

March Madness is in full swing even though it is now April. The University of Kentucky Wildcats have advanced to the Final Four. By this time next week we'll all know whether there is another national champion from Lexington KY.

We are currently in one of our busiest periods in recent months. We're so busy that many of our current jobs are being staffed with help from various managers. Larry Drake and Adam Graves covered a job in Barrow Alaska this week. Here's Adam "breaking the ice". I just learned that Larry got a pretty severe case of the flu while on this project and he is currently home sick.



We have a Hotwork crew that has been onsite in Guatemala since early February. Enrique, Hugo, Ivan and Ricardo have been assisting on this furnace start up off and on since last September. We are hopeful that this one is near completion as we have been holding at 800C for some time.

As always, there have been emergency projects that tend to disrupt our best laid plans. We mobilized a large crew on short notice to dryout a 700' long duct in Billings MT after it had been inadvertently filled with water. We had both steel and glass emergencies when furnaces failed. In one case, we had a glass furnace where we were struggling to plan a safe way to drain it for a planned outage next year. After a couple of site visits and discussions with the client, it went ahead and drained itself into the basement last month.

Irish and I attended a refractories conference in St. Louis last week. One of the conference topics was binder systems and specifically the "solgel" or "nano" binder products. This is a relatively new family of refractories that have very high permeability and therefore can be dried out at very fast rates. It will be

interesting to see whether these products live up to the current hype or whether an “Achilles Heel” develops. Irish presented a paper on the history of Hotwork and various dryout related issues. The paper is now posted in the login area of the website so please take a look. Over 200 technical people attended the conference which is a pretty good indication that the industry is in the best shape in years.

We’re only a couple of weeks away from the annual Hotbels Glass Industry conference here in Lexington. This conference is hosted by Hotwork in cooperation with Fosbel. Some of our clients are in the middle of major furnace outages so we’ll probably be missing a few of them. As usual, we expect it to be a very beneficial event for all of the participants.

Looking forward, we have landed a significant submerged arc furnace job in Kazakhstan. The HPI job that we’ve been working on in China has taken a pause but expects to be back underway this summer. We have a number of other large domestic and international project quotes pending so I am optimistic that we can avoid the extreme summer slowdown that we experienced last year.

We are continuing to invest in new equipment. We recently purchased 30 more new fans. They should be entering service soon. We currently have a purchase order out for four additional digital recorders. Chris Straw has been working on a new high pressure regulator skid. The implementation of the new QD’s with the automatic shutoff flapper is progressing.

Most people should have received their new uniforms. These make Hotwork pretty obvious on most sites but also convey a professional and safety conscious appearance. It is important that we keep the awareness up on safety as we work thru these busy times and long duration projects. Thanks for everyone’s efforts to safely support these high operating levels and emergency responses.

Tom