

## Former stars set to face future stars in Barlow Boys Soccer Alumni Game

By Richard Gregory  
STAFF WRITER

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It's been a late-summer tradition at Joel Barlow High School for nearly as long as the school has fielded a boys soccer team.

The annual Barlow boys soccer team's alumni game, which dates back more than 30 years, is set for Saturday at 7 p.m. at the Barlow stadium, when this year's Barlow squad battles a team comprised of former Falcon stars.

"It's a great way to kick off the season," said former Barlow boys soccer coach Jim Dolan. "It's a neat way to pump the young kids up." And Dolan would know.

Dolan helped start the program at Barlow in 1975 and served as its head coach for 30 years. The Falcons captured six state championships under Dolan's guidance and have continued to be one of the powerhouse high school teams in Connecticut.

Some of the players who helped establish that winning tradition at Barlow over the years will be back on the field Saturday night to rekindle their competitive fires.

Among them will be Patrick Bell and Charlie Ochman, members of Barlow's Class of 1993 who helped lead the Falcons to three straight state championships in 1990, 1991 and 1992.

"It's fun to come back and play under the lights where we played so many big games," Bell said.

The annual event is the perfect way to pass on Barlow's winning tradition to the next crop of young stars.

"I'm really looking forward to it, seeing old friends and seeing the new Barlow soccer players coming up through the ranks," Ochman said. "It's a great way to bring everyone together."

The alumni team won last year's game 3-2.

"These old guys can still play," said Dolan, who will coach the alumni team. More important than the score, however, are the memories it creates.

"It'll be great to play for Dolan again," Bell said. "It'll be nice to have him back on the field again.

"He was a tough coach -- he would get on you -- but that's what made him so good," Bell added.

Ochman agreed: "He pushed us to become better players and better people."

Paul Winstanley, who took over for Dolan six years ago and is the only other boys soccer coach the Falcons have ever known, will lead his current team. Winstanley guided the Falcons to their seventh state title in 2007; Barlow and Brookfield played to a 1-1 tie in that state championship game and were crowned co-champions.

While the Alumni Game annually celebrates Barlow's rich soccer heritage, it also pays tribute to the youth soccer program in town that produced so many talented players.

"It becomes a part of you as you go through," Bell said. "It's like a big, giant Redding soccer family."