

NAHAD

news

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER of
THE ASSOCIATION FOR HOSE AND ACCESSORIES DISTRIBUTION

How Distributors Can Adopt to the Digital Transformation

By: Mike Mortensen, President, CEO
Alaska Rubber Group

DISTRIBUTORS SHOULD EMBRACE the power of digital technologies and use them to drive efficiency and productivity. This could include using cloud-based systems, automation, analytics, and other digital tools to streamline operations and improve performance. **What technologies do you feel are most important to hose & accessory distribution going into 2023?** We have some leading industry leaders to discuss this critical topic.

Alexandra “Ali” Kirtley, Marketing Director for PT, has nearly five years in the manufacturing industry paired with 10 years of experience in the communication field with an emphasis on education. She is responsible for developing, implementing, and monitoring all aspects of internal and external communication, digital marketing, brand awareness, and product marketing.

ALEXANDRA “ALI” KIRTLEY

Marketing Director, PT

From the manufacturing perspective, we want to make it as simple as possible for distributors to get our product on their e-commerce website and within their CRM and ERP software. As the buying trends shift and the purchasing environments change, the consistent factor that manufacturers and distributors share are to have in-depth and consumable data, “ready for use.” As a manufacturer, we’ve adopted the perspective of “consistency is key” when each of our distributors publishes content on our products. Creating “ready-for-use data” can be overwhelming for a small team, so manufacturers and distributors must work together to cover all of the “data needs” from a progressive upload perspective. It’s not a manufacturer’s responsibility to tell a distributor how to manage their data, but it is our responsibility to give a distributor the right data information and tools

to complete their publishing data, presenting the image in a manner consistent with the manufacturer’s branding depiction requirements.

Lydia Rice is the Director of eCommerce and Digital Marketing at TIPCO Technologies. Within one year, Lydia implemented a Product Information Management (PIM) solution, full eCommerce integration, and website rebranding for TIPCO, leading the 135-year-old distributor into the digital age. The digital transformation journey has grown the selling channel, evolved TIPCO’s product education resources, and improved TIPCO’s brand representation of world-class manufacturers. Lydia strongly believes in the power technology has to help strengthen the selling capabilities of industrial distributors and their supplier partners.

LYDIA RICE

Director of eCommerce and Digital Marketing, TIPCO

Distributors can adopt digital transformation by reflecting on their current pain points and finding technology-forward solutions to ease them. Is a major pain point easy access to accurate product information for your team? Look towards a product information management (PIM) solution instead of more printed literature. Are you struggling to find a direct marketing process that reaches your customers? A text or email marketing solution might be the way to go. Digital

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transformation is not “all or nothing.” Instead, find solutions that adopt technology and weave them into your current operations.

Dan Banks is a seasoned professional with over 20 years of experience working with software focused on wholesale distribution. As the founder of Domani Strategies, Dan provides distributor-focused consulting services, helping businesses to implement the right technology strategy to differentiate themselves and outpace their competition.

DAN BANKS

Founder, Domani Strategies

Digital Transformation is a misnomer. It is more of a journey that starts with the right map. And there is no true destination, but rather many milestones along the way. The important thing to remember is that it is also a never-ending journey and there will be detours and U-turns. But with the right map or let’s call it digital strategy, you can limit those. It is critical to make sure you have the right tools and equipment to avoid getting lost. Navigating and understanding those tools or technologies can be overwhelming. You are not alone in this feeling. It may be cliché, but a journey starts with a single step. Some distributors see that step as their website, but that is a very small part of a much bigger picture. So, don’t look at it as a change to your existing business, but rather as a journey that each part of your organization travels together. ●

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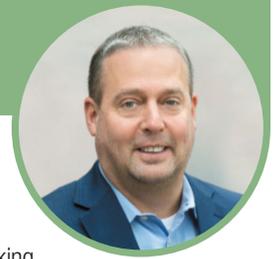
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Dear NAHAD Members



CAN'T WAIT TO WELCOME YOU to the 39th Annual NAHAD Meeting and Convention at the beautiful Atlantis Resort in Nassau, Bahamas. What a venue; I hope to see you there. As I'm sure you recall, we were supposed to be here in 2020 and had to cancel. Speaking for the membership, please allow me to send a big thanks to the Atlantis Resort for allowing us to reschedule for 2023 with zero-cost penalties. Also, thank you to the NAHAD staff for navigating us through that turmoil so successfully. Above and beyond by both, and greatly appreciated.

We have a wonderful event planned for you with great speakers, informative workshops, fun gatherings, and (my number one reason for appreciating NAHAD), the incredible networking opportunities. Also of note, this will be one of the most attended conventions in NAHAD's history. Whoot, Whoot!

Reflecting back, I've had the distinct honor of serving as your President this past year. I learned so much from Karen Brandvold, Sam Petillo, and Jeff Scheininger before me, as well as so many of you, and I tried to bring that wisdom into my leadership. I am humbled to be amongst all of you here and I consider you teammates in this journey of ours. Personally, I have grown immensely through my tenure on the Board and as President, most significantly with the relationships and friendships I've developed and the shared best practice conversations I've had with so many of you. For the convention this year I'm bringing not only my wife Tammy and daughter Caitlin, whom many of you have met, but also my mother-in-law Kathy Dustin and two nephews, Brody and Brandon Dustin to introduce them to this wonderful industry and event (and to enjoy the waterslides, ha).

NAHAD continues to be an incredible partner to all of us as we run our businesses and navigate ever-increasingly turbulent waters. As members, we enjoy the benefits of not only this convention, but of NAHAD365, with elements like the new podcast series (The OD – Other Diameter Podcast), white papers, the Hose Safety Institute, NAHAD Academy, University of Innovative Distribution, Hose Safety Week, increased and focused volunteering opportunities with the new committee structure, and more. Also, this year we are the fortunate recipients of new and increased resources via the acquisition of SEVEN12 Management by Kellen Company, the second largest association services management organization in the world. Under the Kellen umbrella, the NAHAD staff will have even more resources available to bring to our organization.

This year's convention will provide many interesting and thought-provoking opportunities to learn and grow as leaders in our industry. On Saturday, April 29, you'll hear Patrick Luce from ITR Economics give an update on the current economic outlook. Sunday, April 30, renowned author Ross Bernstein will deliver a dynamic keynote themed around relationships and integrity. On Monday, May 1, "Mentalist" Tim David will speak to us about the science behind words and how to use them to motivate and influence others. In addition to these engaging speakers, Patrick Finnegan will provide two Dale Carnegie sessions on Sunday: Selling and Influencing, and Effective Presentations and Storytelling. Finally, you can visit with suppliers and partners on Tuesday, May 2, in the important Showcase of Hose Solutions. Of course, all your favorite social events will happen as well; first timer roundtables, speed networking, company meetings, the opening reception, manufacturer hospitality suites, the closing party, and others.

I hope you enjoy this year's Convention with your industry peers and use it to network, grow and learn.

Sincerely,

Jason Westad
 NAHAD PRESIDENT
 FORCE AMERICA

Built on Hustle: Efficiency is the Name of the Game at Alliance Hose & Rubber

FAR AT THE BACK OF THE 50,000-SQ.-FT. WAREHOUSE AT ALLIANCE HOSE, past tall rows of bright colored inventory and beyond the central production area, a worn yellow measuring decal marks out 100 feet across the shop floor. Its faded numbers tell a story of thousands of yards of hose material that have been cut to size and processed for customers since the 90-year-old distribution company moved to its Elmhurst, Illinois, location in 2013. If that line could really speak, it would also tally the high measure of innovation, leadership, and respect for team that trickle from the top at this third-generation, family-owned business.

President Dave Heckler keeps a lot of spinning plates whirring with a seemingly effortless style and down-to-earth demeanor, but don't be deceived by his soft-spoken manner and occasional pithy pun – he's a serial doer. Making continuous improvements and investments, maximizing shop efficiency, and managing through explosive growth for each of the last two years, Heckler also puts heavy emphasis on building people up and trusting them with decision-making. In fact, he can't talk about their near-doubled inventory and tripled backlog since 2021 without praising the employees who deftly handled it.

"I'm really proud of what our people have done to respond to such a dramatic increase in volume over the past two years," he said. "There was a lot of overtime, a lot of Saturdays in production. We even had people come in on a "swing shift" a handful of times due to tight floor space and the need to keep production flowing."

It's plain to see why he says his business is built on hustle. The operation, though highly manual for many production functions, is teeming with progressive practices. The

entire sales team has embraced use of the company's CRM, and gets as much back from its use as the company receives in sales results. Alliance has also been paperless in production for about eight years, Heckler said, and the tools and processes the team employs are tightly focused on improving speed of delivery and value-add service. One such tool is a completely novel machine, and Heckler says he's probably the only distributor in the country – maybe the world – who has it. Custom-built for Alliance and not commercially available, the machine heats the end of a hose to make it pliable before fittings are attached. Instead of a few minutes of soaking in an industrial crockpot, which they also use, the proprietary method makes a hose ready for fitting in a few seconds.

Heckler says he strives to lead by example, and that includes the hustle mindset. He has a few concurrent projects mapped out for 2023, any one of which would be sufficient for leaders made of lesser stuff. And on top of his business initiatives, the 64-year-old is also being installed as the 39th president of NAHAD – The Association for Hose and Accessories Distribution in April.

A BUSY YEAR AHEAD

Unfortunately, remediating office water damage took top priority by necessity in the first quarter of the new year, but Heckler was relieved that a city permit came through on February 1 so a roof drain diversion plan can finally be executed. That work, plus baseboard and carpet replacement, as well as new plumbing work have caused some temporary distraction from his loftier ambitions, not to mention a very hefty price tag to solve the problem once and for all.

Next on the Alliance itinerary will be a reconfiguration of the building's current

footprint that will push down a wall to expand warehouse storage and production – they'll gain a few thousand square feet from a large and largely unused space the staff calls "the ballroom." Finding a new place for employees to eat lunch will be small potatoes when compared with the pricey alternative: Heckler has rejected estimates of \$2 million to bump out the back of the warehouse to gain 12,000 square feet.

The reno isn't all he's tackling. This year, Alliance will roll out an e-commerce dimension to its website, with the chief aim of providing existing customers with online purchasing options. Responding to what he considers one of the major trends of industrial distribution, Heckler recognizes the time is ripe for addressing the preferences of next-generation purchasers in the workforce.

"As customers' buying habits shift, some of the most reputable hose companies in our industry are adding these website capabilities to serve existing customers and give them the 'omni channel' capability," he said. "So, we too have started on that path. I've had some colleagues in the industry that have moved further down the path and have had good success. One thing some have done is list things for sale on their site but at higher list prices – they're not trying to catch every little piece of business and destroy profit margins."

Heckler has a track record for keeping up on capital investments for his production operations that will produce good ROI, and in 2023 he'll continue that pattern, but with a twist. This spring, he's beginning the exploration and discussions that will lead to Alliance's first foray into automated guided vehicles (AGVs), which will help relieve some physical strain and steps for the production team.

Built on Hustle: Efficiency is the Name of the Game at Alliance Hose & Rubber

“Last fall, I was at a resort hotel for a wedding,” he said. “I was walking from one area into the dining area looking down at my phone and almost tripped over a little AGV thing. Of course, I didn’t trip over it because it stopped for me. It was bringing plates of food from the kitchen to a wait station, and I thought, ‘Wow, that’s saving them a lot of steps.’ And this wasn’t a big fancy hotel, and they weren’t drawing attention to this – it’s just part of how they do business.”

“I looked at that and thought, ‘What if we had two or three of those things in staging areas that move from production to shipping – they can move product around as it is finished and bring them over,’” Heckler said. “It would save some of the stooping and bending, and would trim off the time lag to make the process more continuous. So, I’m starting that discussion to see how this could work for us.”

FIXING KINKS FOR FUTURE GROWTH

One reason Alliance Hose is well positioned for positive changes and a strong outlook for 2023 is that it had the collective courage to press “Pause” and make a process correction during the frenzied, skyrocketing volumes of 2021-2022. It meant incorporating a never-used feature of their ERP system to remove a bottleneck, but it was nonetheless difficult to achieve, as all work process changes are.

“It was a little like rebuilding the airplane while it was in flight,” Heckler recalled. “Supply chain issues forced backlogs on us and we had to recreate a flow.”

The company has used the same ERP software since Heckler joined the business in 1994 – a U.S. branch of the South African-based product for manufacturers and distributors, plus a local service provider, have grown and adapted with Alliance through the years, saving them the painful experience of switching to a new system. And until recently, the ERP had met all their needs as a small, single-location operation.

But supply chain disruptions raised issues the ERP wasn’t configured to handle. When material deliveries became inconsistent, the team carried out its proprietary fast turnarounds but the ERP settings they were using didn’t allow the company to invoice multiple shipments for a single order. The team literally had to sit on finished work instead of shipping out completed portions, and that was not sustainable.

“We had to turn on a new mode in the ERP we hadn’t used before; it’s something that a large, multi-location company would use,” said

Heckler. “We had actually been telling our people, ‘don’t process that,’ or ‘process it but don’t put it in the computer.’ It was a mess. And changing things mid-flight was a challenge.”

He credits the team of frontline people – comprising of production, shipping, material handling, and sales whose experience ranged from 15 years to less than a year – with achieving the smooth transition. “In two months, without slowing our already frenetic pace of shipping, the team installed the new software and process,” Heckler said. “This increased the throughput of our shipping, allowing us to catch up on backorders faster.”

The hard work done, Heckler sees a bright future for his company even amid economic question marks that hover over the coming year.

“I think we will see high single-digit growth, or maybe low double digits, which is a lot lower than we’ve been seeing,” he said. “Some of that is purely pricing growth – we do see volume growth staying the same or increasing slightly. I think the industry is going to see low single-digit growth, although some areas might be retracting.”

Heckler added that because access to materials and products was unpredictable for such a prolonged period, he expects to see some post-pandemic artificial demand – aka over-buying.

“I call it borrowing from the future,” he said, “because people want to make sure they have what they need for their own production or to supply their customers.”

While uncertainty dominated the market post-lockdown, supply chain snafus created the added byproduct of mediocre customer service throughout the industry, Heckler said.

“Everyone’s gotten used to a compromised level of service all the way through the supply chain because information was bad,” he said. “We want to tighten that up and not get used to the idea that things are going to be three or four weeks late. We’re going to beat our competition to the punch with the right product, the right service, and with the urgency that the customer wants it.”

CUSTOMERS AND THE CONNECTION PARADOX

Throughout Illinois, Southeast Wisconsin, Northwest Indiana and even up to Southwest Michigan, Alliance Hose serves a customer base comprised of well-known catalog companies or “big box” stores – companies that redistribute Alliance’s hose and related products. This

Dave Heckler, President
Alliance Hose & Rubber Company



segment of customer tends to have regular, repeating order patterns of buying with a high focus on cost competitiveness.

"We've designed our processes to be competitive and responsive to their needs, and the timing of their needs," Heckler said.

The company has also historically maintained healthy construction supply market share, selling hoses to equipment companies that sell pumps, compressors, and consumables to contractors. Regrettably, he added, the OEM market has been deteriorating for decades. "Illinois has done a really good job of driving them out," he said.

"But there's plenty of MRO business left," he added, "and chemical and petroleum packaging and processing are still done around here. Overall, we're 98% industrial hose and related accessories."

Food and beverage is a strong customer segment, fed by continuous need as well as reliance on local suppliers. A relatively new niche Alliance is tapping into has become its highest growth area by percentage: breweries and distilleries. Alliance Hose Sales Manager Rob Williams has worked diligently to build up relationships and they've sold to over 200 different locations over the last eight years, even as far away as Canada and Hawaii. They've become active in the Craft Brewers Association and Williams has positioned himself as a safety expert on the safety committee and by writing for publications.

While that helps get good information into customer hands, it only scratches the surface of a universal and paradoxical problem Alliance's management sees among end users. On the one hand, customers are harder to get to, often isolating themselves within digital walls. But on the other hand, they're information-starved, seeking reliable product and safety knowledge yet blocking themselves from the people who can partner and provide solutions they need.

"Everywhere, we are seeing reduced service support, but customers want and need the kind of expertise we provide," said Heckler. "They're diverging trends, really: people don't want to talk to you, but then people really need to talk to you. It can be hard to get through the gate, but when we do, we find how many technical and functional questions they have and how much they really need our knowledge."

MAKE NO ASSUMPTIONS

As a distributor who has made a habit of networking and learning at NAHAD, has been active in the IDCO buyers group, and also participates

in a peer group called Renaissance Executive Forums, Heckler has been intentional about putting himself where both industry trends and best practices are readily accessible. As a result, the information he gleans has been vital to many business decisions over his 24-year tenure as president.

From those experiences, he's confident in urging others to be bold in their own outreach, especially when it comes to staying plugged in with those they do business with.

"Times are really changing now as things go digital, and routes to market are changing," he said. "Some suppliers may be considering if they should go direct. I think distributors need to stretch out of the comfort zone and communicate with customers with suppliers and say, 'How are we doing?' and 'How can we do this better?' You can't just trust everything's okay and someone's going to keep buying from you or selling to you. You can't make that assumption anymore. You've got to continue to cultivate those relationships on an ongoing basis." ●

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“On the one hand, customers are harder to get to, often isolating themselves within digital walls. But on the other hand, they're information-starved, seeking reliable product and safety knowledge...”

Member Connections



Adaptall is proud to announce the return of two former employees; Darryl Carver, and Kyle Freer. Darryl is coming out of early retirement to return to Customer Service duties, and brings with him over 20 years of valuable industry experience and relationships. We also welcome back Kyle Freer who started in Adaptall's warehouses as a teenager. He will be returning after a 15 year hiatus to lead outside sales in Canada. Please feel free to reach out and say hi! Darryl: dcarver@adaptall.com and Kyle: kfreer@adaptall.com



Coxreels is proud to introduce a new line of three industrial duty LED lights now available on the PC10 reels. The new LED lights feature a variety of industrial-grade features and options, including: a 50,000 hour rating, internal light diffusers, and shatter-resistant polycarbonate lenses. Coxreels' new LED lights also feature adjustable steel hooks for hands-free placement.

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For more information on Coxreels and our new Hi-Vis Hose Series, please visit www.coxreels.com.



Danfoss Power Solutions names Andrew Smulski

president of the Fluid Conveyance division. Danfoss Power Solutions, a leading global supplier of mobile and industrial hydraulics has appointed Andrew Smulski as the new president of its Fluid Conveyance division. He will be based at the company's campus in Eden Prairie, Minnesota. Andrew joined Danfoss Power Solutions with the merger of DPS and Eaton Hydraulics in 2021. He has more than 20 years of commercial and sales leadership experience in the fluid power and electrical



industries. During his 18 years with Eaton, Andrew has held various leadership positions within sales, program management and marketing.



The Right Connection®

Dixon is pleased to welcome Jeff Nitz as the Dixon Sanitary Sales Manager. Jeff

has been with Dixon for seven years as the Ohio Valley Regional Manager. With 25 years of experience in the fluid power and fluid conveyance industries, in both distribution and manufacturing, Jeff brings a wealth of knowledge to the table.



Contact Jeff for more information on all things sanitary including fittings, valves, actuation, pumps, filtration, and more!



The Right Connection®

Dixon is proud to offer exclusive online training programs to valued distributors.

Once a month Dixon industry experts host live

webinars providing free insight into the products and processes you work with daily. In addition, Dixon's Customer College is a learning management site with over 70 interactive, self-paced courses devoted to Dixon products, markets, and applications.

To learn more, scan the QR code or contact a Dixon sales representative.



Goodyear Rubber Products, Inc.,

a charter NAHAD member, celebrates 75 years in business and opens their new Corporate

Headquarters and grand showroom this month in Clearwater, Florida. As part of the process, Goodyear is opening a new Parker Store less than a block from the headquarters they are closing in downtown St. Petersburg, their home base since February 10, 1948.



McGill Hose expands metal hose fabrica-

tion capacity.

With additional welding booths, custom equipment, and trained staff, we are excited to announce we have significantly increased our capacity in our Metal Hose Fabrication Department. Please reach out for customized quick ship needs! Also, we can laser etch assembly information directly on to the hoses as needed.

McGill Hose leverages years of industry knowledge and increased inventory to

better serve the larger and more complex requirements of the NAHAD Community and our customers.

For any questions regarding this or any of our capabilities, please contact us at 413-525-3977 or sales@mcgillhose.com.



Designed by **O+P** and patented internationally, Stopflex allows retaining the movement of the pressure hose in case of disconnection

of the fitting, protecting the operators and safeguarding the components.

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Python Protective Sleeves + Covers, a division of **Suburban Manufacturing**

Group, has released their Diamondback Lite Sleeve. This tubular sleeve joins Python's other Diamondback Sleeves, Diamondback and Diamondback PRO.

The new Diamondback Lite sleeve is designed to provide UV protection and abrasion resistance to hydraulic hoses and wires. It is lightweight, flexible, and provides a clean, professional look to the application.

"Diamondback Lite was designed with the exact amount of yarn needed to provide

abrasion protection," stated Mike May, Product Manager. "It was designed to be economical yet provide unmatched UV protection and longevity in rugged applications."

More information about Diamondback Lite can be found on the product web page or through local distributors and parts suppliers.

For more information, please visit www.pythoncovers.com.



TIPCO Technologies opens twelfth

hose center location on Maryland's Eastern Shore. TIPCO Technologies, the Mid-Atlantic's complete fluid conveyance solution supplier for industrial, hydraulic, and high-purity applications has announced a twelfth Aeroquip Hose Center will open at 1147 Ocean Highway Suite 5 in Pocomoke City, Maryland. After decades of servicing the Eastern Shore from afar, TIPCO is excited to join the Pocomoke City community and serve the industries within the Delmarva Peninsula. The Pocomoke location will feature products from Danfoss Power Solutions, Continental, and Dixon Valve. TIPCO Technologies is headquartered in Owings Mills, Maryland and has locations in Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New Jersey.

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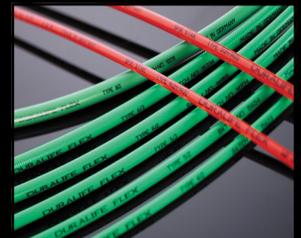
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Congratulations Exam Passers!

The following employees of Hose Safety Institute member companies have passed exams during the period January 1, 2023 through April 11, 2023.

Exams

- Composite Hose Fabrication
- ◆ Composite Hose Handbook
- Corrugated Metal Hose Fabrication
- ◆ Corrugated Metal Hose Handbook
- Fluoropolymer Hose Fabrication
- ◆ Fluoropolymer Hose Handbook
- Hydraulic Hose Fabrication
- ◆ Hydraulic Hose Handbook
- Industrial Hose Fabrication
- ◆ Industrial Hose Handbook

4 STAR HOSE

Duncan Sorrells ●
Pat Stewart ●◆◆

A-1 COUPLING & HOSE

Kyle Huselton ●◆◆
Michael Lachnicht ●●
Zach Shanholtzer ◆

ALASKA RUBBER GROUP

Austin Campbell ◆
Cooper Mullholand ◆◆
Edgar Jimenez ◆◆
Jairo Artiaga ◆
Kyle Sisneros ●◆◆
Max Logan ◆
Seager Stanley ◆◆
Tate Moore ◆◆
Tim Cooper ◆◆

AMAZON HOSE

Jeffrey Cantave ●◆◆●◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆

CONTROLLED FLUIDS

Adam Smith ●●

CURRY FLUID POWER

Bill Kiser ●
Brian Keeler ●◆
Doug Coursin ●◆◆◆
Stephen Stewart ●◆◆
Todd Witosky ●

CUSTOM HYDRAULICS & DESIGN, INC.

Ray Jackson ◆◆

GOODYEAR RUBBER PRODUCTS

Omar Claussell ●◆◆
Dennis Gomes ●◆◆◆

GOPHER INDUSTRIAL, INC.

Alex Dosdall ●◆◆●◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆

HART INDUSTRIES

Jason Smith ◆
Matt Lanese ●

HOSE MASTER

Josh Strausbaugh ●◆◆●◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆

HOSE OF SOUTH TEXAS

Alfred Flores ●◆◆●◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆
Christian Medellin ◆◆
Cole Knapp ◆
Frank Valdez ●◆◆●◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆
Jaydon Ruiz ◆
Jeremiah Vasquez ◆
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Paul Paben ◆
Rene Fernandez ●
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Thomas Persall ◆◆

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Charles Hopewell ●●●
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