

cross-checking Winnipeg Arena into history

For a Canadian hockey town, losing its NHL team is about as bad as it gets — even worse than losing the Stanley Cup on a last-second goal. So, maybe tearing down Winnipeg's old Winnipeg Arena was more of a mercy killing than a huge demolition project. After all, the Jets were gone. They'd moved to Phoenix and become Coyotes, taking with them the broken hearts of all their fans. Only memories and ghosts remained, and maybe it was time for them to move on, too.

The Arena's era ended in March, 2006, when local demolition contractor Rakowski Cartage & Wrecking undertook the structure's implosion and subsequent cleanup. Working under a tight schedule, the firm has paired a Hitachi Zaxis 450 with a Genesis GXS 600R mobile shear, dramatically increasing production. A daunting deadline suddenly became doable.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Rakowski Cartage & Wrecking has a real heritage in the Winnipeg, Manitoba, area. Incorporated by Kazmir Rakowski in 1964, the company has grown steadily to become one of Manitoba's and Ontario's larger demolition specialists.

"We generally stay in those two provinces, but we have done projects

throughout Canada," says Tristan Rakowski, the founder's grandson and company vice president. "But this is undoubtedly one of the more high-profile projects we've tackled, made even more challenging by some serious time constraints. We've had to bring a good portion of our fleet to bear on this project and have seen some impressive performance from some of our newer equipment — specifically the Hitachi Zaxis 450LC and 330LC. They've really helped us keep things moving."

Rakowski says the new Hitachis are the result of needing to replace older equipment and improve dealer support.

"In this business, you really depend on a solid level of service and support to keep production up. We definitely get that from the Winnipeg branch of Wajax Industries. We took delivery of the Zaxis 330LC in spring of 2005, then ordered a Zaxis 450LC late last year for a project we had pending in the Arctic. That project was cancelled, but we had ordered the machine with the Genesis shear, and it turned out to be a great fit for the arena demolition job."

STUBBORN TO THE END

Though small by today's standards, the Winnipeg Arena's footprint was typical of a 1950s-era facility — roughly 120,000 square feet



Tristan Rakowski, Vice President



Richard Jurdeczka,
Operator, Zaxis 450LC



A Zaxis 330LC, equipped with a bucket thumb, lifts and loads slabs of concrete from the stadium's foundation.

“Operators can’t say enough about their excellent cab visibility, which is critical to safety and minimizing equipment damage.”
— Tristan Rakowski, Vice President

COLOR ME ORANGE.

Demolition

(11 148 m²). It was also built like a bomb shelter, which means it didn't go down without a fight.

"This arena was definitely stubborn. The outside came down easily, but we didn't give enough credence to the site's center concrete piers and their reinforcing cages. So, while the explosives did their work, the cages held the real force of the explosion in. The sides of the structure fell easily, but the full midsection remained standing. A few hours later, we pulled those cages apart with an excavator, and it was all on the ground."

That minor setback was easily offset by higher-than-anticipated scrap tonnages. Rakowski expects to recover over 2,500 tons (2268 metric tons) of steel and 100,000 tons (90 720 metric tons) of concrete. The material is processed to prepared sizes onsite. The concrete then goes to the com-

pany's recycling facility located across town, while the steel is shipped to an area mill.

Rakowski says his operators were skeptical about changing excavator brands at first, but have since become real Hitachi fans.

"There are a number of things they now prefer about the Hitachi units," Rakowski remarks. "For example, they can't say enough about their excellent cab visibility, which is critical to safety and minimizing equipment damage.

"Speed is another advantage Hitachi brings to the site. Our cycle times are probably 15-percent faster than comparable equipment we run."

The Zaxis 330LC's first job was material load-out, but soon its power and speed brought about a career change — lifting and loading concrete slabs from the structure's foundation. Turns out scrap processing is where Hitachi really shines. The difference in power between the

shear-equipped 450LC and the previous unit was obvious.

"It's really not even fair to compare the two processing approaches," notes Rakowski. "The technology in Genesis shears is far superior to the older unit we had in use. That 600 RGSX is designed to provide a cutting power typically found in a larger shear. It easily cuts through folded-over steel two-inches thick. Those benefits, coupled with the speed and power of the Hitachi Zaxis 450LC, give us two and a half times the production we had before."

In order to attach the shear to the 450LC, a few modifications were needed. For good hydraulic flow, two pumps were plumbed together, plus some additional pipe was added.

"We're so impressed, we've thought about buying a second Zaxis 450," says Rakowski. "It's been a positive move, no doubt."

Rakowski Cartage & Wrecking is serviced by Wajax Industries, Winnipeg, Manitoba.



This Zaxis 450LC, equipped with the powerful cutting of the Genesis 600 RGSX shear, makes short work of steel debris.

COLOR ME ORANGE.

Demolition