

Echo Precast Engineering NV, 3530 Houthalen, Belgium

Westkon Precast: "Flexible slipformer production is the key to success"

Westkon Precast, one of the largest manufacturers of precast concrete in Australia, is concentrating more intensely on hollow core slab and other pre-stressed concrete products by investing in flexible slipformer technology. A new, extremely maintenance-friendly Universal Slipformer, delivered by the Belgian Supplier Echo Precast Engineering, is part of that strategy. The Australian company, which has two production facilities in Melbourne, and is convinced that this manufacturing method and these products are set to do well in the future.

Westkon Precast, founded in 1987, began to manufacture hollow core slab alongside its established production of reinforced and prestressed precast concrete elements. However, the existing equipment had become outdated and worn and had to be replaced. Simon Hughes, the project manager of the upgrade recalls, "We were faced with the decision of patching up our existing equipment, ceasing production of

hollow core or to invest in new equipment. We decided on the latter and to extend our product portfolio in this segment even further." In order to reach this goal, according to the project manager, they needed the latest technology, which could also manufacture a large range of products.

Convinced by flexibility

The Australian manufacturer visited producers and service providers throughout Europe. "We explored all the methods of production - from extrusion, through slipformer technology to wet cast," continues Hughes. Finally, Westkon Precast was won over by the flexibility of slipform technology. "We then started looking for a slipformer, which is easy to use, quick to convert and maintenance-friendly," adds Hughes. The fact that the choice fell on the Universal Slipformer from Echo Precast Engineering, one of the companies in the Progress Group, was no accident, according to the project manager.



For several months now a Universal Slipformer and the corresponding ancillary equipment for the manufacture of a variety of prestressed concrete products have been in use on the two 150 m long beds: as well as hollow core slab, massive and stadium slabs are produced.

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The Universal Slipformer allows Westkon Precast to manufacture hollow core slabs 20 to 50 cm in height.

We were attracted by the flexibility of this machine - it was very important for us to be able to manufacture, using automated equipment, which, in addition to producing hollow core slabs, was able to manufacture new products for the market, such as solid planks and stadium plates."

Hollow core slabs themselves, according to Hughes, are still considered a relatively new product in Australia and for this reason will attract interest particularly with an extended range and new products being possible. "It's certainly becoming more popular," he adds. The major reasons for this, thinks

Hughes, are the efficiency and speed of manufacture and installation as well as the large spans, which can be achieved with hollow core slabs.

Universal Slipformer with two exchangeable production units and eight slipformer moulds

Two brand new production units and new mould sets allow Westkon Precast to manufacture a wide range of products. The first production unit is designed for the manufacture of hollow core slabs 1.20 m in width and 20 to 50 cm in height.



Already, two stadiums have been equipped with the stadium slabs produced by the new slipformer.



Photo: Kardinia Park Stadium Trust (Trust) | Phil Hines Photography

For the Simonds Stadium in Geelong Westkon Precast produced over 8500 m² of hollow core slabs and 1250m² of the new lower bowl stadium plates.

An additional mould set is used to produce stadium plates that were used on the latest stage of the new Simonds Stadium Grandstand. Westkon Precast uses the second production unit to manufacture hollow core slab 15 cm in height and pre-stressed solid planks 8 to 15 cm in height. It only takes a few minutes to change over the production units. Even changing the various sets takes less than half an hour. With the Universal Slipformer Westkon Precast is able to cover a wide product spectrum and react quickly to market demands. A multi-angle sawing machine, a fresh concrete saw, a multi-function trolley and a plotter see Westkon with a highly automated production facility.

**Positive interim results:
first projects already concluded**

The new products - pre-stressed solid planks and stadium plates - have been well received on the market," says Simon Hughes with satisfaction. Two stadiums have already been equipped with these elements. For the Simonds Stadium in Geelong, as well as precast walls, columns, beams, seating plates and steps, Westkon Precast produced over 8500 m² of hollow core slabs and 1250m² of the new lower bowl stadium plates. The entire structure of the arena, which can hold 11,000 spectators, was constructed from precast concrete elements. Hughes is convinced that the future prospects for these production methods are positive. "The market is growing - but that is no guarantee of success. The key lies in flexibility." ■

FURTHER INFORMATION



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