

Hayden, Leclerc rise to victory as Caterpillar crowns North American champions in Global Operator Challenge

- Brian Hayden from Maine was crowned Eastern Region semifinal champion
- Brock Leclerc from British Columbia was crowned Western Region semifinal champion
- Both champions will advance to the final round of the Global Operator Challenge in March 2026

IRVING, Texas, September 29, 2025—The best machine operators across North America gathered in Clayton, NC to forge their legacy and prove their mastery of both equipment and technology. Held on Caterpillar grounds at the Edward J. Rapp Customer & Training Center, the Global Operator Challenge (GOC) divided the 32 best operators from the United States and Canada into east and west regions for the semifinal competitions. The two winners will now advance to the final round to be held in Las Vegas, Nevada during CONEXPO-CON/AGG, March 4, 2026, inside Caterpillar's 70,000 ft² outdoor exhibit in the Festival Lot.

Eastern Region Champion

Brian Hayden with Hayden Excavating and Welding Inc. from Maine, representing dealer Milton Cat, was crowned North America's Eastern Region semifinal champion. Hayden finished the four GOC events with the lowest point total of 1,313, which is a combination of time and penalties. "What makes me proud is just, you know, nothing to do with me," commented Hayden. "It's bringing recognition to the operators that devote their time and lives to what they do and then showcasing them with their skills."

Western Region Champion

Brock Leclerc with Quattro Constructors from British Columbia, representing dealer Finning Canada, completed the same four challenge events with 1,540 points, emerging as the Western Region semifinal champion for North America. "It's beyond exciting what we've accomplished here as a group," explained Leclerc. "Everybody working with great sportsmanship... it's been an unreal, awesome day and amazing experience."

Event highlights

All competitors completed the same four Challenge events using Cat® equipment and technology. "Our team pulled out all the stops to make sure this was a true test of skill," said Jason Hurdis, global industry solutions manager for Caterpillar. "We created a level playing field where every operator had the same shot at victory, proving that it all came down to talent, grit and performance."

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The **Over-the-Top Challenge** saw competitors put their versatility and precision to the test by operating a Cat compact track loader through a dynamic, multi-phase course. Starting with a bar carriage, operators navigated rugged terrain, including C-Channels and moguls, before swapping to a bucket for a high-speed loading sequence. After dumping two loads into a commercial truck, they switched to a material handling arm to lift and place objects on a staged platform. The challenge ended with a final sprint to the finish, demanding skill, speed and seamless equipment transitions.

An urban-inspired challenge, **City Streets** showcased the operators' finesse and power as they tackled a series of precision tasks using a Cat excavator. Competitors began by placing a manhole lid into a cast frame, then maneuvered to the berm's edge to retrieve and insert a 30-inch pipe into a vertical culvert. The challenge intensified with a heavy-load sequence, requiring operators to fill an articulated truck with 15 to 20 tons of material. After honking the truck off, participants returned to the start and parked the bucket in its designated spot, completing a course that demanded accuracy, control and strength.

Featuring a Cat wheel loader, the **Load 'N Loader Challenge** highlighted the agility and adaptability of the operators as they navigated a dual-phase course. Starting at the bunker pile, participants loaded and hauled material along a marked path before dumping it into a Cat articulated truck. The challenge then shifted to precision handling, where operators had to swap their bucket for forks and transport a pipe across a designated route and place it accurately on a flatbed trailer. After reversing the process and restoring the pipe to its original location, competitors reconnected the bucket and raced to the finish. It was a test of speed, control, and seamless equipment transitions.

To celebrate a century of earthmoving excellence, the **Centennial Push Challenge** had operators put a Cat dozer through a series of precision maneuvers. Competitors began by dozing a tire down a narrow path into a goal zone, then sliding a pipe along a rope using only the dozer's blade. The course continued with a grading segment that demanded smooth, even dirt distribution, followed by a bell-ringing task that tested blade accuracy. Operators then reversed off a slope and returned to the starting box, finishing with a ripper placement that sealed the run. The challenge was a tribute to skill, control and the legacy of the dozer.

The regional GOC semifinals are a culmination of months of competitions held worldwide by Cat dealers. "This year we saw a record-breaking number of dealer competitions," said Hurdis. "It's a true testament to the passion and pride of the operators in this industry."

Other winners

The regional competitions continue in Europe, South America and Asia Pacific in October to determine the nine operators who will compete in the global finals. The winner receives either a \$10,000 cash prize or an equal value trip for two to a Caterpillar location of his choice.

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Eastern Region:

- Second place – Alex Blanchet, Maxi Paysage, representing Toromont
- Third place – Robert Donnellan, C.A.C. Industries, representing H.O. Penn
- Over-the-Top Challenge winner – Brian Hayden, Hayden Excavating and Welding Inc., representing Milton
- City Streets Challenge winner – Frank Gross, Ripa & Associates, representing Ring Power
- Load 'N Loader Challenge winner – Robert Donnellan, C.A.C. Industries, representing H.O. Penn
- Centennial Push Challenge winner – Josh Blanton, Roadbuilders, Inc., representing Gregory Poole

Western Region:

- Second place – Cwentin Clifton, Elite Construction + Development, representing Western States
- Third place – Keith Steed, Native Sun Construction, representing Wagner
- Over-the-Top Challenge winner – Justin Barclay, B&W Services, representing Tractor & Equipment
- City Streets Challenge winner – Jeremey Bordelon, Durr Heavy Construction, representing Louisiana Cat
- Load 'N Loader Challenge winner – Troy Lea, Lea's Demolition, representing Holt of California
- Centennial Push Challenge winner – Jeremy Bordelon, Durr Heavy Construction, representing Louisiana Cat

For more information about the Global Operator Challenge visit www.cat.com/operatorchallenge.

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NOTE TO EDITORS

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