

Dylan Mercier's colorful semi-tractor and grain trailer are being made into a miniature replica by First Gear, Inc.



Truck Wrap Ignites Social Media

Dylan Mercier's idea of painting his semi-tractor bright red and wrapping his grain trailer in a flaming fire rescue scene has lit up social media. The 21-year-old Illinois resident didn't plan on all the attention he got after a story ran in the local newspaper, but now he's leveraging it to support a cause that he's passionate about.

Mercier's story about the decked-out 2005 Mack truck and trailer attracted thousands of views on social media and caught the attention of Adam Knight at First Gear, an Iowa company that produces die-cast replicas of trucks and other vehicles. He contacted Mercier, who interestingly had collected die-cast truck replicas for several years. One

Mini Big Roy is a 1/32 working scale model which uses a Case 222 hydraulic transmission and 14-hp. Kohler engine.



Big Roy "Mini" An Exact Replica

When Denis Combot of St. Eustache, Manitoba, heard that Versatile was planning to restore the original Big Roy tractor, he was inspired to build his Mini Big Roy.

The goal quickly became to park the two finished tractors side by side at the Agricultural Museum in Austin, Manitoba.

With the help of sons, Curtis, Grant, Chad and Ryan, the work began in earnest using the frame, hydraulic transmission and hydrostatic drive rear end of a Case 222 garden tractor.

"We needed to be able to get a person inside, but not lose anything, keeping everything to a true scale replica. We achieved

visit led to another, and plans were made for a die-cast version of Mercier's vehicle.

Knight says the truck's design is extremely unique and he thinks the replica will be a hot collector's item. "Most of our replicas are contracted by companies who want a special keepsake for brand name recognition," Knight says, "but Dylan will be selling his model with a portion of the proceeds going to support firefighters."

Knight says the reproduction will replicate the tractor and trailer down to its finest details. "We've been working on tooling for the cab and getting the designs just right for the toolbox, wheel guards and the hood insignia, which shows a Mack bulldog wearing firefighter's gear. The finished 1/64 scale die-cast will be stunning."

The tractor color scheme and the large trailer graphic, which Knight says are very detailed, will be painted with sophisticated laser equipment. The finished models will be hand-assembled, packaged and ready for

this by building it as a 1/32 scale model and using the ratio set by the wheels," says Curtis Combot.

The front half of the unit consists of an angle iron frame where pillow blocks mount to support axle shafts. The original 14-hp. Kohler engine was used to run the hydraulics. Steering was handled by a small hydraulic cylinder mounted at the articulation point, operated by a side-mounted joystick inside the enclosed cab. All four rear wheels are driven via sprockets and chains from the rear axle.

Combot says the entire exterior body of the tractor is custom-built using 3/4-in. plywood instead of metal. Large amounts of primer and filler were used before paint was applied.

He explains that they contacted Versatile for advice on paint codes to get the red and yellow colors as close as possible to the original.

"They were happy to help," Combot says. "They sent us all the paint we needed, perfectly sized decals, and even the pinstripes. They also gave us leftover cab lining and

distribution."

Mercier, who's had a passion for firefighters since he began following in his father's volunteer firefighting footsteps, is funding the project and will order about 500 units initially. He intends to market them locally and online.

As a 14 yr. old, Mercier joined the cadet program of the St. Anne, Ill., Fire Protection District. He also works for his family's irrigation business and hauls grain with his own truck.

Mercier says he initially wanted his 2005 Mack semi-tractor painted red to show his allegiance to firefighting. That idea expanded into wanting a painted trailer, which turned out to be too expensive. Eventually, he worked with Chad Brosseau of Fastlane Wraps to produce a stunning and fiery decal for the grain trailer.

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sound dampening rubber from their Big Roy restoration. All they asked was that we bring it over when we finished it to show it off at their plant in Winnipeg."

An issue they experienced was confusion over how to complete the planetary hubs, a signature staple of Versatile tractors. For extra detail, they decided on MDF board and stick-on crafted letters to create the mold. From this, they cast a dozen from resin with plywood inserts.

The Combot's Mini Big Roy was completed in time to join its larger counterpart at the museum.

"It's a running unit, not really a model, but overall, it's based on original equipment. All of us boys have kids now so it's harder to make time, but we love to get together and do this kind of thing with our father because we know it's important to him and for the public to see."

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Yax converted a bucket to work as a 3-pt. with his excavator, making it multi-use.



Excavator Bucket Equipped With 3-Pt. Hitch

Mark Yax added 3-pt. connections to his mini-excavator bucket and turned it into a multi-use implement carrier. The concept started when he looked for a way to mount a hook on the bucket.

"I realized a clevis type bracket would also work as a top link connector," says Yax. "By adding pins that screw in and out in brackets bolted to the outside of the 24-in. wide bucket, I can attach different width 3-pt. attachments."

Yax uses dog bone connectors between the pins on the bucket and the attachments and a steel bar pinned to the clevis in place of an adjustable top link.

Some of the attachments he is planning to use with his bucket 3-pt. include a forklift pallet lifter, man-lift, landscape rake, and box scraper. More tools are in the works.

"The pallet lift was designed for use on a tractor's rear 3-pt. hitch," says Yax. "It could lift a pallet about 3 ft. in the air. Mounted to

the excavator bucket, it can lift a pallet about 12 ft. in the air. It's handy for moving stuff into my upper barn loft."

Yax's lift was built for use on the rear-mounted tractor 3-pt. but will gain new height with the modified bucket. It uses a \$300, 2-ft. wide by 7-ft. long motorcycle lift from Harbor Freight. Manual hydraulics in the lift base can raise and lower the platform 3 ft.

"I reinforced the motorcycle lift a bit and welded tubes on the base to match the forks on the 3-pt. forklift," says Yax. "Bolts run through the tubes, and the forks keep it from sliding off."

He used angle iron to make a 3-ft. high railing for a safety basket with gates at either end which he can open up or lock in place. He also painted the floor of the lift with gritty bed liner, so it isn't slippery.

Mounted on the tractor 3-pt., the motorcycle lift gives Yax a platform up to 6 ft. in the air. Mounted to the excavator bucket 3-pt., he has a 7-ft. long working platform 12 ft. up that can be raised another 3 ft. using the motorcycle lift.

While Yax could have a second person operate the boom with an occupied lift, he prefers to lift it in place and use a ladder to reach it. He mounted brackets to the lift base to hook ladder rungs.

"I can climb into the basket and then raise and lower it the extra 3 ft. as needed," says Yax. "I think it will come in handy painting my barn this year."

Yax has plans for using his 6-ft. landscape rake on the end of the bucket for cleaning up work sites and cleaning vegetation out of ponds. Mounting his 5-ft. box scraper on the



Yax uses dog bone connectors between the pins on the bucket and the attachments and a steel bar pinned to the clevis in place of an adjustable top link.

bucket will be a low-cost alternative to a 4-ft. wide grading bucket.

"I know a guy who built a stump grinder for his excavator boom," says Yax. "It has a hydraulic motor and mounts in place of the bucket. I think I should be able to build something similar for about \$1,000."

An even simpler attachment and much less expensive is a single shank ripper he is looking forward to using this year. "It will be incredible for removing stuff," says Yax. "I will be able to reach down and sever roots with it and pull a stump out of the ground."

The hook bracket that started Yax down the 3-pt. road has already proven valuable. "I used the hook with chains to pull down damaged trees," he recalls. "On an excavator, curling the bucket has the most power. If I am pulling something with the hook, I'm using that curl."

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