

# CELEBRATING 15 YEARS OF MASONRY PRIDE



Whether it's on job sites, in contractor offices, at material dealer yards, or during industry meetings, members of the masonry trade have caught the fire of the SPEC MIX BRICKLAYER 500® movement. For the last 14 years, much of the buzz in the masonry industry has centered around one simple question, who will be the next "World's Best Bricklayer?" When SPEC MIX® launched the competition in 2003, the event started out as a straight forward bricklaying competition to limelight the speed and accuracy of masons. Today, however, it is a phenomenon that has taken the industry by storm in more ways than one.

Celebrating its 15th Anniversary on January 18th at the 2017 World of Concrete in Las Vegas, the event is renowned as the entertainment vehicle for the show's 70,000 plus attendees. But for masonry and its supporters, the program has exploded into a full-blown marketing campaign focused on fueling the fiery pride in the trade. Perhaps it's the flaming trowel in the SPEC MIX BRICKLAYER 500 logo that has ignited the competitive fire inside masons throughout North America and abroad.

Like athletes, these masons and their trusted tenders train, practice and work as a team

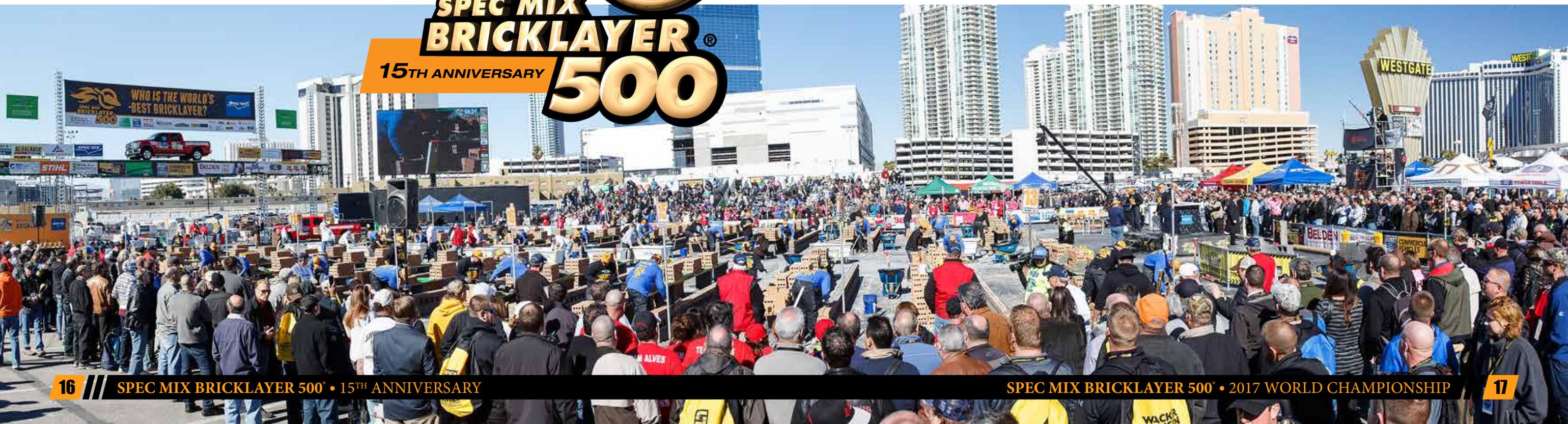
to display a fiery drive as they race to win the competition that has become one of the industry's greatest achievements. For many, just winning a Regional Qualifier contest and securing a spot on the World Championship roster is an honor, but like any sport, winning is everything. The World Championship offers the greatest total prize purse for a trade competition, annually valued at more than \$65,000, including a new FORD F-250 XLT 4x4 plus thousands in cash and prizes.

The SPEC MIX BRICKLAYER 500 has sparked a huge interest with high school kids and young adults seeking both an identity and career...especially one providing an opportunity to win cash and prizes, on top of earning the respect of your industry peers. Masonry instructors and technical colleges have leveraged the event as a recruiting tool to fill their classrooms...and it's paying off. After each World Championship competition SPEC MIX mails over 450 DVDs of the event to a list of masonry instructors in the US and Canada. Whether the video is used at career day exhibitions or in-class training lessons, the SPEC MIX BRICKLAYER 500 is a legitimate tool

for increasing the pool of quality masons. In 2012, at the age of 18, Vince Wright, a two-time SkillsUSA Masonry Champion, stood in the Las Vegas competition arena and said, "I can't wait to compete at this level. I'm just starting my professional career, but the pride I have in the skill of masonry gives me tremendous confidence in what I can create with my hands." Now, five years later, Vince is achieving that goal by competing for the first time at the 2017 World Championship Event.

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In 2010 industry leaders involved in educating, promoting and employing the trade's labor force united to fight one of greatest challenges facing the masonry industry: workforce recruitment, development and retention. That year, SPEC MIX introduced a theme for the World Championship event: "KEEPING THE TRADE STRONG" to further define the event and its mission to promote masonry construction and its craft. The message still resonates today, stronger than ever.





# Masonry Pride

## HOW IT ALL BEGAN...

In 2003 when the SPEC MIX team crafted the bricklaying battle, they wanted it to parallel the energy, excitement, and passion of professional sports. Their mission was simple: To highlight the attributes and pride that define the makings of a great mason: SKILL, SPEED, and STAMINA. "Bricklaying is truly an art that requires incredible hand-eye coordination, especially when laying 700 bricks in one hour. To appreciate this level of skill, people need to see it, which is exactly why we created the event," said Brian Carney, VP of SPEC MIX, Inc. And from then on the competition evolved into an event that compares with the pageantry, drama, and hoopla of the NFL's Super Bowl, which attracts the best masons from the US, Canada, Great Britain and Australia to gain eligibility and compete. Those who don't have the opportunity to compete, join the thousands that tune in online to watch the event, broadcasted live on [www.smb1500.com](http://www.smb1500.com).

Like all credible competitions, the SPEC MIX BRICKLAYER 500 is governed by well-defined rules covering nine different quality standards. Over time, the competition's rules and judging criteria have been modified, or tightened, to better highlight the workmanship and technique of world-class bricklayers. However, the basics have

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not changed. Each team, comprised of a mason and a tender, have 60-minutes during which they build a 26 foot 8 inch, double-wythe brick wall as high as possible. All bricks must be placed by the mason. Following the wall building and a short rest period, the bricklayers are given twenty minutes to clean their wall. Then, the walls are measured, inspected, and reviewed by a select group of 25 or more experienced judges from North America. Deductions are made from the total brick count for rule infractions and tolerance deficiencies. (See "Laying by the Rules" on page 11 for more information.)

The SPEC MIX BRICKLAYER 500® has four awards. The 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place awards are based on the highest brick count meeting the quality standards. The fourth prize designation, and arguably considered the most coveted prize, is the SPEC MIX TOP CRAFTSMAN® Award. All the judges select the wall evaluated to be the "most salable wall" with a brick count over 500 and zero craftsmanship deductions. Only once in the event's history has the Champion also won the TOP CRAFTSMAN Award, which was accomplished in 2014 by Jerry Goodman, 56, who perfectly laid 644 bricks.

The competition's excitement and display of human endurance continues to enthrall spectators while drawing the attention of the worldwide media. Over the years hundreds of thousands have witnessed several aspects of the battle in news reports and YouTube videos, read press articles and heard radio interviews and broadcasts of the SPEC MIX BRICKLAYER 500. The competition has been featured on national network television, their local affiliates, cable television, trade magazines and social media sites, including numerous blogs discussing what makes a great bricklaying competition.

## THE INDUSTRY'S RESPONSE...

Jim O'Connor, executive secretary of the Mason Contractors Association of Greater Chicago, has been a key part of the SPEC MIX BRICKLAYER 500 since its inception. Not only is O'Connor one of primary commentators at the World Championship Event that interacts with the crowd, he is recognized as a true spokesperson for the masonry industry and strong advocate of the competition. He believes that mason contractors, as well as actual bricklayers and laborers, have all benefited from this annual promotion. "This is hands down the single greatest masonry promotion impacting our industry!" said O'Connor.

Lynn Nash, Executive Vice President of the North Carolina Mason Contractors Association, agrees with O'Connor's assessment, "SPEC MIX is among a select and forward-thinking group of masonry supply companies willing to dedicate extraordinary resources to propagating the masonry trade, even when the results are perhaps difficult to quantify and probably benefit

other firms, including their competitors, as much as their own company. I think that's just exactly what's happening. Everyone in the industry is reaping the rewards from the excitement generated at these SPEC MIX competitions," says Nash. "The SPEC MIX competitions, both regionally and in Las Vegas, generate excitement in the masonry community. These contests have people talking about masonry in a positive way. And that's a good thing!"

## GREAT PARTNERSHIPS AND SPONSORSHIPS...

To take the SPEC MIX BRICKLAYER 500 to higher levels bringing sponsors into the program helped expand promotions and create greater awareness. "The power of cross-marketing is immeasurable when 15 strong brands and their people all partner to deliver a message...we're very grateful to have such great sponsors. They all work hard to support the industry," says Brian Carney of SPEC MIX, Inc. Sponsorship levels are divided between platinum, gold and contributor categories. Some of the companies and associations have been part of the event since the early years; Marshalltown Tool Company joined the effort in its inaugural year (2003) and remains a dedicated sponsor today.

"Supporting this event is a great way to show our appreciation and help promote the trade," says Kim Haley, Marketing Administrator, Marshalltown Tool Company. "There is a large workforce gap that desperately needs to be filled for years to come in order to restore our historical structures and build new ones for future generations to admire."

According to Nick Blohowiak, SPEC MIX National Sales Manager of Masonry Products, "Our sponsors take pride in being proactive, hands-on supporters of



the tradesmen and industry. Whenever there's an opportunity to contribute, they're ready to help make the event a success." As masonry product and equipment producers, the sponsors all have a vested interest in strengthening the industry so it's better positioned to capture market share. This is another primary objective of the SPEC MIX BRICKLAYER 500 initiative that is winning the praise and admiration of fans and followers.

"As a longtime supporter of the SPEC MIX BRICKLAYER 500, we have seen the huge impact and benefit this program brings to the masonry industry," says Joel Guth, President and co-founder of iQ Power Tools™. "The SMBL500 has focused so much great attention on the skilled mason, it's wonderful! This is the biggest masonry event in the world, both iQ Power Tools and me personally are so proud to be a part of it."

"Multiquip is proud to be an active sponsor of both the Regional and World Championship SPEC MIX BRICKLAYER 500 events," says Juan Quiros, Senior Director of Engineering & Product Support at Multiquip Inc. "The craftsmanship and skill demonstrated by participants generates exactly what's needed to attract the next generation of masons to the trade and promote our industry."

Every year, the SPEC MIX BRICKLAYER 500 draws attention to the masonry craft and proves that by pulling together to achieve a common goal—promote masonry construction—good things will happen. SPEC MIX and its co-sponsors have built the perfect model. "The SPEC MIX BRICKLAYER 500 brings our entire industry together and shows what is possible when we work as partners," says Mike Sutter, Chairman of the Mason Contractors Association of America and owner of Sutter Masonry,

*"The craftsmanship and skill demonstrated by participants generates excitement and interest in masonry construction. It is exactly what's needed to attract the next generation of masons to the trade and promote our industry."*

*-Juan Quiros, Multiquip Inc.*

Inc. The combined efforts of all the companies and organizations involved are the key to the program's huge success. "It shines a spotlight on the masonry industry, giving young men and women the opportunity to examine a career in masonry that they may not have previously considered."

Now is the time! You are invited to join the masonry movement that is rallying at the 2017 SPEC MIX BRICKLAYER 500 World Championship. It's an experience you don't want to miss. Thousands of your industry peers will be celebrating 15 years of masonry pride and working together to achieve our primary goal: KEEPING THE TRADE STRONG! ■

