

Dow 30 Industrials
9,448.81
down 22.74

S&P 500 index
1,014.81
down 3.82

Posted Oklahoma sweet
\$24.75
down 0.25

National gas spot price
\$4.65
down 0.01

Gold
\$374.50
down 1.30

Dollar in Yen
¥117.45
up 0.12

TULSA WORLD

[SECTION E]

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2003

INSIDE

TULSA LIVESTOCK: E-2

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Business

Continental



Full fare, full treatment

Continental to pamper premium fliers.

E-3

BIZ QUICKS

Stocks continue slide after losing week

Wall Street stumbled through a listless session Monday, closing modestly lower. "I think what investors need to hear from companies — but probably won't hear until they report earnings — is that companies are standing up and saying things are better," said Robert Streed, portfolio manager of Northern Trust Select Equity Fund in Chicago.

The Dow Jones industrial average closed down 22.74, or 0.2 percent, at 9,448.81, having declined 0.3 percent last week to end a five-week winning streak.

The broader market also finished lower. The Nasdaq composite index declined 9.33, or 0.5 percent, to 1,845.70. The Standard & Poor's 500 index fell 3.82, or 0.4 percent, to 1,014.81.

Exxon Mobil, Chevron eye stake in Russia oil giant

Exxon Mobil Corp. and ChevronTexaco Corp. are expected to make rival offers for a 25 percent interest in AO Yukos Oil Co., Russia's top petroleum producer, the Wall Street Journal reported Monday.

Mikhail Khodorkovsky, chief executive and largest shareholder of Yukos, has been looking for a foreign partner since spring, the newspaper said, citing anonymous sources.



Khodorkovsky

Both Exxon Mobil and ChevronTexaco will seek 25 percent plus one share, which under Russian law would give them the right to block certain major decisions at Yukos, the Journal reported.

The companies are expected this week to submit preliminary bids that could be worth \$11 billion, the newspaper said.

U.S. oil companies are eyeing Russia's vast fields as a source to meet growing world demand for oil and natural gas. Much of Russia's reserves are controlled by private companies set up after the fall of communism in 1991.

A spokesman for Irving, Texas-based Exxon Mobil declined to comment. A spokeswoman for ChevronTexaco, based in San Ramon, Calif., declined to comment on the report, calling it "rumor and speculation."

A spokesman for Yukos also declined to comment.

American Eagle seeks mediator in attendant talks

American Eagle has asked for a federal mediator to help the regional airline reach a new contract with its flight attendants, after more than two years of talks.

The unit of AMR Corp., which also is the parent company of American Airlines, asked the National Mediation Board on Friday to join the 28-month-old negotiations with the Association of Flight Attendants. The union represents 1,200 of the carrier's employees.

"We don't feel like we are making enough progress on our own with the AFA," said Lisa Bailey, a spokeswoman for American Eagle.

The two sides previously discussed a joint request for a mediator, she said. The union didn't immediately return calls seeking a comment.

American Eagle also is in contract talks with the Transport Workers Union, which represents mechanics and baggage handlers.

The carrier's traffic, measured in miles flown by paying passengers, rose 15 percent this year through August from the year-earlier period.

American Airlines' regional affiliates, including American Eagle, accounted for \$713 million, or 8.4 percent, of AMR's revenue of \$8.44 billion in the first half of the year.

Dollar Thrifty buying Las Vegas operations

Dollar Thrifty Automotive Group Inc. said Monday that its corporate operations subsidiary agreed to acquire substantially all of the assets of the Thrifty Car Rental franchise operations in Las Vegas, Nev.

The acquisition will add about 1,950 vehicles to the company's corporate operations, said Tulsa-based Dollar Thrifty.

Terms of the deal were not disclosed. The acquisition, effective Nov. 1, includes a Thrifty location at McCarran International Airport as well as a recently remodeled service and rental facility on Rent-A-Car Road.

"The Thrifty licensee, Qualcar LLC, owned and operated by David Rosen, has experienced exceptional growth in revenues and profit combined with quality customer service, which will make this location acquisition accretive to DTG earnings next year," said Gary L. Paxton, president and chief operating officer — corporate operations, at Dollar Thrifty.

Vintage declares dividend

Vintage Petroleum Inc. said Monday that its board of directors has authorized a cash dividend of 4¢ cents per share, payable Oct. 7, to stockholders of record Sept. 23.

Tulsa-based Vintage is an independent energy company engaged in the acquisition, exploitation, exploration and development of oil and gas properties, and the gathering and marketing of natural gas and crude oil.

From Bloomberg, AP, staff reports

Employment picture brighter

▶ A Manpower survey's three-month outlook shows 37 percent of area employers plan to hire.

By LAURIE WINSLOW
World Staff Writer

The hiring picture for the final three months of the year matches the upbeat assessment that local employers had given for the third quarter, according to the latest Manpower Employment Outlook Survey.

Tulsa-area employers expected to hire at a solid pace from October through December, with 37 percent of those interviewed saying they planned to take on more employees.

An additional 17 percent intended to cut their work forces, while 43 percent expected no change in staffing

levels, the survey found. The report said 3 percent were uncertain of their hiring plans.

The three-month outlook is about on par with the forecast for the third quarter. In that survey, 33 percent of the companies interviewed predicted an increase in hiring activity, and 13 percent planned decreases.

"It looks pretty favorable," said Mike Arndt, Manpower's manager for the Tulsa area.

The slight increase in hiring comes after two years of major scaling back by area companies, he said.

"Now, they're at a place where they have to add jobs," Arndt said. "They have to increase their head count to keep up with the workload."

"This is a positive thing, because it shows a back-to-back quarter slight upswing in our hiring activity in Tul-

SEE HIRE E-2

City job fair Sept. 22

By DEBBIE BLOSSOM
World Staff Writer

For the fourth straight year, the city of Tulsa will help sponsor a job fair to link some of the area's largest companies with an even bigger list of employment seekers.

With the theme "Keeping Tulsa Strong," this year's Diversity Job Fair on Sept. 22 at the Convention Center downtown offers the chance to get interviews, said Meredith Holman, senior human resources analyst for the city.

Mayor Bill LaFortune has proclaimed the day Diversity Day,

Holman said, to draw attention to Tulsa's cultural mix and the need to match employers with employees.

Tulsa has lost approximately 19,000 jobs in the past two years, a majority of those in 2002.

"It's been a tough year," Holman said. "We've made a big effort to find out which companies are hiring and get them to the job fair."

Companies represented at the event are from the retail, manufacturing, construction, communications, medical and government sec-

SEE JOBS E-2

Wireless bar codes



Bloomberg News

Cashier Monnika Muhammad rings up customer purchases in the electronics department at a Wal-Mart store in Los Angeles. A symposium this week will herald the arrival of new technology which will help companies such as Wal-Mart better track its inventory.

Corporate giants embrace 'smart tags'

By JUSTIN POPE
Associated Press

Backers of new radio-tagged product codes, a kind of souped-up wireless bar code, are heralding this as the week the technology finally moves off the drawing board and into the physical world.

Unlike traditional bar codes, "Radio Frequency Identification" tags don't need to pass under a laser reader. They're already commonly

used by drivers with "speed passes" at toll booths, U.S. military quartermasters and ranchers tracking livestock from "farm to fork."

But the MIT lab developing the technology and sponsors including Wal-Mart, Gillette and Procter & Gamble are calling a symposium this week in Chicago the beginning of the next step: embedding the chips in shipping crates to help big companies save billions

by tracking their products from factory to warehouse to storeroom.

For now, the focus is on logistics: making sure there's enough product to fill the shelves but not so much as to clog supply lines or waste away in warehouses. Using RFID to track individual products all the way to the checkout line is considered further down the road,

SEE TAGS E-2

OG&E to seek rate hike

▶ The utility said monthly bills might not go up because of new efficiencies.

FROM STAFF REPORTS

OG&E Electric Services told the Oklahoma Corporation Commission on Monday that it plans to file a detailed proposal in November under which "residential customers and some very large electric consumers would likely see an increase in their base electric rates."

The rate plan would reduce rates for schools and more than 80,000 small businesses and nonprofit organizations, the Oklahoma City-based utility said.

The company also said it plans to increase investment in its electric system "to ensure its continued reliability."

"The blackout in the Northeast highlighted the critical nature of electric reliability," OG&E spokesman Brian Alford said in a news release. "Reliability is something in which we must continually invest."

Alford added that the plan also would allow the company to recover the costs associated with the purchase of a new power plant near Oklahoma City that would help meet customers' growing demand for electricity.

"We believe that we have found an innovative way to change our base rates to purchase the efficient new power plant, invest in the reliability of our electric system, and address rising business costs, all without significantly impacting most customers' monthly electric bills," Alford stated.

"Higher base rates don't necessarily mean higher monthly bills," he said. "While base rates may increase for some customers, savings made possible by the efficiency of the new power plant and the expiration of an expensive, federally mandated power contract

SEE OG&E E-2

Industrial activity modest

▶ Productivity barely rose in August following robust output in July.

By JEANNINE AVERSA
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Industrial production edged up by just 0.1 percent in August, restrained by weakness in manufacturing, especially for big-ticket goods such as automobiles.

The Federal Reserve said Monday the small increase in industrial activity came after a revised 0.7 percent advance in July, even stronger than the 0.5 percent first reported. August's performance, however, was weaker than the 0.3 percent increase that economists were expecting.

At factories, production dipped by 0.1 percent in August following three straight months of gains. The decline

partly reflected a drop in the production of costly manufactured "durable" goods, expected to last at least three years, the Fed said.

Output of automobiles and parts, which declined by 2.6 percent in August, "was reduced in part by the power outage that affected several states and some startup problems associated with model changeovers," the Fed said.

"It seems clear the rebound in manufacturing is going to be a struggle," said Daniel Meckstroth, chief economist for the Manufacturers Alliance/MAPI, a business research group.

Production at utilities, however, rose 1.9 percent in August, following a 3.8 percent increase in July. At mines, output increased 0.2 percent last month, down from a 0.3 percent gain.

In a second report, stocks of unsold goods at the nation's businesses

inched down by 0.1 percent in July as sales increased by the largest amount in four months, a sign that companies remain wary of increasing inventories amid other indications of economic strength.

Businesses' sales rose by 1.6 percent in July, the biggest increase since March, the Commerce Department said Monday. In June, inventories were flat as sales went up by a solid 1.3 percent. The figures suggest that companies — wanting profits to improve and unsure of the vigor of the anticipated rebound in the second half of this year — are keeping stocks lean.

At July's sales pace, it would take businesses 1.37 months to exhaust their supplies. That inventory-to-sales ratio of 1.37 months in July was a record low and was down from 1.39 months in June.

SEE OUTPUT E-2



Bloomberg News

Steve McDonald works on the fuselage at the Boeing F/A-18 Super Hornet assembly plant Monday in St. Louis, Mo. Factory production rose just 0.1 percent in August.