



## Axxis Drilling adds 2 rigs to fleet

**THE ADDITION** of two barge rigs brings the fleet at **Axxis Drilling** up to a total of four. The *Liberty* is a 2,000-hp posted barge capable of drilling to 25,000 ft. The *Justice* is a 3,000-hp posted barge capable of drilling to 30,000 ft. Additionally, Axxis Drilling has promoted **John Stevens** to Vice President-Domestic Operations. "John has worked tirelessly for the company since its inception, and this promotion is indicative of our confidence in him," said Axxis Drilling President **Bob Dunn**. ■



The *Justice*, a 3,000-hp posted barge capable of drilling to 30,000 ft, recently joined Axxis Drilling's fleet, as did the 2,000-hp barge *Liberty*.

## Transocean to upgrade Sedco 700-series rigs

**UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH** two operators, **Transocean** will upgrade two Sedco 700-series semisubmersible rigs.

**Shell** has committed to a firm period of three years, and it is entitled to extend the term of the contract by up to two years by exercising an extension option. The upgrade is expected to begin early this year and be completed by May 2007. Estimated cost of the upgrade is \$300 million.

Separately, an agreement with **Chevron** will see the operator contract the rig over a primary term of three years, with the option to extend it to five years. The upgrade is expected to begin in the second quarter of 2007 and be completed by the first quarter of 2008. Cost is estimated to be \$300 million. Its initial drilling location will be Chevron's Frade project offshore Brazil.

Once completed, the two upgraded Sedco

700-series units will increase the company's high-specification floaters fleet to 34 units, with 30 of them capable of operating in water depths of 4,500 ft and greater.

Additionally, **Hydro** has awarded Transocean a 3-year contract for the semisubmersible rig Transocean Winner for drilling on the Norwegian Continental Shelf.

Operations is expected to begin by October, upon completion of a reactivation program, which has begun. The planned reactivation does not involve an upgrade of the rig's current capabilities. Revenues of \$383 million could be generated over the contract period.

The Transocean Winner, capable of operating in water depths of up to 1,500 ft, has been located in Norway since it began active service in 1983, although it has been idle since August 2002. ■

## Diamond Offshore reins in Ocean Baroness

**Diamond Offshore Drilling** has entered into a Letter of Intent (LOI) to use the *Ocean Baroness* rig in the Gulf of Mexico for 3 years beginning in November 2006. Maximum total revenue provided for under the LOI would be about \$400 million. The *Ocean Baroness* was upgraded in 2002 for deepwater high-specification drilling. It has operated in Southeast Asia since its modernization, and in November it was mobilized to the GOM, where it began drilling under a one-year contract.

"This LOI is evidence of the emphasis operators are placing on premium deep-water equipment, which is currently in tight supply," said **Larry Dickerson**, Diamond Offshore President and Chief Operating Officer. ■

## Noble's Bingo 9000 Rig 3 gets operator commitment

**Noble Corporation's** Bingo 9000 Rig 3 semisubmersible hull has received a commitment for a 4-year contract from **Shell**. The unit is one of two ultra-deep-water Bingo 9000 semisubmersible hulls that Noble bought in March 2002. The Bingo 9000 Rig 3, which will be renamed the Noble Danny Adkins, will be completed as a dynamically positioned unit designed to operate in water depths up to 12,000 ft and to drill to a total depth of 35,000 ft. The commitment includes a primary term of four years.

The unit has been in China since Noble's purchase in 2002. The company estimates the construction time to complete the unit will be 32 to 36 months from execution of a shipyard construction contract. No final determination on location of construction and outfitting of the unit have been made. ■

## Union Drilling acquires 3 rigs

**Union Drilling** has acquired three Ideal Rigs from **National Oilwell LP** for an aggregate purchase price of \$24 million and an option to acquire three additional rigs for \$25.2 million. The three rigs are scheduled for delivery in March, May and June.

Union Drilling also took delivery of two newly constructed 185k top head drive rigs in November and early December. The rigs will be deployed in the Southern Appalachian basin drilling for natural gas in CBM formations. ■



Kuwait Drilling Company's Rigs 16 (above) and 17 in the Wafra oilfields reached a million man-hours without a LTI on 30 October. In addition, KDC Rig 26 in August reached 5 years without an LTI.

## KDC achieves safety milestones

**KUWAIT DRILLING COMPANY** recently reached two world-class milestones in its drilling operations. KDC Rig 26, operating in the North Kuwait oilfields for Kuwait Oil Company (KOC), reached five years without a Lost Time

Incident (LTI) in August. Additionally, KDC Rigs 16 and 17, which operate as the only two KDC rigs in the Wafra oilfields in a joint operation with Chevron, reached a million man-hours without a LTI on 30 October. ■

## Forecasting growth, NDC inaugurates Al Hail rig

**THE UNITED ARAB** Emirates' National Drilling Company inaugurated its Al Hail rig on 18 September. Built by **Keppel FELS** in Singapore for about \$100 million, the rig comes as part of the company's investment plan for asset renewal.

The company is forecasting significant and sustainable growth in the drilling industry, and over the past five years, NDC's capital investment has topped \$1.5 billion Dirhams, which is three times the investment made in the preceding five years. Aside from Al Hail, the plan includes rig modernization projects for rigs Al Itihad and Junana.

"The significant investment was made in order to insure that NDC assets surpass the level in the industry in terms of quality and integrity standards," NDC General Manager **Abdul Al Kindy** said at Al Hail's inauguration ceremony.

The latest addition to NDC's fleet of offshore rigs, Al Hail was built in compliance with the MARPOL convention of pollution, with the latest MODU codes and aviation regulations.

"In fact, the rig goes beyond the dictates of regulatory compliance and instead incorporates a philosophy of futuristic thinking," Mr Al Kindy said.

The fully automated rig includes state-of-the-art joystick-operated drillers console; remote control pipe-handling, transfer and racking system; enhanced power; hydraulic and pressure capabilities; leisure, conferencing and fitness facilities and a mosque.

Mr Al Kindy pointed out that timing was critical in getting the project completed ahead of schedule and on budget. "As anticipated by NDC, building rates skyrocketed soon after to over \$140 million for the same type rig, with much longer delivery periods of over 40 months," he said.

During the construction phase, 2.2 million man hours were worked without a single lost-time injury. This adds to a previous achievement in August when rig ND-17 completed 10 years without a lost-time injury. ■

## Great Wall inks milestone contract with PDO in Oman

**GREAT WALL DRILLING** Company (GWDC), a subsidiary of China National Petroleum Corporation, has become the first Chinese drilling company to win a **Petroleum Development Oman** (PDO) contract to carry out a major drilling campaign in Lekhwair. According to the contract, GWDC will drill about 230 wells on a lump-sum basis.

"The introduction of a new player in the drilling services market in Oman should also be welcomed as they will no doubt bring with them new ways of working," said PDO Senior Well Engineer **Charles Okwenivi**. "If they are successful, the introduction of other Chinese players in the Oman market for different drilling services such as directional drilling, cementing and electric line logging may also ensue." ■

## Ensign USA building 8 rigs

**ENSIGN USA**, a subsidiary of Ensign Energy Services, began the construction of eight drilling rigs for the US market. All are supported by long-term commitments.

Four of the rigs are 1,000-hp AC electric self-moving rigs for use in Wyoming; two are 1,000-hp AC electric rigs for use in Wyoming and North Dakota; and two new Automated Drill Rigs (ADRs) are for use in California and Wyoming.

The ADRs will be the first developed for the US market using Ensign's proprietary technology developed in the Canadian market. ■

## Rowan building 2 jackup rigs

**ROWAN COMPANIES** plans to add to its offshore fleet with the construction of two jackup rigs. Each rig will cost about \$165 million and will be built at Rowan's Vicksburg, Miss, facility. The first rig is expected to be delivered in summer 2008 and the second in early 2009.

The rigs will be built under a new design called the LeTourneau 240C, which will have up to 535 ft of leg length and will be designed for HPHT drilling. They will also have more deck space, higher variable load, more drilling capacity, more cantilever reach and increased personnel on board. ■