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September 2007, 36th week

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Hamburg Süd to Buy Costa Container Line?

Germany's second largest container shipping line, Hamburg Süd, allegedly plans to take over Costa Container Lines. The Hamburg-based carrier, a specialist for the trade between the northern and the Southern hemisphere, is reportedly looking to round up its portfolio of liner services. Most loops of Costa Container Line would neatly fit into Ham'Süd's route network, since Costa is a specialist for the trade between the Western Med and the Americas. The Orsero Group of Italy and Hamburg-Süd reportedly already negotiated a sale of the container line. Costa predominantly serves the Canary Islands, Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean and Central and South America from Mediterranean ports. After the death of Costa Container Line's founder Raffaello Orsero in 2006, the line's owners decided that the container service will no longer play an essential role in the portfolio of the Orsero Group. Costa

Container Line presently operates a fleet of 30 mid-sized vessels, most of which are chartered. The ships have a combined TEU capacity of about 35,000 and carried well over a third of a million TEU last year.

MOL Earnest Delivered

South Korean Hyundai Heavy Industries recently completed work on the third unit of a quartet of panamax-sized ships ordered by Mitsui OSK Line. The new container ship was handed over to its owners as MOL Earnest. The vessel is yet another example of Hyundai's virtually endless row of panamax container carriers. Until the year 2010, when the yard at Ulsan will focus almost exclusively on the construction of larger ships, another 25 units of the popular type will be build. With a capacity of 5,078 TEU, the MOL ships are among the panamaxes with the highest container intake. Powered by an MAN B&W-designed 9K90MC-C diesel engine that is rated at 41 MW, MOL Earnest will have a service speed of 23.5 knots. Mitsui will employ their latest vessel in the carrier's ESX service. This sling connects central and southern China with ports on the American east coast via the Panama Canal.

Daewoo Hands Over Maersk Tanjung

Within the shipping empire of Maersk Line, vessel names starting with the letter 'T' had lately been reserved for ships in the size class of about 1,100 to 1,600 TEU. During the Danish carrier's rapid fleet expansion in the +8,000 TEU vessel range however, the creative department at Maersk Line now seems to have run out of suitable S-class names: Rather surprisingly, the line's latest 8,400 TEU unit will now come on stream as Maersk Tanjung. Originally ordered by Hamburg's Claus-Peter Offen, the vessel was later sold on to the Danes. Maersk Tanjung is the third unit of the batch Daewoo built ships from Offen's initial order. The new ship already has quite a number of sister vessels, since both MSC and Hapag-Lloyd already employ numerous units of Daewoo's 8,400 TEU design. Maersk Line too, already employs three sister vessels which the company inherited from an order originally placed on behalf of P&O Nedlloyd. Presently it looks like Maersk Tanjung is set to

perform her maiden voyage in Maersk's AE-8 service. After just one round trip here, the ship will be re-deployed to the AE-10 service for eight weeks before returning to the AE-8. Maersk Tanjong's European premiere will take place in early October, when calls are scheduled at Southampton, Le Havre, Hamburg and Rotterdam.

Laeisz' Posen Delivered as OOCL Bremen

The latest fleet addition of Hamburg's well-known shipping company F. Laeisz arrived in Germany's main port on Tuesday. Traditionally carrying a P-name, the new 2,742-TEU Posen sailed into Hamburg under the charter name OOCL Bremen. The 221-metre OOCL Bremen was built at Aker Ostsee's Wismar yard. She's a sister vessel of Laeisz's Pona, a vessel that presently trades as CMA CGM Copernic. At Hamburg, the new ship docked at HHLA's container terminal Altenwerder in order to load its first cargo of containers. OOCL will employ the ship in their Transatlantic Express, the so-called ATX-loop. This service's European port rotation includes calls at Hamburg, Rotterdam, Le Havre and Southampton. In the United States, the ATX calls at New York and Norfolk.



**Laeisz' new container ship OOCL Bremen arrives at Hamburg on her delivery voyage.
photo: Jan Tiedemann**

Evergreen's Future Plans

At a recent press conference, the chairman of the Evergreen Group, Dr. Chang Yung-Fa, spoke about his thoughts on the container shipping industry's future and his company's fleet expansion programme. He also shed some light on his company's plans to invest into a large-scale shipyard project in mainland China. According to Dr Chang, the Evergreen Group will build a new shipbuilding facility at Quanzhou, a town in China's Fujian Province. Although no details have been revealed so far, analysts believe the new yard will be equipped with a 350,000-tonne building dock. Hull production in this dock could start as soon as 2011. Evergreen's investment in Quanzhou will benefit from provincial government funding which, according to various sources, has been granted for the development of the project. So far however, the Taiwanese shipping line did not reveal the exact amount of money it will invest into the new facility. Whilst the shipyard will accept orders from any interested party, it will mainly provide ships for the Evergreen Group's own fleet expansion and renewal programme. The Taiwanese carrier urgently needs a large number of new container ships: Among the top ten container lines, Evergreen clearly has the least impressive pipeline of new vessels. The shipping line's order book only includes a small number of 7,000 TEU ships from Mitsubishi, as well as a number of mid-sized container vessels. Despite the fact that Evergreen will need between 60 and 100 new vessels within the next couple of years, Dr Chang was not willing to sign any new ships at the peak of the recent order boom. Evergreen's CEO claimed that the price was prohibitive and that it would be impossible to successfully refinance such expensive ships in the long run. With its new shipyard, Evergreen hopes to get its hands on new tonnage without paying the premium prices charged by shipyards all over the world. Regarding the present trend towards ultra large container ships for mainline services, Dr. Chang rejected the idea that such ships were the best choice for the foreseeable future. He claimed that he would have preferred sticking at a vessel size of about 6,000 TEU. At the request of Evergreen's sales department however, he reluctantly raised that mark to 8,000 TEU. Chang referred to

his outlook on liner shipping's future prospects as 'cautiously optimistic'.

Beyond Containers: Cruisers, Bulkers, Reefers and Tankers at Hamburg



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Maersk Neuchatel Aground off Tema

It is only now that your editors learned of an accident that happened off the coast of Ghana: More than one month ago, the German container vessel Maersk Neuchatel has grounded in the approaches of the Ghana port of Tema. The 2,474 TEU ship is managed by Hamburg's shipping company Schulte and trades for Maersk Line. The accident which reportedly happened on July 20th received hardly any media attention until now. Maersk Line quickly dispatched their anchor handling tug Maersk Beater to the site of the grounding in order to free the stricken container ship, but even the 230-tonne pull of the tug proved insufficient to tow the container vessel off the sandbank. Thus, Maersk Neuchatel will now have to be lightened before a second attempt of towing her free can be started. Local sources claimed that the unloading of containers will be a difficult task since sophisticated salvage equipment is hardly available in western Africa. Furthermore, the ship lies unsheltered from wind and waves, so that poor weather conditions can easily prevent salvage teams from working. Svitzer Salvage, a sister company of Maersk Line, was awarded with the salvage contract.

A First Glimpse of Cosco Asia

On Monday evening, Coscon's latest container vessel premiered in its first European port of call: The brand new Cosco Asia arrived at Hamburg. The vessel had picked up cargo at Tianjin,

Shanghai, Nansha, Hong Kong and Yantian, from where it set sail on a 20-day non-stop voyage to Hamburg. Cosco Asia is the first unit of a quartet of vessels Hyundai Heavy Industries will build for Cosco's container shipping branch. With a maximum intake of 10,062 TEU, the new ship is presently the largest container vessel among her owners' fleet. The ship also claims the distinction of being the largest container ship outside Maersk Line's maritime empire. Cosco Asia had left Hyundai's shipyard at Ulsan on August 6th and departed Tianjin on her maiden voyage to Europe just three days later. Cosco Asia trades in her owners' AE4 service. After having departed Hamburg, the ship will perform European calls at Felixstowe, Rotterdam and Antwerp, before returning to the Far East. The new vessel is 349.20 metres long and 45.60 metres wide. Fully laden it draws 14.50 metres of water and displaces 140,000 tonnes. A selection of photographs of the ship's European premiere can be seen in our website's vessel gallery.



**Cosco Asia passes Cuxhaven, bound for Hamburg
photo: Boris Paulien**

New Ships For Rickmers

After a rather lengthy decision-making process, Rickmers Reederei has finally ordered a set of new multi-purpose heavy lift vessels. The Hamburg-based shipping company allegedly

placed orders for no less than 18 newbuildings at three Chinese shipyards. According to our sources, Rickmers signed a quartet of 30,000-dwt-vessels at Jinling Shipyard. The ships will be equipped with two 320-tonne cranes and two smaller cranes. Though not primarily aimed at container transport, they can carry up to 1,888 TEU each. Slated for delivery in 2010 and 2011, the four ships are believed to follow the proven design of the 2002-built Rickmers Hamburg and her later sisters. These ships had already been built at Jingling. Market sources say that Rickmers will pay in the region of USD 50 million per ship. Furthermore, Rickmers is believed to have ordered six smaller multi purpose carriers at a newcomer shipyard. These 19,000-dwt-carriers are to be built at Jiujiang Tongfang Jiangxin Shipyard at a price of a little less than USD 30 million apiece. The vessels are slated for delivery between late 2009 and early 2011. Finally, Rickmers is said to have turned to Kouan Shipyard for an unknown number of 17,000-dwt multi purpose carriers. Some sources claim to know that Rickmers ordered four ships at Kouan – others claim the Hamburg-based shipping company would eventually receive eight units. With up to 18 new vessels in the pipeline, it looks as if Rickmers has finally given up on the ships the company had ordered at an Iranian yard a couple of years ago. The yard at Busheer never got any further than building several hull sections which now apparently slowly corrode into oblivion, somewhere along the Gulf coast.

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The Weekly Containershipping-Newsletter
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For assistance with the present issue, the editors gratefully acknowledge the contribution of Bert Vernimmen, Helge Barth and Klaus Masuch.