

# BDF INDUSTRIES puts its product excellence on full display

During Glasstec last month the editorial team at Glass Machinery Plants & Accessories spoke to BDF INDUSTRIES Head of Operations Ferdinando Dalla Fontana on machines on display at the trade show and how recent organisational changes were able to boost company innovation.



## **G** LASS MACHINERY PLANTS & ACCESSORIES (GMP&A):

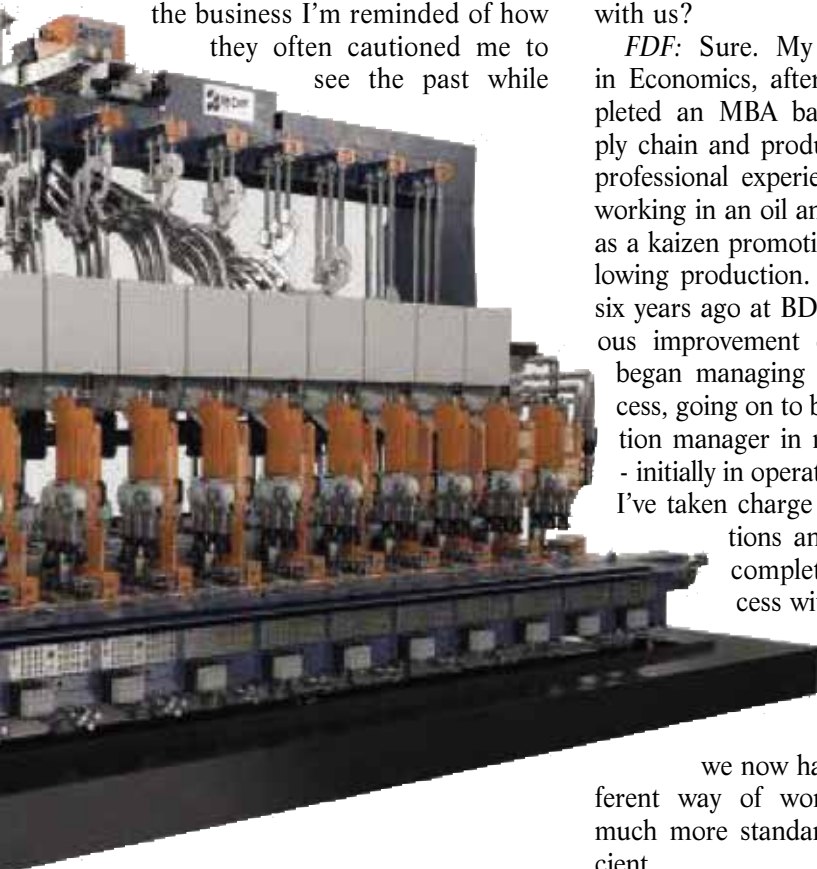
Ferdinando, tell us how your own personal story is linked to BDF.

*FDF:* As the fourth generation taking the reins of the family business, BDF often leaves me with mixed feelings. The company has always been a part of my home. As a child I was often on the factory floor. I even learnt to drive there by practising on the forklift. It all became more hands-on about six years ago, and that rich sense of family history has been my driving passion ever since. For me, BDF always came naturally. It's in my DNA, which also explains why I feel the strong responsibility today to





continue along that family path and ensure the business grows. Looking back at how I always watched my father, grandfather and uncle to learn the ropes of the business I'm reminded of how they often cautioned me to see the past while



remaining also focused upon the future.

**GMP&A:** Can you share something of your professional history with us?

**FDF:** Sure. My preparation is in Economics, after which I completed an MBA based upon supply chain and production. My first professional experience came with working in an oil and gas company as a kaizen promotional officer following production. I started about six years ago at BDF as a continuous improvement officer. Here I began managing the entire process, going on to become production manager in my second year - initially in operations. Over time I've taken charge of BDF operations and introduced a completely new process with a fresh team.

While it may not be always visible from the outside, we now have a totally different way of working which is much more standardised and efficient.

**GMP&A:** So, innovation with your products and transformation of your organisation, basically.

**FDF:** Indeed. What drives me and my team is continuous improvement. That goes for our operations but also for technical development at BDF. Two years ago I became technical director and there my particular focus has been on evolving the IS machine. Here we've been introducing all the modern concepts, like the black box system which has sensors within all utilities of the machine to allow reception of all machine information, thereby maximising machine control.

We've also implemented the thermo-camera that regulates mould temperature and moderates air flow while managing the cooling of the machine. To this we can add our implementation of new mechanisms, like those of the new servo baffle and servo blow head - both of which can be installed in either a new machine or an existing one. All this follows that logic of continuous improvement to which I referred earlier - not only for future BDF machines but for all earlier versions as well, which means extending our advancement of the technology to what's already out there. We've also focused a lot on the angular section, having identified many features that can be improved - not just at BDF but throughout the entire IS sector. We've worked a lot, for instance, on machine stability and anti deflection - all to guarantee not only stability but also a certain 'performance standard'. This can best be delivered by a structurally-robust machine that's also resistant to wear over time given that it takes into consideration all the many variables of production which come with years of operation and millions of cycles. Having examined the internal mechanisms of





our various machines we've also worked on the passage of air in all of them. Now with the state-of-the-art software programmes and tools currently available we've been able to isolate any legacy engineering inside the machine -also following intensive study- which has afforded us the know-how to identify areas which exhibited pressure loss. In this way we've been able to 'rationalise' the air passage mechanism within our machines to render it more standardised. That's marked a great improvement.

**GMP&A:** Also a big win for energy saving.

**FDF:** Precisely. Basically the goal here was to have no pressure loss within the air circuit. You improve performance with the same air quantity because you're not losing any compressed air. That way we have a more efficient machine



which is also far more reliable and much more standardised.

**GMP&A:** Talk to us about your product range.

**FDF:** As a leading supplier in the glass container business, BDF can supply the entire hot-end from batch to stacker. We've got both melting and forming divisions. The former takes care of all the furnaces, or hearths - so automation, back charger and the entire process associated with it, while the latter refers to everything from feeder to stacker (here the IS machine represents our core business). Not only. We also provide everything in-between.

**GMP&A:** Ferdinando, how has 2022 been so far?

**FDF:** Despite recent headaches in the industry connected to the present war, I can report that we've had a good year so far. That's because as a company we prefer to have advanced preparation for any unanticipated shocks. This also extends to the competition since we're also the producers of our own electronic system. It automatically excludes BDF from problems with the electronic component that many face within the industry. In terms of materials, as well, our forecasts had already factored in any unforeseen difficulties, so our timing hasn't been affected either. For us, the problems connected to Ukraine display two sides of the same coin. True. We're strong in Russia and have many clients there. However, after halting company activities there we've been able to concentrate instead on areas that were receiving less attention. Indeed in some cases we've been able to improve our presence in other countries that were serviced less or where our footprint wasn't as visible.

**GMP&A:** Finally, any reflections on 2023?

**FDF:** Looking ahead to next year I'm very positive. Today the consumption of glass has remained



unchanged and current demand is still very high. Plants have to stay operative and keep the production going. So despite existing fears around gas and energy, people are still consuming beer and making pasta with tomato jars.

**GMP&A:** Can you speak to any BDF innovation in terms of energy saving?

**FDF:** For a long time now we've been providing hybrid solutions for our furnaces - so much so that we already have furnaces that are almost-gas free. While it's true there's still some need for oil and gas, we've implemented double-booster systems that ensure total reliance on oil and gas is reduced to a minimum. On our IS machine, too, energy

consumption is significantly cut with the servo baffle and servo blow head, which jointly reduce compressed air consumption in the machine - here, in fact, we've totally eliminated compressed air consumption in the baffle to reach an estimated saving of 80 percent. ■



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