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Twelve New Container Ships for Rickmers?

According to a number of recent media reports, Hamburg's Bertram Rickmers turned to Hyundai Heavy Industries for a total of at least eight large new container vessels. According to our knowledge, the purchase deal includes orders for two quartets of ships: Four of the vessels are believed to be 8,400 TEU units of 334 metres length and with a 17-row width. Four more vessels will probably turn out a bit smaller at 306 metres in length, with a 16-row width and an intake of about 6,800 TEU. All eight ships are scheduled for delivery in 2010. Since no details of the deals have been published so far, your editors cannot determine whether the ships were ordered by Hamburg's Rickmers & Cie, or by the group's relatively young

Singaporean offshoot. Furthermore, an article in Friday's edition of the Lloyd's List newspaper claimed that Bertram Rickmers had also signed a letter of intent for a quartet of 12,500 TEU ships at Hyundai Heavy. According to Lloyd's, Rickmers has time until late July to convert these options into firm orders. A quick research by your editors however, showed that Hyundai Heavy already drew IMO numbers for all four 12,500 TEU hulls. This would be rather unusual for vessel orders that are still subject to tentative agreements between the yard and the buyer. Hyundai thus seem quite convinced that the ships will be build as scheduled.

Maersk Sembawang and Maersk Sebarok

Hyundai Heavy's delivery of their present series of 7,200 TEU Maersk vessels continues at record speed: With Maersk Sembawang and Maersk Sebarok, the yard now delivered units number four and five. Again, the ships carry Singapore-themed names. Like their earlier three sisters, the vessels will be deployed to Maersk Lines' revamped AC2 Transpacific service, a loop that connects Hong Kong, Shenzhen and Kwangyang in the Far East with Lazaro Cardenas in Mexico and the Panamanian port of Balboa, Maersk's hub for Central America which also offers feeder connections down the South American west coast.

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Maersk Sofia Delivered

With the takeover of P&O Nedlloyd in 2005, the Danish shipping giant Maersk Line also inherited a number of orders for new container vessels that the Anglo-Dutch company had placed with shipyards in the Far East. This included a series of 8,500

TEU container ships that P&O Nedlloyd's Hamburg-based ship management subsidiary Blue Star had ordered at IHI. Six of the ships had already been delivered at the time of the companies' merger, while two were still at the yard. Blue Star actually later extended the series by ordering an additional two ships for delivery in 2007. The first of these laggards has now been handed over as Maersk Sofia. The ship's project name was P&O Nedlloyd Montevideo. The new vessel will deputise for a single voyage in Maersk Line's AE10 and then switch to the AE8 Far East – Northern Europe Service. This loop presently employs a mixed fleet of ships between 6,000 and 9,000 TEU and will be upgraded to a homogenous fleet of at least 8,500 TEU in the next few months. On her maiden voyage, Maersk Sofia will call at Felixstowe, Dunkirk and Zeebrügge. Her regular European port rotation in the AE8 will include Hamburg, Rotterdam, Le Havre and Southampton.

E-class Adds Ebba

Danish Odense Steel shipyard recently finished the fifth jumbo containership of their 14,500 TEU E-class. The vessel has recently been handed over to Maersk Line. As reported earlier in this newsletter, the ship was named Ebba Maersk.



The new Ebba Maersk
photo: Bent Mikkelsen

Ebba is a traditional Danish name, which is not frequently used nowadays. The new ship joined her four earlier sisters in the AE7 loop, where it will trade between South China and Northern Europe. Since Ebba Maersk replaces a standard 8,500 TEU vessel, she will add an additional 6,000 TEU of container capacity per round trip. At the end of this year, the AE7 is scheduled to employ a fleet that consists entirely of E-class jumbos. It will thus be the world's first true super loop – with many more to come in the next couple of years.

Volkswerft Delivers Maersk Buffalo

Finally, the past week has seen the delivery of yet another Maersk Line ship: The German Volkswerft at Stralsund, a wholly-owned subsidiary of A.P. Moller, completed the fifth of seven ultra-fast panamax ships for Maersk. The new container ship was handed over as Maersk Buffalo. It will soon be deployed to the Far East. Presently it looks like the Danes changed their minds and redeployed the high speed carriers of the B-class: Opposed to earlier plans, the ships will now be used in the TP8 Transpacific service. This loop connects Japan, Northern China and South Korea with the Californian ports of Los Angeles and Oakland.

Hyundai Hands Over CMA CGM Marlin

Hyundai Heavy's yard at Ulsan did not only finish the two abovementioned Maersk sister vessels during the last week, but also delivered a ship to CMA CGM: The French Line received another unit of their eight-ship series of 5,040 TEU panamax carriers. All these ships are named after marine animals. Thus, it is no surprise that the new vessel now came on stream as CMA CGM Marlin. It will be phased into the PEX3 loop, a service that connects the Far East and the North American east coast via the Panama Canal. CMA CGM is presently boosting this service's capacity by as much as 60 percent in order to cater for the demands of the loop's major customer, Wal-Mart. According to industry sources, the retail giant presently accounts for about 90 percent of all containers carried on the PEX3. Most of this cargo is transhipped via Houston. CMA CGM

Marlin 294.10 metres long and 32.20 metres wide. The ship has a service speed of 25 knots.

Philippines Attract Maritime Investment

In recent years, the Philippines have attracted a significant amount of foreign investment. Especially the maritime sector has made headlines with a number of large-scale development projects. The nation with its population of about 90 million has been listed among Goldman Sachs' "Next Eleven" economies, a shortlist of countries with promising outlooks for investment and future growth. With its low labour costs, a stable political environment and its comparatively skilled workforce, the Philippines have clearly developed into an attractive place when considering investment in the maritime sector. Only a few years ago for example, South Korean Hanjin Heavy Industries decided to build one of the largest shipyards in the world at Subic Bay, a town on the western shores of Luzon. The confined location of Hanjin's present yard in the port of Busan restricted any further development at the existing site in South Korea. Furthermore, Hanjin was following the trend to outsource parts of its production to countries with lower labour costs. Many South Korean shipyards had already done this, either by investing in block factories in China or developing entire shipyards abroad. Daewoo's facility in the Romanian town of Mangalia and STX's Chinese outlet might be named as examples, here. The construction of Hanjin's Subic Bay plant is presently in progress, and a whole number of vessel orders has already been bagged for the new facility. Among these are several container vessels of 12,600 TEU for a German owner. The Hanjin group's largest vessels will thus no longer originate from its homeland, once the Luzon yard has been established. Hanjin was however, not the first foreign yard group that decided to invest into a facility in the Philippines. The Japanese Tsuneishi Group is already engaged in a joint-venture with the Aboitiz group of companies in September 1994. The two companies opened a shipyard at Balamban, some 60 kilometres from Cebu city. The shipyard is located in the West Cebu Industrial Park, one of the Philippines' special economic zones. It specialised in the construction of small and medium-sized bulk carriers. The Balamban yard's output steadily increased

over the years and business is running smoothly for Tsuneishi. Thus, it does not come as a surprise that more foreign investors have decided in favour of the island nation, when it comes to expansion plans. Only very recently, Cosco announced plans to invest up to USD three billion into both a large-scale shipyard and a container terminal facility at Sangley Point, south of Manila. The container terminal will serve as Cosco's main hub in Southeast Asia. According to some local sources, this Chinese investment could generate up to 50,000 jobs in the region. Like Subic Bay and Balamban, Sangley Point is being developed through the creation of a special economic zone. Presently however, there is no definite timeline for Cosco's project and it is hard to say when the company will start building the complex or when the facilities would be completed.

ACL to Move Service to Hamburg

Last week, the Grimaldi-owned Atlantic Container Line announced to switch the European call of their transatlantic container- and roro-services from Bremerhaven to Hamburg, with calls at Hamburg starting in early 2008. This move does not come as a real surprise: Half a year ago, ACL's Italian mother company bought 49 percent of the shares of Hamburg's Unikai terminal which is a part of the HHLA Group. The two-berth facility in the eastern part of Hamburg's port is frequently used by Grimaldi's conro ships. Three of Grimaldi's weekly liner services call at Unikai, which is also used by roro-services of Höegh, NYK Line and some smaller operators. In 2006, about 220 roro-carriers were handled at Unikai. At the occasion of signing the contract, HHLA already announced that both companies planned to intensify their cooperation and turn Hamburg into Grimaldi's second European hub, after Antwerp.

CSCL Long Beach Completes Jumbo Octet

Vancouver-based Seaspan once again extended their container fleet by another large unit, the 9,580 TEU CSCL Long Beach. Like the majority of Seaspan's vessels, the new ship will be taken on a charter by Shanghai's China Shipping Container Line. Seaspan had ordered the ship from Samsung Shipbuilding

& Heavy Industries in 2005. CSCL Long Beach is the last unit of a series of eight identical vessels. All of the ships trade for China Shipping. Four units are owned by CSCL and four are chartered from Seaspam, with Danaos taking care of the ships' daily operation. CSCL Long Beach, will hardly visit her namesake port in the next few years: The ship has been deployed to CSCL's AE1 service, which links the Far East and northern Europe, where it only calls at Felixstowe, Hamburg and Antwerp.

The Newsletter Takes a Summer Break

Please note that the containership-info newsletter will take a short summer break and will not return until mid-July. Your editors will however not be idle and use their free time to update the vessel data base, upload additional images and prepare two special reports which will be published later this summer.

This Newsletter is edited and compiled by Jan Svendsen and Jan Tiedemann. This pdf-file is available for download at "www.jantiedemann.de" and "www.containership-info.net.tc". Feel free to contact the editors by e-mail at jantiedemann@hotmail.com and jan.svendsen@gmx.net. We greatly appreciate your feedback and your input. More contact details can be obtained from the above websites. Please note the disclaimers displayed on the download pages. All information given in this newsletter is believed correct, but not guaranteed.

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