

# Digging

# MASS

# Quantities

An EX1200  
Excavates Florida  
Lakes by the Dozen



COLOR ME ORANGE.

Site Prep/Mass Excavation

Much like a pool shooter planning to run the table, site-preparation contractor Lee-Mar bought a giant Hitachi EX1200 Excavator with an eye on present and future projects. In April 2005, Lee-Mar started digging lakes with the new EX1200 at the new Ave Maria University outside of Naples, Florida. It's a huge 3.2-million-cubic-yard project that covers 300 to 400 acres. As of mid-May 2006, the EX1200 had racked up 2,300 hours digging 13 lakes.

"The EX1200 was a strategic purchase for us," says Jimmy Thompson, superintendent for Lee-Mar at Ave Maria. "We have relationships with developers that will be buying land around this university site. We've just been awarded a nearby residential contract and will move to it in July. This machine will be here at least another three years."

### HIGH PRODUCTION

The water table runs very high at the Ave Maria project. So, the site requires constant dewatering to pull the water low enough to dig lakes out of the saturated, hard-caked lime. With the EX1200, Thompson can dig 25 feet deep, reaching underwater from one bench. His construction permit doesn't let him dewater sufficiently to dig down two levels, which is why he's not running a smaller excavator.

High production is the challenge at Ave Maria University, which is on a whirlwind schedule. Average production for the EX1200 runs 7,500 cubic yards per day, with a peak of 9,000 cubic yards. The machine packs a 9.3-cubic-yard bucket and a 14-ft. 9-in. dipper arm.

Thompson says he is "absolutely happy" with 7,500 cubic yards per day. In fact, in May 2005, the EX1200 moved 192,000 cubic yards of material. "Considering that we only worked 20 days, that's just shy of 10,000 cubic

yards a day," says Thompson. "With a short haul and all the cards stacked in our favor, we could probably average 9,000 cubic yards per day."

When we visited the EX1200, it was loading five 40-ton articulated trucks in three passes. Uptime with the EX1200 has also been perfect — no breakdowns. That's despite Florida's hot, humid summers, which challenge cooling systems. The EX1200 has separate cooling systems for the engine and hydraulic system, so overheating has not been a problem — even on days in the high 90s.

Operator Joe Douglass says he loves the EX1200. "All the controls are nice and smooth, and the cab is second to none," says Douglass. "The seat is very comfortable, and I can stand up in the cab, so that's a first."

Thompson likes the long undercarriage on the EX1200. "It's very stable. The efficiency and smoothness of the hydraulics are great. When you multifunction with the hydraulics, it doesn't detract from any one function. It's the best excavator we've ever owned."

*Lee-Mar is serviced  
by Nortrax Southeast.*



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### About Ave Maria University

Located just outside Naples in southwest Florida, Ave Maria University will sit on 4,000 acres with a European-inspired town center called La Piazza. That is where the 1,000-acre university will meet a 4,000-acre city called Ave Maria that is springing up around the university.

The university is the vision of Thomas S. Monaghan, founder of Domino's Pizza®, who provided \$250 million of seed money. It will be the first Catholic university to be built in the United States in more than 40 years. Monaghan has teamed up with the Barron Collier Companies to build the project, which will feature the Oratory as its focal point. The Oratory will be in the middle of the large, brick-paved La Piazza. It will soar more than 100 feet high and seat 1,100 people.

At first, the university will have the Oratory and three new buildings: an extensive library; a science, math, and technology building; and a student activities center. There will also be an undergraduate housing complex with three residential buildings, a recreational pool, tennis courts, and softball and multipurpose athletic fields.

Groundbreaking was February 17, 2006. The university will open in the fall of 2007.