

Leading Edge

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No-till
On The Plains

Go Boldly

by Matt Hagny

Hard-core defines Alan States. The drive, the urgency, the decisive style, the careful logic that exude from his every action and utterance are inescapable. A man who gets things done, and cares little whether you approve.



Yet the self-assured personality, combined with exceptional discipline and cunning, has served States remarkably well during his somewhat storied life. His road has had

its share of turns. Following an education in economics at K-State, he embarked on what he describes, tongue-in-cheek, as “an all-expense-paid, around-the-world leadership course, courtesy of the U.S. government,” referring to his tour of duty with the Army during the Vietnam conflict. He barely escaped with his life. Returning home to Logan in north-central Kansas in 1972: “All I wanted to do was farm in my little corner of the county.” But he returned with the resolve to do things his own way.

While a solid no-tiller now, States had impatiently waited two decades “for the tools to become available,” knowing all the while where he needed to go. In ’77 he was dabbling in no-till and was doing an “ecofallow”-type rotation of wheat >>milo >>summerfallow. Soon it became standard practice for him to plant the milo crop into the wheat stubble without any tillage. The sorghum stalks were then v-bladed during the fallow year, and field cultivated to prepare for wheat planting. However, Alan saw no compelling reason to do this tillage during the fallow year—he knew herbicides were effective, and was



Photo by Alan States.

Back in 1985, States’ air drill was an attempt at a no-till seeder for wheat, built from Acra double-disc openers on a Sunflower chisel frame and a Sunflower (John Shearer) air cart imported from Australia. Inadequacies of that unit in handling firm soils caused States to delay his desired conversion to permanent no-till by over a decade, diligently looking all the while for a practical yet reasonably precise no-till seeder. In ’97 when the Deere 1850 air drills came out, he pounced.

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