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## **An Expanding Oakwood Empire**

By

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For more than 25 years, [Oakwood](#) has been synonymous with soccer in Connecticut, and owners Rick Derella (left) and Dave Farrell are determined to keep it that way.

The photo above was taken in the "Crossbar" (love that name!), which was constructed during a renovation last year that made the Glastonbury facility -- which has four indoor soccer fields -- an even-more impressive and appealing place to play and watch the sport.

And coming soon is a new 25-acre, three-field outdoor facility seven miles away in Portland. The Portland zoning authorities gave the project the green light in November, and ground-breaking will be in June if things go as planned.

"They are pioneers," Matt Cameron, an assistant manager, said of his bosses when I stopped by to check out Oakwood a few days ago.

Located in an office park off Hebron Avenue, Oakwood was originally an indoor tennis facility when the transformation to soccer began in 1980. Over time, the tennis courts were displaced by the soccer

fields, and longtime employees Derella and Farrell (no relation to me, by the way) became owners in 2001.

With about 300 games played indoors each week during their busy season -- which lasts from November through April -- there are clearly lots of logistical challenges. Plus, the Oakwood Soccer Club boasts about 30 premier teams during the indoor season and about 14 in the summer (a number that will rise when the Portland site is finished). And there are clinics and camps galore.

For Derella and Farrell, building their business is clearly a labor of love.

But both are renowned for their soccer expertise, and they share a passion for teaching the game as coaches and clinicians.

"We don't just throw kids out on the field and make more and more teams," Derella said.

Added Farrell: "We're trying to deal with all aspects of the game."

Back in 1980, Oakwood was one of only five indoor soccer facilities in the country. Now, there are more than 300, including 10 in Connecticut alone (although most are actually multi-use).

With the increased competition, it's nice to see Oakwood doing all it can to keep its place at the epicenter of indoor soccer.