



Mini Excavators
Bobcat 335



SILVER
Medal Winner

Omaha life

Contractor relies on Neb. for work

Building retaining walls is tough work. There are long trenches to dig and heavy block to be lifted in place, not to mention extensive grading and backfilling. But a Crescent, Iowa, contractor who works mostly in the Omaha area has found that Bobcat 335 compact excavators can take a load off his shoulders.

"I use them on a daily basis for just about everything," said Brian Shea of Shady Shea Inc. "My two 335 excavators are the mainstay of my fleet. They show up every day, never call in sick and don't get bothered by the heat."

He purchased his first machine from Bobcat of Omaha about 11 years ago. The 335 is a conventional-tail-swing model with a 41.8-hp Tier IV diesel engine, a digging force of 7,892 lb and a rated lift capacity of 3,963 lb.

"I like the 335 for its lifting capacity," Shea said. "While a zero-tail-swing model would be useful in some situations, in most cases we just don't require that capability. I got the bucket with a thumb because it adds a lot of versatility. It gives me the ability to pick and move a variety of items, such as heavy retaining wall block, and it saves the backs of my crew."

Along with his two excavators, Shea runs two Bobcat loaders, a T300 track loader and an S250 skid-steer loader, and two trucks. Until last summer, he kept two crews busy the entire construction season, but the downturn in the economy forced him to cut back from nine employees to just four.

Among Shady Shea's most challenging projects are roadways with retaining walls built along slopes.

Both of his excavators are equipped with the Bobcat Hydraulic X-Change system. The system allows the operator to activate hydraulic pins at the flip of a switch. They can be retracted for attachment removal or extended for attachment hook-up. The operator only needs to install retainer pins before operating.

"Attachment capabilities make a big impact on your productivity," said Shea. "When attachment changes are simple, operators are more likely to use the proper size bucket and the best attachment for the job."

Shea owns buckets of various widths that allow his crew to precision-cut trenches for footings. "There's no use digging any wider than you need to," he explained. He also owns a packer wheel with a sheep-foot design that he uses to compact backfill; a wide grading blade that he uses for finish grading, backfilling and leveling; and an auger. In addition, both of his units are equipped with angle blades for backfilling work.

Shea said typical retaining walls go 12 to 15 ft in height but he has built walls that are up to 35 ft high. Among his most challenging projects are roadways with retaining walls built along slopes. As the wall goes up, a geogrid material is laid behind it, filled with dirt and compacted. The process is repeated until finished height is attained. Later, a paving contractor applies either concrete or asphalt to the road surface.

Along with retaining walls, Shea's company also does large paving brick projects and drainage systems.

"This year started slow but I'm now starting to book up for the summer," he said. "I only have one crew working right now, but I may expand if business continues to pick up." **R&B**