Yamaha expands national reach with high-tech service trucks

By ANDREW OVERBECK

NEWNAN, Ga. — In an effort to increase its ability to service golf car fleet customers in out-of-the-way areas, Yamaha Golf Cars has unveiled a system of global positioning satellite (GPS)-linked service trucks that offer the same capabilities as its dealerships.

"We have a dealer and service network across the country," said Dan Grigsby, national service manager. "But there are many courses out there that are not covered by those dealers. The whole premise of the program is to take care of customers that are in an area where the dealer cannot provide service."

The advent of the service truck program also allows Yamaha, which depends on fleet sales for 80 to 90 percent of its business, to expand sales opportunities. "Our goal was to identify where we had potential customers and give our sales people the opportunity to sell cars where ever they can. Then we can determine which areas are big enough to put in a service truck," Grigsby said.

So far, Yamaha has 15 service trucks in Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, eastern Tennessee, Texas, Oklahoma and Florida and will be adding trucks in Arkansas and California. The trucks are staffed by a technician who regularly services between 15 and 20 courses and visits each course once a month. The technicians work out of a home office when they are not on the road.

**TRUCKS ROLL OUT FULLY STOCKED**

Each Chevrolet 14-foot box truck is equipped with a complete line of tools, a $15,000 parts inventory, a service area, and an office. The service technician has a laptop that is linked to the Yamaha home office that allows him to open and create repair and part orders. When the technician closes an order, Yamaha has the ability to order, bill and send parts within 24 hours.

"They can do all the maintenance work and 95 percent of the major repairs," Grigsby said. "They have a spare engine, transmission assembly and two sets of batteries. They can do just about everything right there on site."

The GPS system on the truck allows the technician to communicate with a search and product development manager. In his new role, Walter assumes marketing and development manager for turf and ornamental products. Walter, who has been with the company since 1997, previously served as turf development manager and global product development manager. In his new role, Walter will be responsible for marketing strategies, research and product development.

"We will continue their tradition and supplement their customer offerings with other Pennington/Central branded products. In addition, we plan to expand the presence of the Rebel varieties in several key accounts," said Brooks Pennington III, president of Pennington Seed.

According to KRB Seed Company president, Ken Budd, the company president, Ken Budd, the company will be renamed Ag. Aventis CropScience, which is already operating as an independent company, was formed a year ago by the merger between Hoechst Schering Agerva and Rhone Poulenc Agro. The subsidiary’s Environmental Science Division manufactures turf fungicides, herbicides, insecticides and plant growth regulators, including the popular Chipco and DeltaGuard brands.

The company, which will be renamed Agerva, will either be launched on the stock exchange or sold outright. According to analysts, Germany’s Bayer AG, which recently bought Novartis’ FLINT fungicide business, is the front runner to buy Aventis CropScience, although both Dupont and Dow Chemical may also be interested.

Pennington acquires Lofts and Rebel varieties

LAFAYETTE, Calif. — Central Garden & Pet Co. has announced that its Pennington subsidiary has reached agreement with KRB Seed Co., LLC to acquire certain assets and licensing rights with respect to Lofts and Rebel facilities and products.

Under the agreement, Pennington will acquire substantially all of the assets of the Lofts group with facilities in Woburn, Mass., Laurel, Md., and Farmingdale, N.J. In addition, Pennington will be granted exclusive rights to the Lofts related trademarks and sales marks. Pennington will also be granted certain non-exclusive rights to produce and market Rebel seed varieties. Other terms of the agreement were not disclosed.

"The Lofts brand is established and well respected in the Northeast. We will continue their tradition and supplement their customer offerings with other Pennington/Central branded products. In addition, we plan to expand the presence of the Rebel varieties in several key accounts," said Brooks Pennington III, president of Pennington Seed.

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Aventis to spin off crop science division

STRASBOURG, France — The life-science group Aventis SA has announced that it intends to sell its $3.5-billion agrochemicals and plant health products division by the end of 2001 to concentrate solely on its pharmaceutical business.

Aventis CropScience, which is already operating as an independent company, was formed a year ago by the merger between Hoechst Schering Agerva and Rhone Poulenc Agro. The subsidiary’s Environmental Science Division manufactures turf fungicides, herbicides, insecticides and plant growth regulators, including the popular Chipco and DeltaGuard brands.

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