

EMEA's Top Operators Meet For 2016 CASE Rodeo Final

The finest construction machinery operators from across Europe, Middle East and Africa gathered at the CASE Customer Centre Paris in October, to compete in the final of the 2016 CASE Rodeo operator challenge. Following four highly technical challenges, French operator Ludovic Fronteau emerged victorious, lifting the trophy and winning the 2016 title, while Denmark grabbed the country team prize.

Turin, 21 October 2016

The CASE Rodeo operator challenge once again brought together the best machine drivers from across Europe, Middle East and Africa, in a challenge of skill and technical ability that is second to none. Held at the CASE Customer Centre Paris in Monthyon, France, on the weekend of October 14th-16th, operators from 15 countries grabbed their Stetsons and neckerchiefs, before taking to the controls of a range of CASE machinery.

With an opportunity for the drivers to hone their skills on the Friday, in an atmosphere of friendly yet serious competition, there was a tangible rise in tension as Saturday arrived, beneath a clear blue sky and bright sunshine, as the competitors were put through their paces in front of a cheering crowd to complete four complex challenges. With names like *Wild Wheels*, *Lawless Loader*, *Cherokee Crawler* and *Big Thunder Backhoe*, each test was designed to assess the driver's coordination, operating finesse and control behind the levers.

Wild Wheels called for the operators to take the controls of a CASE compact wheel loader equipped with pallet forks. The pallet had to be transported through two laps of the course and returned to its original position without dropping the cardboard box that was sitting on top of the pallet. Marks were lost for knocking over the cones that marked the course and the pallet had to be positioned precisely within a marked area. This challenge was won by eventual overall winner Ludovic Fronteau, in a time of 2:08:21 minutes, well ahead of his nearest competitor, Danish driver Bendt Martin Rison and third placed Swedish contestant Fredrik Johansson.

The *Lawless Loader* test involved a compact track loader with an attachment to carry a ball mounted on a cone. After following a set path through the test area, the operators had to throw the ball to knock over a set of nine skittles, before returning to the starting point. Working against the clock, points were lost for dropping the ball, for skittles left standing and for knocking over the cones. Johansson grabbed the lead in this test, with a masterful display of machine control, recording a time of 1:42:00 minutes. Second place went to Czech driver Karel Nedoma with third to Italian Davide Visca.



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For *Cherokee Crawler*, the operators moved up in size, to a CASE crawler excavator with a hook hanging from a chain at the end of the dipper arm. The contestants had to hook wooden cubes one at a time and position them within a marked area, in the right sequence. With a maximum time allowance of just 4 minutes the operators were really up against the clock, particularly as time was added for dropped cubes and delivering the cubes to the wrong marked area. Belgian operator Mike Pelzer mastered the test however, recording an incredibly rapid time of just 1:52:00 minutes. Dutch operator Peter Bart Poppink was second with Ludovic Fronteau back on the leader board in third.

As the tension mounted, with several operators still in contention, the final competition called upon perhaps the most famous CASE machine of all, the backhoe loader. Using the backhoe bucket, the driver had to take five balls from individual bases and place them into a basketball hoop. Dropped balls and missing the basket resulted in time penalties, but with a crowd of wildly cheering supporters, UK operator Karl Owen managed to complete the task in just 2:08:37 minutes, completely smashing the competition. Second spot went to Danish operator Bendt Martin Risom, with third to Italian Michelangelo Catalano

After an exhausting but thoroughly enjoyable day, with all of the marks collated, the competition was finally won by Ludovic Fronteau from France.

The country team award went to Denmark for an impressive overall performance. As well as lifting the Rodeo trophy to a round of cheers from supporters and competitors, Fronteau won a Mediterranean cruise for two and a visit to the CASE plant in Lecce, Italy.

"Above all I was very satisfied with the warm welcome and the organization of the International CASE Rodeo final. I would also like to thank all the organizers of the final French Rodeo heat that took place the previous weekend. The Big Thunder Backhoe game was my favourite as it was interesting and complicated. I actually obtained good scores on all games but I am pleasantly surprised with the result. I am getting married next year so I will enjoy the cruise and the Italian visit with my future wife. Above all, please do not change anything, and I hope to be there next year!", said winner Ludovic Fronteau.

A special team award was given to an International group, with operators from Mozambique, Israel and Romania. This additional award was given to recognise their team spirit and enjoyment of the event. This was the first time that operators from both Israel and Mozambique have taken part in the Rodeo and they enjoyed it very much. The final, well-earned award of the 2016 CASE Rodeo, given for his incredible ability to stay on the mechanical bull, went to Xavier Dannemark from Belgium.

With the pressure of the day over, all of the operators came together to enjoy a well deserved celebratory drink and a gala dinner, which this year took place aboard the Tennessee Boat, an American paddle-wheel cruise ship that allowed diners to enjoy the sights of Paris from the river. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the evening, which included many congratulations for the operators and live entertainment from female country music singers.

“Once again the CASE Rodeo operator competition has proven one of the most popular events in the calendar for CASE dealers and customers across our region,” said Giampiero Biglia, Marketing Director CNH Industrial Construction Equipment for Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

“The level of skill and control on display today was simply unbelievable. All of the operators had a fantastic competition and we at CASE have really enjoyed the opportunity to demonstrate just how versatile and controllable our equipment can be. The CASE Rodeo operator challenge provides a unique opportunity for machine operators to demonstrate their skills in front of an international audience of competitors.” said Mr Biglia.

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