



Machine Operator
Shawn Bencze

Log Handler
Tim Batey

Time
25 min. 40 sec.

Cords Processed
1.5

Cords/Hour
3.5

Blockbuster 14-12

WHEN TIM BATEY AND SHAWN Bencze of Blockbuster (no connection to the video rental company) brought a skidsteer loader with their new grapple, they had no idea that it would be a workhorse for the event. After using the machine to bring up their logs for the Firewood Processing Competition, they loaned it to other competitors. The tracked machine seemed to float across the mud as it moved the firewood blocks to the splitters before pulling the 2,700-pound Blockbuster 14-12 into position for the Competition. “There was no problem with the mud,” said Shawn. “It’s a very portable machine.”

With a half dozen logs on its two-strand live deck, the twin cylinder 31-hp Briggs and Stratton Vanguard engine warmed up, Shawn at the controls, and Tim on the loader, the Blockbuster team had only to wait for the starting signal before putting their firewood processor to work.

As shop foreman of the Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, manufacturing plant,

Shawn literally knows every nut and bolt in the machine. “Everything went pretty smoothly,” he noted. Shawn’s experience on the 14-12 is limited to testing the machines before they leave the factory and a few demonstrations at shows, but he says the machine is easy to learn to use. “Everything on that machine is hydraulic. You simply stand there and run the controls.” In a short time, he set up a cutting rhythm that kept a

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consistent flow of wood through the machine.

Shawn advanced the log along the reversible infeed chain until it touched the length indicator, and then activated the 0.404-inch pitch hydraulic harvester chain saw cutoff



way wedge, using the hydraulic control to adjust its height to center on the firewood. On the smallest pieces he moved the wedge to the 2-way splitting position. Blockbuster chose power over speed on the splitting hydraulics for this machine. Whether it split a log six ways or in half, the 24-inch hydraulic ram maintained its cycle time of 7.5 seconds with no hang-ups or jams. The processing time of 25 minutes, 40 seconds was fine with Shawn. "We did have a few logs that maxed out the machine, and it took the machine a little longer to make those cuts," Shawn said afterwards, "but we wanted to show that." Accounting for the smaller logs, the 14-12 machine probably split close to one full cord. Even at that, it more than doubled the advertised processing rate of one cord per hour. ■

bar. As a safety feature and to save wear, the saw only runs when the cutting lever is activated. "The clamping and cutting cycles are automatic," he explained, "but you have to keep your hand on the valve. If you let go of the control valve,

everything (including the cutting chain) stops." The same holds true for the splitting cycle. The operator must hold the splitting valve during the split, though it does return with an automatic stop (detent valve).

Shawn used the standard 6-



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