Business Week
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Huntsman ends discussions on company's sale

06 February 2006

Huntsman Corporation has announced that it has terminated discussions regarding existing proposals to acquire the company.

According to the company, after careful review of the proposals received, the company's prospects and other strategic initiatives available, as well as thorough discussions with the parties, the board of directors of the company and its special committee have concluded that none of the proposals were in the best interests of the shareholders.

Jon M. Huntsman, founder and chairman, said: "The Company appreciates the thoughtful and diligent review by the special committee and the board of directors throughout this process, which began with an unsolicited indication of interest. As a shareholder, I fully support this conclusion. While the last proposals were above the price of our IPO last year I believe they were not adequate, particularly in light of the risks, uncertainties and extended timing of the proposed transactions.

"Moreover, there are significant opportunities for our company going forward. We believe our historical stock prices have not reflected the full value of our differentiated businesses. Accordingly, we are continuing to evaluate the available alternatives for realising this potential."

Huntsman is a global manufacturer and marketer of differentiated and commodity chemicals. Its operating companies manufacture basic products for a variety of global industries including chemicals, plastics, footwear, and textiles.

BASF recognised for sustainability

06 February 2006

BASF has been included in the Global 100 list compiled by the New York research house Innovest for the first time. The list consists of the world's most successful companies in the areas of environmental protection, and social and corporate governance issues.

Innovest compiled its ranking together with the Canadian publication Corporate Knights, choosing the Global 100 companies from more than 1,800 global corporations. In selecting BASF, Innovest paid tribute to the company's environmentally responsible activities, its development of sustainable products, and its eco-efficiency analysis – a tool that BASF uses on behalf of its customers to compare the environmental and cost performance of different products. Innovest also highlighted BASF's achievements in the fields of innovation, product stewardship and sustainability management.

We are pleased to be recognised in this way for our environmental and social performance. Sustainable development is strategically important for BASF and is playing an increasingly important role in the investment decisions of our investors," said Magdalena Moll, head of Investor Relations.

The Innovest ranking was first published in 2005. The Global 100 companies are chosen from all publicly traded companies in the MSCI World Index.

Bayer receives vocational training prize

06 February 2006

The German Minister for Labour and Social Affairs, Franz Müntefering, has awarded Bayer the "Shaping Employment - Companies Demonstrate Responsibility Award" in the category "Prospects for Young People" in recognition of its commitment to vocational training. The jury, comprising high-ranking representatives of politics, labour unions, and business and academia, singled out Bayer for the award because of its special training program for less able youngsters. This programme prepares socially and educationally disadvantaged young people for vocational training courses. 161 companies from all sectors were considered for the award.

"We are delighted with this accolade for our training achievements. Our initiatives specifically include efforts to create perspectives for less well-qualified school-leavers," commented Dr Richard Pott, member of Bayer's board of management responsible for Strategy and Human Resources and Labour Director of Bayer AG.

Bayer has been running the programme for young people who do not have the qualifications needed to secure a place on a vocational training course for the past 18 years. The one-year programme combines instruction to improve basic educational skills with elements of practical and theoretical vocational training, including training in social skills such as team work, communication and self-discipline. During the training period participants receive the same remuneration as regular trainees.

New Australian footwear fair to be held in February

06 February 2006

A new independent trade fair for the footwear industry, The Australian Shoe Fair, will take place for the first time on February 17-19.

The inaugural fair in February 2006 will be held at the Sydney Exhibition Centre, Darling Harbour and will boast over 100 Exhibitors and anticipates attendance by more than 2000 footwear retailers.

According to the organisers, the fair has been developed as a result of demand from suppliers and industry stakeholders for a high quality, industry operated and truly independent footwear fair for the Australian market.

Following the same formula of Fashion Exposed, the Australian Shoe Fair will be held in Sydney each February and in Melbourne each August.

West 49 reports Q4 sales growth

06 February 2006

Canadian action sport retailer West 49 Inc. has reported improved sales performance for the fourth quarter of fiscal 2006, ended January 28, 2006. Sales for the quarter increased 70.7% to $50.7 million from $29.7 million for the fourth quarter of fiscal 2005. The sales growth is the result of the acquisition of the Off the Wall and Quebec banners, as well as the opening of eight West 49 stores during the year.

Total company fourth quarter comparable store sales grew by 5.4%, compared with the same period last year. West 49 banner comparable store sales grew by 6%, following especially strong comparable store sales of 19.8% in the fourth quarter the year before.

For the fiscal year, sales increased 55.3% to $135.1 million from $87 million last year. Fiscal year comparable store sales grew by 7.2% compared with the year before, with West 49 banner comparable store sales growth of 8.3%. During the year, the company opened 15 new stores and acquired 34 stores under four banners. At January 28, 2006, the company operated 107 stores under six banners, compared with 58 under two banners a year earlier.

West 49 Inc. is a multi-banner retailer of apparel, footwear and accessories related to skateboarding, snowboarding, and surfing.

Suunto celebrates 70 years of business

06 February 2006

Finnish manufacturer of diving and outdoor computers Suunto celebrated its 70th anniversary on February 4. The company was founded in 1936 by surveyor and active orienteer Tuomas Vohlonen and its first product, the Suunto M-311 field compass, remains in production almost unchanged as the Suunto M-801. Over the years, Suunto has gone from developing field compasses to developing hi-tech wristop computers that are used in fitness training, diving, alpine skiing, hiking, sailing and golf.

In 1999, the company was taken over by Amer Sports. Suunto's headquarters are in Vantaa and the company employs over 500 staff worldwide, selling products in over 70 countries.

Quiksilver appoints new president for DC Shoes

06 February 2006

Outdoor sports company Quiksilver, Inc., has appointed Nick Adcock as president, DC Shoes, effective immediately. He will report directly to Bernard Mariette, president, Quiksilver, Inc., and will be based at DC Shoes' global headquarters in Vista, California, USA. DC Shoes is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Quiksilver, Inc.

Mr Adcock has been with DC Shoes for three years and previously served as Australian general manager in which he set up the company's first subsidiary operation. From this role, he was promoted to handle the regional responsibilities for DC Shoes in Asia/Pacific as regional general manager.

Rohm and Haas elects new VP

07 February 2006

Rohm and Haas Company's board of directors has elected Michael Hamilton as vice president , effective March 1. Mr Hamilton was recently named business unit director for the global Powder Coatings business.

He joined Rohm and Haas Canada in 1991 as an account manager for the Ion Exchange business, and then followed that with increasing responsibilities in marketing and general management responsibilities within the Coatings businesses based in Germany. In 2001, he relocated to London, and was named European general manager of the Architectural and Functional Coatings business. In 2003, he returned to Philadelphia, as director of Investor Relations, and in 2004 he assumed responsibility for the Performance Chemicals and Adhesives and Sealants businesses in APR, based in Singapore.

Wenzhou and Elche shoe companies sign agreement

07 February 2006

The Wenzhou Manifesto, which aims to achieve fair competition and mutual benefit between shoe companies in Wenzhou, China, and Elche, Spain, was signed by representative of Wenzhou Shoe Industry Association (WSIA) and Mr. Antonio, director of Elche Shoe Industry Association, in January in Wenzhou.

The manifesto states that both sides will make use of individual advantages to promote beneficial cooperation although the two areas are in competition.

Mr. Zhu Feng, the secretary-general of WSIA, said that Wenzhou shoe merchants have realised that they should share profits made through footwear exports with local people in Elche, following several clashes between local workers and Chinese companies based in the Spanish town incidents in the town last year.

Mr Liu Guang Zhong, director of Chinese Shoe Industry Association in Spain, said now many Wenzhou shoe merchants are beginning to make use of local resources to help their shoe business, including employing local people.

LaCrosse Footwear reports growth

07 February 2006

Branded work and outdoor footwear manufacturer LaCrosse Footwear, Inc., has reported improved results for the fourth quarter ended December 31, 2005.

For the fourth quarter, LaCrosse reported consolidated net sales of $29.7 million, up 4% from $28.7 million in the fourth quarter of 2004. For the full year, net sales were $99.4 million, compared with $105.5 million in 2004.

Sales to the work market were $15.5 million for the fourth quarter and $50.4 million for the full year of 2005, compared with $15.7 million and $60.7 million, respectively, for the same periods of 2004.

"We are pleased with our sales and earnings performance in our core work and outdoor business for the fourth quarter and the year," said Joseph P. Schneider, CEO.

Invista launches Ultra Release DuPont Teflon fabric protector

07 February 2006

Invista, the licensed marketer of DuPont Teflon fabric protector in textile markets, launched the latest innovation, Ultra Release DuPont Teflon fabric protector at the recent ispo Winter.

It is said to provide superior washout of dirt, i.e. tennis sand or grass stains – minimising the worry of permanent, costly damage. This new technology utilises an innovative nanotechnology finish that protects the fibre from permanent staining allowing detergent to be pulled into the fibre during laundering, and helps to reduce graying during laundering. It is said to be well-suited to team sports apparel, running, cycling, fitness or sports underwear that desire ideal stain release.

Invista has also released High Performance Repel DuPont Teflon fabric protector, which is the ideally suited to outdoor fashion, but also for every day washable clothing. It optimises the durability utilising a new long-lasting technology that leads the industry in wash durability. It is said to outperform the competition even after 50 home launderings and it shows outstanding stain repellence after approximately 30 washes (up to now 20).

Invista launches Super White Lycra

07 February 2006

Invista has launched a new innovation for the intimate apparel market with a new fibre – Super White Lycra – in order to address the issue of yellowing.

Invista's research found that 43% of consumers were disappointed because their white bras turned grey after washing. The figure for pants/briefs was similar at 41%. Super White Lycra fibre – a white elastane that offers superior whiteness durability in intimates, including moulded garments – has been developed to specifically address this problem.

The key benefits of the new fibre are that it is easier to obtain high levels of initial whiteness, especially with high elastane content fabrics; the fibre delivers outstanding whiteness retention in commercial high temperature moulding processes; it is highly compatible with topical fabric treatments therefore prolonging the 'like new' appearance even after the topical treatment is washed off; it offers improved prevention of yellowing after exposure to atmospheric contaminants; it delivers innovative aesthetic effects such as brighter pastel shades and enhanced colour.

The fibre has already been adopted by some European mills including Penn Elastic, Willy Hermann and Jersey Lomellina.

DD Grassmaster named professional football and soccer field of the year

07 February 2006

At the 2006 Sports Turf Managers Association Conference in Orlando, USA, the DD GrassMaster surface at Invesco field at the Denver Broncos stadium was honoured as the best Professional Football and Professional Soccer Field of the Year.

The DD GrassMaster system is a "hybrid" system, combining a natural turf surface with the reinforcement provided by over 20 million synthetic fibres. The synthetic fibres are injected by a computer-controlled machine every three-fourths of an inch in a sand base. They extend over eight inches into the field and an inch above it. As the roots of the grass grow, they intertwine with the synthetic fibres, anchoring the grass roots to provide a stable and durable grass surface. With 20 million artificial

fibres injected into the field, each field can handle up to three to four times the normal usage of a standard grass field. The improved drainage and stronger root zone also helps the surface meet the demanding usage and challenging growing conditions found in modern stadia. This patented system was developed by Belgium-based Desso DLW Sports Systems in the 1980s and has been installed in stadiums since 1992.

Hemptown appoints Kenneth Barker to board of directors

07 February 2006

Canada-based eco-friendly apparel company Hemptown Clothing Inc., has appointed Kenneth Barker to its board of directors.

Mr Barker is co-president of The Meriwether Group, a Portland-based business acceleration and investment company, formed in 2004. Prior to The Meriwether Group, he was director of apparel for adidas America, where he was responsible for the entire adidas US apparel business. He also served as business unit manager of apparel for adidas Canada. Before joining adidas, he was general merchandise manager at Levi Strauss and Co. Canada, where he oversaw both Levi's and Dockers brands.

Born in South Africa, Barker started an athletic apparel company in 1983 which he ran until moving to Canada in 1998.

Puma takes over Canadian Licensee

07 February 2006

Puma North America has acquired 100% of its Canadian licensee ATA Inc., based in Montreal, Quebec. ATA, which is owned by ATA Holding, is the current licensee of the brand's apparel, footwear and accessories in Canada and has distributed Puma products since July 2000.

The acquisition will take place retrospectively as of January 1.

OptiTex appoints new distributor in Europe

08 February 2006

Israel-based developer of 2D 3D CAD/CAM solutions for sewn products and other related industries OptiTex has appointed Kuris Spezialmaschinen GmbH of Germany as its new distributor for Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

Kuris joins a long list of distributors that have joined OptiTex's European operations during 2005 in a massive marketing effort that has resulted in 70% increase in sales in that region. Other recently appointed distributors include Invescorte from Portugal, Absolutech from Spain, Integra from Croatia, Yuki from Turkey, Crea from Italy and Zünd Trading for Benelux territories.

Available in more then 20 languages, OptiTex products are sold and supported around the world through certified distributors and OEMs.

EU Commissioner warns over protectionism

08 February 2006

In a speech given in the Czech Republic on February 7, EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson defended a policy of economic openness in the European Union, calling for a commitment to facing the commercial challenges of globalisation.

Speaking to the 'Retail Summit' in Prague, Mr Mandelson issued a clear warning that Europe faces a swing against openness, and a drift to populism".

He stated that he would be robust" in defending Europe's interests from unfair trade but that we must be careful not to allow a legitimate need to provide safeguards and to create balance and time to adjust to become a concession to protectionist populism that will simply do Europe economic damage in the long term."

Toray reports 12% increase in sales for first nine months

08 February 2006

Japan's Toray Group has reported improved sales for the first nine months ended December 31, 2005. Net sales rose 12.6% to 1,026.5 billion yen ($8,692 million) from the same period of the previous fiscal year, buoyed by growing sales in business segments such as Fibres and Textiles and Plastics and Chemicals. Operating income grew 15.2% to 57.8 billion yen ($490 million), mainly because of the strong performance in the Carbon Fiber Composite Materials segment and Plastics and Chemicals segment.

Headquartered in Tokyo, Toray produces fibres, textiles, resins, plastics, films, chemicals, ceramics, composite materials, medical products, and electronics.

Buckeye earnings fall

08 February 2006

Manufacturer of specialty fibres and nonwoven materials Buckeye Technologies Inc. earned $1.9 million after tax in the quarter ended December 31, 2005. The company's results included $0.7 million after tax in restructuring expenses associated with the closure of the Glueckstadt, Germany cotton linter pulp plant. The Glueckstadt manufacturing facility ceased production in December.

During the same quarter of the prior year, the company earned $2.9 million after tax, which included $6.6 million after tax in restructuring and impairment costs and a $4.7 million after tax gain from the sale of a building and equipment located at Cork, Ireland.

Net sales in the quarter were $188.3 million, 4% above the $180.6 million in the same quarter of the prior year.

Buckeye operates facilities in the United States, Germany, Canada, and Brazil.

DuPont presents advanced portfolio for outdoor apparel at OR

08 February 2006

DuPont presented its advanced portfolio of scientifically engineered performance materials that provides manufacturers and retailers with "one-stop" shopping for their winter sports apparel and outdoor accessories at the recent Outdoor Retailer show (OR), Salt Lake City, USA. DuPont's array of products, which includes DuPont Active Layer, DuPont Sorona and DuPont ComforMax, are based on the latest advancements in materials technology. While each has its own unique attributes and benefits, when used together DuPont claims that manufacturers can take their designs to new heights.

DuPont Active Layer is a waterproof, breathable film, which blocks out wind, cold and water; DuPont Sorona polymer provides freedom of movement along with easy care; and DuPont ComforMax, is a two-layer technology with a unique polyethylene membrane and fine denier polyester fiberfill, which provides superior warmth and breathable comfort without the bulk.

Combining the three technologies, manufacturers can select from a broad portfolio of technologies and can even request a tailor-made, holistic package that delivers a combination of warmth, comfort, softness, flexibility and durability. DuPont is collaborating with a number of manufacturers and retailers and anticipates widespread commercial application of its technologies in the near future.

VF announces record results

08 February 2006

Branded lifestyle apparel company VF Corporation has posted record results for the fourth quarter and full year 2005. Net income in the fourth quarter rose to a record $127.5 million from $125.3 million. Total revenues increased 4% to $1,646 million from $1,579.2 million.

For the full year 2005, income increased 9% to $518.5 million from $474.7 million. Total revenues rose 6% to $6,502.4 million from $6,124.6 million in 2004.

In its Outdoor segment, total revenues increased 23% to $343.9 million in the quarter from $279.9 million in last year's period, driven by growth across nearly all its Outdoor brands.

The North Face brand continued to grow revenues in excess of 20% both in the US and internationally. Revenues of its Vans brand also rose, with continued momentum in its Classics line and double-digit growth in comparable store sales within Vans brand retail stores. The Kipling brand continued to grow in Europe, while total revenues of the company’s packs business rose 13%, driven by higher JanSport brand sales in the US.

Delta Galil introduces new underwear solutions

08 February 2006

Israel-based apparel company, specialising in intimate apparel, men's underwear and socks, Delta Galil Industries Ltd. has introduced its newest underwear solutions for men.

Through careful research and collaborative efforts of the company's innovation and marketing teams, Delta has come up with advances that have resulted in the filing of two patent applications, as well as in the design and development of three unique product lines.

The resulting Real Innovation products include: Real Comfort, offering support for boxers and enhanced freedom in the brief/slip. The group includes two variations of patent-pending Ergotec, providing both support and separation: Real Cool, a new cool and airy collection which borrows on advances from the world of performance garments. The line offers a specially developed fabric for cotton lovers, RealCool Cotton, with inherent technological innovations that keeps moisture away from the body; and Real Classic, that are designed to consider body and shape changes and cater to the group age specific needs, while maintaining standards of style.

Burlington and Traptek collaborate on coconut fabric

09 February 2006

Burlington WorldWide (BWW) and TrapTek, LLC have collaborated on the development of a new series of woven fabrics that offer specific comfort and performance benefits for the active wear, menswear, womenswear, military, homeland, uniform, and lifestyle markets. The new products will address comfort issues through a new Natural Technology, derived from coconuts, that provides evaporative cooling, odour resistance, and UPF protection.

The products have been developed through a collaborative effort between the companies aimed at specific desired benefits and functionalities in each marketplace. The first woven products, directed at the active wear market, provide an evaporative cooling effect by rapidly moving moisture over the active particles creating unprecedented "dry times". Burlington will also

engineer products that will provide outstanding UPF properties with sheer constructions and will also be able to market the natural origins of this emerging technology.

The technology will be a platinum colour in order to promote the ability of the consumer to 'see' the Natural Technology.

Ansell Touch N Tuff gloves performs well in chemical tests

09 February 2006

Belgium-based Ansell Healthcare Europe's Touch N Tuff gloves have been proven to offer superior protection against chemical splashes. In response to EU regulation on the protection of workers from chemical substances, independent laboratory tests were performed on Ansell's single-use chemical splash resistant Touch N Tuff gloves, which showed that they offered a high level of protection for chemicals from nine families.

Specifically designed for production employees who are at risk from chemical splashes in the workplace, the nitrile Touch N Tuff(r) was extensively tested against a wide variety of hazardous industrial chemicals by the independent laboratory Centexbel. The industries which use these hazardous chemicals include chemicals and cosmetics manufacturing, automotive production, laboratories and pharmaceutical industries, as well as food processing, dry cleaning, cleaning products, inks and dyes. The gloves' 100% nitrile composition is recommended against the aliphatic hydrocarbons present in lubricants.

According to EU OSHA, 16% of European workers handle hazardous products and it has been estimated that some 32 million European workers are exposed to unsafe levels of chemical exposure which can result in cancer, brain damage, harm to the nervous system, asthma and skin problems such as dermatitis or allergies.

Nilit to showcase Sensil Body Fashion trend book at Expofil

09 February 2006

Israeli manufacturer of nylon 6.6 fibres for legwear, intimate apparel and bodywear Nilit Ltd will showcase its Sensil spring/summer 2007 Trend Book at this year's Expofil, to be held in Paris, February 21-24.

Visitors to Nilit's booth will receive the trend book, designed by Ilana Joselowitz, to see the interplay of products that fuse fashion, glamour, lingerie, and dynamic activewear, capturing moods of fashion and conjuring up images of luxury, sensuality, and exotic destinations".

Nilit produces nylon 6.6 and microfibre yarns in a broad selection of decitex and filament counts, layers of lustre, and types of cross-sections. Nilit's yarns are used for both knitwear and spandex covering applications for the production of legwear and bodywear.

Couromoda attracts over 64,000 visitors

24 January 2006

The 33rd Couromoda, footwear and fashion accessory fair, attracted over 64,000 visitors.

Results from the domestic market were extremely positive and exceeded the expectations of the exhibitors; however, international business was disappointing despite the large number of importers that visited the show. This has highlighted the fact that the sector will have to concentrate all its efforts on the export markets in order to maintain 2005 levels when foreign exports reached 190 million pairs worth $1,800 million. However, exports have now begun to fall, as a result of the low US dollar exchange rate that, according to those in the industry, is making Brazilian goods non-competitive in the global market.

Makin his closing speech at the end of the fair, Francisco Santos, president of Couromoda, said that the fair worked well as a forum to update strategies for the Brazilian footwear industry after a very difficult year. "The message that the fair leaves with all of us is that 2006 will be a year for the sector to reposition itself and be alert to the changes and the evolution of the market. We must also double our efforts to diversify our export markets … and seek to expand higher value product niches in the global market."

Jones Apparel Group agrees to sell Polo Jeans company

24 January 2006

Jones Apparel Group, Inc. has entered into a definitive stock purchase agreement to sell its Polo Jeans Company business to Polo Ralph Lauren Corporation. The company and Polo Ralph Lauren Corporation have also entered into a settlement and release agreement to settle the pending litigation between the respective parties, including a former Jones executive, upon closing of the stock purchase agreement.

Jones Apparel Group, Inc. will receive an aggregate $355 million in cash at closing, which is expected in early February 2006. Jones will also retain the distribution and product development facilities located in El Paso, Texas, along with certain working capital items, including accounts receivable and accounts payable. Polo Ralph Lauren Corporation will acquire the stock of a Jones wholly-owned subsidiary whose primary assets include the Polo Jeans licence, inventory, a New York operating lease for administrative/showroom space and certain other assets.

Jones Apparel Group designs and markets branded

apparel, footwear and accessories. Its brands include Jones New York, Evan-Picone, Norton McNaughton, Gloria Vanderbilt, Erika, I.e.i., Energie, Nine West, Easy Spirit, Enzo Angiolini, Bandolino, Joan & David, Mootsies Tootsies, Sam & Libby, Napier, Judith Jack, Kasper, and Anne Klein.

Nilit to showcase Sensil Body Fashion trend book at Expofil

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Olympics boost Roots sales

09 February 2006

With the 2006 Winter Olympic opening ceremony just days away, Canadian lifestyle brand Roots, the official outfitter of the 2006 US Olympic Team, has reported a 15-20% increase in online sales and a 25% increase in general web traffic compared with its original forecast.

In addition to the Team USA T-shirts, scarves and trademark berets, Roots offers replicas of the jackets worn by Olympians during the opening ceremony.

Established in Toronto in 1973, by co-founders Michael Budman and Don Green, Roots offers a range of clothing, leather goods and accessories. The company operates nearly 150 branded stores, including more than 125 in Canada, five in the United States and 18 in Taiwan.

Intertextile Beijing to highlight Thai textile industry

09 February 2006

China's International Trade Fair for Apparel Fabrics & Accessories, Intertextile Beijing, which will be held on March 28-30 will highlight the Thai textile industry.

The Thai pavilion will be organised by the Thailand Department of Export Promotion and will feature companies specialising in wool, silk, linen, lace, embroideries, fibres and yarns.

Over the last 15 years, the Thai textile and garment industry has developed and has gained acceptance, both domestically and internationally. Since the second meeting of the Thailand-China Joint Committee on Trade, Investment and Economic Cooperation in Chiang Mai in September 2005, bilateral trade volume has grown rapidly. Textiles are among the many products that Thailand exports to China. The Thai Government has been very active in assisting the industry to grow further. In 2001, the Department of Export Promotion (DEP) started the Thai Tex Trend (T3) project in co-operation with Mitor Textile Consultancy Service of Italy. The Thai pavilion at the fair will be showcasing products and services developed as a part of this co-operation.

"Intertextile Beijing 2006 is an important trade fair for the textile industry in China and is seen by Thai companies as an ideal platform to foster bilateral trade relations," said Ms. Chantira Jimreivat Vivatrat of the Thailand DEP, organiser of the pavilion.

Performance Fibers outsources logistics

09 February 2006

US supplier of high-tenacity polyester and a global manufacturer of other man-made industrial fibres and fabrics, Performance Fibers, Inc., has signed a multi-year outsourcing contract and completed the transfer of its outbound North American logistics needs to Odyssey Logistics & Technology Corporation, a provider of global transportation and logistics services for process manufacturers.

Odyssey will also provide international freight forwarding and manage the Customs House Broker services required to meet customer needs.

Performance Fibers, an affiliate of Sun Capital Partners, has manufacturing facilities in North America, Asia and Europe. Its products are used in a wide range of consumer and industrial applications. Formed in December 2004, the business was formerly part of Honeywell International.

Timberland reports record Q4 revenue

10 February 2006

The Timberland Company has reported fourth quarter net income of $46.9 million compared with $45 million in the same quarter of 2004. Fourth quarter 2005 results included pre-tax costs of $1.7 million related to the company's restructuring of its Caribbean manufacturing facilities.

Fourth quarter revenue increased 2.3% over strong prior-year results to a record $465.3 million, driven by gains in both US and international markets. US revenues grew 2.6% as gains in children's, men's casual and

Timberland PRO series footwear and men's apparel sales offset anticipated decreases in women's casual footwear and boot sales. International results (+1.7%) were driven by strong constant dollar sales gains in Europe and Asia in both footwear and apparel. Global footwear revenues grew 1.4% to $357.5 million and apparel and accessories revenue increased 5.4% to $103.2 million. Wholesale revenue expanded 1.3% to $313.4 million.

Brazil accepts Argentina's trade proposal

10 February 2006

Following a meeting held on February 1, negotiators from Brazil and Argentina have announced that a Competitive Adaptation Mechanism (MAC) is to be established. The MAC system will work to prevent flooding of the Argentine market by Brazilian products and vice versa. The mechanism, which was proposed by Argentina as far back as 2004, will allow the application of safeguards in order to limit imports from a given industrial sector that may be negatively affecting companies in the country of destination. The quotas applied by either country may be enforced for a maximum of four years.

Reacting to the announcement of the MAC, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva said that the agreement marked a historic event which will contribute to the integration of South America. Argentine Minister of Economy, Felisa Miceli, stated that her country's economy needed time to become strong.

Should either country exceed any quota imposed, the volume of products over the quota limit will be taxed according to the Mercosur Common External Tariff minus 10%. This condition was imposed by Brazil.

Military operation for GB bobsleigh team

10 February 2006

The British four-man bobsleigh at the Winter Olympics in Turin, which opens today, will have an all-military crew, comprising three Royal Marines and an RAF airman. Eight members of the forty-strong British squad selected to take part in the 2006 Games are members of the Armed Forces.

The two-man bob will be driven by Royal Marine Lee Johnston with RAF Senior Aircraftman, Dan Humphries operating the brakes. Lee's brother, Captain Karl Johnston and Marine Martin Wright, both also Royal Marines, join them in the four-man sled.

The Army provides half of the two-women's sled in Corporal Jackie Davies. A year ago Jackie and partner Nicola Minichiello became the first British women to win a bobsleigh medal when they finished second at the World Championships in Calgary, Canada, in February 2005.

Lectra's orders fall by 12%

10 February 2006

French software and CAD/CAM equipment producer Lectra has reported that business activity in the fourth quarter continued to be affected by a difficult economic climate. Orders for new systems fell by approximately 12% relative to Q4 2004.

Lectra closed two major deals in the quarter: the first was with Mango, for 800 licences of Lectra's new Product Lifecycle Management (PLM) solution; the second was a €5 million contract with Johnson Controls Inc., for Lectra's VectorAuto MP9 automated cutting systems.

Revenues fell by €7.9 million (-21%). The amount of orders for new systems being greater than revenues invoiced, the backlog of orders for new systems totalled €15.6 million as of December 31, up €3.8 million, like-for-like, compared with the backlog in 2004.

The full year performance was also strongly impacted by the abolition of textile quotas and contrasting conditions in the automotive industry. Revenues in the company's three principal regions declined: European revenues (56% of total revenues) were down 11%, North American revenues (18% of total revenues) were down 8%, and Asia-Pacific revenues (18% of total revenues) were down 5%. Revenues for the rest of the world (8% of total revenues) increased by 6%.

Revenues from new systems sales (€110.5 million) decreased by 19%. This decline was felt strongly in all three of the company's main markets. Apparel revenues were down 19%, while automotive, aerospace and marine market revenues were down 12%, and furniture & furnishings, 34%.

With a staff of 1,500, Lectra develops and produces software and CAD/CAM equipment dedicated to industrial markets, including fashion and apparel; luggage & leather goods; footwear; furniture & furnishings; and the automotive, aerospace, and marine industries.

K-Swiss reports fourth quarter results

10 February 2006

Athletic footwear brand K-Swiss Inc. has announced a rise in revenues for the fourth quarter and year ended December 31, 2005. For the fourth quarter of 2005, total worldwide revenues increased 4.5% to $92,289,000 compared with $88,356,000 in the prior-year period. Domestic revenues decreased 5.9% to $64,327,000, and international revenues increased 40% to $27,962,000. Total worldwide revenues for 2005 increased 5.1% to $508,574,000 compared with $484,079,000 in 2004. Domestic revenues decreased 4.3% to $380,478,000 in 2005, while international revenues increased 47.8% to $128,096,000.

Worldwide future orders with start ship dates from January through June 2006 decreased 2.8% to $217,895,000 at December 31, 2005, compared with $224,233,000 at December 31, 2004. Domestic future orders decreased 12.7% to $148,698,000 at December 31, 2005, from $170,291,000 at December 31, 2004. International future orders increased 28.3% to $69,197,000 at December 31, 2005, from $53,942,000 the previous year.

K-Swiss Inc. designs, develops and markets an array of athletic footwear for fitness activities and casual wear under the K-Swiss brand. The company also designs and manufactures footwear under the Royal Elastics brand.

Austrian ski team to use skis with smart active fibres

10 February 2006

Advanced Cerametrics Corporation (ACI), a supplier of advanced engineered ceramic materials, has announced that the Austrian Ski Team will utilise Head Intelligence skis with its smart active fibres at the Winter Olympics. The fibres, a new power source technology, called piezoelectric fibre composites (PFC's), are embedded in the Head Intelligence line of skis. Combined with power conversion electronics the fibres actively control torsional stability as skier's race downhill.

The new technology is deemed legal by sporting authorities because it does not involve any external power sources. Rather, the piezo fibres harvest the energy of the constantly changing speed, terrain and snow conditions and convert it to control torsional stability effectively keeping the ski edge on the snow longer.

Piezoelectric fibres are a relatively new smart material that enables energy to be harvested from ambient motion, vibration and strain. Mission critical loads or harsh environments are ideal applications as the piezo power source can eliminate the need for batteries. The technology is inexpensive, reliable and robust.

Oakley acquires Oliver Peoples

10 February 2006

Oakley, Inc. has acquired Oliver Peoples, Inc., a luxury eyewear company, and its subsidiaries. As a result of the acquisition, Oakley has acquired Oliver Peoples' three eyewear brands Oliver Peoples, Mosley Tribes, and the licensed Paul Smith eyewear brand.

Headquartered in Los Angeles, Oliver Peoples was co-founded in 1986 by optician and designer Larry Leight. The company currently has distribution in more than 45 countries worldwide and operates five retail stores located in New York, Los Angeles, Costa Mesa and Tokyo.