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# KAL TIRE

at the forefront of customer service and innovation

By Nelendhre Moodley

## Expect more tyre life



**H**ealth, safety and environmental issues continue to take front and centre stage at boardrooms and mine sites across the globe. As such, the tyre market is evolving in line with customer needs and industry requirements, says Kal Tire's Mining Tyre Group, VP Southern Africa, John Martin. *SA Mining* recently caught up with Martin to chat about the key elements driving industry change.

**THE TYRE MARKET IS ESSENTIAL IN DRIVING THE GLOBAL ECONOMY. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE KEY GLOBAL AND LOCAL FACTORS IMPACTING THE SECTOR?**

We have a sense from our customers that environmental stewardship and corporate social responsibility are gaining a great deal of attention – both in boardrooms and at the mine locations. Although mines have always had a key focus on safety, this notion of widening that attention is quite evident.

We see for example some customers focusing more on environmental, social and governance, which drives investment and development of new technology or innovations. This is not only to make jobs and tasks easier and safer, but to support our customers' commitment to the environment, complement their social standing with mining communities and underpin their organisational governance.

**HOW IS THE SECTOR RESPONDING TO EXTERNAL IMPACTS, AND WHAT MEASURES HAVE BEEN PUT IN PLACE?**

We see tyre manufacturers – who normally work closely with original equipment manufacturers' (OEMs) product portfolios – work on ways they can change the tyre construction or performance to match the new demands of automated or electrified fleets.

Stresses and wear characteristics will undoubtedly change the dynamics of tyre wear and performance, and the tyre itself needs to be able to be matched to the duty cycles.

Additionally, we are seeing more of a holistic approach to linking things together from a data collection perspective. So the machine sends data through sensors, and we include information from the tyre (heat, temperature, pressure) and add details about locations (GPS tracking) and even operating context (weather patterns, etc.).

Taken all in combination, we can learn things about relationships that were difficult to determine before.

For ourselves, we are keeping abreast of technological changes and innovations on a regular basis. We are having more involvement with OEMs and even third party data collection sources or aggregators. An organisation – even a tyre service provider – that is not taking notice of this fundamental shift from reactive service to predictive



John Martin.

analytics will find themselves minimising their impact on the value chain over time. It is not easy, and it is quite new for us, but we feel it is well worth the efforts.

**HOW DID THE TYRE MARKET PERFORM IN 2020 AND UP TO MAY 2021?**

Tyre manufacturers have for the most part performed reasonably well over the 2020/21 period. COVID has unfortunately forced a slump in the sale of light vehicles. However the demand for mining tyres has remained relatively robust, stemming primarily from increased mining activity in the face of favourable pricing development in global commodities.

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The tyre industry is however not without its challenges. It's currently under severe pricing pressure through the unprecedented increases in the pricing of tyre products, as well as the fourfold increases in ocean-going freight.

Kal Tire's performance through 2020 and year to date 2021 has been strong and favourable, due to our very close alignment to the mining industry and its principal players, as well as the close cooperation with our selected manufacturing partners.

While we have been warned of potential supply constraints for giant off-the-road (OTR) tyres, fortunately that has not materialised to affect the industry.

**WHAT NEW DEVELOPMENTS ARE UNDER WAY AT KAL TIRE TO ENSURE THAT INDUSTRY REMAINS PRODUCTIVE AND TICKING?**

The core principle behind all Kal Tire's innovations is that what we develop should have a twofold effect on operations. The innovation should reduce risk and improve the operational efficiency.

Our award-winning Gravity Assist System (GAS) is a prime example of this philosophy. It is designed in a manner that allows the technician to effortlessly handle and use very heavy torque tools, while further reducing health and safety risks, such as pinched hands and fingers, general fatigue, and muscle strain.

Kal Tire will continue to innovate new and value-generating solutions, as part of our core competencies and functions. New risk-reducing and productivity-enhancing tools will be released to the market in September 2021.



Kal Tire continues to deliver strong performance.

“Tyre manufacturers are aligning tyre construction to new demands of automated or electrified fleets.” – Martin

The ongoing evolution of Kal Tire's proprietary Tire Operations Management System (TOMS) continues to deliver new functionality. TOMS is the most advanced management system for OTR tyres that positively impacts productivity, tyre life and safety.

Focused on fleet productivity and accessible, near-live reports, TOMS gives the visibility for planned and predictive maintenance and thus enables informed, real-time decisions. With instant, visual communication between the entire fleet planning team, more tyre work can be performed while trucks are simultaneously down for maintenance.

**HOW IS THE INDUSTRY HANDLING THE DISPOSAL OF WASTE TYRES?**

One of the biggest environmental challenges South Africa has been grappling with for many years, and which remains a significant challenge and concern, is the ethical disposal of waste tyres. Mining customers are desperate to roll out their environmental stewardship obligations. However a fully functional waste tyre management plan is urgently needed, to allow our mine owners to exercise their obligations.

An effective tyre abatement plan that serves all industries that generate waste tyres, and more specifically for the mining industry, is urgently needed. No facilities are currently available in South Africa that can effectively and ethically recycle the large stockpiles of waste mining tyres that the industry has generated over many years of stockpiling.

Kal Tire has invested heavily in OTR recycling technology, which we call thermal conversion, which is specifically designed to cater for the recycling of ultra-large mining tyres. A proven and functional recycling facility is already installed in the La Negra district of Chile, which by design returns waste tyres into the original basic

components used for tyre manufacturing, fully supporting the development of a circular economy, in the most environmentally friendly manner possible.

Existing technology of this nature can do extremely well for many of the established mining locations around South Africa, to reduce the many stockpiles of mining tyres that are causing ongoing environmental, health and safety risks.

**THE MINING SECTOR IN AFRICA AND SOUTH AFRICA SEEMS TO BE BENEFITING FROM HIGH COMMODITY PRICES. HAS THIS IN ANY WAY TRANSLATED TO INCREASED BUSINESS FROM THE MINING SECTOR FOR KAL TIRE?**

Africa remains the one continent that is relatively unexplored, and continues to deliver several world-class mining projects, as exploration continues to grow on the continent. We are experiencing some consolidation of mining operations, as mining houses look to take advantage of the buoyant commodity prices.

Growth opportunities certainly exist on the continent, in both brownfield and greenfield expansions, which is driving demand for additional services and products. The buoyant market has certainly brought about some stability into a market that was threatened by COVID-induced uncertainties a year ago.

Kal Tire will continue to leverage our regional infrastructure as well as our broad width of services and product offerings to serve our existing customer base, and be well placed to expand into the greenfield and brownfield expansions.

These growth opportunities are necessitating new investment in additional infrastructure and service capacity, in locations that place Kal Tire's service capabilities geographically closer to any new operations. ■