

New-Style Combine Demolition Derby Requires A Fine Touch

A first-of-its-kind combine demolition derby that's like a combination of "capture the flag" and monster mash was held at the 2012 Chesterville Fair in Chesterville, Ont. Two modified combines took to the arena in mock combat, but they required a fine touch to win.

"We placed flags on sticks at various places on the combines," explains Marty Derks, derby chairman and president of the local Junior Farmers chapter. "Opponents have to knock the flags off each other's combine to win. This makes it more of a driving skill contest than a wrecking contest."

To win, a contestant has to either strip all the flags from his opponent or simply outlast him. In this year's contest, the one that kept running was the winner. His opponent had a drive belt break.

Combines are stripped of grain augers, glass and any part that might fall off. Feederhouses are welded solid at 16 in. above the ground, and a minimum of 12-ft. headers are required to protect the driver from side swipes hitting the cab. The cab is reinforced to protect the driver from possible rollovers.

Other precautions included fuel tanks secured inside the grain tanks and batteries securely mounted on top of the combines.



Photo courtesy Eastern Ontario AgriNews

New-style combine demolition derby is more of a driving skill contest than a "wrecking contest". Contestants have to knock flags off each other's combine to win.

Separators are inoperable, and doors fastened shut.

Speed is limited, and backing into rear ends that could break a rear axle is not allowed. Otherwise, anything is permitted.

Derks admits it wasn't easy getting the event up and running its first year. He advises assembling a big winner's pot or a lot of

sponsors to defray costs.

"It's expensive to enter a contest like this," noted Derks. "Any combine with an engine that starts is worth \$2,500. The owner needs a reason to risk it."

While 2012 was the first combine demolition derby at the fair, Derks says it won't be the last.

"We have 6 contestants lined up for next year, already," he says. "It was very well attended, and that got contestants motivated for next year."

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Milk Tank Used For "Hot Tub Therapy"

"It has worked on my arthritis like no doctoring has," says Del Stubbs about his milk tank hot tub. "I sit still in it for about 5 min. until I'm loosened up, then stretch and move for about 20 min."

The Leonard, Minn., man picked up the 250-gal. milk tank when he bid for maple syrup equipment at an auction. He knew he'd never need that much storage, but hated to see the tank go unused. He was familiar with aqua therapy because of his joint problems, and decided to convert it to a hot tub.

"I found out that the prescribed 102 F degrees just wasn't enough to loosen my 60-year-old joints. I go to 109 degrees," Stubbs says.

He removed the tank's top doors and installed a locally made stainless submersible wood-burning heater at one end. (Two commercially available submersible woodstoves are available at

www.cowboyhottubs.com and www.snorkel.com). It takes a couple hours to heat the water in the summer and more than 4 hrs. to heat when it's about 32 F degrees, Stubbs says. He gets in the tub at about 105 degrees and adjusts the stove draft to increase the water temperature to 109 degrees.

There's plenty of room for one person to fully stretch out, Stubbs says. Because it's stainless, the tank stays clean without adding chemicals. Every couple of months he drains it and cleans it thoroughly.

Between hot tub therapy sessions, he puts 2-in. building foam sheets over the top openings. The only alteration he made was to line one opening with wood to rest his head against for comfort.

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Del Stubbs converted an old 250-gal. milk tank into a low-cost hot tub. He removed tank's top doors and installed a submersible wood-burning heater at one end.

Two-Man Chainsaws Always Draw A Crowd

When Bob Brommerich starts up one of his vintage two-man chainsaws, a crowd is sure to gather. The 65-year-old first used a Mall saw when he was 8 or 9, holding onto one end to help his father cut hickory staves. Now Brommerich offers entertaining demonstrations at threshing shows and antique events.

"We have a lettered trailer that houses 10 running saws and memorabilia of the literature and hardware that it took to maintain these saws back in the day," says Brommerich.

His saw collection got its start 12 years ago when he bought back the Mall chainsaw his father, Bill, had sold to a tree service. He and other family members and friends started demonstrating at shows traveling from their home in Winona, Minn. People who saw the demos began to offer to sell him their saws. Most are family saws, and he usually doesn't pay a lot for them because they're not in good shape. He spends an average of three mos. to get them running.

His most unusual saw, called a bow saw, came from an 87-year-old.

"I have never seen another one run," Brommerich says, noting it's in good shape and is always a big hit at events.

Running a two-man saw isn't for the faint-hearted. "They are scary to look at. People call them man killers," Brommerich says. He explains that both ends are dangerous, and that the bar end holder has to be steady or the chain can grip and kick backwards.

When the Brommeriches cut with the saws, they keep the crowd back with a barrier chain, wear protective gear and take other safety precautions.

Brommerich admits he's fascinated and in awe every time he starts up one of the saws. Joseph Mall first manufactured the saws in Chicago to clear airstrips in the Philippines during WWII. After the war, farmers purchased the saws to cut firewood.

Many people have never heard of the two-man saws and are intrigued at the demos. Those that once worked with them love to share stories with Brommerich.

"It's hard work. At the end of the day we are sweaty and dirty," he says. "I have to compliment the help that joins me in this effort to educate about the way it used to be."

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Bob Brommerich offers entertaining demonstrations of his vintage, 2-man chainsaws at threshing shows and antique events.