

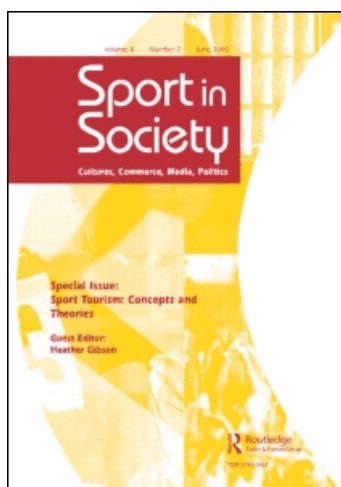
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The contribution of the Maccabiah Games to the development of sport in the State of Israel

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This essay intends to trace conceptually and historically the multifaceted nature of the Maccabiah Games from its early years. It is argued that the Games have to be seen as interdependent within the broader socio-political dimensions of what later became Israel, and in conjunction with the close relationship between the developing sport organizations and the development of the Israeli state. Moreover, it is argued that the development of sport in Israel in general, and the Maccabiah Games in particular, can only be adequately understood by presenting them in a historical context. The processes of state formation, population growth, urbanization, militarization and, most germane for the present purposes, the development of sport are not isolated but rather interdependent, and therefore all of them are of vital importance when discussing the development of the Maccabiah Games.

Introduction

A major disaster occurred at the 1997 World Maccabiah Games in Israel. As the Australian delegation was about to enter the Ramat Gan stadium for the opening ceremony of the 15th Maccabiah Games, the pedestrian bridge they were crossing collapsed, killing four athletes and injuring many others. Many of the Australian athletes have filed lawsuits against the games' organizers, the Maccabi World Union and the builders of the bridge, demanding damages for injuries, mental anguish and loss of income. Four years later the 16th Maccabiah Games were held, the first Maccabiah since 1950 with fewer participants than its predecessor. Athletes from 46 countries competed in a tense atmosphere in Israel, which was in the midst of a long terrorist campaign which began the previous year.

Using those two examples among many others from the Games, and by adopting a development approach described by Elias as 'indispensable for advances in the study of human society',¹ the aim of this study is to shed light on the process in which the Maccabiah Games, the 'Jewish Olympics' as they are often called, with its modest beginnings in 1932, made varying degrees of progress, until it finally gained international recognition.

The study intends to trace conceptually and historically the multifaceted nature of the Maccabiah Games (named after the Jewish warrior Judah Maccabee who fought against the ancient Greeks) since its early years, and argues that the games have to be seen as interdependent with the broader socio-political dimensions of what later became the State of Israel, and in conjunction with the close relationship between the developing sport organizations and the development of an Israeli state. Moreover, it is argued that the development of sport in Israel in general, and the Maccabiah Games in particular, can only

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be adequately understood by presenting them in their historical context. The processes of state formation, population growth, urbanization, militarization and, most relevant to the present purposes, the development of sport, are not isolated but rather interdependent, and therefore all of them are of importance when discussing the development of the Maccabiah Games.

The establishment of the Maccabiah Games

The first-ever Jewish gymnastic club, known as the *Israelitische Turnverein Konstantinopel* (Israelite Gymnastic Association Constantinople), was established in 1895 by German and Austrian Jews residing in Constantinople. Numerous Jewish gymnastic clubs grouped together in 1903 under the umbrella organization *Die Juedische Turnerschaft* (Jewish Gymnastic Association) with its headquarters in Berlin. The constitution of *Die Juedische Turnerschaft* permitted membership to every Jewish gymnastic club which accepted that 'the aim of the society is to foster gymnastics as a medium to build up physical fitness as part of the Jewish National Idea'.²

The continued rapid development of Jewish sports clubs (by 1913 there were 29 clubs with a total membership of 4,500) culminated at the end of First World War with the formation of the Maccabi World Union (MWU) at the Twelfth Zionist Congress in Carlsbad, Czechoslovakia in 1921. The Maccabi World Union became the parent body with which all Maccabi national and territorial organizations were to affiliate and was defined as 'a federation dedicated to the physical and moral rejuvenation of the Jews and the restoration [of] a Jewish country and nation'.³

Diaspora sports clubs affiliated with Maccabi actively promoted national consciousness and the idea of the 'Muscular Jew'. Maccabi attracted many Jewish youth who were without a clearly-defined national identity. Its sports activities served as a magnet for Diaspora youth who had been previously indifferent to the Zionist movement. The Jewish clubs also engaged in cultural activities of a general nature that refrained from advocating a particular political line. However, the Jewish clubs in the Diaspora had an obvious appeal to new members who had suffered from the deprecatory Jewish stereotype and occasional incidents of anti-Semitism in the non-Jewish clubs. The atmosphere of Jewish nationalism in the clubs brought Jewish youth closer to Zionist ideas and provided the physical image of the tough 'New Jew' as a counterweight to racial claims.⁴

The first gymnastics and sports associations were established in the Land of Israel in 1917 at the end of the Ottoman period. The 'Rishon Lezion' association, founded in Jaffa, was the first of them. Others followed, such as 'Shimshon', which was established by the Zionists Maccabi workers in Jerusalem, and Maccabi associations in various settlements. In September 1912 the Maccabi organization was founded in Tel Aviv and became the roof organization uniting all the gymnastics associations in Israel.⁵

In 1917 the British conquered the southern part of Palestine. By the end of 1918 the entire country was under its military rule. In July 1920 the British Mandate unofficially began in Palestine, and following the San Remo decisions of April 1920 the first British High Commissioner, Herbert Samuel, arrived in Israel. In July 1922 the League of Nations authorized the Mandate, which included a commitment to establish a national home for the Jewish people in the Land of Israel, and British mandatory rule in the Land of Israel commenced officially, continuing until May 1948.

The British did not leave a lasting cultural mark on the Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel; the Jewish settlement nurtured its own autonomic frameworks which were almost completely free of British influence. Because of the desire to create a new Hebrew culture,

cultural influences that could endanger the new cultural national hegemony were often totally rejected. English did not become the vernacular, and typical colonial British sports (with the exception of football) such as cricket and hockey were rarely played in Israel. The British for their part did not intervene in the activities of various institutions, including sports organizations, which, as noted, began prior to the British conquest.⁶

In 1928, Yosef Yekutieli, one of the heads of Maccabi in Israel and a founder of the Israeli Football Association presented a proposal to the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Jewish National Fund, Menachem Ussishkin: to organize a world Maccabi games (Maccabiada) and that this First Maccabiada should take place in time for the 1,800th anniversary of the Bar Kochba Rebellion.⁷ It should be noted that Maccabi at that time was trying to set up an umbrella body to represent all sports in Israel, the idea being that a route be opened for participation by athletes living in the new British Mandate of Palestine to compete in important international events. This would also act as a form of international recognition of Palestine as the Jewish National Home.

Yekutieli had definite aims for the games and envisioned:

The development of Jewish culture – both physical and spiritual, and the presentation of that culture to the Jewish people and to the whole world: the development of Jewish sport in the world and the emphasis of the idea that Jewish sporting athletes were not just part of their home countries but were part of the Jewish people as a whole, emphasizing the fact that the Land of Israel is the centre of the Jewish world; and finally, the strengthening of the Maccabi movement.⁸

Yekutieli's proposal was finally approved in June 1929 at the International Maccabi Congress in Maharish-Austreo, Czechoslovakia. Preparations began for the first Maccabiah, scheduled for 1932 in order to mark exactly 1,800 years since the beginning of the Bar Kochba rebellion. Preparations were delayed due to the outbreak of the 1929 Arab riots in Palestine, but work was resumed and the games were held on time. A new Maccabi stadium next to the Yarkon River in Tel Aviv was completed just days before the opening of the games. It contained 20,000 places in all, including 5,000 seats, and was filled to capacity for the opening ceremony which included 2,500 participants in a gymnastics display. Altogether, in the games themselves, 390 Jewish athletes took part representing 14 different countries, including Lebanon, Syria and Egypt. The evening before the games a huge gala was held which included dramatic presentations from the country's top theatre companies. The games themselves provided few substantive sporting achievements, but proved a great success and created the desire for more.⁹

Three years later the second Maccabiah took place, on a larger scale. Twenty-eight different countries represented by 1,350 athletes arrived for the games together with 1,000 accompanists. Many stayed on after the games, as the rope was tightening around the necks of the Jews of Europe, and the British had severely limited the numbers of potential 'Olim' (Jewish immigrants) from entering Palestine. Many used the games to overcome the limitations of the British system and to make their way to perceived safety. The most pronounced case was the Bulgarian delegation, of which all 350 representatives stayed in the country, and the Lithuanians were not far behind them.

By this time there was a great variety of sporting events at the games. A swimming pool had just been opened in Bat Galim near Haifa, and in addition to the pool events, judo and ju-jitsu, weightlifting and bicycle racing were all now on the Maccabiah list of games in addition to the more central athletic ones which had provided the basis for the first Maccabiah games. The next games were scheduled for 1938, but for a variety of reasons, they were never held. The riots in Palestine (1936–39), financial difficulties, the dire situation of European Jewry, and the opposition of the Mandate authorities who were

concerned at the possibility of thousands more illegal immigrants, all conspired to postpone the event.

Nation building

The third Maccabiah would not be held until 1950, and by that time much had changed. The powerful delegations of Central, Eastern and Southern Europe had all vanished in the Holocaust, the State of Israel was established in 1948, and Israeli sport had grown increasingly strong, with improved facilities and more professional training. Only 800 participants from 19 different countries took part in the Games, but in the new national stadium of Ramat Gan some 50,000 spectators stood and applauded the world's first international Jewish competition in a Jewish state.¹⁰ However, starting in 1950, and for the next 40 years, the Maccabiah Games would have participants only from communities in what was called the 'Western' or 'Free' world.

For the first time, Maccabi World Union opened the Games to all Jews, not only Maccabi members.¹¹ One has to realize that this was an important landmark, and this step has to be understood in conjunction with the development of the different sports organizations. 'Hapoel [The Worker] Association', for example, was founded in 1923. Despite its differences with Maccabi, its prime goal was to serve as a sports club for workers within the Maccabi framework. However, the discord between the political camps in both the Yishuv (the Jewish settlement) in Palestine and the Zionist Movement forced the Histadrut (union of labourers) to take the new sports association under its wing in 1926, an act that led to the formal politicization of Hebrew sports. But the Maccabi refused to see the split in sports in Israel as an irreconcilable condition. Several attempts were made in the first years of Hapoel to reach a compromise that would enable joint activity among the various clubs and avert the politicization of Hebrew sports. From the beginning, the attempts did not succeed, and Maccabi, which perceived itself as an apolitical sports organization, unaffiliated with any specific sector, gravitated almost willy-nilly into the 'citizens' camp.¹² In 1950 all Maccabiah participants were accommodated in one location, in the manner of the Olympic Games, in a tented recreation camp (previously a British Army camp) on the Tel Aviv seashore. Men and women were segregated ten to a tent. A national Olympic stadium, the Maccabiah Stadium, had been erected in the neighbouring model town of Ramat Gan. Swept up into the all-out national effort, even the cash-strapped Israeli Government of the day contributed 25,000 Israeli pounds (*Lirat* in Hebrew) to the Maccabiah's efforts.

Eight days of competitions – 19 events with 892 athletes – opened in the Ramat Gan Stadium on 20 September 1953 for the fourth Maccabiah Games. Maccabiah leaders initiated the tradition of bringing the torch used to light the flame at the opening ceremony from Modi'in, Judah Maccabee's birthplace. Because of the lack of proper sports facilities, the events were held in school and other public gymnasiums. Competitions were held in the shadow of the *fedayeen* (Palestinian armed militias) terrorist raids from across the Jordanian border as well as a difficult economic austerity regime – the 'Tzena'. Four years later, in 1957, the fifth Games were held and competitors included American weightlifter and Olympic gold medalist Isaac Berger and Australian national tennis champion Eva Duldging. Hungarian four-time Olympic gold medalist Agnes Kelti performed in two exhibitions. The policy of holding the Maccabiah every four years was established.

The sixth Maccabiah (1961) was held at the end of summer for the first time, making it easier for young Diaspora athletes, mainly university students, to participate. Also for the first time, the staff and the Organizing Committee operated from Kfar Maccabiah

(a permanent athlete village in Ramat Gan). The Israel Government Sports Authority, established that year, finally brought Israeli sports under state purview, and the Authority was very active behind the scenes. In 1960 the International Olympic Committee recognized the Maccabi World Union as an organization of Olympic standing over the strong objections of Arab countries, and the Maccabiah was granted the status of regional games within the International Sports Association. The importance of international recognition cannot be overstated, especially in a young state such as Israel, and can serve to illustrate Elias' observation that:

In the course of the twentieth century, the competitive bodily exertions of people in the highly regulated form that we call 'sport' have come to serve as symbolic representations of a non-violent, non-military form of competition between states . . . It is indicative of the growing significance of achievements in sport as a status symbol of nations.¹³

Similarly, Stoddart explains that:

Sport is a form of cultural capital, a resource which can be exchanged for honour and respect on the world stage. Sport is a weapon in the 'Culture Wars' that take place as nations compete, not in the market for goods and materials, but in the market for prestige. A scarce resource, prestige is highly sought after by nation-states, for gaining recognition and respect on the world stage is one of the most crucial means for states to legitimate their sovereign powers. Being admitted to compete in the prestige economy, and competing successfully within it, is thus very important for national elites, and of considerable popular appeal to a nation's citizens. Culture wars are no substitute for real wars, or for economic competition, but they are by no means insignificant. In all likelihood, informal cultural ties such as those forged by sporting competition, become more important where formal, political ties have atrophied it.¹⁴

Beyond the honour bestowed upon Jewish sports in Israel and the world, this recognition placed a heavy obligation upon the Organizing Committee. Henceforth, they were committed to running the Games along professional lines, stringently according to the International Sports Constitution and, among other things, were obliged to invite ISA observers to each event. As the next Maccabiah approached, a new permanent body, the International Maccabiah Committee (IMC), was established.

With 1,200 athletes from 25 countries participating, the seventh Maccabiah (1965) attained the highest level of achievement of all competitions since the Second World War. Financially, things were difficult in mid-1960s Israel; even though the Maccabiah brought 10,000 players and tourists to Israel – extremely high figures for those days – the Israeli government could contribute only 8% of the total budget of 4.2 million Israeli pounds, and the Jewish Agency, the Jewish National Fund and Keren Hayesod were unable to contribute at all. Nevertheless, the 1965 Games marked a quantum leap in Israeli sports facility standards, and some of the sports achievements rivalled the best in the world. The building of sport facilities in the young state was of great importance. As Wilson points out:

Besides pitting their athletes against athletes from other countries, nations can also bid for prestige by hosting sport events. Nations, especially those in the process of building an identity, are encouraged to divert national resources to large and highly visible projects, such as airports, dams, government buildings and the like. Sports stadia and complexes are often included on this list.¹⁵

Several well-known athletes won medals in the new facilities, including swimmer Mark Spitz (winner of seven gold medals in the Munich Olympics), swimmer Marilyn Ramenofsky (then USA record-holder and silver medalist in the Rome Olympics in the 400-metre freestyle), and Dutch tennis player Tom Okker.

Deterioration in performance

The 8th Maccabiah (1969) was the first to take place in the new Israeli reality after the Six Day War of 1967; Jerusalem had become a reunified city. One has to bear in mind that Israel was still at war on a daily basis, facing terrorism and rocket barrages from across the Jordan River (1967–70) and Egyptian artillery barrages from across the Suez Canal (1967–70, the War of Attrition). Admiration for, and curiosity about, Israel swept Diaspora Jews; many young people were drawn to Israel, and for the first time the Maccabiah broke the record number of athletes who participated in the pre-Holocaust 2nd Maccabiah of 1935: 1,450 athletes from 27 countries competed in 22 disciplines. The overall 8th Maccabiah budget was two million Israeli pounds, with sports foundations picking up half the bill, and the Government of Israel – with the Absorption and Education Ministries and the Treasury, along with the Jewish Agency – pitching in to help the Organizing Committee. During the 1960s, the whole domain of sports was undergoing revolutionary changes. There was a widespread move away from amateur status and the advent of professionalism occurred in many disciplines.

For the first time, the Organizing Committee conducted an objective evaluation of participants' athletic performance and the athletic level of the Games. Findings indicated that the 8th Maccabiah took place during a period of *deterioration* in the performance level of Jewish athletes throughout the world, reflecting a lack of Jewish athletes in the West capable of qualifying for international competitions; Jewish athletes from Communist countries, of course, were forbidden by their governments to compete in the Maccabiah Games and Maccabi sports clubs were banned. The organizing committee also indicated that Israel did not invest enough funds in improving the performance level of members of the Israeli Delegation. The report referred to the large number of Israeli athletes participating in the Maccabiah – nearly a quarter of the total – a quantitative answer to an unacceptably low qualitative level.

The 9th Maccabiah (1973) took place in an Israel which had just celebrated its 25th year of Independence, a country with relative peace along its frontiers and with many new Jewish immigrants from the USSR, who had been allowed to leave due to a general, if slight, thaw in the Cold War between the free West and the Communist East. With some 2,694 athletes from 34 countries (!) participating, the Maccabiah, which was dedicated to the 11 Israeli Olympians murdered by terrorists during the 1972 Munich Olympics, became one of the world's biggest sporting events. The following games in 1977 marked 25 years of Maccabiah competition, with more than 2,700 competitors from 33 countries participating. The 11th Maccabiah (1981) reflected the changing character of Jewish sports involvement in the Western world: a decline in the number of participants in the classic Olympic sports such as track and field, boxing and weightlifting and a concomitant rise in the number of athletes participating in sports of specifically British origin: field hockey, golf, squash, badminton, cricket, softball, lawn bowls and tennis. It is worth mentioning that few competitors were of international standing. While the 12th Games in 1985 hosted 4,000 athletes from 40 countries it was then to be decided to establish the Junior Maccabiah in order to encourage young elite Jewish athletes who could not find a proper niche up to that time.

Changing world and its effect

Communism in Europe began to fall apart in the late 1980s and the long Cold War ended. For the first time since before the Second World War, a delegation from Eastern Europe participated with 57 athletes and their escorts, representing the Soviet Union and the

re-emerging countries. The difficult security situation in Israel, a year-and-a-half after the outbreak of the first *Intifada* (Palestinian uprising), and the wave of bad press towards Israel all over the world, failed to deter registration. On the contrary, at a time when tourism in Israel was at a very low ebb, the 13th Maccabiah brought together 4,500 athletes from 45 countries, and literally tens of thousands of tourists and fans to Israel. Four years later, in 1993, emphasizing 'aliya' (immigration) and immigrant absorption, the opening ceremony's theme was illustrated by live video link at Ben Gurion Airport with the arrival of a jumbo jet packed with new immigrants from the former Soviet Union. Aliya of Jews from the former USSR, later to become the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), was not essentially a new phenomenon. Nevertheless, with the exception of the very first years of its statehood, Israel had never received such a large wave of *aliya* at any one time (approximately one-fifth of its total population). Together with the dream of the exodus of the Jews of Silence (as the Jews behind the Iron Curtain were known), problems associated with aliya rapidly began to emerge: employment, housing, language difficulties and, above all, the transition from the society of origin to Israeli society, which was rapidly becoming a highly Westernized society.¹⁶

Guests of honour at the 1993 Games were representatives of the International Olympic Committee, including IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch. As in the last five games, the enormous energy and resources invested in development were not really reflected in athletic achievement.

The decline of the Maccabiah

As a sport and cultural experience during the 100th anniversary of modern Zionism, and in Israel's 50th year of independence, the 15th Maccabiah (1997) should have been a fitting conclusion to all the Maccabiah Games held in the twentieth century. However, shock, deep grief and mourning enveloped the 15th Maccabiah. The event was marred when a pedestrian bridge collapsed during the march of delegations towards the opening ceremony, killing four Australian athletes and injuring more than 60 others. All the next day's events were cancelled. In the harsh glare of the morning after, Israel President Ezer Weizman came to comfort the bruised and battered Australians assembled at Kfar Maccabiah. Since so many athletes, coaches, staff, officials, family members and supporters from the corners of the globe had travelled to Israel for the Maccabiah, it was decided by the Organizing Committee that the competitions would continue following a day of reflection and respect for the victims. Most gallantly, the Australians decided to continue on in the games, in the name of their dead and injured compatriots. The tragedy itself, and the complete and incomprehensible refusal of the officials of the Israeli Maccabi organization to take responsibility for their actions, alienated many in the Jewish world and led to a strong reaction against the Maccabi framework. Up to that point the games had preserved much of their existing prestige in the wider Jewish world,¹⁷ but less so in Israel itself. In Israel, the Maccabiah Games appeared increasingly to be viewed as a relic from the long-gone past. Apart from the colourful opening ceremony that many were still happy to watch, the sports events themselves evinced little interest beyond the circle of the participants and their families and friends. The results were invariably mediocre and were no cause of excitement from a solely sporting point of view. The quality of the competitors provided no real incentive for an Israeli athlete whose ambition was to train and compete against the best in the world – and the best of whom occasionally had many opportunities to do exactly that in other more prestigious international competitions.

In the Maccabiah of 2001, some 2,500 athletes came to Israel to take part, but the event itself seemed to generate little excitement, partly because of the shadow of the events of the previous Maccabiah and partly due to the political situation. Intensive preparations, and the large number of registrations received from abroad, indicated that the 16th Maccabiah would set records both for participant numbers and sporting achievements. However, the sudden upsurge of Palestinian terrorism starting around September 2000, and culminating in the Dolphinarium terrorist attack in Tel Aviv in June 2001, shortly before the Maccabiah was to begin, caused a steady erosion in participant numbers, leading to proposals by major delegations for a year's postponement and even threatening cancellation of the games. However, the games were held as planned and the opening ceremony at Teddy Stadium in Jerusalem was a spectacular show that attracted an unprecedented TV audience. Israel President Moshe Katsav opened the Games in the presence of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, the Prime Minister of Romania and other VIP's from abroad, Israeli Cabinet Ministers, the Diplomatic Corps and many leaders of World Jewry – a powerful display of solidarity with Israel at a difficult time in its history.

Summary and conclusions

Taking place in Israel every four years, and held in the year following the Olympic Games the Maccabiah Games are called the 'Jewish Olympics'. Many notable athletes have competed in the Maccabiah, including swimmer Mark Spitz, gymnast Mitch Gaylord, golfer Corey Pavin, basketball players Ernie Grunfeld and Danny Shayes and tennis player Dick Savitt. The aim of this study was to shed light on the process in which the world Maccabiah Games humbly began, made varying degrees of progress, and gained international recognition. The main argument was that the processes of state formation, population growth, urbanization, militarization and, most germane for present purposes, the development of sport in Israel, as presented in this essay, are not isolated but rather interdependent and therefore of vital importance when discussing the development of the Maccabiah Games.

In many respects, the Maccabiah Games, and mainly the population growth parallel to the first two games (1932 and 1935), laid the foundations of future Israeli sport. It should be noted that a substantial number of the participants in the early Maccabiahs did not return to their native countries, but became active citizens and athletes in pre-statehood Israel. The most substantial demographic increase during the British Mandate period occurred during the Fifth Aliya (years 1932–39), when the number of Jews in pre-statehood Israel doubled from 200,000 to 400,000. This aliya, when compared to previous ones, included a major population of Jews from Western Europe, especially Germany (about 60,000), who imported their established sports traditions to pre-statehood Israel. As a result, development intensified in the various branches of sport, the number of athletes and trained physical education teachers significantly increased, and higher professional standards were set.¹⁸

The games, especially up to the 1970s, also contributed to the improvement of the Israeli athletes and their ability to practice their talent in international tournaments. The international status of Israeli sport, as well as factors determining its success or failure, is an outcome of the unique geopolitical status of Israel. As explained by Kaufman and Bar-Eli, one of the central factors in the State of Israel has been its relationship with its Arab neighbours.¹⁹ For most of its history as a state, the majority of Israel's neighbours have failed to recognize its existence, and Israel has been involved in an on-going political and military struggle for survival. This reality has determined the policies and actions

of the State and has influenced all of its systems, including sports. The ongoing political conflict has had several consequences. The major one was the fact that Israel found itself in regional isolation, as opposed to other countries that frequently compete with their neighbours and mutually improve their athletic achievements as a result. Moreover, in addition to their refusal to compete with Israeli athletes, the Arab states have used all their influence to keep Israeli sports out of international tournaments and organizations. As a result, Israeli participation in the Mediterranean Sea Games, for example, was denied. Furthermore, Israel has been kept out of the Asian Games since the 1970s. In addition, security problems have continuously surfaced as a result of this situation; Israeli athletes have been under constant threat of terrorism, reaching an apex at the Munich Olympics in 1972 with the murder of 11 members of the Israeli Olympic Team.²⁰

However, things have changed over the years, and not just politically. The move to individual professionalism and achievement has had a huge effect. The decade from the 1990s onwards was significantly different from the previous ones. Israeli sport turned into a central part of cultural life. The privatization process and the declining influence of the major sport organizations turned sport into first-rate entertainment.²¹ The Maccabiah as an institution has lost much of its prestige in Israel, and most of the professional athletes and teams are not taking part due to the lack of meaningful competition. Instead, the Games have virtually become amateur tournaments. Still, most, if not all, participants take the games very seriously. For most of them, coming to Israel is a personal victory in which they are willing to invest both time and money. According to Igal Carmi, chairman of Maccabi World Union: 'We must (still) be doing something right ... We never forget that Maccabiah athletes' personal fees pay a lot of Maccabiah's bills. We never forget that a lot of athletes have trained for two years to achieve selection by their national delegation.'²²

It seems that the Maccabiah still symbolizes for many the role of the Israeli State as a home for all Jews throughout the world. At the same time, the Maccabiah is increasingly becoming a symbol of pride, unity and solidarity of the Jewish people in Israel with the Diaspora, rather than a pure sporting event. To many of the athletes, as well as their spouses, siblings, parents and relatives, the games provide are a milestone towards aliya or a way to forge warm relationships with Israel and the Israelis. To them, like many others, the games *must* go on.

Notes

¹ Elias, *What is Sociology?*, 22; Elias and Dunning, *Quest for Excitement*.

² For more comprehensive background on the establishment process see Eisen, 'Maccabiah Games', 18.

³ Kaufman, 'Jewish Sports in the Diaspora', 152.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 156.

⁵ Kaufman and Galily, 'The Early development of Hebrew Football'.

⁶ Harif and Galily, 'Sport and Politics in Palestine'.

⁷ The Bar Kokhba revolt marked a time of high hopes followed by violent despair. The Jews were handed expectations of a homeland and a Holy Temple, but in the end were persecuted and sold into slavery. During the revolt itself, the Jews gained enormous amounts of land, only to be pushed back and crushed in the final battle of Bethar.

⁸ Eisen, 'Maccabiah Games', 41.

⁹ Israel, 'The Story of Sport in Israel'.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ At the same however, according to Kaufman, the first years after the establishment of the Hapoel Sports Association 1923/24 shaped the relationship between the sports organizations and led to the politicization of sports in the land of Israel. The many conflicts between the sports organizations that arose as a result of the political climate created in the Jewish yishuv at the time

rendered worthless all the attempts to arrive at a written settlement which would concretize the relationship between them. Instead, mutual hostility and suspicion were created among the organizations, even when it appeared that a settlement, which would satisfy both sides, had been reached – the negotiations always ended in failure. Hapoel's refusal to participate in the Maccabias was an extreme expression of a lack of ability to compromise.

¹² Kaufman, 'Jewish Sports in the Diaspora'.

¹³ Elias and Dunning, *Quest for Excitement*, 23.

¹⁴ Stoddart, 'Sport, Culture and Postcolonial Relations', 125.

¹⁵ Wilson, 'Cleaning up the Game', 258.

¹⁶ Galily, 'The Americanization of Israeli Basketball'.

¹⁷ For further information see Israel, 'The Story of Sport in Israel'.

¹⁸ Kaufman and Bar-Eli, 'Processes which Shaped Sports in Israel'.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ But if the link between sports and politics has declined since the 1970s, it has intensified in the international arena as the country's Arab neighbours sought to isolate the Jewish State from 1973 onwards. Ironically, this tactic backfired. For while Israel was expelled from all Asian sports' federations, it was eventually accepted into the European sports' bodies, enabling the country to compete in many of the world's most prestigious competitions such as the European Athletics Championships, the European Swimming Championships, the UEFA football cups, the European Basketball cups and all other major European tournaments. Ibid.

²¹ Ben-Porat, 'The Commodification of Football in Israel'; Ben-Porat, *From a Game to Commodity*.

²² Igal Carmi, personal communication, July 10, 2005.

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