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With the Power of Autonomous Iron, Caterpillar Pulls Off the Ultimate Trick Shot in Cat Trial 12: No Hands

On a field in the middle of the Arizona desert, a soccer legend and autonomous Cat[®] machines use proven technology to conquer challenging obstacle courses and score a major goal in the name of safety and efficiency.

The latest heavy equipment challenge from Caterpillar is live. Cat Trial 12: No Hands, released May 24, 2022, features two autonomous machines—a Cat[®] 299 D3 Semi-Autonomous Compact Track Loader and a Cat 794 AC Electric Drive Autonomous Mining Truck—teaming up with Major League Soccer (MLS) and FIFA World Cup soccer legend, DaMarcus Beasley, in a trick shot only possible with Cat equipment.

The concept for “No Hands” was born out of a desire to highlight the precision of the autonomous vehicles and produce a sequel to fan favorite Cat Trial 3: China Shop, in which a mini excavator moves through a shop full of dishes, plates and glasses. With that inspiration and the massive size of the autonomous truck, the obstacle course the 794 AC faced was decidedly more fragile.

Without an operator in the cab, the 794 AC deftly navigates an obstacle course full of backhoes, flags, cars, and—as a nod to Cat Trial 3—tables full of dishes.

“Cat Trial 12: No Hands proves you should not judge a book by its cover,” says Yvette Morrison, Global Head of Marketing and Brand at Caterpillar Inc. “What appears to be a large, bulky piece of equipment can be just as nimble and agile as an elite soccer player. It clearly shows that autonomy is a viable tool for safety and productivity for the appropriate customer site.”

To pull off the larger-than-life goal, Caterpillar constructed a lush soccer pitch in the Arizona desert and asked the former Manchester City, L.A. Galaxy, Chicago Fire F.C. and U.S. Men’s National Team star to serve up the most interesting assist of his storied career.

Standing between Beasley and the scoring opportunity was a challenging obstacle course that tested a player of Beasley’s caliber. It featured a wide variety of Cat products including Cat Phones, an excavator, dozer, tool bags, and more. Cat worked in tandem with the MLS in designing Beasley’s course.

As the only U.S. male player with four FIFA World Cup appearances, Beasley is used to making incredible things happen hands free on the pitch. To meet the challenge of the trial’s name, the Cat machines featured were operated with “No Hands” as well.

Located just south of Tucson, Arizona, the Caterpillar Tinaja Hills Demonstration and Learning Center hosted the event. The facility is outfitted with the Cat MineStar™ system that the company's autonomous mining trucks run on, sending the commands that allowed the 794 AC mining truck to navigate its own obstacle course fully autonomously before providing Beasley with a target to hit.

“Caterpillar's autonomous haulage system, Command™ for hauling, can improve safety, increase productivity, and provide consistent cycles,” says Jag Samaraweera, Autonomous Manager, Resource Industries, Cat Command. “For example, one of our Command for hauling customers has seen a 30% improvement in productivity and seen an increase in operational efficiency.”

The event also marked the debut of Cat's first semi-autonomous machine aimed at the construction industry: a 299D3 Compact Track Loader outfitted with a Cat Command technology. Caterpillar introduced the Command roof rack in January as a remote-control solution. However, the prototype seen in Cat Trial 12 adds a suite of LiDAR and cameras that give the 299D3 360 degrees of environment, obstacle, and human detection capability.

Caterpillar's work in autonomy stretches back to the late 1980s and its autonomous haul trucks have established a legacy for efficiency, productivity, and safety in the mining industry.

“Cat® Command for hauling is a great real-world example of customers experiencing benefits today, including productivity and safety,” says Joe Forcash, Engineering Manager, Cat Robotics. “Caterpillar has more than 500 autonomous trucks in operation, and they have driven over 90 million miles autonomously without a single lost-time injury, which is a significant safety accomplishment.”

Caterpillar originally created the Cat Trials as a means to showcase the advantages of the company's machinery through unique challenges. Previous Cat Trials included Cat Trial 1: Jenga®, Cat Trial 10: Tech Test and Cat Trial 9: PAC-MAN™.

Whether you are an aspiring or current innovator, leader, or soccer fan, Cat Trial 12: No Hands will show you the true potential of people, process and technology. Watch the challenge here: cat.com/trial12

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