

Kobra Formen GmbH, 08485 Lengsfeld, Germany

Ferreteria Ochoa – the largest block manufacturer in the Caribbean

Steady growth in the concrete industry is all about making the right decisions, capitalizing on opportunity, and of course, having the right equipment and dedicated employees. And while most people in the U.S. associate the concrete business with the skyscrapers, super-highways and tract homes endemic to our country, there are, of course, businesses that thrive on concrete products around the world. In the Dominican Republic, which is perhaps best known in the USA for producing major league baseball players and some of the world's finest cigars, there is a company that mirrors the passion for the entrepreneurial spirit, that reaches beyond concrete into every facet of the construction industry. That company is Ferreteria Ochoa (F.O.) of Santiago and Santo Domingo, the nation's capital.

■ Bill Hemer, Kobra Molds, LLC, USA ■

Founded in 1971 by brothers Mario Morel Ochoa and Fulgencio Morel Ochoa, F.O. began as a distributor of building materials, concrete blocks, rebar, cement, aggregates and wood products. Within a few years, the company had expanded to offer lighting, pumps, irrigation, paints (including automotive finishes), refrigeration and air conditioning, power tools, appliances, electronics and more.

It currently has the largest and most modern block factories throughout the Caribbean, including its largest center in Las Charcas, Santiago boasting 35,000 square feet – making it F.O.'s largest space dedicated to the construction business. Retail hardware operations are primarily carried out in its main facility, Ferreteria Ochoa Ave Imbert, as well as Ave Bartolome Colon Hardware Ochoa, Ferreteria Ochoa Ave Estrella Sadhala, and Ferreteria Ochoa in the industrial area of Herrera, Santo Domingo. In

addition, the company operates "8A Home" and Euroceramicas in Santo Domingo, the latter of which specializes in the marketing of ceramics in the Dominican Republic and abroad. In total, F.O. employs 2,024 people with annual gross revenues of \$195 Million.

Hardware Ochoa's motto is "First to Build", and when the decision came to produce concrete products, build they did. They started off with two Besser V3R machines which initiated production in 1960, with a block capacity of 14,000 blocks/day per machine.

Before long, the company had acquired 12 Besser V3R machines, and in 1995 F.O. had their first fully automated Besser UltraPac plant installed, capable of producing 40,000 to 50,000 blocks/day.

That was followed in 2003 by a Besser SuperPac machine with output capability of 50,000-70,000 blocks/day.

Though FO's progress has been an unmitigated success, the company hasn't been without its share of tumult and tragedy. In 1992, a devastating fire almost completely destroyed the main hardware center (which was later rebuilt) and in 2003, F.O.'s founder, Marino Ochoa, passed away unexpectedly, which left the company in the capable hands of Marino's brother, Fulgencio.

Less than five years later, on December 14th, 2007, Tropical Storm Olga caused the flood gates of the Tavera Dam to open into the Yaque River, which killed more than 20 people and put five of the company's V3R machines under water, damaging them beyond repair.

Still, F.O. soldiered on. As the demand for their products continued, in 2008 the company pulled the trigger on a completely automated Masa 9002 XL fully automated plant that can produce 100,000 to 115,000 blocks/day. In total, F.O. has the



Kobra Mold installed and ready for production



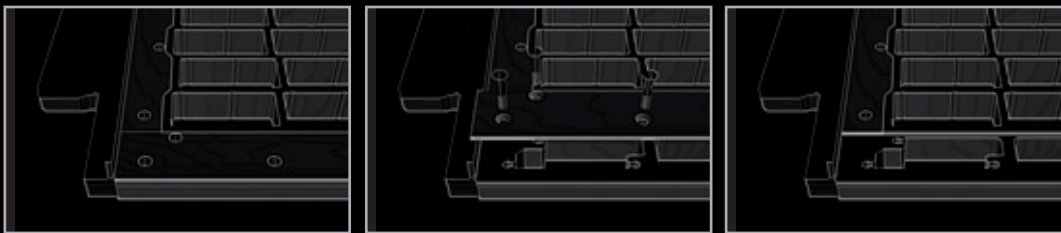
6 inch 3 cored block during production



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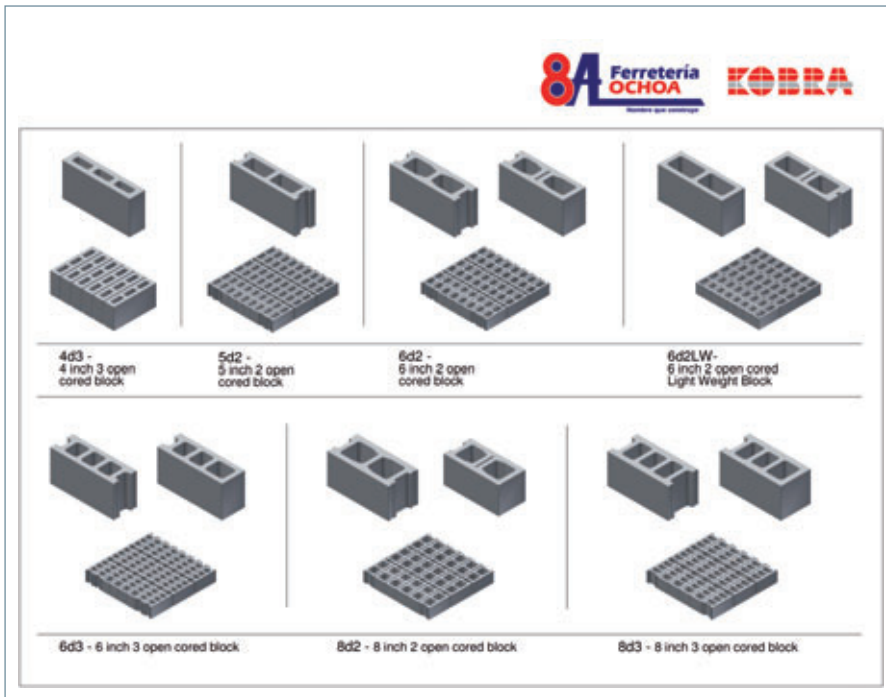
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Product overview F.O. block products supported by Kobra

capability of producing a maximum of 320,000 blocks/day, with an annual output of 70,000,000 to 90,000,000.

These include 4d3, 5d2, 6d3, 6d2, 6d2 lightweight, 8d2 and 8d3 blocks illustrated below. F.O. also has the capability of producing concrete pavers but finds themselves too busy with block production. Of course, the fact that F.O. currently owns the largest quarry in the Dominican Republic, operated just behind the main F.O. manufacturing property, doesn't hurt production capability, either. Just taking a drive through this facility/property would make anyone marvel at the volume and grand scale at which F.O. operates.

Following the catastrophic 7.0 earthquake that struck Haiti's capital of Port-au-Prince in 2010 (followed by 52 aftershocks of 4.5 magnitude or greater), F.O.'s focus of late has been on getting block, aggregates and many other building supplies to help Haiti rebuild. F.O. is also in the planning process to move some building equipment to the country of Haiti.

Despite this tragedy and a worldwide economic crisis that has left millions unemployed, F.O. reports that the construction business has remained steady in many parts of the Dominican Republic. In fact, the company has actually had trouble keeping up with demand.

So, in an effort to increase production capacity while improving quality, F.O. recently

made the decision to fit its Besser Machines as well as the Masa 9002 XL with Kobra molds. "The Kobra molds create a better finished product, and the adaptation to our Besser and Masa machines has been great," commented plant manager, Nelson Perez. "Kobra molds have also tremendously decreased our production costs because the molds are so durable. Combined with Kobra's great customer service, working with Kobra molds has been one of the best decisions Ochoa has made."

In addition to working with F.O.'s existing products, Kobra was able to help the com-



Nelson Perez, Production Manager Ferreteria OCHOA, about working together with KOBRA



Kobra Mold for Besser SuperPac machine ready for shipment to Ferreteria Ochoa

pany design alternative versions of the current blocks they produce. Further, F.O. enjoys full access to Kobra's design team as well as the manufacturing facilities located in Lengenfeld, Germany and Hudson, Wisconsin.

"Ferreteria Ochoa and Kobra is a match made in heaven," said Nelson Perez. "I feel that if we continue working with Kobra, we won't have any problems in the future."

FURTHER INFORMATION



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