



**Sawyer**  
Jim Snyder/  
Frank Pender

**Tailman**  
Jim Snyder/  
Frank Pender

**Log Scale**  
336

**Sawing Time**  
1 hr. 10 min. 56 sec.

**BF/HR**  
261

**Net Yield**  
309

**Percent Scale**  
92%

**Percent Overrun**  
-8%

# Mobile Dimension 12XLS

HAVING BEEN ABSENT from the last two Shoot-Outs, it was good to hear the distinctive sound of a Volkswagen engine back at this year's event. The Mobile Dimension is unique among the portable sawmills and commanded a lot of attention from the people who were more accustomed to band mills and swingblade mills. According to sawyer Jim Snyder, the Mobile Dimension was developed in the 1960s, making it one of the first portable mills. Since those days, there have been many advances such as an electric starter (the older models used a rope start for the VW engine). A few features, such as the old-fashioned round metal gas tank, however, remain to this day.

Jim is a relative newcomer to the business, having been with Mobile Dimension for only 21 years. Serving

as a mechanic, however, he has actually sawn lumber on the machine for a few hours. "This is my third show, and first Shoot-Out," he explained. "They just threw me into this thing head first, with no life jacket." The story behind the decision for Jim to saw depends on the teller. Jim's version is that Frank Pender, who is used to working on his own, balked at running the mill in front of a crowd and elected to be the tailman. Frank, on the other hand, insists that he "thought it would be more fun for Jim to do it, since he had never done it before." "I taught him everything he needs to know," he added.

Jim had a great teacher. With more than 20 years of running Mobile Dimension mills to cut Douglas fir logs in Oregon, Frank has owned three Mobile Dimension mills—"because of improvements,

not because they wore out,” he explained. Unfortunately, the classroom was not the best. As anyone who has participated in a Shoot-Out knows, the distractions and pressure of showing the mill to its best advantage can rattle even the most experienced sawyers.

According to Jim, the first challenge was in just moving the 30-foot-long, 3,900-pound machine through the mud and into its designated place for the event. “I’ve only got a two-wheel-drive truck and had to have another vehicle move the mill. Everyone there was really helpful.” With one log on the mill and three more waiting on the deck, Frank gave Jim a few last minute instructions before he was interrupted by the blast of the starting horn.

The Mobile Dimension is a fascinating machine to watch in

action. The carriage rolls down a square steel truss frame. The 30-inch-diameter vertical circle saw blade makes the main cut, led by a pair of smaller edger blades. Each pass out and back yields one or two boards, depending on the setting of the edger blades and the cut. Once the cutting starts, there is no turning the log, unless sawing for grade or sizes larger than 8-1/4 inches x 12-1/4 inches. The model at the Shoot-Out featured a 24-volt carriage height adjustment and a hydrostatic feed to move the blades through the wood. As he grew more accustomed to the machine, Jim used the adjustable edger blades to produce a variety of boards ranging from 3 inches to 10 inches wide.

Jim chose to take his time and cut conservatively. “I was cutting the boards to the maxi-

mum thickness, and probably could have gotten another board or two,” he admitted. Still, he only lost three—two for wane and one cut too thick—for a total yield of 309 BF in the hour and eleven minutes of sawing. Frank noted that some of the slabs he pulled off the log were a little on the heavy side. All of this combined for a cutting rate of 261 BF per hour, and board yield of 8% below the log scale. “I tried to just pay attention and have fun,” Jim said after finishing the demonstration.

Frank echoed the sentiment of just about everyone who worked on and participated in the Shoot-Out, “It was fun, but it was a muddy mess.” Frank says he also has a new nickname on timberforum.com. “One of the guys nicknamed me tail-gunner, because I was the tail-man.” ■



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