

CAT® GLOBAL OPERATOR CHALLENGE

FINALS



Smooth Operator Finning Customer Wins

OPERATORS FROM CANADA AND IRELAND TAKE TOP HONORS

Those attending day one of CONEXPO-CON/AGG 2020 in Las Vegas were treated to a one-of-a-kind experience at Cat® Operator Stadium: the finals of the Cat Global Operator Challenge. Hosted by TV personality Mike Rowe and Rutledge Wood, the competition pitted nine of the world's best operators against each other in a series of obstacles.

Last year, Caterpillar launched the Global Operator Challenge at bauma—the world's largest trade fair in the construction industry—to celebrate the equipment operators who build our world, advocate and drive awareness for the trades, and elevate solutions that address jobsite challenges.

Seventy Cat dealers from 30 countries, representing 22 different languages, kicked off the program by holding local operator challenges from March through

September 2019. More than 10,000 operators competed in the local events.

On March 10, nine of the world's most talented equipment operators gathered at a temporary construction site erected off the Las Vegas strip to compete for the top spot in the Cat Global Operator Challenge finals.

The operators' skills were tested in three final machine challenges: operating a medium hydraulic excavator using GRADE 2D, a medium wheel loader with Production Management, and a Next Generation Mini Excavator.

Canada's Jaus Neigum proved himself the best of the best, emerging victorious after a tough test of skill and determination. Neigum, who hails from Medicine Hat,



Alberta, put his remarkable loading and trenching talents to work, winning both the Load and Carry Challenge and the Trenching Challenge. He completed all challenges with a low combined time of only 16 minutes and 28 seconds.

Neigum works for Industrial Backhoes Ltd. in Medicine Hat and has been operating heavy machinery for 20 years. Industrial Backhoes was created more than 45 years ago by Neigum's uncle. His father is also part of the company, and Neigum, 34, said he's been in the cab at the family business since he was a child.

"By the time I was eight years old I was running excavators and backhoes," Neigum told *Equipment Journal*. "I was born into it and I got to spend a lot of time at a young age learning how to operate—as soon as my feet could touch the pedals I was able to operate it.

"I love going into work every day," he adds. "Doing these competitions is just a lot of fun for me—it's definitely something I'm passionate about and I get to showcase my skills.

Neigum put in extra hours of practice prior to the finals in Las Vegas. He was able to practice with a 320 Hydraulic Excavator at his sponsoring Cat dealer, Finning Canada, in Edmonton ahead of the final competition.

"Getting to represent my country makes me very proud," Neigum said following the competition. "I hope to inspire the next generation of operators."

Following closely behind Neigum were second-place finisher Thomas Murphy from Ireland, and third-place finisher Sebastian Behr from Germany. Both displayed impressive speed, accuracy and overall operating best practices over the course of this hard-fought competition—as did all the finalists. **OTJ**

