

Towards the Goal of “No.1 in Tohoku”

Iwaki FC

The Joban region of Iwaki is known for its coalmining history, natural hot springs and the Hawaiian-themed resort, Spa Resort Hawaiians. But now this part of Iwaki is becoming the sporting hub of the city thanks to the establishment of Iwaki FC.

A new vision created from disaster

When the Tohoku region was ravaged by the destruction of the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011, the president of Dome Corp felt a strong desire to help those affected by the disaster in any way possible. However, due to the limited supply of fuel immediately after the earthquake, he decided to deliver his supplies as far as half a tank of petrol would take him before returning home. He set off on his journey one week after 3.11, and by chance that half a tank took him all the way up to Onahama.

After initially providing aid to the local residents through clothing and donations, the company eventually realised that the best way to help the recovery of the city was to provide a new avenue of employment in the area. This is what ultimately led to the establishment of the logistics centre Dome Iwaki Base in 2015. However, as momentum grew, sports were further incorporated into Dome’s vision for revitalisation. This led to the company coming up with an ambitious goal of making Iwaki “The no.1 city in Tohoku”. As a result, the new local football team Iwaki FC was established in 2016.



Iwaki’s football team: Iwaki FC

Iwaki has a football team (or soccer for our American readers) that is rapidly progressing towards one day playing in Japan’s professional competition. However, Iwaki FC’s ultimate goal is not simply joining the J1 League, but utilising sports in order to establish Iwaki as a powerhouse for the Tohoku region in terms of tourism, business and the cultivation of highly talented individuals. This mindset of urban development through sports has become a standard globally, which is why Iwaki FC has incorporated it into their sports club operations.

Now entering their fourth year since formation, the team has already achieved astonishing success on their way to climbing up Japan’s club football ranks and will play in the Tohoku League’s first division as of this year. In 2017, the team debuted in the Emperor’s Cup while they were still only a Prefecture League team and made national headlines when they achieved a massive upset victory over the J1 League team Hokkaido Consadole Sapporo by defeating them 5-2 after extra time in the second round of the tournament. Iwaki FC also attracted international attention last year when they were invited to

Hawaii, USA as one of four teams to take part in the Pacific Rim Cup. Although they didn’t achieve victory in this tournament, Iwaki’s young team of rising talents certainly provided a challenge for their professional opponents – some of whom earn seven-figure salaries.

After hearing about Iwaki FC’s rapid growth, you might find it hard to believe that nearly the entire team has a schedule that consists of training in the morning followed by work in the afternoon at the Dome Iwaki Base factory which neighbours their training facility. Iwaki FC has adopted this seemingly hard schedule for their players’ long-term career prospects as most professional sports athletes usually retire in their late-20s.

The team also contributes to the community by regularly holding sports workshops for local primary school children for free. These workshops were created in response to parents who were concerned about letting their children play outside after the nuclear disaster of 2011. This not only provides a safe environment for children to be active, but also helps in developing basic skills such as running, throwing and catching that can be applied in all sports including football.



Access

By Car: 5mins from the Joban Expressway Iwaki-Yumoto Interchange

By Train & Bus: 7mins by bus from Yumoto Station (Board the bus bound for Hawaiians or Negishi from the station, and get off at the Iwaki FC Park bus stop)

Iwaki FC Team’s Official Website: <http://iwakifc.com/>



Iwaki FC Park

Open to the general public since mid-2017, this facility is the headquarters and training grounds of Iwaki FC, located just a few minutes away from Spa Resort Hawaiians. Unlike other football club houses in Japan, Iwaki FC Park is the first one to operate as a commercial facility where visitors can shop or dine. Within the FC Park building, you can find a sports apparel store, sportscar showroom and several restaurants, including a sportsbar and café. The restaurants are located on the 3rd floor and provide outdoor terrace dining with field views of corporate-box quality, so you can enjoy watching the Iwaki FC players training or playing a home match with your coffee or meal.

Iwaki Dome Base and Iwaki FC have contributed to Iwaki’s revitalisation through sports and serve as an important symbol of modern development taking place in the city. Even if you’re not a football/soccer fan, you will surely enjoy the food and shopping facilities and find yourself following the club’s pursuit towards glory on the pitch across Japan and the rest of the globe.