SUPPLIER BUSINESS

Laskowski returns to Lastec, looks to expand niche

By ANDREW OVERBECK

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. — Jeff Laskowski has returned as CEO and president of Lastec, a company he co-founded with inventor Dan Tekulve in 1990. The two pioneered the concept of high-end rotary mowing, with the introduction of the Articulator and received a patent for the mowing deck’s drive system.

In 1998, Laskowski merged the $5 million company with its parent firm Wood-Mizer, which makes portable saw mills, and then decided to leave and pursue other interests. After his father, Donald Laskowski, stepped down in early April, he decided to come back on board to once again run both companies.

According to Laskowski, he’s got his hands full. “The mower side of the business is profitable, but it has shrunk,” he said. “The sawmill side is in the red for the first two years in a 25-year history. I would say some of it has to do the economy, but they took their eye off the ball and they need some direction.”

On the mower side, Laskowski will concentrate on reasserting Lastec’s brand in the marketplace and rebuilding its dealer network. “We created the niche. Nobody had articulated rotary decks before we did,” he said. “We used to supply Toro and John Deere with decks in the game with different configurations and different types of drive systems.”

“But Lastec presents the greatest opportunity for the corporation,” Laskowski continued. “We got into this market in the worst possible economy in the early ’90s and we thrived. The economy doesn’t matter if you offer a viable solution to a problem that exists at a reasonable price.”

Strengthening Lastec’s dealer network will be key to the company’s success. “The distribution network has been neglected a bit,” Laskowski said. “We have an effective way of powering decks at a reasonable cost. What we haven’t done is build a distributor network to take advantage of what we currently make and we haven’t taken that advantage and put it in other niches. We can do four times more volume if we are better at building a distributor network and

Scotts and Monsanto resubmit RR bent petition

By ANDREW OVERBECK

MARYSVILLE, Ohio — The Scotts Co. and Monsanto resubmitted their petition for Roundup Ready bentgrass to the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) April 14. The companies originally submitted the petition in May 2002, but withdrew their application Oct. 3 after APHIS made a “letter of deficiency” in September.

“We have not changed the petition,” said John Bosser, senior specialist for environmental communication for Scotts. “We just provided the additional year’s worth of data that they asked for.”

According to Bosser, the requested data supports the performance of the variety and how it behaves in terms of growing characteristics. Bosser also said that since 1998, some 40 percent of petitions to APHIS have been withdrawn at some point and then subsequently resubmitted and approved by the agency.

No timetable has been set for APHIS approval or commercialization, but Scotts and Monsanto are moving ahead and plan to harvest their 400-acre test plot in Oregon in July.

“Once they complete their scientific review we will have seed available for commercialization,” said Bosser.

As Scotts and Monsanto proceed with their approval process, Bill Rose’s HybridGen is currently seeking an APHIS permit to grow its proprietary male-sterile glufosinate resistant creeping bentgrass outside in field trials (GCN March 2003).

Deere & Co. posts 80 percent second quarter gain

MOLINE, Ill. — Deere & Co. announced May 13 a worldwide net income of $256.9 million for the second quarter ended April 30, an increase of more than 80 percent over last year’s second quarter net income of $141.8 million. For the first six months, net income was $324.9 million, more than triple last year’s six-month net income of $103.6 million.

Sales volumes were up across all three major equipment divisions. The Commercial and Consumer Equipment Division, which includes the golf and turf business, increased sales by 12 percent. Sales for the first six months increased 19 percent, compared with last year, when the division implemented deep production and shipment cutbacks to reduce company and field inventories.

In other John Deere news, its Golf & Turf One Source division has been named the exclusive supplier of golf course maintenance equipment and financing to Evergreen Alliance Golf Limited (EAGL), a golf course management company serving more than 40 courses around the country. Through the agreement, John Deere Golf & Turf One Source will be supplying John Deere golf and turf maintenance equipment to the superintendent of each EAGL course, including all mowing, aeration and specialty turf products. John Deere will also provide exclusive financing to all EAGL courses.

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