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J-GREEN Sakai: Three-and-a-Half Years After Its Opening



The view looking down on J-GREEN Sakai Photo of J-GREEN Sakai:: J'S PARK GROUP

Sakai City's Soccer National Training Center, which opened on April 1, 2010, has been called "J-GREEN Sakai" since November 2010, following an August invitation for names from the public. It has been three years and eight months since its opening, and with each year the number of visitors has increased. The following is an introduction to the training center, its establishment and the facilities it offers.

The Largest Class in Size

J-GREEN Sakai, an athletics facility that boasts of being one of the largest in Japan (at approximately 87.5 acres), was built to promote sports and recreation activities such as soccer. It was opened to the public in 2010 with the aim of establishing a communication hub that would create a productive sports culture by inviting the Japanese national soccer team to use it as a training facility as well as by hosting nationwide sports competitions.

The construction funds were contributed by the Japan Football Association (JFA)(500 million yen), Osaka Prefecture (1 billion yen), Sakai City (4.1 billion yen) and Japan Sport Council (about 100 million yen). Currently the facility is run and managed by J's Park Group (the representative body is Japan Football Merchandise in Yodogawa-ku, Osaka; the affiliated bodies are Nippon Kanzai Co., Ltd., in Nishinomiya City, Hyogo and Kansai Yunibehru Co.,Ltd., in Sakai City, Osaka), which is appointed by Sakai City as a designated superintendent.

The site of the facility is located at the waterfront area of Sakai City, on what was once the site of the Osaka Gas' production plant. The center was introduced to the site when the three related parties were in total agreement: Osaka Gas was seeking an efficient use of the site; Sakai City was planning revitalization and redevelopment of the idle land; and JFA was looking for a place for training other than Fukushima J-Village and Shizuoka J-Step.

With its great advantage of having facilities of the largest scale in Japan, J-GREEN Sakai can be used not only for soccer but also for other sports, including rugby, American football, lacrosse, ground golf and ultimate (flying disc).

Operating Performance

According to Mr. Shioda, the deputy general manager of the center, J-GREEN Sakai's operating performance in terms of the number of the facility users is steadily rising, with the first year accounting for 620,000, the second year 630,000 and the third year 640,000. Those numbers include not only the soccer players but also the spectators. As for players, those under the age of 18 years and those who are 18 years or older constitute 45% and 55%, respectively.

In addition to the usage fees, the center's income consists of advertising fees from sponsors (1 million yen per year for the use of an advertisement board, subscribed by over 20 companies) and parking fees. Income from the facility's usage fee has been stable enough to generate a surplus even from the first year of the operation. Accordingly, the payment of the designated management fee (70 million yen for the first two years), which was paid to J's Park Group by Sakai City for two years, has already been abolished. Reportedly, the facility's yearly income for the third term was about 320 million yen.

The upcoming challenge is to increase the utilization ratio on weekdays, which has stagnated at 30% as compared to 90% for weekends and holidays. However, it would be difficult for working adults and college students to use the facility on weekdays. Moreover, at this point there is no regular usage of the facility, except for seven high schools that use it for their club activities. The center's next plan is to invite teams (leagues) of department stores and barber shops to use the facility.