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Versalift United Kingdom Limited
1 Altendiez Way, Latimer Park,
Burton Latimer, Kettering. NN15 5YT

T: 01536 721010

F: 01536 721111

E: sales@versalift.co.uk W: www.versalift.co.uk

Versalift Ireland

Suite 22, Osprey Business Centre, Devoy Quarter,
Naas, Co. Kildare, W91 X40K, Ireland

T: +353 85 8563034

E: sales@versalift.ie

W: www.versalift.ie

Meet the president

Skyjack appointed Ken McDougall as president last September. With more than six months under his belt he spoke with Mark Darwin at Conexpo in mid March.

The news that McDougall was to be re-appointed as Skyjack president was totally unexpected and sudden. Much had changed since he left the company at the end of 2009, when he was seconded overnight to head up Linamar's Mexican powertrain operations.

Skyjack appointed Steve Shaughnessy in his place, having just quit as managing director of Loxam UK. Within 15 months Shaughnessy was replaced by Linamar's Ken Meyers who was in the role for less than six months. He was replaced by Brad Boehler - whom McDougall had promoted to head of engineering during his time as president - who provided the much needed stability to the role.... that is until the surprise McDougall announcement. Under Boehler the company had grown beyond all recognition becoming the leading scissor lift manufacturer, establishing itself in the global boom lift market and gaining a good foothold in the North American telehandler market.

McDougall first joined Skyjack from Linamar in 2008 taking over from Lloyd Spalding following his delayed retirement. "During the



Skyjack president Ken McDougall at Conexpo in mid March

early part of the 2008 recession, activity in the access market was very slow and I spent the latter part of 2008 and 2009 exploring new markets to sell equipment," says McDougall. "Because it was slow I asked Linamar if I could 'pitch in' on the automotive side. I did not think it would come to anything but the operations in Mexico that I was familiar with were starting to struggle as the automotive market picked up. I was asked to help and spent 18 months running four manufacturing plants there, and then slowly took over all the automotive plants in Canada, the USA and Mexico - 28 in all - but I always said that if the opportunity ever presented itself I would love to go back to Skyjack."

"When the opportunity arose, I think it was a good time for Brad as well. I respect and like Brad, I promoted him to be in charge of engineering and joked with him that someday I wanted my job back. At the moment we have some internal challenges caused by continued growth and expansion of our product portfolio - not just sales but also the manufacturing operations. We have already produced a few units at one of the Linamar plants in Hungary including the articulated SJ46 and SJ51 booms and this will be expanded to include the SJ63 AJ."

"Why Hungary? The founder of Linamar was originally from Hungary and the group has five factories there making industrial equipment.



C&A

interview

Skyjack equipment will continue to be manufactured in Canada but obviously the CE models built in Hungary help minimise freight charges and get the 'in market' benefits of production. Another opportunity that is high up on my list - even with the current Coronavirus setback - is doing more in China. We are still working on things we did earlier this year before the current problems. Linamar has five automotive factories in China, for which I did the first business licences in 2003/4 in my role in business development. We are not producing any aerial platforms in China, but my aim is to have production facilities in all three global regions. In China we would want control over production so whether that is a green field operation building our own factory, an acquisition or a partnership of some kind, all are in play."

"Although we have no production in

China when the Coronavirus hit, we do source some components from there. Fortunately all of our suppliers continued to work normally, and we did have more inventory and parts than I would have liked but maybe that was a saving grace. We always try to have safety stock on hand to cope with walk-in orders. We get phone calls such as 'I need 15, SJIII4740s next week' - if you have them you can sell them. I don't want to have 200 in stock, but we watch market demand and try and adjust."

ANSI battles

In December Skyjack shut down production for three weeks to convert most of its lines for the new ANSI standard machines. It also took an extended Christmas shut down, again knowing that demand drops early in the year.

"The new standard provided us with an opportunity to add more technical advancements into the machine in addition to load sensing and more that were already on CE machines anyway," says



Skyjack is gaining a good foothold in the North American telehandler market.



Skyjack SJ3219



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Subversive Design

Sophisticated European R&D-Intelligently manufactured by Dingli in a new state of the art facility-Global Patent Protection

Subversive Innovation

Innovative technologies such as dedicated axles, overall component downsize, lower counterweight for lower center of gravity and lighter machines, modular design for ease of maintenance and interchangeability of parts.

Subversive Performance(Compared with the same model in the industry)

The maximum working height heights have been increased by more than 2m to 30m on the telescopic Boom Lifts is 30m and 28m the Articulating Boom Lifts. Both models can be loaded into a standard container.

Maximum SWL increased by more than 30% to 454kg on telescopic booms and 300Kg on articulating Boom Lifts.

Maximum Horizontal Reach is increased by more than 1m.

Maximum gradeability is 50%, an increase of more than 20%.

The weight of the whole machine will also be 1 ton lighter.

Subversive Maintenance(Low maintenance costs)

With a family-style modular design, 95% of the parts and more than 80% of the structural components are common across the range.

More convenient maintenance and lower cost of components storage.

Simple to maintain with integrated component down design.

With dedicated axles, the failure rate is lower.

Telescopic Boom Lifts

BT24RT(24m) **BT26RT**(26m) **BT28RT**(28m) **BT30RT**(30m)

Articulating Boom Lifts

BA24RT(24m) **BA28RT**(28m)





Elevate Live features

McDougall. "The push back from those opposing the new standards had nothing to do with the machines and is more related to the manuals of responsibilities. When publication of the new standard was delayed again in December, Genie, JLG and others signed a petition demanding its publication. I was also asked but my two largest customers would not sign it - they have their own concerns - my job is to supply machines that comply and not to get involved in a fight."

More technology/new machines?

"In recent years as a company we have taken a very cautious approach. The last time I was at Conexpo - about 15 years ago - JLG had brought out the ES series which wasn't completely proven and had some issues, so we maintained a slow approach to the new technology. In hindsight we may have been too conservative but are now moving forward at a rapid pace to advance our machines. We are currently developing a new vertical mast machine which will incorporate new technology which we can then incorporate into our scissor line bringing us more in line with our competitors. Right now we are tweaking the product line and looking at greater working heights but are aware of the limited market size for very large booms or scissors and the cost to develop such

machines."

"Instead we are looking to go down in size to micro scissors, an area that we are not in at the moment but which is becoming much more popular. The 11 to 13ft models seem to be the area which leads into vertical masts and then 19ft scissors. Our 15ft scissor does not sell well in North America but the Koreans love it. We are also working on hybrid machines."

Future changes?

"I am probably a little bit more system driven in terms of the product developments which I think take too long. We aim for an 18 month development cycle but we do overrun. But look at how quickly the Chinese manufacturers produce new models. We laughed at them 15 years ago, but now they produce some particularly good machines. I would like to see our development time reduced to a year or less. We have a very robust system in place so tweaking that would probably be sufficient to reduce development time. The first new machine cycle since I re-joined is the new vertical mast which will have taken about 13 months to develop. We are looking at a 20ft unit and will incorporate some distinct technology. The machine should be launched at the ARA next year."

Big scissors?

Skyjack has launched its largest scissor to date the 63ft SJ9263 RT with a working height of 21 metres. Having looked at the changes mandated by both the ANSI standards and Stage V emissions in Europe it decided to go for a new class of machine that goes higher, and yet is more cost effective than the specialist heavy duty models. "We are now on the upper edge of the normal big scissor, a good niche

Skyjack has launched its largest scissor to date - the 63ft SJ9263 RT - with a working height of 21 metres.



between our 50ft scissor and having to go to a specialist machine to get to more than 90ft," says McDougall. "Larger scissors are big ticket items and it is a matter of how many rental companies can buy it and what is the return?"

Product roundup

"Since rolling out Elevate Live at the ARA we have a lot of interest in the product at the working level because it gives the operator more data which will hopefully help rental companies with better battery management and other exciting opportunities. We are also adding extra capacity to the booms which has generated a lot of interest - and a backlog of orders."

"Everyone needs to be looking at alternative power sources and one of the good things of being related to an automotive company is that it is very advanced in power R&D, with Linamar companies already making hydrogen tanks for the automotive market. Whether

hydrogen will be used in aerial work platforms in the future, we will see? Batteries have their limits and if the world thinks it is going electric then it will be pretty dark in the future as the battery solution creates other problems."

Future aims?

"I don't have designs on becoming the biggest platform company, my goal is to stay in the top two or three in any market we operate. I would like at least 30 percent market share which I think is reasonable. We don't do a lot in China - a market we have shied away from - however the rental market is maturing and while I think there are financing concerns, now is a good time to push a bit more. We have just come through a 10 year cycle of growth in North America and I think there may be couple of flat years ahead."

"Returning to Skyjack is what I expected - and its good to be back."



SJSJ66-T+



ANSI TH Series FLEXCAB