



PHOTOS BY BILL GOVE

Reviewed by Bill Gove

BUILT- RITE **MODEL 45 SCP**

The "John Smith-designed" fast-cycle processor with a patented scissors clamp draws praise from users in the mid-size market.

When the North Winds Timber Management Co. of Whitehall, New York decided to add firewood to their mix of timber products, a decision had to be made. Which of the various sizes of firewood processors available would be best for a commercial firewood operation that usually ran only about 8 to 10 hours a week?

North Winds chose to buy a rugged processor of moderate capacity, not one of the more expensive high-production models appropriate for full-time commercial production. Their selection: a Built-Rite Model 45 SCP. Powered by a four-cylinder 45 HP John Deere diesel motor, the Model 45 is the middle one of the three models made by Built-Rite.

North Winds is a forest management and timber harvesting concern with a professional forester on staff. The company is owned by the three Wilbur

brothers: Jack, Francis, and Harry. Timber harvesting is done by three to five crews of independent contractors who sort the wood for sawlogs, pulpwood, and firewood. Firewood was recently added with the objective of doubling the value of at least some of the pulpwood sticks. Hardwood pulpwood is currently bringing \$52 a cord. Firewood sells in the range of \$90 to \$140 for dry wood.

With the Model 45, the Wilbur brothers bought more than a machine. They also bought the expertise of John Smith.

Smith, owner of Built-Rite, which is headquartered in Ludlow, Vermont, has been designing and

building splitters since 1981 and processors since 1989. He has been manufacturing under the Built-Rite name since February of 1996. Discussions afield with his clients soon made it evident to me that John Smith has a good name among his customers. Once

Built-Rite's Multi-Wedge allows for 2, 4, 6, or 8-way splitting.



I met him myself, I discovered why. Smith is personable and easy to talk to, and he is always available for his customers. On one of my visits to the factory, he had just returned from New Mexico to make an adjustment that took about five minutes to accomplish. His customer

didn't speak English well enough to understand over the telephone how to make the correction, so Smith made the trip himself.

Two of the difficult aspects of cutting firewood lengths on a machine are the conveyance of rough and crooked logs in the trough, and making the proper drop of the cut piece into position before the wedge. There is no perfect machine on the market that can accomplish these jobs flawlessly, but as I watched the Built-Rite 45 operate it was obvious that John Smith has smoothed out some of the problems with a couple of unique features.

Instead of the customary clamp bar usually employed on processors to hold the log while the saw is making the cut, Built-Rite now uses a scissors clamp. Watching the scissors clamp at work, I noticed how the wood was centered in the trough to make cutting

BUILT-RITE SPEC SHEET



The Wilbur brothers added a conveyor to speed their operation.

easier, and how much more securely the last short piece was held in place for the final saw cut.

The other innovation recently added to the Built-Rite machine is a support plate which can be raised by an operator's foot pedal to hold the last short piece for sawing, and then released to make a proper drop of the stick into the splitting trough. The splitter trough has a fairly deep V-drop which helps in centering small pieces in front of the splitter blade. Even though the Wilbur brothers at North Winds Timber pull out most of the smaller, crooked, and knobby logs for the pulpwood market, there are still some odd sized and smaller pieces to put through the splitter and test the operating skill of Jack Wilbur.

With the large range of stick sizes going through the splitter, the machine operator has to be constantly aware of adjustments in splitter blade combinations. To state the obvious, a sin-

gle split on a 12-inch piece will leave the pieces too large, a six-way split on a six-inch piece means the pieces are unacceptably small. Processor manufacturers deal with this by building in a combination of movable wedges, often employing a hydraulically operated wedge to adjust vertically in or out of the splitting path. John Smith of Built-Rite has taken this technology a step further with his patented Multi-Wedge. By means of two cylinder-operated wedges

MODEL

Built-Rite 45 SCP

POWER UNIT W/HP

John Deere 45 HP
4-Cylinder, Diesel

PUMP

Triple

CYLINDER SIZE

4 x 26, 3-inch rod

SPLITTING FORCE (TONS)

18

SPLITTER CYCLE TIME

5 seconds

CHAINSAW BAR

25-inch

CHAIN SIZE

.404 inches

HYDR. TANK CAP.

30 gallons

WEDGES (STANDARD)

4, 6 or 8-way

MACHINE WEIGHT (LBS)

6,500

TRANSPORT LENGTH

24 feet 6 inches

TRANSPORT WIDTH

7 feet 8 inches

TRANSPORT HEIGHT

13 feet

TIRES

F78-14

HITCH

2-inch

TROUGH LENGTH

16 feet

FRAME

2 x 4 inch rect. tube

AXLES

2

LIVE DECK

7 x 10 feet

HOURLY PRODUCTION

1 1/2 - 3 cords

MAX LOG DIAMETER

22 inches

MAX. LOG LENGTH

22 feet

CLAMP STYLE

Scissors

OPERATOR'S SEAT

Standard

LIST PRICE

\$29,900

SPECIAL FEATURES

- Scissors Clamp
- Multi-Wedge (2, 4, 6 or 8-way)
- Separator Grate
- Deep V drop in splitter trough
- Support plate for saving short pieces

OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT

- 3 strand live deck
- Multi-wedge
- Operator's cab, heated and w/AC

MANUFACTURER

Built-Rite
Manufacturing Corp.
750 East Hill Road
Ludlow, Vermont 05149
Telephone:
1-800-757-2520

MANUFACTURER'S COMMENTS

The Built-Rite Model 45 SCP is designed for mid-size or large scale producers. Because of the high-speed return obtained with our custom cylinder and 3-inch rod, we feel it is the fastest machine on the market. For wood 14 inches and less in diameter, a larger machine is not needed.

on separate shafts, the operator can easily adjust for two, four, six, or eight-way splits. The Multi-Wedge is an optional feature on the 45SCP.

With these latest Built-Rite innovations, the Wilbur brothers get production of about two cords an hour. Jack Wilbur sometimes works the machine alone, but when available, a

second man is put on the operation to load the deck and do other odd jobs.

Further north along Lake Champlain, the Valley View Firewood partnership of Willsboro, NY, operated by Leo and John Drinkwine, also employs a Built-Rite Model 45 SCP. It's a weekend and evening operation for the Drinkwines, but they produce about 800

cords a year, and they need a rugged machine.

The Drinkwines' older model is not equipped with the scissors clamp, but it does have the Multi-Wedge, and Leo Drinkwine praised the fast, adjustable feature. With its high-speed return, the custom-built 4-inch cylinder on the ram (with a three-inch rod) gives him a cycle time of almost five seconds on the splitter. The Drinkwines opted for a 40 HP Kubota power unit.

The controls on the Built-Rite machines are not in the most convenient position for the operator; I noticed that the operator often would have to leave his station when wood dropped crosswise in the splitter trough or when the wood plugged in the mouth

of the conveyor. John Smith says he designed it this way, however. He purposely placed the control panel on the left side as the operator faced the saw and splitter for safety reasons. This way, if the saw chain breaks, the operator is not in the path of danger. Also, Smith did not want the operator standing where he could put one hand on the controls and the other hand in the splitter trough. These considerations make good operating sense, and, of course, manufacturers also have to constantly keep in mind the liability factor on unsafe features.

As the wood tumbled through the Drinkwines' 45SCP, I noted that the separator grate (a John Smith design) at the end of

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the splitting trough removed most of the fines (bark and very small pieces of wood.) This can be a useful feature, but according to the Drinkwines, most of their customers actually prefer to have the slivers and chips as kindling and want it left in the load. In the off-season, the

Drinkwines pile a portion of their wood in windrows to be sold later as seasoned wood.

One area on the Drinkwines' older model 45SCP needing improvement was the log deck. With only two strands on the deck, any logs that are extra long or short were causing some trouble, and Leo said he would have preferred three strands. For moving purposes, the deck lifts hydraulically and hinges down at the end to decrease height.

Overall, the operators I talked to were happy with the Built-Rite Model 45SCP ■

Bill Gove is a retired forester who last worked for the Vermont Department of Parks and Forests.



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