

Hud-Son Badger FIREWOOD SPLITTER

When I think back to my very early childhood, cutting firewood is the chore I remember most. My father used his chain saw to cut the cordwood to firewood length, and we threw the firewood out of his way so he could keep cutting before standing all the blocks on end. Then he split one after another with a splitting maul. The work of cutting, splitting, and piling the winter's firewood never seemed to end.

I began swinging the splitting maul when I was just 8 years old. I learned to use the chain saw at 13, and by 14 my sisters had miraculously disappeared from the chore, leaving me the entire task of processing the next winter's firewood (I did manage to get out of doing the dishes). Each summer I cut, split, and piled the five to six cord of firewood necessary to get us through the long winters of northern Wisconsin.

Fast forward, my wife and I are the proud owners of a drafty 100-year-old farmhouse heated with a basement woodstove. I had intentions of cutting and piling my own firewood with nothing more than my chain saw and wood splitter. However, having lost my right

The operator can pull down the Badger's spring-loaded cutoff bar and cut a log with relative ease.



Hud-Son Badger



The grab-legs hold the machine while winching logs.

Engine	16-hp Briggs and Stratton w/electric start
Pump	22-GPM, 2-stage
Max Wood Diameter	18 in.
Max Wood Length	unlimited
Max Firewood Length	24 in.
Speed	1 cord per hour
Machine Weight	2,000 lbs.
Splitting Wedge	4-way, optional 6-way
Conveyer	optional add-on

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arm below the elbow to a roadside bomb in Iraq two years earlier, I had to face reality. Was I really going to put my body through that? Eventually my missing right arm made the decision for me. My arm and prosthesis could not handle the strain. I needed to buy a firewood processor.

Until recently the gap between an expensive wood splitter and a low-end firewood processor was immense. Most firewood processors start at over \$20,000—and rightly so. With built-in conveyers for hauling away the processed firewood, automated cutting and splitting, and a live log deck for constantly

feeding the machine, they are deserving of their price tags. Unfortunately they were simply out of my price range.

During my search I discovered the Hud-Son Badger, a smaller machine without many of the bells and whistles of the larger processors (and also without the added cost). For example, as much as I would enjoy the live deck, conveyer, and

log-loading arms, they were simply unnecessary. I just wanted a machine that could cut the firewood and split it without a lot of lifting and stress on my body.

Living up to its name, the Badger is proof that big things do come in small packages. In fact, when I picked it up from the distributor in Wisconsin, my first thought was, “That’s it!” Measur-



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ing roughly 10 feet long and 6 feet wide, it packs a lot of punch into a small footprint.

Operating the Badger

Setting up the Hud-Son Badger takes only a few minutes. First, orient the machine so the logs can be skidded up into the back. Drop the four corner-stability legs and tighten each bolt to hold them in place. In the rear of the machine on each



The hold-down keeps the log from sliding backwards and keeps it stabilized during cutting.



Firewood length is set by the adjustable rod.

side there is a “grab leg” that must be put down in order to hold it in place as heavy logs are winched up into it (the machine cannot be run on a paved surface). Remove the trailer tongue and set it out of the way. Then simply flip the Badger’s tail down behind the log trough, start the engine, and the machine is ready to start making firewood.

The system of operation behind the Badger is simple. Logs are pulled into the back of the machine using the onboard hydraulic winch. When the front of the log reaches the wood length rod, it is sawed using the manually-operated cutoff bar. The block of firewood then rolls into the splitting trough where it is split by the hydraulic ram and splitter head. The machine can turn a log into firewood in a short amount of time.

Some Details

First, in order to hook up to a log, the winch must be set in “free” mode. This allows the operator to pull out enough cable to attach the choker around the log. Once the choker is attached, the winch is set back to “low,” the operator pulls on the corresponding hydraulic lever, and the winch pulls the log into the back of the Badger. Once the front of the log is in the log trough,



Chain lubrication is handled by the onboard oiling system that only turns on during cutting.



The hydraulic winch is plenty strong for loading even the largest logs.

the choker must be attached to the back of the log so it can then be pulled further into the machine. When the end of the first log gets close to the cutting bar, the operator must pull the D-handle to open the log hold-down. The hold-down keeps logs from sliding backwards out of the machine while a new one is being skidded in behind it,



Pulling a large log into Badger’s log trough is quick and easy with the winch and choker system.

and it keeps the log stabilized as it is being cut.

The cutting bar is engaged by flipping the toggle switch on the handle. It engages a clutch on the engine and the belt-driven pulley system that drives the chain. It also powers a small electric pump inside the onboard bar-oil container that lubricates the chain as the machine cuts. The cutoff bar is spring-loaded so the operator can pull down and cut a log with relative ease.

Evaluation

I have been pleasantly surprised at how long the chain stays sharp on the machine. Even though the logs are dragged across the ground into the machine, multiple cords can be cut before there is any noticeable slowdown in cutting speed. Swapping the chain can be done in minutes by removing the front access panel, a pillow block, and the chain saw bar assembly. The entire process is well documented in the



The Badger features a manually adjustable 4-way splitter head.

updated owner's manual which is conveniently available on Hudson's website.

The wood splitter portion of the machine is more than adequate. The ram for the splitter has a fast 7-second cycle time, thanks to the Badger's 16-hp Briggs and Stratton engine and a two-stage,

per-minute hydraulic pump. The two-stage pump provides high flow, low pressure for high-speed piston movement, then drops down to "granny gear" for low flow, high pressure to crush the wood through the splitter with a force of 19 tons. The 4-way splitting head can be adjusted up and down with the

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attached handle. Hud-Son also offers an optional 6-way splitter head for those consistently splitting larger wood.

I do have one minor gripe about the splitter, and that is the smooth face on the hydraulic ram. If the end of the firewood is cut at a slight angle, as can happen with curved or forked logs, they tend to slide off the face of the ram as they engage the splitter. (Hud-Son has since added a welded "V" to give the ram more grip.)

Hud-Son claims that the Badger can process about a cord an hour. After running a few cord of firewood through the machine, I think this is realistic. The most time-consuming aspects of using the machine are hooking up a new log with the choker and doing something with the processed firewood.

I sped up the choker aspect of the machine by using my own homemade invention—a set of tongs with a spring attached. Now

instead of struggling with the factory choker chain with my one hand and prosthetic arm, I simply slip the tongs over the top of the log and walk away. Since the Badger has no limit on the length of logs being processed, another way to speed up the machine would be to process longer or even tree-length logs.

I typically pile the firewood right off the machine, which eats up a fair amount of operating time. For those who are in a hurry or are content simply dumping their firewood into piles, Hud-Son offers an optional conveyer attachment.

While the Hud-Son Badger is roadworthy, it does not have any trailer lights, nor does the one-ton axle have any suspension. Taking this into account in addition to the removable tongue, Hud-Son strongly recommends a maximum 45 mile-per-hour towing speed.

All in all, the Hud-Son Badger has proven more than adequate for

my needs. While the price tag may seem hefty for those who are content (and able) to process their firewood with a wood splitter and a chain saw, the savings in both time and wear and tear on my body have proven to be cost-effective.

Hopefully someday when my 2-year-old looks back on his early childhood, he will remember the more enjoyable things we did together as father and son, instead of all the long hours we toiled together out in the hot sun cutting and splitting firewood. To me that's priceless. ■

As a self-described "sawdust addict," J.R. Salzman is both an avid sawyer and woodworker. He is a longtime competitor in professional lumberjack sports, winning eight Men's Professional Log Rolling world titles, and the 2005 ESPY Award for Best Outdoor Sports Athlete. He operates his portable sawmill on a regular basis and has a BS in Technology Education.

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