RAIN BIRD PROMOTES TWO
AZUSA, Calif. — Rain Bird has promoted Steve Sakurai to president of sales and company spokesman Mark Bland. “We have a new hinge pin design, a new self-cleaning radiator and have developed retrofit kits for older models. Many of the new design features and tweaks in the articulating mower design can be found on the company’s latest mower, the entry-level 3377T. The new zero-turn model is designed for courses with less severe undulations and features four mowing decks, a 77-inch width of cut and a 33-hp air-cooled Kubota turbo engine. A new patent-pending, self-cleaning radiator with reversing fans also makes its debut on the mower. The 3377T will cost approximately $18,000 and go into production this fall. “We made this a simple design with a commonality of parts so it will be easy to fix,” said Bland. “For example, the pulley bearings are the same as the spindle bearings so you can keep fewer parts in stock.” The development cycle for the 3377T marks a renewed focus on quality control and product design. “The 3377T is a mature product,” said Bland. “Five years ago the company probably would have released it last fall. We have done more testing and I am confident that we have gotten all the bugs worked out.”

According to Bland, service intervals used to be every 100 hours of service, but intervals now extend to once every season. “The new technology in the 3377T will eventually find its way into other models,” said Bland. In addition to the 3377T, Lastec makes the 3606 and 3682 riding mowers and a full range of pull-behind and front deck mowing units.

Monsanto’s business plan unchanged following spin-off

INDIANAPOLIS — With competition increasing, articulating mower manufacturer Lastec has spent the last two years refocusing efforts on research and development and product design on both existing and future models. “We have done a lot in the last two years, and there is more to do,” said senior engineering manager Mark Bland. “We have a new hinge pin design, a new self-cleaning radiator and have developed retrofit kits for older models. Many of the new design features and tweaks in the articulating mower design can be found on the company’s latest mower, the entry-level 3377T. The new zero-turn model is designed for courses with less severe undulations and features four mowing decks, a 77-inch width of cut and a 33-hp air-cooled Kubota turbo engine. A new patent-pending, self-cleaning radiator with reversing fans also makes its debut on the mower. The 3377T will cost approximately $18,000 and go into production this fall. “We made this a simple design with a commonality of parts so it will be easy to fix,” said Bland. “For example, the pulley bearings are the same as the spindle bearings so you can keep fewer parts in stock.” The development cycle for the 3377T marks a renewed focus on quality control and product design. “The 3377T is a mature product,” said Bland. “Five years ago the company probably would have released it last fall. We have done more testing and I am confident that we have gotten all the bugs worked out.”

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John Deere, Toro report strong 3Q growth

MOLINE, Ill. — Citing increased sales overseas and higher commercial and consumer equipment sales, Deere & Co. reported worldwide net income of $147.6 million for the third quarter ended July 31, more than double last year’s $71.8 million. Increased sales for both periods were mainly due to higher overseas sales of agricultural equipment, primarily in Europe, higher commercial and consumer equipment sales and the impact of acquisitions less divestitures. Based on the market conditions, net equipment sales for the fourth quarter are currently forecast to be up 8 to 10 percent from the same period last year.

Toro posts higher net earnings

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. — The Toro Co. has reported net earnings of $21.9 million on net sales of $375.6 million for its fiscal third quarter ended Aug. 2. In the comparable fiscal 2001 period, the company reported net earnings of $16.9 million on net sales of $329.7 million.

Due to new equipment and irrigation products, professional sales were up six percent for the quarter. In both grounds and golf, Toro reported that customers are ordering closer to retail demand reflecting their concerns about inventory. As a direct result of this “just in time” ordering strategy, sales were behind retail levels for most products.

Soil Air resolves patent dispute

CROMWELL, Conn. — Soil Air Technology has resolved its litigation with East Syracuse, N.Y.-based SubAir concerning proprietary and patented subsurface soil aeration and conditioning technology. A consent judgment has been entered in the United States District Court for the Northern District of New York declaring that David Potts and Soil Air own all rights, title and interest in United States Letters Patent No. 6,018,909, which was issued on Feb. 1, 2000. “This legal judgment reinforces the fact that our patented technology is, and always has been, the intellectual property of Dave Potts and Soil Air,” said Ed Guider, CEO of Soil Air. SubAir had alleged that Potts, who used to head SubAir, misappropriated its intellectual property (GCN May 2000) when he left the company.