JCB 3DX model: "I've been operating this type of equipment for nine years now and this JCB 3DX is the best machine of its type that I've worked with. The cab has enough space and good visibility, and the controls are smooth, preventing operator fatigue, which is a definite factor during sustained work on especially mining sites.

I really enjoy working with the JCB 3DX Backhoe Loader."

"We generally work on wet rates, meaning we supply the fuel for a contract and having these two JCB 3DX Backhoe Loaders burning only around six litres of diesel an hour means that we're able to execute the work within budget," says Larnston Gowera, a Mining Engineer with multidisciplinary mining and materials handling experience, who joined the company as a partner a couple of years ago.

When Constructo landed a mining contract, tasked with material handling and earthworks for construction purposes for a large gold mining company on their various shafts in the Free State, the partners realised they needed more robust digging and loading equipment and thought to buy two excavators. But their dilemma was what to buy in a market filled with these machines.

According to Lesego, he and Thomas then remembered that they had been introduced to Bruce Ndlela, Director: Business and Public Sector Development for Bell Equipment Sales (SA) Ltd, whom they had met by chance when tutoring





his son, Jordan, at the University of Pretoria. Bruce Ndlela remembers meeting the two young entrepreneurs: "I was struck by the ambition and energy that these two recently graduated engineers showed and when they contacted me after establishing their own business to find out more about what Bell Equipment could offer them. I felt comfortable introducing them to our Sales Representative, Enock Mabaso, to see to their equipment needs," Bruce says.

Enock Mabaso introduced Constructo's three partners to the Kobelco Excavator range and their choice fell on two machines, the Kobelco SK220XD-10 and SK300LC-10 models that were delivered to them in early 2022. Added to the two Kobelco Excavators was a Bell L2106E Wheel Loader, which now brought Constructo's machine and truck fleet to number 20.

They had also bought a vintage Bell 1756 Haulage Tractor with a 10-cubic metre tip-trailer from the gold mining company, and it is used in areas with tight turning circles where the interlinked rigs can't get

into. "We knew nothing of the Kobelco range of Excavators but were reassured by the fact that Bell Equipment, now also the local distributor for the JCB range of equipment, was the distributor. Coupled with the company's excellent reputation and large network of service centres this convinced us that this was the way to go," says Larnston.

"We haven't been disappointed in the Kobelco Excavators as they seem to purr along when digging trenches or loading trucks with excellent hydraulic flows without putting undue strain on the engine."

Hard working and certainly ambitious, the three partners of Constructo Civil Construction and Mining Services are looking beyond South Africa's borders for mining opportunities. Depending on the loading and haulage equipment they may need, they are confident that machines distributed by Bell Equipment will be in that mix.



**Lesego Tsotetsi (left) with Thomas Ngake and the Bell 1756 Tractor.**

