

# 'Dome, Sweet Dome'



Photos by Gordon Woodworth

## bustles with activity

**W**hen Kevin Potter said the Adirondack Sports Complex, popularly known as "The Dome," was his second home, he wasn't kidding.

The South Glens Falls resident, a multi-sport standout in the early 1980's at South High, now has three daughters who all participate in soccer leagues at the 98,000-square-foot domed facility, located off Sherman Avenue in Queensbury.

"I am here five nights a week," Mr. Potter said. Mondays, he coaches his 11-year-old daughter Mykenzie's team. Tuesdays, he coaches 14-year-old Lauren's team. Wednesday is practice for the Under-12 squad. Thursdays, 7-year-old Sydney plays. And Fridays are practice sessions for the Under-14 team. "I only get weekends off," he said with a smile.

While Mr. Potter and his daughters and other family members might not be there on weekends, plenty of other young athletes and their parents are taking advantage of a wide variety of athletic options at the Dome, which is owned and operated by Doug and Teresa Miller and opened just after Christmas in 2005.

"Our most important period is November through March," Mr. Miller said. "We average 3,000 to 4,500 people a week coming through the door."

Under the Dome, the playing surfaces are covered with Pro Green synthetic turf, described by Mr. Miller

as "the newest generation of synthetic turf, laid down on compacted earth, with crumb rubber infill."

Mr. Miller says the Dome employs 18 full-time or part-time employees. On most weekday evenings, when kids and parents are both filing in and filing out, the walkway into the Dome resembles a shift change at a mill or a smaller-scale Grand Central Station.

"It's a busy place," Mr. Miller said. "We are getting tremendous feedback. People are very happy with it."

Besides the increasingly popular soccer leagues for kids and adults, the

### Adirondack Sports Complex — the 'Dome' — takes off

Dome also offers programs in field hockey, softball, lacrosse, baseball and softball. Tim Harrington, the Dome's director of baseball and softball, runs clinics and gives private lessons with his twin brother, Tom, and a host of instructors in batting cages, while the Dome also features a 110-yard driving range for golfers looking to keep their swings sharp in the off-season.

In addition, Lee Taft Speed Academy rents space in the facility where the former Whitehall standout works with athletes to help increase their strength, explosiveness and speed.

The Glens Falls Greenjackets have

practiced there, and some Section II softball tournament games were played there last spring when inclement weather made outdoor games impossible.

A popular part of the facility is the Dome Grill, which is "transitioning into a restaurant," said grill manager Steve Brand. It will soon offer subs, club sandwiches and pizza, he said, and the restaurant also has a beer and wine license.

### 'A lot of room to play here'

"There's a lot of room to play here," said 7-year-old Cadhan McFadden of South Glens Falls during a break from his club soccer team's practice. "We used to have to drive all the way to Malta every week."

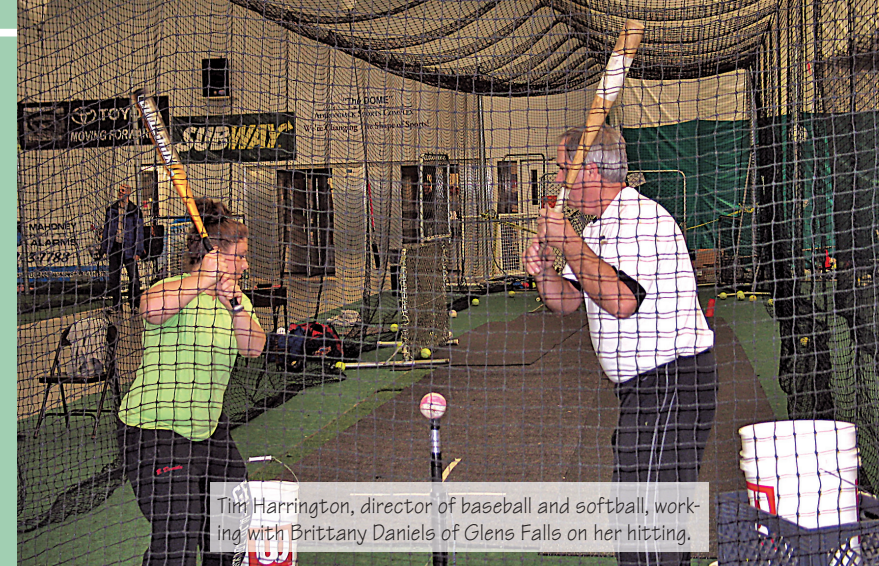
"This is closer," said his teammate Andrew Fifield. "And we can run really fast on these fields."

Mr. Potter, with three daughters playing soccer five nights a week, is especially grateful for the Queensbury facility.

"It's great to have one closer," he said. "We used to drive down to Malta twice a week. It saves on gas!"

Kristin Ricciardelli of Queensbury has two sons who participate in activities at the Dome.

"I think it's great because you don't have to worry about the weather," she said while watching her son, Matthew, play soccer. Her older son, Nicholas,



Tim Harrington, director of baseball and softball, working with Brittany Daniels of Glens Falls on her hitting.

who is 8, "did spring training camp in baseball last year and it made a big difference in his play."

"I'm hoping the Dome does well," she continued. "I'm excited about it. And it seems like a lot of my friends are up here using it, too."

Near one of the enclosed batting cages, Wendy Daniels of Glens Falls watched as her 14-year-old daughter, Brittany, hit off a tee under the watchful eye of Tim Harrington.

"The Harringtons are great," she said. "And this facility is great for all of the kids. Brittany also played indoor field hockey, and is going to play in a softball tournament in March. This gives them an opportunity to get lots of practice."

The Dome property also includes four outdoor baseball/softball fields, and four 100-yard fields for soccer, field hockey and lacrosse, totalling 380,000 square feet, or over nine acres of fields.

### The idea for a local Dome

Mr. Miller, who was a teacher and coach at Queensbury High School for 11 years, got the idea for what would become the Adirondack Sports Complex when one of his daughters was participating in sports.

"My daughter played on a travel softball team in the summer, and they were playing in Montreal and Oswego, and I thought, 'Boy, it would be nice to have something closer to home where kids could play."

"So, we did two years of market analysis and talked to almost every high school coach within an hour of Queensbury to get their ideas. Then we spent more than two years in front of the Queensbury Town Planning Board to get the property rezoned and get site plan approval. There were five public hearings, and about five years after we got the idea, we opened."

But the opening was delayed when a Thanksgiving snowstorm and some design problems forced a change in the schedule.

"We lost a half-year of revenue,"



Julie Clark, director of the Dome's sport programs, with Dome owner Doug Miller.

Mr. Miller said. "We were supposed to open the last week of August, and ended up opening the week between Christmas and New Year's in 2005."

"My vision was to provide an opportunity for people to participate in their field sports during the off-season and giving kids an opportunity they didn't have. We're doing okay. As with any new business, the first couple of years are a struggle. Had the timing of the opening been on track, after the second year we would be operating with a profit. But with the delay, that has been pushed back a little bit."

Julie Clark, a former standout athlete at Queensbury who went on to play Division I field hockey at Syracuse, is the Dome's director of sport programs. She maintains a schedule board, arranging and re-arranging color-coded cards in time slots to keep things moving smoothly. She also oversees marketing and many other duties, Mr. Miller said.

"Without Julie, we'd be lost," he said.

"Not every athlete has a Dome in their backyard," Ms. Clark said. "As a former Queensbury athlete, I was trying to find gym space or a weight room. The weight room was easy to find. Not everyone was in favor of allowing field hockey players to play on their gym floor, though. Having the turf at the Dome is an incredible benefit to the local field hockey players. The turf is fast, yet plays a little bit like grass. More field hockey players need to come and try it out!"

A sign inside the facility says, "We're



Courtney Bell of Queensbury, practicing her softball pitching.

changing the shape of sports." Mr. Miller said the entire facility is just getting started, with soccer, field hockey and softball tournaments scheduled this winter along with baseball and softball camps, the Northeast Winter Classic Dog Show on Feb. 2-4 ("The last qualifier before the Westminster Kennel Club," Mr. Miller said), the return of the Great Upstate Boat show on March 16-17, and possibly an outdoor show in early April.

The Galaxy Lacrosse girls' tournament, which Mr. Miller said brought 3,800 people and 113 club teams to the facility last July, will return in 2007.

"We are currently in negotiations for a variety of activities," Mr. Miller said, including the possibility for a large men's softball tournament.

Mr. Miller said the site plan approved by the planning board includes a possible additional dome that would have tennis courts and a four-lane track.

"If that happens, it would be at least another three years down the road," he said.

A revised site plan also allows for an additional 80 parking spaces. The facility currently has 168 spaces on site, and some neighbors in the area complained when a handful of out-of-town visitors parked near their homes during the Galaxy tournament. Mr. Miller said he had contracted to shuttle people to the games from the West Glens Falls fire station, the nearby industrial park and Morse Field.

"We never came close to filling those to capacity," he said. "People were just not following the directions given."

For information on the Dome, call 743-1086 or check the Web site at [www.adirondacksportscomplex.com](http://www.adirondacksportscomplex.com).