[00:00:00:00 - 00:00:01:21]

(Music)

[00:00:01:21 - 00:00:11:14]

Intro/Outro Voice Over

Welcome to a special Con Expo edition of the Digging Deeper podcast, brought to you by Tena, helping construction companies know more, control more, and make more.

[00:00:12:14 - 00:00:26:19]

Ryan Wisner

Hi everyone, this is Ryan Wisner. I'm here today with Tim Boulds, Production Operations Manager for Kubota Tractor Corporation. He's going to share some insights on the company's entry into the stand-on track loader market with the introduction of the SCL 1000. Thanks for joining me today, Tim.

[00:00:28:16 - 00:00:48:15]

Ryan Wisner

Certainly, Kubota has its place in the compact equipment market, and you're coming out with the SCL 1000 in the stand-on track loader market. So what led Kubota to start down to get into that market?

[00:00:48:15 - 00:00:58:16]

Tim Boulds

Well, as always, we're looking for how to improve and how to expand our product lines.

[00:00:59:20 - 00:01:19:23]

Tim Boulds

And the key way that we do that is actually by surveying our dealers and customers as to what improvements they may want or new product that they would like. And this has been an item that's kind of been near the top of their requests for new products.

[00:01:21:21 - 00:01:30:00]

Tim Boulds

And basically, that's what it is. It's come through dealer surveys and listening to what our customers and dealers want.

[00:01:31:04 - 00:02:03:05]

Tim Boulds

And we decided that this would be a good time to enter the market. We kind of try to do our homework, and we see that this market is growing and that the popularity of these units is becoming more sought after by some of the different in-uses in the market. So that's kind of why we went this direction with expanding to this product line.

[00:02:03:05 - 00:02:15:12]

Ryan Wisner

And is it, for this type of product line, is it the landscapers and kind of into the rental market that these machines are being utilized?

[00:02:15:12 - 00:02:31:13]

Tim Boulds

Yeah, I mean, the highest portion of this, there's a very vast in-use category. But if you want to say landscapers and nurseries and rental markets,

[00:02:32:16 - 00:02:40:00]

Tim Boulds

those are probably your top three industries within this product type.

[00:02:40:01 - 00:02:42:00]

Ryan Wisner

Okay, okay, fair enough.

[00:02:42:01 - 00:02:51:11]

Tim Boulds

And those were all customers that we surveyed with what do you,

[00:02:53:00 - 00:03:06:18]

Tim Boulds

if they currently have one, what do you like about it? What do you don't? What do you want to see from Kubota as far as the product itself? And that's kind of how we came about on this machine.

[00:03:08:05 - 00:03:17:08]

Ryan Wisner

And so I guess that leads us right into it then, what is unique about the Kubota stand-on track loader?

[00:03:18:12 - 00:03:24:12]

Tim Boulds

Well, it is, there's actually quite a bit of uniqueness to this machine.

[00:03:25:15 - 00:03:31:23]

Tim Boulds

We tried to listen to the customers and give them what they wanted and what they were requesting.

[00:03:33:15 - 00:03:36:14]

Tim Boulds

I'll just go through some of the top features.

[00:03:38:12 - 00:04:02:07]

Tim Boulds

We've got a 4.3 color LCD monitor on this machine that provides us the ability to have a keyless start and password protection system on it. So that's unique. No one

else has a keyless start system on theirs. Everybody requires some sort of key to turn the machine on and start it.

[00:04:03:18 - 00:04:21:23]

Tim Boulds

So that's one thing. And another is the overall concept of the machine is being that it is only 36 inches wide with a wide track. Now wide track is typically a nine or 10 inch track. Ours is 9.8 inches wide.

[00:04:23:13 - 00:04:41:22]

Tim Boulds

So we have a fairly wide track on a narrow platform, basically a 36 inch wide. And that's just to be able to get in and out of backyards and into some tight spots with really good flotation, a light PSI footprint on the ground.

[00:04:43:10 - 00:04:49:05]

Ryan Wisner

So because that 36 inch, that's still going to allow you to get through a fence gate and that type of thing?

[00:04:49:05 - 00:05:10:00]

Tim Boulds

Yeah, the little walkthrough fence gates that are in a lot of backyards to be able to get in the backyards really easy. So in the way it differentiates is most of the other manufacturers have a narrow track and wide track offering. And if you want to get down to that 36 inch size,

[00:05:11:00 - 00:05:13:12]

Tim Boulds

you have to go with a narrow track,

[00:05:14:18 - 00:05:18:04]

Tim Boulds

which is typically a seven inch track. Sure.

[00:05:19:06 - 00:05:23:04]

Tim Boulds

So that's kind of a little bit of the difference and uniqueness there.

[00:05:24:20 - 00:06:05:16]

Tim Boulds

We do have a 5.1 mile an hour travel speed both forward and reverse, which is basically the fastest out there according to paper, you know, on paperwork. So and it allows these machines are going from the front of the house through the gate to the backyard to do a lot of work or that type of thing. And, you know, the faster you can get it done, the more you can move on and get another job done. Part of it, if you look at the couple of pictures that got sent along with it, and if you're familiar with our larger compact track loaders?

[00:06:05:19 - 00:06:07:09]

Ryan Wisner

To some extent, yes, yes

[00:06:07:10 - 00:06:15:14]

Tim Boulds

So if you look at the way this machine looks, we took a lot of features from our big machines and put them into the small machine.

[00:06:16:17 - 00:06:35:05]

Tim Boulds

For example, the loader is vertical lift. It is and it looks like the loader arms off of our track loaders. The undercarriage, the track system is designed similar. It's a welded purpose built machine. So it's not a bolt on set of tracks.

[00:06:36:14 - 00:06:37:14]

Tim Boulds

It has

[00:06:38:15 - 00:06:43:11]

Tim Boulds

permanently sealed rollers on the bottom that's lubricated.

[00:06:44:18 - 00:07:04:04]

Tim Boulds

So, you know, some of the competitors have grease arcs on theirs instead of permanent sealed options. So your reliability and your maintenance goes down because ours are sealed and lubricated. The overall undercarriage, you know, has a grease tension. Some competitors don't have that.

[00:07:05:12 - 00:07:10:01]

Tim Boulds

They're using a wrench to tighten or loosen the tracks.

[00:07:12:00 - 00:07:14:07]

Tim Boulds

So, you know, a lot of our efforts there.

[00:07:16:14 - 00:07:36:18]

Tim Boulds

One of the other things is the engine in our machine. It is a Kubota diesel. It's a very popular model, a D902. However, we've added a turbocharger to that. So it gives us the ability to... We stayed under the 25 horsepower emissions threshold, you know, where you have to add a

[00:07:39:14 - 00:07:51:05]

Tim Boulds

after treatment for the exhaust if you go above 25. We don't have to do that now. And it gives us the performance at a higher altitude level because it's a turbocharged engine.

[00:07:53:02 - 00:07:59:09]

Tim Boulds

Our control handles are pilot operated instead of linkage.

[00:08:00:13 - 00:08:20:23]

Tim Boulds

So we kind of brought that down from our bigger machine into this one. We have a unique T-handle drive system for the machine that is patent-pending. And the loader arm control as well as being pilot operated, it is...

[00:08:23:21 - 00:08:29:22]

Tim Boulds

We incorporated our auxiliary hydraulics into that handle with push buttons.

[00:08:30:23 - 00:08:34:04]

Tim Boulds

And those push buttons are proportional control.

[00:08:35:10 - 00:08:42:19]

Tim Boulds

Meaning that if you push them a little bit, a little bit of flow and the more you push them, the more flow goes. So they're proportional.

[00:08:43:21 - 00:08:57:23]

Tim Boulds

Whereas many of the competitors have a separate lever on the dash or on the control area to control their auxiliary hydraulics. We've incorporated that into the loader control handle.

[00:08:59:00 - 00:09:02:20]

Tim Boulds

So... Let's see.

[00:09:03:21 - 00:09:06:20]

Ryan Wisner

Would you say in general, I mean, are the controls for...

[00:09:08:00 - 00:09:08:19]

Ryan Wisner

Being that this is...

[00:09:10:02 - 00:09:16:05]

Ryan Wisner

seems like a machine that would be on the rental market, is it fairly intuitive how to operate this machine?

[00:09:16:05 - 00:10:06:20]

Tim Boulds

Yes. Yes. It would be very intuitive, especially... It operates similar to most of the other machines out there as far as loader controls. It's just pilot operated instead of linkage. So it's going to be smooth and take a little less effort on the operator's side of it. So it should be very intuitive. It should be easy to use. Let's see if there's anything else on this. Oh, the name itself, the SCL1000, just for clarification, it is a thousand pounds of ROC. That's rated operating capacity. And the SCL, it actually stands for stand on compact loader in our world.

[00:10:45:08 - 00:10:51:18]

Ryan Wisner

You had been talking about the wider track that you have on the SCL1000.

[00:10:53:13 - 00:11:05:20]

Ryan Wisner

Does the wider track design assist in terms of the PSI rating for the low impact and to minimize the damage as it's going over the backyards and stuff?

[00:11:05:20 - 00:11:19:02]

Tim Boulds

Yes, yes. The RPSI is 4.0 PSI. So it's a pretty light footprint and it gives you the ability to squeeze through those narrow

[00:11:20:12 - 00:11:33:02]

Tim Boulds

gates or those narrow openings with a light footprint, whereas some of the competitors, when they've switched to that more narrow track, the 7-inch track,

[00:11:36:15 - 00:11:39:11]

Tim Boulds

the PSI goes up if you switch to a narrow track.

[00:11:40:17 - 00:11:45:04]

Tim Boulds

Our machine will only come with the wide track on it.

[00:11:47:01 - 00:11:49:22]

Tim Boulds

And um, the, yeah

[00:11:49:22 - 00:11:52:22]

Ryan Wisner

and like you said, that design, I mean just

[00:11:55:15 - 00:12:17:06]

Ryan Wisner

the overall design was factored in based on surveys with your dealers and with the landscapers and the nurseries and the rental shops as well that were saying, this is what our customers want. This is what the end users are saying they want.

[00:12:15:01 - 00:12:16:00]

Tim Boulds

Yes, yes.

[00:12:16:00 - 00:12:17:06]

Ryan Wisner

This wide track and...

[00:12:19:04 - 00:12:19:11]

Tim Boulds

Yeah.

[00:12:20:11 - 00:12:20:18]

Ryan Wisner

Okay.

[00:12:22:13 - 00:12:32:16]

Ryan Wisner

How about from a maintenance perspective? I mean, you did mention that based on some of the design factors with the tracks and such, it does make it a little bit easier

[00:12:35:02 - 00:12:44:18]

Ryan Wisner

with the welded design and other things. And what about in terms of access to the engine and other general maintenance on the machine?

[00:12:44:18 - 00:13:08:06]

Tim Boulds

So on maintenance-wise, as far as greasing, we kind of did the similar where we put our grease circuits facing outward in wherever the pivot points are on the loader arm, similar to our larger SVLs. So it's easy for someone to take a grease gun and walk down the side of the machine and grease all of the greaseable points,

[00:13:10:04 - 00:13:19:23]

Tim Boulds

very easily easy access. As far as access to the hydraulic fill tank, your fuel tank,

[00:13:21:03 - 00:13:34:22]

Tim Boulds

the hydraulic filters, water separator, all that, you simply lift the hood up and they're all right there towards the top, easy to get to, easy to access.

[00:13:36:21 - 00:14:20:04]

Tim Boulds

Even the engine oil filter that is on the side of the engine, we've added an access panel or door on the side of the machine to where you simply take that off and you can reach in there to be able to take that engine filter off. So and then again, with the track tension, ours is grease tension versus some competitors that have a wrench to turn a, like a turn buckle where you've got to spin it to either, you've got a threaded piece and you're turning it to either lengthen or tighten it.

[00:14:21:04 - 00:14:29:05]

Tim Boulds

That's how some of the competitors have. Ours is just a grease zerk system like on our larger track loaders and our excavators.

[00:14:30:05 - 00:14:38:19]

Tim Boulds

So reduces the amount of effort to tension and loosen the tracks.

[00:14:40:09 - 00:15:15:06]

Tim Boulds

The rollers being sealed, you don't have to grease those, you don't have to worry about it. Yeah, we took into consideration that the overall maintenance and the ease of it and tried to, you know, the monitor itself, we have built into it the time frames for maintenance. So we have maintenance minders in there and the customer can go in, it will tell the customer, "Hey, you're due on your oil change or whatever."

[00:15:16:15 - 00:15:28:04]

Tim Boulds

And then they can, once it does that, they can go in there and reset it and then it times out another, it's set up for the time of the maintenance per the operator's manual.

[00:15:28:04 - 00:15:28:23]

Ryan Wisner

Sure.

[00:15:30:07 - 00:15:30:12]

Tim Boulds

Okay.

[00:15:33:15 - 00:15:57:04]

Ryan Wisner

So with these machines, I mean, as we've discussed, I mean, you did say that it does kind of the top three are those landscape nurseries and the rental side of things. So even for the landscapers though, is this more a machine, I guess it would depend on the size of the contractor that they're going to be purchasing or is it something that they're more likely going to be renting?

[00:15:59:08 - 00:16:20:01]

Tim Boulds

It really depends on that customer because there are some customers that we went to see that this is kind of what they specialize in with this size of machine, but almost all of them own larger construction pieces, whether it be a skid steer or a track loader or an excavator.

[00:16:20:01 - 00:16:20:21]

Ryan Wisner

Okay.

[00:16:21:22 - 00:17:27:14]

Tim Boulds

You know, so, you know, the wide array of customers that we went to see, you know, it could be a tree removal company that they have larger equipment for the larger open areas, but if they have to work in someone's backyard and they have to take, you know, a tree down or they trim tree limbs and they stack them and then they, what they do is they go in through gates with this and with maybe a little tree grapple on the front and they grab a bunch of limbs and then they drag them through the gate out to the front and put them into, you know, a shredder or to a trailer and haul them off to be, you know, chipped and shredded, but to, we have landscaper guys that are taking, maybe they're building a patio in the back or they're finishing out around the pool and they're taking material back there with this little machine to fill in and to do the final type of landscape grading back there.

[00:17:30:02 - 00:17:44:10]

Tim Boulds

It lends itself to all types of customers, I guess, and we've seen some customers that are fairly good size construction guys that, yeah, this is their,

[00:17:45:11 - 00:18:13:16]

Tim Boulds

this isn't like their main unit, but if they do get a job site where, hey, we need this machine, they kind of throw it in there and then it's a popular machine for, you know, weekend warrior type guys like the homeowners like me that, oh, I got a project in my backyard or I want to, I want to completely tear out my shrubs and my landscape in the front and I want to redo it and I want to do it quickly. I can rent one of these machines and just go to town.

[00:18:13:16 - 00:18:34:16]

Ryan Wisner

Sure, and it's, and it's not going to be too hard for that weekend warrior to jump on this thing and, yeah, I mean, and for that, for the rental shop guy to be able to say, well, yeah, here's, here's, here's how you use it and they get it, get it to their house and it's like, well, yeah, I, I still can figure out how to use it. Even if I don't remember everything you said, it's pretty intuitive.

[00:18:34:16 - 00:18:50:22]

Tim Boulds

Yeah. And, and the fact that it's, you know, it only weighs 3000 pounds, so you can tow it, right? And you can take it from the rental center with a small trailer and

tow it with a normal, you know, your normal license. You don't have to worry about having CDLs or anything.

[00:18:50:22 - 00:18:51:19]

Ryan Wisner

Sure.

[00:18:53:20 - 00:19:16:22]

Tim Boulds

A couple other points about the machine that I wanted to mention is in, in this market, the common industry interface coupler, which is the, they call it a CII coupler, but it's the common industry coup- interface coupler. It's that standard little two pin hitch. I don't know if you're familiar with these or not, but

[00:19:18:22 - 00:19:44:19]

Tim Boulds

it's just, it, there's two little pins that drop down into a hole. It's a slightly different setup than a two lever skid steer style hitch. So majority of all the competitors out there, or actually all the competitors offer the common industry interface. Only

Bobcat came out with their little two lever skid steer style hitch that fits on that machine.

[00:19:44:19 - 00:19:45:17]

Ryan Wisner

Okay.

[00:19:45:17 - 00:19:48:00]

Tim Boulds

And, and we will be doing that as well.

[00:19:49:06 - 00:19:57:09]

Tim Boulds

We are, we're going to offer the common industry and the two lever style skid steer hitch for these smaller machines.

[00:19:57:09 - 00:19:58:03]

Ryan Wisner

Okay.

[00:19:58:03 - 00:20:10:03]

Tim Boulds

And, and simply that's, that's a strategy on our part as far as, you know, we can sell the machine to whoever, it doesn't matter what hitch you have on it. We can, we can connect to your attachments.

[00:20:10:03 - 00:20:34:03]

Ryan Wisner

Right. And that was, I'm glad you brought that up because actually that was going to be a question I had as far as, cause you had mentioned, you know, attaching a kind of a grapple type of thing and it's like, well, what kind of attachments would be open to it? And it sounds like what you're saying is that it's a, it'll be an option to really kind of have a generally just about anything on there. So.

[00:20:34:03 - 00:21:35:15]

Tim Boulds

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, there you've got, you know, you're not going to take your, well, let me put it this way. You shouldn't take your 80 inch bucket off of an, like an SVL 95 and put on this little machine. Right. And, and you may not be able to, the, the, the two-level skid steer style hitch it's compatible with some of the SSL

attachments out there. Maybe if, you know, if you've got a smaller set of pallet forks, you might be able to connect to that. It really depends on, cause the attachment world, there's, there's variant, there's so many different manufacturers out there. And the, the variances in just a skid steer style hitch is quite different. I mean, the top plate that you go in and hook under, if the angle is different for one manufacturer versus another, it may or may not fit your machine.

[00:21:35:16 - 00:21:35:50]

Ryan Wisner

Sure.

[00:21:36:00 - 00:21:37:00]

Tim Boulds

So,

[00:21:37:07 - 00:21:40:13]

Tim Boulds

but with that, since we're talking about attachments,

[00:21:41:23 - 00:21:52:21]

Tim Boulds

are you familiar with land pride equipment up in the, or land pride company out of Kansas or are you aware? Great.

[00:21:52:21 - 00:21:54:23]

Ryan Wisner

That's not one I'm familiar with personally. No.

[00:21:54:23 - 00:22:16:10]

Tim Boulds

Okay. So Great Plains Manufacturing is the parent, is a parent company of land pride out of, based out of Salina, Kansas. And a couple of years ago, a few years ago, Kubota tractor corporation or Kubota corporation bought that manufacturing company up there.

[00:22:17:13 - 00:22:27:20]

Tim Boulds

So land pride, the division of land pride up there has been making our construction equipment attachments for us.

[00:22:28:22 - 00:24:04:22]

Tim Boulds

And with the launch and this, this project, this, this, uh, SCL 1000 project was a collaborative effort between Kubota tractor corporation and land pride to design and build it. So they will actually be producing the, this machine up in Kansas. And we, as part of our survey, we wanted, and since they're doing our, our construction equipment attachments, part of our survey was what were, what is the most popular attachments for this, um, you know, stand on track loader and, uh, we will be launching that con Expo. You'll see, um, if you're going to be at con Expo, you'll see our attachments that we are launching with it, which is, you know, the most common ones besides a standard 36 inch bucket for this is a high capacity bucket, a, you know, uh, an auger head with varying sizes, augers offered pallet forks, a compact, uh, skid rake, and then a compact trincher that fit this. So we'll, we'll have a array of five or so different attachments that, that, that's going to be our initial offering. And then like we did when, when we started for them to build our attachments, we started with an initial offering and then we aggressively, you know, uh, grew that offering over a matter of three or four years. And our idea is to do the same here with, with this machine and these small attachments. Okay.

[00:24:04:04 - 00:24:04:22]

Ryan Wisner

Okay.

[00:24:04:22 - 00:24:18:05]

Ryan Wisner

So with this machine, I mean, you, you've, uh, it's definitely, uh, has a certain size component to it and, and it's got the wider track, but it's still the 36 inch width.

[00:24:19:13 - 00:24:22:09]

Ryan Wisner

Do you, is Kubota going to be, uh,

[00:24:24:21 - 00:24:30:11]

Ryan Wisner

looking into other size ranges within this, uh, the stand on, uh, track loader market?

[00:24:30:11 - 00:24:41:00]

Tim Boulds

Yeah, I think, I think we will. Um, the way, the way we kind of, um, do product introductions and launches is, um,

[00:24:42:02 - 00:26:28:03]

Tim Boulds

we will, uh, we will launch a particular model or two models. Like let's go back to our compact track loaders. Uh, back in 2010, we introduced two models and a few years ago, we introduced a third one there, but the way we typically do it is if we, if we're going to, we're going to do this one model for this, this, um, type of machine as an introduction. Once we get it in the hands of, um, dealers and customers, we want to, we want to give it a few months to be out there, let them use it, and then we'll, we'll survey them and say, okay, how's it doing? We want to make sure that it's meeting what they want and, and the, and it's doing well. And then we, we, we do. So part of our, our surveying would be, what do you want next? Do you want a larger one? Do you want a smaller one? Um, you know, this, this market's growing and part of the reason, you know, the, the, uh, a large section of this market is actually a little bit smaller size machine than this 1000 pound capacity. But the, the overall they're, they're going, they started even smaller than that and they just keep growing in size. Uh, you can see that with, with, uh, Ditch Witch's offering of a, you know, a 1500 pound and then Toro came out with a 2000

pound and then Ditch Witch came back with a 3000 pound machine last year where they introduced. Well, by the time you get into that size, you're really getting into a small skid steer and the, and the price point of a small skid steer that you can actually sit in a cab.

[00:26:28:03 - 00:26:28:18]

Ryan Wisner

Sure.

[00:26:28:18 - 00:26:50:00]

Tim Boulds

So, so we, we, we're gonna, we're gonna assess how this machine goes, but, but, uh, with w-we will eventually, um, expand the market or expand our product offering, but we, we want to, we want our customers and dealers to tell us, do you want a bigger machine or smaller?

[00:26:50:00 - 00:26:50:10]

Ryan Wisner

Sure.

[00:26:51:17 - 00:27:31:06]

Tim Boulds

And everything that we put into it and designed into it, we want to make sure that they're happy with that. Or is there anything else that we can give to you that you're, that you're looking for? Uh, you know, and as time goes on, you know, um, the technology changes and, and, uh, you know, they may say, Oh, well, we want, uh, some other technological, maybe they want to include, you know, how, how on the big track loaders we have, uh, these, uh, greater boxes that have the GPS and the, and all that on it. Maybe they want something like that on this small unit.

[00:27:31:06 - 00:27:32:04]

Ryan Wisner

Sure.

[00:27:33:13 - 00:27:42:12]

Tim Boulds

You know, that would be something that we would incorporate potentially down the road, um, if the market demanded it or, or requested it. So.

[00:27:42:12 - 00:27:51:00]

Ryan Wisner

And when, uh, when, when will this machine actually, uh, be available to, uh, to the Kubota dealers?

[00:27:51:00 - 00:28:02:10]

Tim Boulds

Uh, we're gonna, we're going to launch it and start shipping it during the second half right now of, of the year. So it's going to be July, August timeframe. Sure.

[00:28:02:10 - 00:28:06:00]

Ryan Wisner

Sounds good. Thanks a lot, Tim. I appreciate it.

[00:28:02:00 - 00:28:06:12]

Tim Boulds

Yep. Thank you.

[00:28:06:12 - 00:28:07:06]

Ryan Wisner

All right.

[00:28:07:06 - 00:28:07:20]

Ryan Wisner

Bye.

[00:28:07:20 - 00:28:08:10]

Tim Boulds

Bye.

[00:28:08:10 - 00:28:17:01]

Intro/Outro Voice Over

That's it for this special Con Expo edition of the Digging Deeper podcast sponsored by Tena. You keep listening. We'll keep digging until next time.