Tributes paid to industry’s ‘shining light’

As the industry remembers Steve Walton’s contribution to the offshore community, family, friends and colleagues paid tribute to a man “full of laughter”.

Steve served faithfully as an elected safety rep for more than 20 years before his sudden death on November 19th last year at the age of 54. The dedicated offshore worker suffered a heart attack at home.

His widow, Marie said: “He absolutely loved his work. Not many people can say that. He was with Wood Group PSN for most of his career. For the past few years he’s been a storeman offshore. His work with Step Change in Safety was his passion. He gave speeches for Step Change, which was good because he loved to talk!”

In one of those speeches, Steve coined the phrase the ‘unrecognised asset’ for safety representatives. Steve understood the importance of people in the safety equation and worked tirelessly to see that recognised.

His wife of 24 years added: “When Steve was home in Great Ayton he would spend hours and hours in his study working on his passion, health and safety. He loved the lads he worked with offshore and wanted to do everything he could to make their job just that little bit safer.

“When the men from Piper Alpha died, I remember Steve spending time in his study to learn all of their names. He spent so much time offshore and worked on so many rigs it was important for him to do that.”

Former colleague and close friend, Jake Molloy, praised Steve for his selfless sacrifice to safety.

He said: “Many workers owe this man a great deal for the impact he’s had through the years. One of his big achievements in the mid 90s was retaining a SAR (search and rescue) facility in the East Shetland basin.”

Return to Base - figures revealed

What does ‘going tech’ actually mean?

Understandably there are lots of rumours and concern about an aircraft ‘going tech’ and having to return to base (RTB). Tea Shack News reports on the reasons for RTBs and how often they actually happen.

The Helicopter Safety Steering Group (HSSG) agreed with the three major helicopter operators, Bristow, Bond and CHC, that weekly RTB reports would be provided. This has allowed the HSSG to collate all the RTBs for 2013.

Reports submitted to Step Change in Safety detail there were less than four RTBs a week in 2013 with about 500 flights taking off every week.
**STEPA SHACK NEWS**

Published by:
Step Change in Safety and HSE.

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**“Steve still had a great deal more to give” continued**

During his career, Steve played a pivotal role in countless safety measures, including lifting systems, emergency response exercises, maintenance processes and asset integrity issues. He also pushed for NEBOSH (The National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health) training for safety reps, was influential in developing the final standard of the new SI 971 courses and played a critical part in the Piper25 conference last year.

Jake added: “Steve is a great loss to the industry because I believe he still had a great deal more to give. With a couple of dozen more people like Steve wed be working in a different place today, certainly a safer place. We owe Steve a lot and we should remember him today because he achieved what we all strive for – he made a difference.”

Step Change in Safety team leader Les Linklater also paid tribute to his friend and colleague. He said: “Steve was a shining light in the offshore industry. He had this amazing ability to cut through complicated situations with his sharp Yorkshire wit. Steve had a talent of seeing and understanding both sides of any challenge. That’s what made him such an integral part of Step Change. He acted as a bridge between opposing sides and he did so with the utmost integrity.

“When I had the challenge of finding four people from the industry to read out the names of those who died in the Piper Alpha tragedy at the rededication ceremony, Steve was the first name I thought of.”

For Marie, it’s about coming to terms with life without Steve. For now she remembers the man who never missed a Times crossword and doted on their four grandchildren.

She said: “Steve was very much a family man. He adored his grandchildren. He used to spend hours playing with them. They would make little origami figures and Steve would write the grandchildren’s names on each of the figures before floating them on boards down the river together.”

**Sunday evening safety meetings will never be the same again**

A new safety tool has been launched to help tackle hydrocarbon releases.

Step Change in Safety has created a programme aimed at examining the various issues which are critical in reducing the unplanned releases.

Joined-up Thinking packs consist of a short video and PowerPoint file which can be adapted to suit a company or worksite. They can be presented at onshore and offshore safety meetings.

Joined-up Thinking work group member Gary Begg said the programme was designed to encourage engagement and fuel the conversation around preventing unwanted hydrocarbon releases.

“The packs are designed to get people engaged,” he said.

“We want to make them challenge what they do, what their peers do and indeed what their organisation does. Some say a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. But actually sometimes a little knowledge can prevent a dangerous thing.”

Colin Campbell who uses the packs within Marathon Oil echoed Gary, insisting the packs will get people talking.

“I think this is a good kick-off which will generate discussion. It will allow us to focus on set topics related to hydrocarbon releases and compare against our present plant and equipment issues going forward.”

The educational packs examine an array of topics including Major Accident Hazards and Safety Critical Elements, Small Bore Tubing, Reporting and Learning Lessons, Pipework and Control of Work and Joints.

“The grandchildren still ask where their Grandad Banana is.”

Steve once came home in a bright yellow jacket and baby Reese said he looked like a banana. The name just stuck. We told them Grandad is on the moon. Now when the moon comes out Reese will shout hello to his Grandad Banana and show him what new toy he has or just talk to him.

“I still can’t believe he’s gone. He was the centre of the whole family. I still expect him to walk back in the door. If he’s remembered for anything I hope it’s for how loving he was. He was full of life and laughter. He was one of those people who just made you feel good.”

Steve is survived by his wife Marie, mum Kendra, dad David, brother Nigel, stepdaughter Donna, stepson Jason and grandchildren Jake, Romani, Damon and Reese.
Derek Whatling has more than 50 years’ experience in the aviation industry. The former pilot is currently heavily involved with the HSSG as a representative of the British Airline Pilots Association (BALPA).

“It’s gone tech is something I’ve heard many times during my career,” Derek said.

Derek spent 20 years flying in the RAF before joining Bristow Helicopters in 1984. His first four years were spent flying helicopters based offshore in the Brent field before moving to Aberdeen to fly Super Pumas. He retired two years ago as one of two Air Accident Investigators for the Bristow group.

Derek said: “There have been various reports in the media around helicopters which have returned to base and for those who are not familiar with aviation it can be a scary thing to read. I can understand friends and families of those who travel offshore getting quite frightened when they read about ‘avionics not working’ or ‘engine chip warning lights’ but in reality, most are minor issues which can be dealt with in a minor way.”

From the reports submitted to the HSSG, the main cause for a RTB was minor electrical problems. These can encompass everything from the weather radar system not working properly, irregularities with the pilot’s headset or, quite simply, the cabin lights not coming on.

A total of 21% of RTBs are due to minor irregularities which include engine whistling noise and water ingress. The vast majority for RTBs are for minor issues but the precautionary nature of them means that a bigger, more significant problem can be identified and eliminated and a potential safety issue prevented.

Most fixed wing flights are between one airport and another where aircraft engineers are available at both ends. However there are no aircraft engineers on installations offshore so a helicopter flying there must return to its base with even the most minor fault where it can be checked out by a suitably qualified engineer. If the helicopter with a fault was to continue to the installation, it would not be allowed to take off again and an engineer would have to be flown out causing disruption and more delays to everyone concerned.

Aviation is still the safest method of transport as recognised by the UK Department for Transport.

For more information, download a RTB Factsheet from the Step Change in Safety website.

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WEST Launch

A new industry engagement team has been launched to support the offshore workforce.

Step Change in Safety and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have teamed up to form the Workforce Engagement Support Team (WEST).

The new steering group reflects better practice.

Step Change in Safety Team Leader, Les Linklater, said: “WEST is an amalgamation of Step Change's Workforce Engagement Group (WEG) and the HSE’s Workforce Involvement Group (WIG). The two groups came together to plan and run the extremely successful Workforce Involvement Day at the Piper25 conference last year.

“We realised we had these two very similar groups aiming for the same goal but working independently from each other. Part of safety is simplification and that’s exactly what we did.

“By combining the two organisations and each group’s strengths we’re simplifying the process. The end goal remains the same. We want to actively and routinely engage with the onshore and offshore workforce as we strive to become the safest oil province in the world.”

Susan Mackenzie, Head of HSE's Energy Division said “Lots of things need to change to make sure we get safety right offshore and ensuring workers are united to improve safety has been one of my top priorities. I very much welcome the setting up of WEST. I am personally committed to making sure it works to improve safety offshore.”
Step Change working for you

Step Change in Safety works with industry experts, the HSE and unions to produce documents and events which are free to download and attend. It has the vision of making the UK the safest place to work in the oil and gas industry and it aims to do that through keeping you informed of safety issues and getting everyone involved in the safety effort. Here is what the groups have been up to recently:

Human Factors Group Update

’Human factors’ is about explaining how human behaviour at all levels of an organisation can cause accidents. Investigations from across our industry show that the behaviour of individual people through to whole organisations can cause many serious incidents.

The Human Factors group has focused on three categories: people, plant and process to develop an online self-assessment tool which offers an insight into behaviours at an individual and company level. “Human Factors: The Next Steps” allows companies and workers to identify what they need to do to improve on human factors.

The guidance explains what ‘human factors’ means and the effect - good and bad - they have on safety.

The group has also liaised with the Well Life Cycle Practices Forum (WLCPF) to generate a suite of case studies on human factors, which are available to download on the Step Change website.

Helicopter Safety Steering Group (HSSG) Update

Helicopter safety is at the forefront of workers’ minds. A recent Fatal Accident Inquiry and the events of 23rd August 2013 have fuelled safety concerns and damaged workers’ confidence in flying.

The helicopter industry and the HSSG are in action to address safety concerns. Those involved are committed to improving standards and workforce confidence in offshore air travel.

Asset Integrity Steering Group Update

The elimination of hydrocarbon releases is the primary focus of the Asset Integrity Steering Group. A culture has to be built whereby hydrocarbon releases are not accepted as ‘just something that happens offshore’. It is vital to ensure that major accident hazards are understood in every organisation and that their elimination or control is part of everyday business. One way this can happen is by encouraging companies to share their best practices and lessons learned from incidents and near misses.

In 2010, the AISG set a three-year target to reduce hydrocarbon releases by 50%. In 2013, industry achieved a 49% reduction. Despite narrowly missing its target, the AISG agreed to implement a further 50% reduction challenge. This has been coupled with a commitment to work alongside industry and HSE to improve the use of Step Change reporting database. This will help the workforce better understand the causes behind hydrocarbon releases that do occur and prevent similar issues in the future.

Competence

Getting the right mix of training, skills and behaviour at a worksite to enable workers to identify hazards and manage risks can be a challenge. This is what the Step Change Competence Steering Group is trying to achieve.

The group has worked closely with OPITO and ECITB to develop guidance, standards and support for workers offshore and onshore.

A subgroup of the competence steering group has been developing a document to give a high-level overview of what a competency management system should look like.

A Lifting Task Group has reviewed and are updating the guidelines for Lifting and Mechanical Handling which continue to be an area of risk to workers.

A third group is working with OPITO to review the effectiveness of the MIST standard. It also aims to update workers’ understanding of key safety principles.

Elected to make a difference: ESR, Bob Egan

Safety meetings are an important part of work for an elected safety rep. On Maersk’s GP3 both shifts have a meeting with up to 20 workers attending from six or seven different employers. The range of companies, ages and roles represented at each meeting allows everyone to learn from others’ experiences and areas of expertise.

Fundamental to our meetings is the absence of senior management which allows a laid back atmosphere.

The agenda for our meetings is always kept simple; feedback on the previous meeting’s minutes, sharing information from Maersk and contracting companies, feedback and information from onshore meetings and updates on groups such as Step Change and its Helicopter Safety Steering Group (HSSG). Our meetings are an open forum to raise any issues from procedures, planning of jobs and doing jobs. We all have opinions on how these can be improved and ideas to help us to be Incident Free. Every meeting ends with any other business (AOB) which opens the meeting to any kind of safety concern or learning.

There are many good ideas which have come from safety meetings that make a difference to everyday life offshore. But the most important thing is that the team has a relaxed and open forum and everyone feels able and encouraged to contribute to improving safety on board.
SIZE AND SHAPE

What are the chances of two offshore workers being able to pass one another in a narrow corridor?

That’s one of the questions that Robert Gordon University and Oil & Gas UK’s size and shape study is trying to answer.

The study has taken a critical step forward. Robert Ledingham of Robert Gordon University and Moira Lamb of Oil & Gas UK spent a week offshore measuring the workforce last month. This is the first real look at how the offshore workforce has changed size and shape in more than 20 years. The study aims to inform the design of future offshore infrastructure and equipment with the aim of improving ergonomic safety.

Robert said: “Examination of existing weight data shows a 19% increase between 1985 and 2009, when the mean weight had risen to 90.9 kg. The questions remain – how much extra space is required by people who are nearly one fifth heavier than a generation ago and how much extra space is required when wearing the survival suit and re-breather?”

This is the second time the size of offshore workers has been measured. In the mid-1980s, the Robert Gordon Institute of Technology measured the size and shape of 419 male offshore workers while they attended survival school.

Now, in conjunction with Oil & Gas UK, the Technology Strategy board and other stakeholders, Robert Gordon University is repeating the study on 600 workers across seven weight categories using portable 3D scanning technology to accurately quantify the current body size of offshore workers.

Robert added: “Because only the weight of offshore workers has been collected since the 1980s, the current survey is long overdue and could shed some important light on the amount of living and working space which is provided for offshore workers.”

The massive undertaking measures individuals in three postures and two clothing options – form-fitting clothing (cycling shorts) and a survival suit and re-breather.

The study, which is still in its infancy, has already yielded some interesting finds according to Robert.

He said: “Based on a sample of 44 university volunteers across a wide range of sizes, the scanners can map maximum and minimal dimensions to establish critical space clearance. For example, all can pass one another without touching in a one metre wide corridor if they turn side-on. However, in a space just 80 cm wide, while they can all pass one another in form-fitting clothing, when wearing the survival suit the probability of passing approaches zero.

“By having an accurate picture of workers’ body size and shape, infrastructure ‘pinch points’ can be identified and size-related risks for emergency managed. University staff and students, despite being the same species as offshore workers, might not be typical of them, so we need to be cautious about any inference about size until the study’s full findings are known.”

The study’s full findings are due to be published by the end of 2014.

Union Opinion

Jake Molloy

Oil and gas workers have a vital role to play in safety improvement – history demonstrates this. Looking at past safety initiatives and inspection programmes will plainly show that safety agendas were being driven by the workforce.

In 1999 workers complained about failure to comply with recommendations made in Lord Cullen’s Piper Alpha Inquiry. Their complaints were around safety critical maintenance and hydrocarbon leaks and led to an initiative to reduce hydrocarbon releases.

Focus then switched to the mechanisation of drilling operations, due to the number of drilling and lifting injuries. Another initiative followed which led to more improvements. Similar patterns occurred with asset integrity, maintenance backlogs and ageing infrastructure.

Step Change in Safety is vital in maintaining and improving overall performance by engaging workers across the industry. The industry can only achieve its goals if safety critical elements are maintained properly and performance standards are met. This is where workers have a crucial role to play.

The North Sea is going through a transition period which involves changes to the HSE. So the workforce must play their part and act as a constant source of safety. They pay the ultimate price if fear or ignorance stops them from challenging or questioning bad practice. The newly formed Workforce Engagement Support Team (WEST) aims to support them in this.
Nikki Morris has passion.
She’s passionate about her roller derby team, her career, but most of all she’s passionate about safety.
And as a Step Change in Safety Focal Point she’s made it her aim to share that passion with others.
The ConocoPhillips HSE advisor said: “My involvement and support with Step Change in Safety early in my career led to me being appointed as Focal Point and I try to help out as much as I can.
“Focal Points have such an important role to play in Step Change in helping align our organisations but this only possible if we have the right people in the seat. It needs to be someone that is passionate about facilitating change or willing to take the time to explain to someone what this is all about and how they can support it.”
Nikki, who previously worked as an HSE Improvements Advisor for Petrofac, stressed engagement was critical to Step Change’s success.
“Being involved in something like this is a great way to network,” she said. “Every event and meeting I go to is a chance to catch up and share ideas and stories with colleagues from across the industry.
“I especially like to catch up with those that work offshore. There’s never really a right time to meet them so these events work really well!”
Why are you passionate about safety? This is only a hard question because I think it’s difficult to understand why someone wouldn’t be! I know that makes me sound like a H&S geek but we need to look out for each other and keep each other safe. The consequences and ripple effect of an incident can be so awful – I don’t want people to go through the unnecessary, avoidable heartache, frustration, anger or fear.
What’s the best advice you’ve ever been given? Be true to yourself 100%. If it’s something you believe in you have to stand up for it and fight for it.
What do you do in your spare time? I’m not sure I know what that is! I am quite heavily involved in Aberdeen’s only roller derby league (Granite City Roller Girls). I also try and spend some time playing my bass – although a bit rusty now!
What are you reading right now? Current reads are the roller derby rules and any papers that are safety leadership and risk perception related (my attempt at preparing to start my MSc!).
What’s your favourite TV programme? There’s so many good things started just now. I’m very excited for Arrow. I also love Modern Family and The Middle. Clearly any ‘depth’ I have is reserved for my passion for safety, not mind-numbing TV programmes.

The UK Oil and Gas Industry Safety Awards
The UK Oil and Gas Industry Safety Awards celebrate the achievements and ideas of teams and companies who go beyond the call of duty to ensure a safer offshore environment. This year’s deserving winners will be announced on Wednesday 30th April 2014. A new award has been added this year – “The Health Award” for a demonstrable positive effect on the workforce by an individual, team or company that has taken steps to actively improve the health of its workforce.

Safety Leadership: Kent Lanier: When Kent started his post as Rig Manager of the Rowan Gorilla VII, he inherited a high number of reported high potential incidents and poor culture.

Comment from Susan Mackenzie (HSE)
I was delighted to attend Total E&P UK’s 9th annual SHE Awards ceremony. I believe that recognising those who go that extra mile to promote excellent health and safety is very important in building a strong safety culture. TEP UK’s awards recognise leadership and innovation as well as safety, health and environmental aspects of work. The diversity of award categories, nominations and companies involved reinforces that safety is something that everyone has a responsibility for every day. One thing I liked in particular was the number of award winners who said in their speech “I’m so surprised, this is just what I do every day for my job”. I think this indicates that safety is becoming a natural and automatic part of how people do their jobs. It was great to see TEP UK celebrating workforce engagement.

Continued >
Elgin - what have we learned?

It’s been nearly two years since the Elgin platform dominated headlines. Tea Shack news caught up with Total E&P UK Managing Director Philippe Guys about the lessons learned since the incident broke. Here’s what he had to say:

“After any serious incident, it’s critical that lessons are learned and shared across the industry. After the Elgin leak, we updated the Safety Case to prevent a similar occurrence. We also engaged with the Safety Representatives to ensure the workforce was fully informed and engaged as to what those lessons were, and what actual changes had been made to the Safety Case and associated procedures.

Let’s start at the beginning.

On 25th March 2012, the G4 well on the Elgin Well Head Platform suffered an uncontrolled release of hydrocarbons to the atmosphere. This prompted a full evacuation from the Elgin installation and an adjacent drilling rig, the Rowan Viking. The facilities were successfully evacuated and all the platform’s safety systems functioned correctly. The platform was efficiently shutdown and depressurised.

The efficiency of the evacuation and the shutdown underlined the importance of having all the appropriate emergency systems, processes and procedures and ensuring that the workforce is properly trained and well-drilled in emergency response. It also demonstrated the value of having a rigorous maintenance programme for all Safety Critical Equipment on an installation.

For me the first lesson learned was the importance of training our people properly and maintaining our working tools at all times.

Total thoroughly investigated the incident. This investigation showed the incident to be the result of a sequence of events which would have been very difficult to predict individually, and even more unlikely to predict in combination.

The findings of the investigation identified the following:

• The 10¾” casing failed at lower than the design pressure. A form of corrosion had occurred because of conditions unique to the G4 well. The cause was the combination of casing thread dope and calcium bromide brine used in that well.

• Over the years, a gradual change in the properties of the rock strata through which the well was drilled led to increased gas activity in the reservoir.

• Intervention work to kill G4 after an initial failure of the 10¾” casing was unable to stop over-pressurisation of the C annulus occurring – which subsequently led to a release of hydrocarbons to the atmosphere.

Following submission of the revised Safety Case to the HSE for formal assessment, Total’s senior management teams made numerous presentations to the workforce. This highlighted the changes that had been made to the Safety Case to prevent this happening in the future and also provided a forum for them to ask questions and give feedback.

One of the key recommendations and learnings from the investigation was to review well integrity criteria and to update details on all HP/HT wells and their management. We then had to determine which wells met the new criteria and could be brought back into production, and which wells would need to be abandoned.

At the time of G4 leak, of the 19 Elgin and Franklin wells, 12 were in production. Seven have since been shut and only three meet our new well integrity criteria and have been restarted. Some wells are being evaluated to determine if they could return to production in the future and others have been confirmed as requiring abandonment. It is expected that this will require rigs at both the Elgin and Franklin locations for two to three years.

Ultimately, I believe the follow-up to the G4 incident and the dissemination of lessons learned is an excellent example of how the Safety Case regime is still relevant today. It’s an essential tool in demonstrating to stakeholders that all potential Major Accident Hazards have been identified, and that the risks to personnel working on these facilities are as low as reasonably practicable.

Effective workforce engagement has proved to be essential in explaining lessons learned, changes to operating procedures and critical face-to-face interaction.

Notwithstanding the fact that the incident happened, and we naturally regret that it did, I have been extremely proud of the way Total E&P UK responded. To witness, and be able to count on, the immeasurable commitment and dedication of the workforce in reacting to the incident, and then rebuilding confidence based on the lessons learned, has been an inspiration.”

Kent engaged the crew to develop a plan for improvement. ‘Safety stand-down’ sessions with the offshore crew lead to committed support, additional training, better tools and more effective systems. By 2012 reported incidents had reduced ten-fold. His approach has been repeated on every Rowan installation worldwide.

Safety Representative of the Year: Nicky Elphinstone: Nicky became a Safety Rep in 1994 and has been active in many industry groups. He was fundamental in developing and creating additional training for ESRs which is now an OPITO-accredited ESR Development Training.

Preventative Safety Action: Scott McDonald: Scott is an experienced electrician. While working for Archer, he discovered that the original equipment manufacturer’s instruction for testing the control panel’s alarms was putting electricians at risk. He and his colleagues came up with a plug-in test box which would allow alarms to be tested from outside the panel. Plans are in place for Archer to adopt similar systems across the company.

Most Promising Individual: Marc Frankin: Marc, a scaffolding charge hand, embraced health and safety to contribute towards a significant reduction of incidents on the Brent Decommissioning Project. Marc volunteered to become a safety coach and his enthusiasm resulted in an obvious improvement in the platform’s attitude to safety. George Stewart, Brent Delta OIM, said: “Marc spends a huge amount of energy looking at the way things are, deciding how they can be better and then working hard on those improvements.”

Innovation in Safety: Stork Technical Services and bSolutions: After realising there was no training standard for personnel involved in Temporary Refuge (TR) integrity testing, Stork Technical Services approached bSolutions, the commercial training arm of the Banff and Buchan College. Together they created a three-day training course which provides an industry-recognised standard for TR testing in the oil and gas industry.

Workforce Engagement: Shell UK: In December 2011, the Brent Delta Platform moved into its decommissioning phase. The Brent field had been operated by Shell UK who wished to ensure the safety of all on board through to their final decommissioning. After the implementation of a safety programme, Delta recorded its lowest Total Recordable Case Frequency (TRCF) in 27 months.

Ideas in Safety Prize: Petrofac: Following a number of incidents where Control of Work (CoW) was one of the root causes, Petrofac decided to try a new solution, rather than patch up its Permit to Work system. By using workforce engagement at all levels for workers both on and offshore, a CoW training programme which addresses the need for human factors to be acknowledged was developed. Petrofac employees have reported that they are now more focused on what should be discussed prior to work commencing.
**TEA SHACK TEASERS**

**TEAduko**

**Tea Break**

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**Lunch Break**

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**Delayed Flight**

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**Spot the Difference!**

(9 Differences)

**EVENTS Diary**

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<td>SEPTEMBER 17</td>
<td>Step Change Perspectives event (Norwich) provisional</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>NOVEMBER 26</td>
<td>Workforce Engagement Support Team (WEST) event (Aberdeen)</td>
<td></td>
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