

IH Combine Converted To “Pull-Behind” Loader

We’ve seen a number of loader tractors built from combines over the years, but Dan Crick, Menno, S. Dak., has taken the idea to a new level.

He rebuilt a 1976 IH 715 combine, attaching the loader off a Versatile 256 bi-directional tractor on front. Several attachments, some of them homemade and all of them interchangeable with another Versatile bi-directional tractor that Crick owns, can be used with the loader.

The only components he used from the combine were the cab, chassis and axles, and engine.

What’s unique is the rig can quickly be set up to tow behind a pickup or semi trailer, allowing it to be hauled down the road at highway speeds. A hitch made from 8-in. channel iron bolts on back of the combine. The hitch is held in a vertical position until needed and then is extended by a hydraulic cylinder. Once the hitch is hooked up, the cylinder is extended further to lift the combine’s rear axle off the ground.

“The loader pulls like a heavy 2-wheeled trailer behind a semi trailer. I can pull it down the road at 40 mph,” says Crick.

He uses brokers to sell locally-grown hay, most of which goes to Wisconsin. He uses local truckers to haul the hay, which he has weighed at a local elevator to make sure the trucks are loaded with the maximum legal tonnage. He uses the loader to load bales onto the semi trailer. Then he drives the semi trailer to the elevator, towing the loader behind, and uses the loader to adjust the weight of the load, taking a bale or two off as needed. “Without the loader, I’d have to bring the semi trailer all the way back to my farm to adjust the weight,” says Crick.

The loader is also handy around his farm because he can tow it out to the field and use it to load hay without the need for another operator. “The hitch acts as a counterweight to the loader on front. It’s like a big bumper on back so if I accidentally back into something it won’t damage the loader.”

He bought the combine used from a neighbor for \$1,000. “It’s a 2-WD model with a German diesel engine and a hydrostatic transmission,” says Crick. “I replaced the original front wheels with bigger 18.4 by 30 front wheels off a Gleaner



combine. The bigger wheels results in a little faster ground speed.

“I used the Versatile loader because it fits close up against the cab so I have a great view of everything right in front of me. I bought the loader cheap at an auction sale.”

A pair of foot-operated pedals are used to operate the loader. The left pedal is used to raise and lower the loader, while the right one tilts the bucket.

He uses several homemade, quick-tach attachments with the loader.

Rock picker: bolts on inside the loader bucket are equipped with four steel spears made from 1 3/4-in. dia. spring steel, which extend inside four larger pipes. A metal lip on front of the mounting frame serves as a “dam” to keep rocks from rolling back out of the bucket.

“It’s a simple idea but it’ll outpick any rock picker I know of,” says Crick. “There’s no need to dig out around the rock at all. I tilt the spears at an angle and slide them under the rock as I drive forward. Once the rock is on top of the spears I bounce the loader bucket up and down a couple of times to shake off the dirt, and then tilt the bucket up until the rock rolls in. It can handle big rocks, too. I just point the teeth down under the rock and then lift the bucket to pop it out. It’ll even dig out rocks in frozen ground.”

Ditch digging spade: Made from 1/2-in. thick plate, it’s 5 1/2- ft. long with an 18-in.

wide, rounded bottom. A pair of metal wheels keep the spade level and are also used to control digging depth by changing the position of a pair of bolts.

“I use the spade to remove silt from drainage ditches. It also works great for installing electric wire under the ground because I can dig sod out without going too deep. Once the wire is laid in I use the spade to put the sod back,” says Crick.

Bale fork: can handle up to three big square bales or a single round bale. The frame is made from 2 by 4 rectangular tubing and has four teeth across the bottom for big square bales. A single spear bolts on above it to handle round bales.

Backhoe: fits onto the loader frame.

Spray boom: bolts onto the bale forks and is equipped with a 25-gal. tank. “Because it’s loader-mounted I can reach over the top of a fence and spray weeds or trees and brush,” says Crick.

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