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.

“Irvin 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 Orville, Ohio.

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

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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 of tourism, has already been locked into a development package by entrepreneurs from countries without restrictions like the United States.

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RANSOMES AMERICA PROMOTES FOUR FROM WITHIN

SIOUX CITY, Iowa — Terra International, Inc. has promoted Art DeLeon, Ray Miller, Burnie Baker and Pam Stephen to new positions within the company. DeLeon has been named director, energy procurement, while Miller has been named director, chemical and fertilizer purchasing. Baker has been named fertilizer purchasing manager, and Stephen has been promoted to chemical purchasing manager.

CHANGES AT RISE BOARD

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment) Board of Directors has added three new members. Selected to represent DowElanco for a vacant term is Dick Holzschu, general manager of North American Specialty Products. Also named were Tommy Reeves, vice president of Oldham Chemical Co., Inc.; and Ron Fister, director of Specialty Sales for Sandoz Agro, Inc.

CONNOLLY JOINS JACKLINGolf

James E. Connolly, a U.S. Golf Association agronomist in New England since 1988, has joined JacklingGolf as senior technical representative. He will work with customers to solve turfgrass needs.

RAINBIRD TAPS HIGH TECH

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.

ECO-SCIENCE ENTERS CHINESE Joint VENTURE

WORCESTER, Mass. — EcoScience Corp. has announced its new joint venture with 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. The EcoScience enters Chinese joint venture

ASIAN GOLF COURSE REPORT

ASIAN GOLF COURSE NEWS

BEIJING, China — Chinese joint venture

EcoScience enters Chinese joint venture

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.”

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“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 DowElanco to form SePro Corp.

NEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

The Short-Cut greens mower is a motorless, hand-propelled product designed to handle smaller jobs — like putting greens — and is side in for motorized mowers in the shop. The Short-Cut was developed by the owners of Lowell Greens, a company which installs custom greens for home and commercial use. For more information, contact Dick Moultrie at 509-355-4560. For more new products, see page 65.
EcoScience in midst of public offering

WORCESTER, Mass. — EcoScience Corp., a manufacturer and marketer of biological pest control products, is in the midst of a public offering of 2,000,000 shares of its common stock.

The offering is being led by Oppenheimer & Co. and Prudential Securities Inc. Those interested in obtaining a prospectus or those with questions should contact Michelle Linn or Gene Ostrow at 508-754-0300.

EcoScience also announced a net loss of $24 million — or $0.35 per share — for the three months ending Sept. 30, 1993. This contrasts with the net loss of $1.3 million — or $0.20 per share — for the same quarter in fiscal 1992.

EcoScience also announced a joint venture with a Chinese company.

Dick Stuntz
Superintendent
Alvamar Country Club
Lawrence, Kansas

"With the amount of flooding and heat we're had this season, most preemergence herbicides would have fizzled out by now — but not Barricade. It's still giving us excellent control."

Vietnamese trade embargo lifted

Continued from page 59

a Western-style business climate, is encouraging pursuit of golf and resort-oriented projects.

The United States placed a trade embargo on Vietnam following America's military withdrawal from the Southeast Asian nation in the mid-1970s. As memories of the war faded, United States/Vietnam relations have mellowed. President George Bush modified the embargo in December 1992, allowing American businesses to sign Vietnamese contracts, but not fulfill them until the embargo is lifted.

Clinton refused to lift the embargo last summer, claiming Vietnamese officials still were not fully cooperating on resolving the issue of locating U.S. servicemen missing since the Vietnam war.

But in recognition of improved relations between the two countries, Clinton on Sept. 13, 1993, further modified the embargo so that U.S. developers could at least bid on projects financed by international lenders, such as the World Bank and Asian Development Bank.

Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.), a Vietnam veteran, has led the call to ease the embargo if Vietnamese cooperation continues. Assistant Secretary of State Winston Lord praised Vietnamese officials for their cooperation during a late-1993 visit to Hanoi.

Clinton's action allows U.S. companies to bid on privately financed projects, the State Department spokesman said. Private money is fueling what golf development is taking place in Vietnam.

The World Bank and Asian Development Bank could eventually finance resort development, although this remains years away in a country where roads, bridges, electricity and water supplies are sadly lacking and the average yearly income is approximately US$200 per person.

"We're looking at financing very basic infrastructure projects at this point," said Peter Stephens, external affairs spokesman for the World Bank's East Asian market.

"It's likely to be that way for some years. The Asian Development Bank is probably looking at the same type of investments." Infrastructure, transportation, communications and a legal system to define specific land packages are the major deterrents to golf development in Vietnam, Jones II's Furbisher agreed.

Many potentially beautiful golf resort sites exist in Vietnam, particularly in the Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi areas, Furbisher noted. But most won't be developed until infrastructure requirements are met, he added.

"A few months ago, a Singapore newspaper did an article on all investments in Vietnam," Furbisher said. "Only one out of seven ventures were successful."