

New Kobelco SK380XDLC-10s fit seamlessly into West Reef's operation

When a young and newlywed Anton Weststrate and his bride, Joke, visited South Africa in 1979, little could they know that the country that they would fall in love with on that memorable trip would become their permanent home with a successful business to match.

After emigrating from the Netherlands in 1980, Anton Sr started a family in South Africa followed by his own business in 1993, with a single bulldozer.

"My dad had developed a love for bulldozers, especially the heavier classes, but he soon realised that an excavator, albeit a used one, could also add value to his fledgling business, which was hiring plant to companies working in the gold mining and construction industries," Anton Weststrate (Jnr) says.

"Our company West Reef Plant Hire, with the name derived from our surname, built its reputation hiring equipment to companies involved in the construction of roads and big commercial projects as well as the tailings deposits on gold mines."

Anton Junior joined his father in the business in 2011 after completing tertiary studies in Mining Engineering. Since then, their company's client base has swung to approximately 80% being involved in mining. Their fleet of yellow machines consists of dozers, articulated dump trucks (ADTs), graders, wheel loaders, backhoe loaders, and excavators.

"My dad taught me that preventative maintenance is a key factor in ensuring the longevity of equipment. To complement this we have a large maintenance team, who apart from regular maintenance and repair, oversee the refurbishment of our equipment to extract second and even third lives from selected machines," Anton says. "We don't have a fixed policy on machine replacement but will judge any machine on its merit and replace it when we feel it is due."



Bell Equipment Sales Representative, Ebrahim Astree, (left) with Anton Weststrate (Jnr), Operational Manager West Reef Plant Hire.

As luck would have it, the Weststrates were in the market for two new excavators in the 40-ton class when Bell Equipment Sales Representative, Ebrahim Astree, and his colleague, Product Support Representative, Refiloe Mokone, visited the company at its Heidelberg head office in January 2023. "We were very impressed with the product knowledge of both Ebrahim and Refiloe on the merits of the Kobelco SK380XDLC-10 Excavators and having had the experience of this well-known Japanese brand, going back to 2009 when we owned some of their 20-ton machines, it made the decision easy for us," Anton adds. "A client of ours also sang the brand's praises and we duly committed to two new Kobelco SK380XDLC-10 machines, which were delivered in July 2023."

"We ultimately chose the Kobelco SK380XDLC-10 Excavator for a number of reasons, which include the right price, proven reliability, and low cost of ownership in the long run," Anton continues. "As our business model sees us extract a long life from any machine such as the Kobelco with its simple yet rugged design, we have enough confidence in the brand to believe that these two machines will still be giving us a solid return on our investment over 10 to 15 years' time. Knowing we have the likes of Bell Equipment offering technical support and genuine parts, increases our confidence and fully justifies our decision."

The two new Kobelco SK380XDLC-10 Excavators have been deployed at two different sites with the first being a large industrial plant where it is used to build an ash deposit. At the second site, situated in the Vaal Triangle, the machine is used to mine sand near a river and load trucks that fetch the product from a large sand screening operation.

"We're pleased to say that our seasoned operators took to the new Kobelco SK380XDLC-10 Excavators seamlessly and report that the controls are smooth and responsive while the cabs offer real comfort and good all-around visibility," Anton says. "While we work on dry rates without the challenges of fuel cap limits, we've been able to confidently assure our clients of at least a 15% saving on fuel as these Kobelcos just seem to purr along while still delivering more than adequate hydraulic flows."

The pair of Kobelco Excavators have been bought with standard warranties of 12 months or 2 500 hours as, according to Anton, they prefer doing their own maintenance once the warranties have run their course and are geared for the task with trained staff and a large well-equipped workshop.

"We're pleased that a solid company such as Bell Equipment distributes and backs a great brand such as Kobelco as we already have an established relationship with Bell Equipment from the six Bell B40D ADTs we have running on a coal mine near Middelburg," Anton mentions.

