

As seen in June 2015

PALLET ENTERPRISE

The Power of Partnership

PRS Group and CAPE Create Joint Venture to Serve North American and Global Customers

By Chaille Brindley



CAPE machinery combines heavy duty equipment with the latest technology in terms of drive motion, electronics and robotics.

Two leading suppliers of pallet equipment from different sides of the Atlantic Ocean are joining forces to develop a partnership that will bring new technology and machinery to both North America and Europe as well as other key regions around the globe. PRS Group, formerly known as Pallet

Repair Systems, and CAPE (Kaa – ae), a leading European pallet nailing machinery manufacturer, are starting to represent each other's complementary product lines in their respective sales territories and are collaborating on future projects to offer a complete line of both pallet manufacturing and recycling equipment.

Flying at Mach Speed – Fast Changeovers

Starting in June, PRS Group will begin offering for sale in North America, CAPE nailing machinery, which has developed a strong reputation in Europe for efficiency, flexibility and scalability at a very competitive cost. The initial focus



CAPE main factory is located close to Barcelona, in the heart of Catalonia (northeast of Spain), with 150,000 sq. ft. building where all lines are fully tested.

will be the CAPE Mach 2 designed to produce stringer pallets and can be upgraded by adding another module to produce block pallets. The Mach 2 is known for its quick changeover between designs and can produce about 2,500 pallets in an eight hour shift.

Jeff Williams, president of PRS Group, “The Mach series is a quick changeover line of machinery that fits today’s small batch run needs.” He explained that changeovers are done in 30 minutes or less with touchscreen controls, no wrenches or manual adjustments are required.

Williams added, “The unique thing about the Mach lines is that they are modular in nature. Somebody can purchase a Mach 2 line today and a year from now add a few modules and have the ability to product block pallets as well.”

If you want to see the Mach 2 in action, PRS Group will have a CAPE nailing line running in its Illinois showroom later this summer.

The Mach 2 standard layout requires



Robotics are used more frequently in the CAPE Tandem and Mach lines, saving labor and increasing productivity and efficiency.



A Mach 3 line undergoing testing at CAPE factory.

At CAPE facility, six full lines can be tested at the same time every month.

three operators. But robotics and other automation in regards to feeding lumber can allow customers to reduce that number by one or two employees. In addition to the partnership with PRS Group, CAPE is also working with Yaskawa-Nordic, a Swedish company specializing in robotics for unique pallet applications.

A key difference between the Mach 2 line and other nailing systems is the design. The Mach machines are all electrical and not hydraulic in terms of the mechanics of the system. Williams explained that this design makes the machine more robust and durable for continuous operation and long production times. He said, "A mechanical system of

a crank shaft and a cam are very reliable."

When it comes to service, PRS Group will stock factory parts and has a factory trained service technician on staff in the United States. From telephone support to field visits, the PRS technician can solve almost any problem according to Williams.

Partnership Equals Stronger Innovation

A key aspect of this new partnership is the combined equipment expertise and research and development capabilities of CAPE, PRS Group and Yaskawa-Nordic. Each company brings a key piece to the collaboration effort. CAPE is a world leader in pallet nailing systems. PRS Group has become a major North American and global supplier of pallet

Sidebar #1

CAPE Nailing Lines

Tandem Line

Two nailing heads, particularly designed for long runs of pallets. It requires a longer setup time than the Mach series between pallet design changeovers. The Tandem lines are much less expensive than the Mach line. Can produce on average 2,000-2,500 pallets per shift, either block or stringer.

Mach Line (Flexible line)

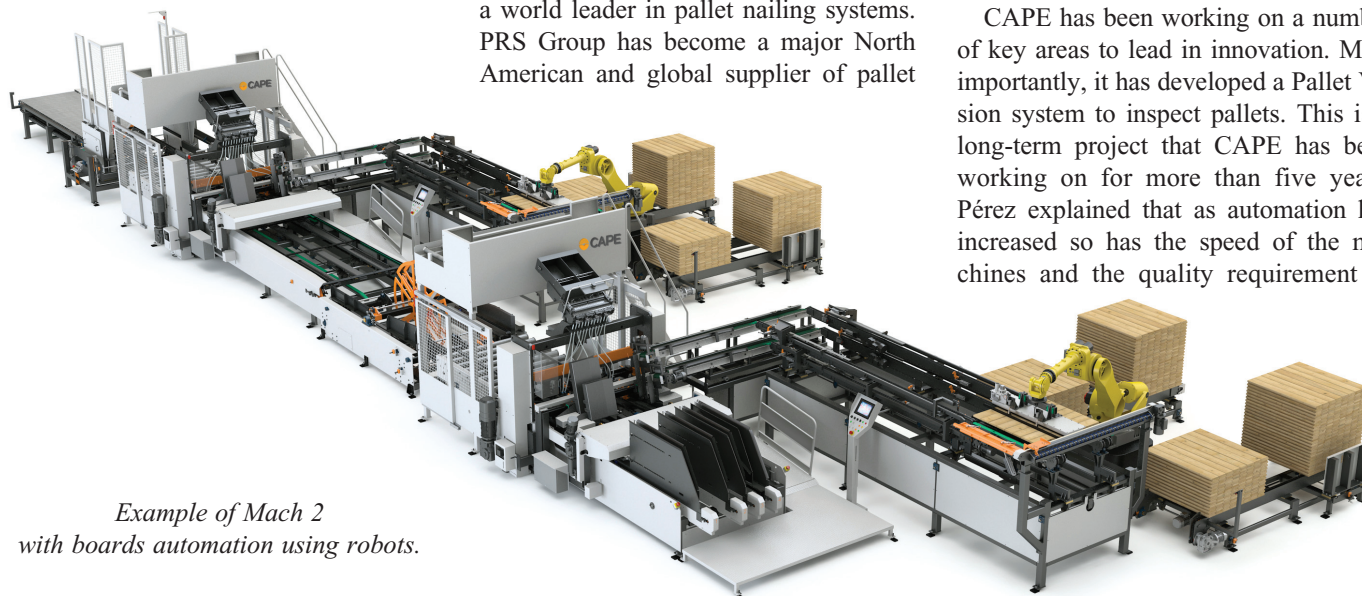
The core of this line is a deck or mat machine. Average pallet production is 2,000- 2,500 pallets per shift. The big difference is the setup which can take 30 minutes or less. No manual adjustments, everything is controlled by touch screen. Can buy modules to produce stringer and/or block pallets as well as automate lumber feeding.

repair equipment and lines. And Yaskawa-Nordic has pioneered unique robotic modules and systems for both pallet manufacturing and repair.

These three companies are combining their strengths to be able to innovate the future according to Marc Pérez, the export sales manager for CAPE. The Pérez family has owned CAPE since it began in 1967 by producing a manual pallet assembly bench.

Pérez stated, "CAPE is the integrator of these different solutions. CAPE is going to integrate PRS grading and repairing stations as well as Yaskawa-Nordic robotic solutions for the repair industry."

CAPE has been working on a number of key areas to lead in innovation. Most importantly, it has developed a Pallet Vision system to inspect pallets. This is a long-term project that CAPE has been working on for more than five years. Pérez explained that as automation has increased so has the speed of the machines and the quality requirement of



Example of Mach 2 with boards automation using robots.

pallet users. At the same time pallet companies are looking to reduce the number of workers needed on each line. He explained, "Pallet companies need to control quality even while having fewer human inspectors."

Currently, CAPE has three lines in Europe running the pallet inspection scanning technology. Pérez commented, "Our system uses a scanner that controls and identifies defects on pallets, dimensions, board spacing, different heights, knots on boards, etc."

A second version of the system is under development that will be able to identify nail defects and problems. Pérez envisions a future where these inspection systems will be used to certify pallet quality and add value.

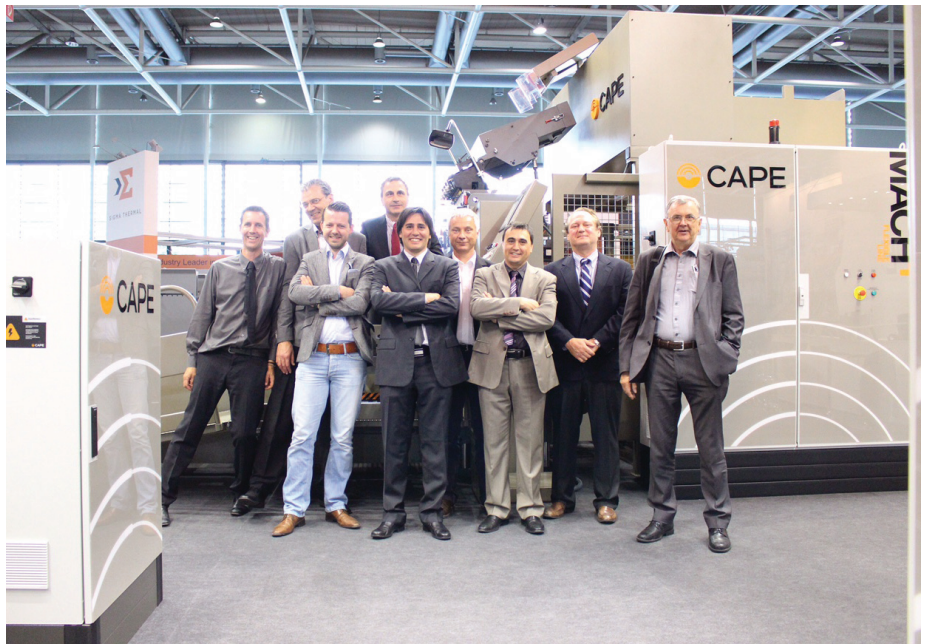
Williams added, "The Pallet Vision inspection system has a place in the States. It is not for everyone. But it might be a quality control check point on a repair line. Or it might be for an automated visual inspection on an automated sort line."

He further suggested, "If you have a higher end, very demanding customer, you may have this system to inspect pallet one last time before going to a customer."

Partnership Based on Compatibility

CAPE briefly entered the U.S. market 12 years ago and pulled out after its alliance with different company didn't work out. Pérez explained, "The situation is different than when we first entered the market. CAPE is stronger as a company, and we wanted to have the right partner."

Pérez said that he knows Jeff Williams



Some CAPE representatives and distributors were present during the last Ligna exhibition. Brothers Joan Manel and Marc from CAPE in the center, Jeff Williams from PRS Group at right corner.

and PRS has the same commitment to quality, service and reliability. And the industry is different today in the United States as labor is becoming more expensive, companies need to be able to produce a wide variety of pallets and make fast changeovers.

Pérez said, "There is a gap in the U.S. market for those with a little bit more ambition, and I think we can cover that need."

And at the same time, the European market is changing with an increased focus on pallet repair and recycling. CAPE has a limited repair line, and it will begin representing and selling PRS Group equipment in Europe and China.

Simplicity in design is a core philosophy for CAPE. A second generation company, the three brothers who run CAPE now have grown up in the industry and have done almost every aspect of their operation. Pérez commented, "We know the market and what people want the machines to be able to do, and CAPE has a reputation for producing heavy-duty equipment with significant engineering behind it." The company employs 18 engineers to develop the right solution and fit for each customer. Many of these engineers have decades of experience in automation for pallet and wood products.


Pérez said, "We are always trying to listen to customers and to implement what they suggest into our product line to

make it better."

Who is the ideal CAPE customer? Pérez explained that CAPE offers lines for companies looking to produce 1,000-1,500 per shift up to its high-speed Mach or Tandem lines capable of producing 2,500 pallets or more. CAPE can customize solutions too for companies with specialty needs, such as drilling holes in the lumber for unique designs or putting plastic covers on pallets.

Pérez proudly stated, "When it comes to versatility – we have the machine to do long runs of pallets and those to do quick changeovers. When it comes to speed, we have machines that can produce nine Europallets per minute. We also offer stringer production systems. We have designed completely automated machines that only require one operator. We have lines for specialty or big sized pallets."

Another key aspect of CAPE equipment is self-test software to identify anything that might not be working properly to allow for fast, easy maintenance and equipment fixes.

When asked why this partnership and why now, both Williams and Pérez said it was about two compatible equipment lines and company visions coming together to produce better solutions for the global pallet industry. Find out more at www.cape.es or call PRS Group at 866-546-8864 or 217-291-0009. 

Sidebar #2

CAPE Company Overview

Family-owned, second generation business. It was started in 1967 by Manel Pérez. Today, the company is run by three brothers, Joan Manel Pérez (the sales manager), Carles Pérez (purchasing manager) and Marc Pérez (export manager).

- State-of-the-art production facility in Barcelona with 150,000 sq. feet of production floor space.
- CAPE machinery and technology is already present in over 46 countries worldwide.
- Check out CAPE's new website at www.cape.es