One-stop equipment deals on rise

By MICHAEL LEVANS

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. — As the industry sees more courses gathering under management umbrellas, the number of exclusive provider deals between management companies and manufacturers — including equipment, equipment maintenance and ancillary services — appears to be following suit.

In the past month, both the Toro Co. and Ransomes America Corp. have added substantial new agreements to their growing list of exclusive arrangements.

Toro cut a five-year deal with Whitbread/Marriott Hotels to be exclusive provider of turf equipment and maintenance for Whitbread’s eight existing courses and two currently in development. Ransomes will be the exclusive manufacturer and maintainer for the eight courses under the watchful eye.

PGA Tour, Deere ink 3-prong deal

By HAL PHILLIPS

MOLINE, Ill. — In a deal that impacts three distinct segments of the golf industry, John Deere has reached an unprecedented nine-year agreement with the PGA Tour to provide turf equipment to the Tournament Players Club (TPC) network of courses, assume title sponsorship of the Quad City Classic and provide 385 acres for a new TPC course development.

The nine-year partnership — comprising three consecutive 3-year leases — was an

FTC gives blessing to Ciba, Sandoz merger

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The United States Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has cleared the creation of Novartis through the merger of Ciba and Sandoz.

Though the merger was first announced back in March of 1996, Novartis Crop Protection, Inc., was not formed until Jan. 1, 1997.

And the timing couldn’t be better, as the new Novartis operation will conduct a week-long coming out party this market [turfgrass],” Zeneca President Robert Woods said at a press conference at the International Golf Course Conference and Show here announcing the new product, which is being marketed as Heritage. “It has significant importance to Zeneca as we move forward.” Scotts and Zeneca will distribute Heritage.

Developed from natural compounds found in certain species of wood-decaying mushrooms, it has activity against plant pathogens from all four major fungal groups.

Heritage introduced in Las Vegas

By MARK LESLIE

LAS VEGAS — The federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has expedited registration of the first fungicide ever approved in its “reduced-risk pesticide” category — the broad-spectrum azoxystrobin, which represents a new and different class of chemistry.

“We are extremely excited,” said Keelan Pulliam, business director of Zeneca Professional Products which, he said, mandated for azoxystrobin “the most extensive research in turf, ever — both by universities and companies.”

“We are committed, with research and development, to support this market [turfgrass],” Zeneca Professional Projects at a press conference at the International Golf Course Conference and Show here announcing the new product, which is being marketed as Heritage. “It has significant importance to Zeneca as we move forward.” Scotts and Zeneca will distribute Heritage.

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RohMid partnership a work in progress

By HAL PHILLIPS

PHILADELPHIA, Pa. — It’s been nearly six months since American Cyanamid Co. and Rohm & Haas Co. formed RohMid L.L.C., a marketing and sales joint venture charged with developing, registering and commercializing a new insecticide, RH-0345.

The eagerly awaited product has a name, Mach II, and RohMid officials seem confident the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will register the product this year.

Yet the fate of grubs and soil-borne pests — the targets of Mach II — have taken something of a back seat, as observers of the turf and ornamental industry gauge the success of this unprecedented partnership. In a time of unmatched competition, mergers and acquisitions among multinational chemi-
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Rohmid
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cal conglomerates, can cooperation really work? What lessons are there to learn?
In search of answers, Golf Course News sought out two primary players in the partnership: Janet Giesselman, Turf and Ornamental product manager for Rohm and Haas and chair of the four-person board overseeing the joint venture; and John Thomas, PhD, manager of the RohMid project.

Golf Course News: How has the partnership worked out so far?
Janet Giesselman: It really couldn't be better. We're having a great time and we're getting a lot done. We've submitted for registration on target for a launch in 1997. But more important, we've laid the groundwork. Because these are such large organizations, we had to be sure we had the processes in place—for manufacturing, administration, processing, delivery. How the joint sales force will be selling through distribution... These people needed to get to know each other.

Golf Course News: How are the responsibilities divided up?
John Thomas: What we've decided is, we'll be using the full resources of both companies. We have formal agreement on that, an administrative services agreement, that outlines all marketing and logistic functions.

Golf Course News: We spent a lot of time here—a year of negotiations. And we covered a lot of ground. We covered everything that we could think of. So there wasn't a lot of disagreement on responsibilities before we formed the company.
John Thomas: We're governed by a series of agreements. We took it in a step-wise fashion. The development agreement was sorted out before the joint-venture agreement, for example. Then we had an agreement for manufacturing, administrative services, etc. It allowed us to focus on one thing at a time.

Golf Course News: We've been told you had a unique incentive for sorting out disagreements.
John Thomas: The incentive is, we recognize that our higher management has said, "Hey, you know the business. The issues aren't unusual. We believe you can handle them and we've empowered you to do so."

Heritage
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according to research.
Steve Gipson, superintendent at Fairlawn Country Club in Cleveland, said at the conference that using the product "can break the pattern of using sterile inhibitors after sterile inhibitors. It gives us an opportunity to break that cycle. Sterile inhibitors aren't bad, but this will extend the life of sterile inhibitors."
"It is the only fungicide to control both brown patch and pythium," said Dr. Bruce Clark of Rutgers University, one of several university researchers who studied azoxystrobin. "It provides up to 28 days of control."
Dr. Joseph Vargas of Michigan State University also touted its replacement of mercury-based products and "excellent control of snow mold."
Clark pointed to Heritage's low 2- to 4-ounce usage rate and "low-risk environmental profile."
Indeed, when mixed at four and eight times the mix rate, it reportedly did not harm turf.
Superintendent Mike McNulty of Philadelphia Country Club, one of more than 170 superintendents to test the product, said: "The only thing it does not control is dollar spot, and there are many other products that do that."
It has proven effective against summer patch, takeall patch, anthracnose, pink and gray snow mold, red thread, fusarium patch and other fungi, according to Clark.
"It's wonderful to see a different mode of action come on the market," he said, adding that it is compatible when mixed with other products, such as those that fight dollar spot.
"We looked at a dozen products and there is no sign of incompatibility."