

NEWS

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OLYMPIC STEEL REPORTS RECORD SALES AND EARNINGS FOR FIRST QUARTER OF 2004

Cleveland, Ohio -- (April 29, 2004) Olympic Steel, Inc., (Nasdaq: ZEUS), a national steel service center, today announced record financial results for the first quarter ended March 31, 2004.

Net sales for the first quarter of 2004 increased 62.8% to a record \$187.0 million from \$114.9 million for the first quarter a year ago. Tons sold increased 43.2% to a record 385 thousand from 269 thousand in the first quarter of 2003. First quarter 2004 net income was also the highest ever for the Company, totaling \$10.8 million, or \$1.12 per share, compared to a net loss of \$(479) thousand, or \$(.05) per share for last year's first quarter.

"The diligent execution of our management plans positioned us extremely well during the first quarter, when steel demand and prices increased significantly," stated Michael D. Siegal, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer. "We are very pleased with our ability to perform and grow during a period of very tight steel supply. As indicated in our fourth quarter earnings release, in anticipation of a market recovery we aggressively and intentionally increased our inventory position at the end of 2003. This allowed us to be favorably inventoried to meet our customers' significantly increasing demand for steel during the first quarter. Our 43.2% increase in shipping volumes for the first quarter far outpaced the service center industry increase of approximately 25%. The increased volume of steel processed through our assets was a significant contributor to our best ever quarterly financial results. "

"Our commercial relationships will continue to be guided by our core values of integrity, respect and financial stability, as we expect customer demand to remain strong, prices to remain elevated, and availability of steel to be tight through the second quarter. We believe we are favorably positioned in terms of inventory, equipment capacity, and working capital availability to continue performing well through the seasonally stronger second quarter," concluded Mr. Siegal.

Founded in 1954, Olympic Steel is a North American steel service center that is experienced in the specialized processing and distribution of large volumes of flat-rolled carbon and stainless steel products. Headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio, the Company operates 12 distribution and processing facilities and participates in two joint ventures in Michigan. For further information about Olympic Steel, Inc., visit the Company's web site at <http://www.olysteel.com>.

It is the Company's policy not to make quarterly or annual sales or earnings projections for external use and not to endorse any analyst's sales or earnings estimates. Forward-looking statements in this release are made pursuant to the safe harbor provisions of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995.

Such forward-looking statements are subject to certain risks and uncertainties that could cause actual results to differ materially from those projected. Readers are cautioned not to place undue reliance on these forward-looking statements that speak only as of the date hereof. Such risks and uncertainties include, but are not limited to: general business, economic and political conditions; competitive factors such as the availability and pricing of steel and fluctuations in customer demand; layoffs or work stoppages by the Company's, suppliers', or customers' personnel; equipment installation delays or malfunctions; and customer, supplier, and competitor consolidation or insolvency. Please refer to the Company's Securities and Exchange Commission filings for further information.

OLYMPICSTEEL
SELECTED FINANCIAL INFORMATION

(in thousands, except per share data and ratios)

	Three Months Ended		
	March 31,		
	2004	2003	
	(unaudited)		
<u>SUMMARY RESULTS OF OPERATIONS:</u>			
Net sales	\$187,033	\$114,880	
Operating income	18,835	379	
Income (loss) before income taxes	<u>17,495</u>	<u>(798)</u>	
Net income (loss)	<u>\$ 10,847</u>	<u>\$ (479)</u>	
Earnings per share:			
Net income (loss) per share - basic	\$ 1.12	\$ (0.05)	
Net income (loss) per share - diluted	\$ 1.09	\$ (0.05)	
	As of March 31,		December 31,
	2004	2003	2003
	(unaudited)		
<u>SUMMARY BALANCE SHEET DATA:</u>			
Accounts receivable, net	\$ 82,319	\$ 59,167	\$ 56,501
Inventories	94,739	92,435	92,775
Net property and equipment	87,787	95,331	89,782
Total assets	278,056	258,982	249,002
Current liabilities	51,562	35,666	42,574
Total debt	100,006	109,080	97,797
Shareholders' equity	123,266	115,024	112,236
Shareholders' equity per share	12.77	11.93	11.63
Debt-to-equity ratio	.81 to 1	.95 to 1	.87 to 1
	Three Months Ended		
	March 31,		
	2004	2003	
	(unaudited)		
<u>OTHER DATA:</u>			
Capital expenditures	107	95	
EBITDA (a)	21,206	2,466	

(a) Defined as operating income plus depreciation plus asset impairment charge.

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OLYMPICSTEEL
RESULTS OF OPERATIONS

(in thousands, except per share and tonnage data)

	Three Months Ended March 31,			
	2004	(unaudited)		2003
Tons sold				
Direct	330,095		229,501	
Toll	55,049		39,434	
	385,144		268,935	
% change	43.2%		(13.0%)	
Net sales	\$ 187,033		\$ 114,880	
% change	62.8%		4.2%	
Cost of materials sold	133,546		90,987	
Gross profit	53,487	28.6%	23,893	20.8%
Operating expenses				
Warehouse and processing	10,884	5.8%	7,988	7.0%
Administrative and general	9,677	5.2%	5,808	5.1%
Distribution	5,071	2.7%	3,764	3.3%
Selling	5,316	2.8%	2,754	2.4%
Occupancy	1,333	0.7%	1,113	1.0%
Depreciation	2,071	1.1%	2,087	1.8%
Asset impairment charge	300	0.2%	-	0.0%
Total operating expenses	34,652	18.5%	23,514	20.5%
Operating income	18,835	10.1%	379	0.3%
Income (loss) from joint ventures	78		(29)	
Income before financing costs and income taxes	18,913		350	
Interest and other expense on debt	1,418	0.8%	1,148	1.0%
Income (loss) before income taxes	17,495	9.4%	(798)	(0.7%)
Income tax benefit (provision)	(6,648)	38.0%	319	40.0%
Net income (loss)	\$ 10,847		\$ (479)	
Earnings per share:				
Net income (loss) per share - basic	\$ 1.12		\$ (0.05)	
Weighted average shares outstanding - basic	9,675		9,644	
Net income (loss) per share - diluted	\$ 1.09		\$ (0.05)	
Weighted average shares outstanding - diluted	9,959		9,644	

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