

Kobelco SK220XDLC-10 proves successful as a drill rig carrier

Excavators are known to be powerful machines and above all stable, as the mass created with their tracked undercarriages lends them stability. This is thought to be the reason why excavators have evolved into different applications besides the use of their buckets for digging and loading.

They can be seen in the forestry industry felling, processing, and loading timber. In mining and construction applications they can be used to break rock and concrete when fitted with hydraulic hammers. An innovative engineering company based at Donkerhoek to the east of Pretoria has now successfully added yet another use to these versatile carriers - that of a drill rig.

Hyperion Drilling & Manufacturing was founded in 2007 by Kenny Truter and, when meeting Kenny, one is immediately struck by his brimming inner energy that translates into the success he's had with his business in a competitive environment. "I qualified as a fitter and turner at ISCOR back in 1996 but as there were no positions available in the company, I had to head out into the big wide world to find work," he says.



This he found with a large drilling company where he gained valuable experience during 10 years building drill rigs. A short stint working with a friend in the roof truss industry taught him about working with clients in business before he ventured into Africa with a Zimbabwe-based drilling company that did exploration work in that country as well as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia.

"By 2007 I felt I had enough confidence and experience to go out on my own and I built five drill rigs for my erstwhile employer from Zimbabwe," he adds. "These drill rig set-ups would consist of three Samil trucks bought on the used market where we would fit the drill rig on one, a compressor on a second, and the drill rods and other ancillary equipment on a third."

Kenny says that in 2012 a client suggested they mount a drill rig on an excavator. It radically changed their way of thinking when they mounted a drill rig on a 20-ton machine. The air compressor, which has the important role of providing the impetus for the drill's hammer action, was at that stage still mounted on a trailer that was towed behind the excavator.

"Three years later, we decided to mount the air compressor on the excavator by removing the rear counterweight and adapting that mounting bracket to accept the compressor," Kenny explains. "This

added weight of an additional engine providing more than enough stability to the whole rig proved to be really successful as it's now an all-in-one compact unit with no trailer behind it."

Having done conversions on many different brands of excavators since then, totalling an impressive 80 in number, Kenny thought to try this on a brand of excavator he had never worked on after speaking to friends in the know. "It was after I had first heard of Kobelco Excavators from my friends at ALS that I came into contact with Bell Equipment's Sales Representative, Kobus van Niekerk, who impressed me with his technical knowledge of what this bright turquoise brand could offer us," Kenny recalls. "We subsequently bought through Kobus, a Kobelco SK220XDLC-10 machine at a competitive price from Bell Equipment and ordered it without the stick and bucket as we would not need those once the drill rig is mounted on the boom."

Kenny also explains that the 20-ton excavator range works best for them and their clients as it is relatively easy to transport in that it doesn't qualify as a large abnormal load and subsequently needs only one escort vehicle.

"We can offer our clients a variety of three different mast types, namely cable, cylinder, or chain masts, and we fit water-based dust suppression systems to all



Jaco Kruger, Kenny Truter, Jaco Prinsloo, and Ben van Staden of Hyperion Drilling & Manufacturing.



our excavator conversions along with additional fuel tanks," he says. "We've found the Kobelco Excavators to be particularly well designed, which makes them robust and well suited for work on mines in Africa, where several have been exported to. Added to this is Kobelco's all-weather cab which is very well insulated and makes for fatigue-reducing operator comfort and safety."

Regarding safety, Kenny further explains that excavator-based drill rigs like the Kobelco can work safely near high walls on opencast mines. Kenny and his team have also experienced the Kobelco SK220XDL-10 Excavator with its slightly longer undercarriage that provides more stability, to have very good hydraulic pressure, which produces a lower revving engine and subsequently better fuel consumption. All the hydraulic functions on the excavator are driven by the excavator's engine with only the compressed air on the drill rig running off the compressor.

"We've found the Kobelco Excavators easy to work on as their rugged design makes them well-suited for us to fit our range of Raptor drill rigs on and we look forward to working with more such quality equipment that is backed by a solid company such as Bell Equipment," he says.

