

BRIEFS



CLUB CAR NAMES NICUSANTI VP SALES AND MARKETING

AUGUSTA, Ga. — Club Car Inc. announced that Kevin Nicusanti has been named vice president sales and marketing. In his new position, Nicusanti is responsible for the worldwide sales and marketing efforts of the company. Nicusanti arrives from another Ingersoll-Rand company, Schlage Lock Company, where he served as vice president of marketing and engineering. Nicusanti joined Ingersoll-Rand in 1996. His career includes positions at Formica Corporation; Nortek, Inc.; Black & Decker/Kwikset Lock Division as well as The Toro Company.

POTTS JOINS MEDALIST

POST FALLS, Idaho — Medalist America, provider of turfgrass seed, announced that Myra Potts has joined the company as a turf specialist for the Southeast U.S. sales region. Potts is responsible for sales of Medalist America seed varieties, distributor relations and technical agronomic support for customers throughout a six-state region: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee and Mississippi. Immediately prior to joining Medalist America, Potts was a sales manager for Kelly Seed Co., Inc. in Alabama and Northwest Florida.

ZENECA NAMES CAMORS BUSINESS DIRECTOR

WILMINGTON, Del. — Buddy Camors was recently named business director of Zeneca Professional Products. Camors takes over the pest control, turf and ornamental business from Keelan Pulliam who moves into a director position for domestic and international distributor relations within Zeneca Ag Products. Camors, based at Zeneca Ag Products in Wilmington, has been with Zeneca for 27 years, most recently as business director for the Horticulture business.

PROFILE NAMES STIMMEL NATIONAL SALES MANAGER

BUFFALO GROVE, Ill. — Profile Products LLC, manufacturer of soil conditioners and other products for golf courses, announced that it has promoted Sam Stimmel to Profile national sales manager and named Mark Fields, CGCS, as its Gulf regional sales manager. As Profile national sales manager, he will manage the company's four regional sales managers, in addition to maintaining direct sales responsibilities in select areas of the country.

ABT reshuffles management, moves towards consolidation

By ANDREW OVERBECK

HENDERSON, Nev. — AgriBioTech Inc. (ABT) marked the completion of the acquisitions phase of its three-pronged business plan by completely reshuffling its upper management.

Citing a need to shift gears into integrating and consolidating the 34 companies that ABT acquired since 1995, the company's board of directors decided in late February to replace Dr. Johnny Thomas, chairman and chief executive officer. Kent Schulze, president and chief operating officer, resigned in late March.

While the board felt that Thomas and Schulze were good at mergers and acquisitions, they decided that former Lofts Seed president Richard Budd and others would be better suited to operate the company as it moved into consolidation.

Budd, who joined the board of directors when Lofts was taken over by ABT in January 1998, is now chairman and chief executive officer and is joined by a new team-based management group of four co-presidents who share senior responsibilities

and consult on strategic planning and decision making.

Budd's task is to make ABT, which many industry experts think grew too much too fast, financially solvent again. ABT has been tanking after announcing debt upward of \$135 million in February.

However, Budd remains undaunted. "With the changes we have made since assuming responsibility for ABT in March, we believe that we are on target to create a profitable, large seed company that will bring better performing turf grass and forage seed products to the market," said Budd.

The company expects that the current plan of consolidation and integration will allow ABT to pay off the subordinated convertible debt that was sold by the previous management by the end of the fiscal year ending June 30.

Under the consolidation, ABT will be cutting its workforce of 1,300 by 300 to 500 employees and reducing its 88 facilities to 50 to 60.



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John Deere to build new utility vehicle complex

RICHMOND, Va. — In response to demand for its Gator line of utility vehicles, John Deere's Worldwide Commercial & Consumer Equipment Division announced that it will build a new \$30 million, 300,000-square-foot utility vehicle complex in southeast Virginia's James City County.

Expected to employ more than 300 people when fully operational, the facility will include engineering and design for new products, manufacturing, sales and marketing functions.

The current line of Gators includes both two- and four-wheel drive, gas and diesel utility vehicles, and Turf Gator and Trail Gator specialty vehicles.

According to Mark Rostvold, John Deere senior vice president, "This investment is a signal to our customers that John Deere is committed to the utility vehicle business

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NEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH: TH20 THETA MOISTURE METER

HOUSTON — Dynamax, Inc. is launching the TH20 Theta Moisture Meter, a new way to measure volumetric soil moisture content. It combines ease of use and accuracy with low cost, to give growers, land managers and engineers unprecedented access to precise soil moisture data. The sensor sends microwave signals and amplifies a reflected signal dependent on the dielectric constant (theta), a precise electronic parameter for the volume of water in soil (+/-2% accuracy). The TH20 probe is inserted into the soil and the LCD shows the volume of water in soil as a decimal value. The palm-sized, battery powered, display device provides instantaneous readings for mineral or organic soils, which may be selected by a slide switch on the front panel. For more information, contact 281-564-5100.



Mauna Lani Resort has rolled out PowerLight solar-powered golf cars.

PowerLight's SolarCady gaining ground in Hawaii

By ANDREW OVERBECK

KOHALA COAST, Hawaii — Just months after installing the world's largest resort-scale solar electric energy system on the hotel and golf course maintenance building roofs, the Mauna Lani Resort has rolled out solar-powered golf cars that utilize cutting-edge solar cell technology.

Berkeley, Calif.-based PowerLight Corp., which designed and installed the hotel and golf maintenance solar systems, has outfitted four of Mauna Lani's golf cars with its experimental SolarCady system.

Although solar powered cars are not an entirely new phenomenon, Mauna Lani is the first to use the SolarCady system which features improved technology and design.

"These are high efficiency solar cells that are similar to those used in satellites to power communication," said Dan Shugar, product engineer and executive vice president of PowerLight.

"We have a charge controller that regulates voltage in a way that is compatible with the battery and this gives us maximum utilization." There are currently patents pending on the system's design.

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With a fully functional prototype (above), Armstrong's next move is to attract companies like Toro and John Deere to integrate the robotic systems with existing fairway mower models.

'Intelligent' mower

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The robotic mower can be used in two ways.

The superintendent first drives the unit around the perimeter of a fairway to record the corner points. From there, on-board computers automatically generate a sweep pattern to cover the area. The superintendent can then specify the spacing of the rows and the mower will "remember" the settings and follow the exact path each time.

The unit can also be programmed in a more specified manner. A superintendent can mow an entire fairway and program the mower to remember and follow his exact path from then on.

The system's five computers run a number of different functions allowing for a high degree of autonomy.

One computer controls the motor, steering, throttle, brake and shifter. The second controls the GPS system which is integrated with an inertial navigation system allowing it to maintain its' position when the unit is under trees or in a tunnel.

The third computer runs the detection mapping system which uses sonar to detect obstacles.

The fourth computer runs a path planner, and the fifth unit integrates all of the above functions using an autonomous control unit to drive the vehicle.

Armstrong has mounted the unit, which is about half the size of a refrigerator, on the back of a Kawasaki Mule that pulls a three-gang reel mower. He has been working closely with superintendent Barry Greenwalt at Ironwood Golf Club in Jacksonville to test the unit on one of their fairways.

"It performed great," said Greenwalt. "It is an amazing machine, if players are in front of it, it will stop and let them play through and then move on after they are gone."

With a fully functional prototype,

Armstrong's next move is to attract companies like Toro and John Deere to integrate the robotic systems with existing fairway mower models.

In the meantime, he plans to continue to tweak the unit in size and price. "We will eventually get it down to the size of a small cooler," said Armstrong. Additionally, Armstrong's first prototype cost \$350,000, but he thinks that by the end of the year the cost will be around

\$50,000 and eventually down to around the \$15,000 range.

"We envision a club that would have an automated team of these mowers that could go out at 4 a.m. and mow the whole golf course," said Armstrong.

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—David Armstrong

PowerLight

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According to Shugar, the SolarCady provides three distinct advantages. First, the car has increased range. While a standard electric car can maybe go for two rounds, the SolarCady can go for three and perhaps four rounds depending on the level of sunlight.

"It's phenomenal," said Neil "Buster" Bustermante, general manager at the Mauna Lani Resort. "There are days where we will rent the car out and it will go for four rounds without using the battery at all."

Furthermore, re-charge times are cut in half, minimizing re-charge costs.

The SolarCady also doubles the car's battery life. "Most courses rotate their cars every five years, but they wind up having to buy a battery after just two or three years," said Shugar. "With the SolarCady, they never have to buy new batteries."

At an average cost of \$400 per battery, that would save Mauna Lani around \$72,000 over a five year period. For that reason, Mauna Lani and PowerLight are currently working on a lease agreement to retro-fit all 180 of the resort's cars.

While PowerLight is working with golf car manufacturers to integrate SolarCady, it is currently installing the system strictly as a retro-fit option. The company leases the SolarCady for \$14 to \$24 a month.

PowerLight plans to install SolarCady in golf cars at a number of clubs across the U.S. by the end of the year.

Deere/Utility

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and to extending our leadership position," Rostvold said. "One of our first initiatives is to introduce a new, larger and more powerful Gator that will appeal to new markets."

David Larson, vehicle group manager, said that the company intends to break ground for the new complex within the next few weeks, with the plant on line by summer of 2000.

"The new plant will allow us to meet current and future demand for Gators and to design and manufacture new vehicle lines to respond to the needs of our customers," Larson said.

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