Ransomes America shakes up turf divisions; Aal steps down

By Peter Blais

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. — Ransomes America Corp. has eliminated divisions and dismissed 100 employees in an effort to streamline operations, cut costs and become more competitive in the turf care industry.

The new organization has been reduced to two divisions, consumer and commercial. Ransomes formerly had four divisions — consumer, commercial international, commercial American and property (overseeing the company’s vast, worldwide land holdings).

Leading the list of dismissed upper management personnel is former Ransomes America President Irv Aal, who left Jan. 27. Aal took over Ransomes America in 1991 shortly after Britain-based Ransomes Plc. purchased Cushman Inc. and its affiliates.

“Tanz recognized the company’s performance hadn’t been as good as we’d hoped,” said Commercial Group Chief Executive Peter G. Wilson.

“We’re not reducing manufacturing capacity,” assured Wilson, whose group includes the golf market. “We’ve simply reduced tiers of management in order to become more efficient.”

Wilson said the streamlined company is still the only manufacturer of turf equipment with assembly facilities on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. The commercial group’s four plants are located in England, Lincoln, Neb., Johnson Creek, Wis., and Orrville, Ohio.

The new arrangement allows those facilities to share engineering information and expertise, with Wilson orchestrating.

Ex-DowElanco trio forms SePro Corp.

INDIANAPOLIS — Three former DowElanco executives have formed a new company, SePro Corp., which will market four former DowElanco products to several specialized markets, including the golf course market.

Indianapolis-based SePro—which formally began operations Jan. 3, 1994—has purchased from DowElanco A Rest plant growth regulator, Sonar aquatic herbicide, and Tripton, a fungicide for the control of powdery mildew in greenhouses. SePro has also acquired exclusive distribution rights to market Rubigan EC fungicide.

“We realize the importance of these specialized markets and understand that, at times, large chemical manufacturers have been unable to focus on those niche markets outside the mainstream of their core business,” said William Culpepper, SePro CEO and former director of

OTHER ASIAN GOLF COURSE REPORT

Vietnam Vice Premier Nguyen Khach christens the country’s first driving range, at King’s Island Golf Resort on Lake Dong Mo, outside Hanoi.

Another Asian market beckons

EcoScience enters Chinese joint venture

WORCESTER, Mass. — EcoScience Corp. has announced it has entered into a long-term collaboration with the Institute of Biological Control (IBC) of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS) in Beijing, Peoples Republic of China (PRC), to develop and commercialize microbial agents and beneficial insects for pest control.

The CAAS is a governmental agency that sets national agricultural research priorities, assists in agricultural development at the provincial level, and supports the Ministry of Agriculture in formulating national and international agricultural policies. The collaboration includes an initial technical development and screening program (Phase I) and the formation of a PRC based joint venture operating company (Phase II). It is anticipated that the joint venture will be operational before the end of the first quarter 1995.

“High Tech Golf has been named the exclusive Rain Bird Golf irrigation distributor for Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Santa Barbara and Ventura counties. High Tech Golf is a new distribution partnership created by two golf industry veterans, John Dixon, president of High Tech Irrigation in Indio, Ca., and Gard Craw, former Hunter Industries’ Golf sales manager. High Tech Golf will sell Rain Bird sprinklers, valves and controllers, and will also carry a wide range of golf course irrigation equipment and maintenance supplies.

NEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

The Short-Cut greens mower is a motorless, hand-push product designed to handle smaller jobs — like putting greens — and hand-pushed product designed to handle smaller jobs — like putting greens — and

By Peter Blais

HO CHI MINH CITY, Vietnam — The lifting of a United States trade embargo will have little immediate impact on golf development here, but will make more investment capital available in the future, according to Asia-Pacific golf industry analysts, government officials and lenders.

Under a plan passed by the U.S. Congress in February, President Bill Clinton has eliminated virtually all restrictions on American developers doing business in Vietnam.

“Clinton’s action will have very little effect on golf directly,” said Al Furber of Robert Trent Jones II International’s Singapore office, “as many of the good resort locations and other land packages have already been locked into a development package by entrepreneurs from countries without restrictions like the United States.”

“The long-term effect of the U.S. action will hopefully be more investment, which will have a side effect for the leisure industry.”

The country’s first two courses — King’s Island in Lake Dong Mo outside Hanoi and Song Be near Ho Chi Minh City — opened last summer. The Vietnamese government, which sees golf as key to the development

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