

Kobelco Excavator boosts production for AML Aggregates

When Raksha Laghari needed a new quarry-specified loading tool for the quarry they had just bought they turned to Bell Equipment for the right advice and tool for the job.

Raksha Laghari is the owner of AML Aggregates Newcastle. She has been in the business of selling and distributing building materials, with a focus on cement and roof tiles, for many years. But, being a true ambitious trader, she decided it was time to own more of the building and construction material value chain and bought two quarries from an established South African cement manufacturer and supplier of aggregate and building stone.

The two quarries are situated near Newcastle and Ladysmith in KwaZulu-Natal, and we visited the Newcastle operation. Here we found Nicholas Kunene, a veteran of the previous company who has worked at the Newcastle quarry for 47 years and is the current production and maintenance team leader. He reports to Hein Grebe who was recently appointed the manager.

"We produce different sizes of stone aggregate and crusher dust from the dolerite rock we mine in a traditional drill, blast, load and haul operation," Nicholas says. "We use the excavator to load the blasted rock onto two Articulated Dump Trucks (ADTs) that undertake the short haul to the primary jaw crusher."

From the jaw crusher the crushed rock is fed into a cone crusher that reduces it further before a screen separates sized material and dust. Oversized rock goes back into the cone crusher to be further reduced. The stone aggregate is sorted according to size, and this is stockpiled for transport to customers. The quarry also produces a rounded stone aggregate that binds better into road construction layers. Even the very fine crusher dust of between 7,1mm and 4,7mm is sold to companies making cement bricks and doing paving.

"The previous owners had hired earthmoving, loading, and haulage equipment but we really wanted to own our own equipment for this purpose," Raksha says. "While we had found two used 30-ton ADTs in good condition on the pre-owned market, we thought it prudent to buy a new excavator that was job-specific due to the dense and abrasive nature of dolerite stone."

Raksha goes on to explain that AML was keen to buy an excavator from a well-known brand and when looking for agents for JCB equipment she found Bell Equipment was the official South African distributor.

"Although we're based in Durban, we were directed to the Pietermaritzburg branch of Bell Equipment into whose area our Newcastle operation would fall," Raksha says. "Here we met Bell Sales Representative, Brent Nelson, who was very knowledgeable, and we were impressed by the sound advice he gave us regarding the correct loading tool for our purposes."

That loading tool turned out to be a Kobelco SK380XDL-10 Excavator with additional features for use in heavy quarry work as Brent Nelson explains: "The Kobelco SK380XDL-10 has been designed specifically for work in hard-rock mining such as a quarry where dolerite is extracted. The keyword here is protection of the machine and operator and this is achieved by reinforcing the boom and arm with rock guards, side-deck bumpers, and other protective guards. A lot of attention has been paid to protecting the drivetrain with a reinforced guide frame, double support outer flange upper rollers, thicker steel plate for shoes, reinforced motor cover and lower frame underside cover. All in all, this machine is virtually rock proof."

Brent adds that the well-designed cab with roll-over protection (ROPS) is easy to get in and out of and with operator comfort paramount, translates into a safe operation. Daily maintenance points are easy to get to through easily accessible ports.

AML Aggregates' Kobelco SK380XDL-10 Excavator has been bought with a three-year/6 000 hour extended warranty on the hydraulics, wet drivetrain, and engine and during that time it will be maintained by mechanics from Bell Equipment's branch in Newcastle. Although it is still new, having been delivered in July 2022, average fuel consumption is not expected to top 25 litres an hour with the bonus of a fuel-saver power button which increases hydraulic flows.

"Another reason for us buying this Kobelco Excavator is that Bell Equipment has a branch staffed with trained mechanics right here in Newcastle which avoids expensive travel costs from larger centres such as Durban or Pietermaritzburg," Ali says. "This is further proof of Bell Equipment's large service footprint and reasons why we're keen to support such a local brand."

Nicholas Kunene has the last word when he says: "This Kobelco Excavator has had an immediate impact on our production figures as it is used for so many tasks like loading the ADTs in the quarry, stockpiling our product, and doing general housekeeping. Because of it, we have a tidy quarry, production areas, and product stockpiles, which all point to a productive and safe workplace."



AML Aggregates Production and Maintenance Team Leader, Nicholas Kunene.

