

# שנה טובה



## Israel Association of Baseball

From the desk of Haim Katz

October 2008



Haim Katz, President

חיים קץ – נשיא

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פיטר קורץ - מזכיר כללי

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[www.baseball.org.il](http://www.baseball.org.il)

## From the President's Desk

*We had an extremely busy and successful summer both in Israel and overseas. An extensive number of clinics were conducted in Israel as well as sending 3 teams overseas. None of this would have been possible without the help of our North American friends who supported our activities. Our senior team had a number of donors and sponsors, notably the Goldklang group, who enabled our participation in the European Qualifying Championship. Our Junior team received very warm support from the Pittsburgh community embracing our efforts on all fronts providing financial support, organizational assistance and home hospitality for our players and coaches.*



*The Pittsburgh Federation has made it easy to make your tax deductible donation to the IAB. Just surf to [www.ujfpittsburgh.org](http://www.ujfpittsburgh.org) and click on donate now. Scroll to the bottom of the page and type "Israel Baseball" in the comments field.*

*We would also like to thank Arye Zacks for our new website. The name is easy to remember – [www.baseball.org.il](http://www.baseball.org.il). We'll have a lot more updated information, scores and stats.*

*We wish all our baseball community a **שנה טובה ובריאה**, a happy healthy and peaceful New Year. Haim Katz, President -Israel Association of Baseball*

*Haim Katz (hdkatz@013.net).*

## Aerielle Inc, To Sponsor Senior League



מערכת הגברה אלהושת לכל מקום  
[www.i2iGear.com](http://www.i2iGear.com)  
אפשר לרכוש ב- (1 קודם) דינגוף סנסר קוסה 3

**i2i Stream Premiere Senior League**, after Aerielle's flagship product *i2i® Stream Digital Music Broadcaster*. The i2i Stream is a wireless digital audio

Aerielle Inc. has agreed to sponsor the senior league. The league will now be called

device that allows a user to broadcast his or her favorite music to all that also have i2i Streams. This technology will also be used as the 'PA' system at selected senior games. Together with **Café Joe**, which sponsors the Modiin Senior team, the IAB welcomes Aerielle Inc into its corporate senior team family. Larry Leibson, Aerielle's i2i representative in Israel stated "This is a great opportunity as it hits the right age and socioeconomic group." Aerielle's distributor Dekada, in

Dizengoff Center **has agreed to give the members of the baseball league, their families and friends a 70 Shekel discount on a i2i Stream pack (containing 2 Streams, cables and documentation)**. All have to do is mention the baseball league at time of purchase.



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## IAB Sends 3 National Teams to Tournaments

**Senior Team** – Senior team played in a CEB qualifying tournament in Croatia. The winner of the tournament would play next year in the World Baseball Cup (not to be confused with the world baseball Classic held by the MLB.) The team finished in a three way tie for 2<sup>nd</sup> place and lost out of the championship round due to a lower run differential, to Lithuania, whom they defeated 2-1 in 10 innings, in the round robin



round. The team had excellent pitching from player/coach Dan Rotem, Alon Leichman and Shlomo Lipetz. Oren Gal, a Canadian Israeli who played here in the 2005 maccabia and subsequently in our Senior League, was named the MVP of the series with a batting average of over 550. The defense was excellent throughout their play. Kol Hakavod to the coaches Dan Rotem and Leon Klarfeld, the manager Peter Kurz and all the players who trained intensively for the whole year to prepare for the tournament. We wish

to thank the Goldklang group who made a substantial contribution to our effort



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**Junior/Cadet Team** – This team



went to a tournament in Freeport Pa, near Pittsburgh to play in a

tournament called “For the love of the game”. There were no trophies, standings or statistics, the goal was to go out and play as much baseball as possible. That is what the 18 players on the team did by playing 15 games in 6 days, against very stiff competition. They managed to pull off one victory but played very well in several games including a 4-2 loss to a Maryland team composed mainly

of college Freshman and Freshman to be. The team stayed in homes in the Jewish community of Pittsburgh, and help build bonds between the community and the IAB which will hopefully continue to bear fruits in the future. Golan Maimon was named team Israel MVP by the coaches Craig Dunning, David Schenker, Moishe Lewis and Yedidya Fraiman. (See more on page 5)

**Junior/Cadet Team** – Went to two tournament in the Tuscany region of Italy. They tied for the second best record in Grosseto and finished in second place in the Arezzo. The team was led by Ari Bina and Binyamin Mor's stellar pitching, and the hot bats of Tal Erel, Daniel Zacks and Ben Cahn.

But the hallmark of this team was defense. With an outfield that wouldn't allow a ball to get past them, and sharp cutoff throws, this team gave up only 24 runs in 11 games in Italy. Ephraim Keren was the head coach assisted by Arye Zacks and Jeff Mor with Yaron Erel as manager.



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### Pitch In For Baseball Goes to Bat for Israel Baseball

Pitch In for Baseball, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting baseball among youth, continues to put Israel Baseball on their map. In our previous newsletter we announced their first installment. Since then there have been 4 or 5 more installments, including a large one which was sent here with the help of the Confederation of European Baseball (CEB) and MLB. See more on their website: [www.pitchinforbaseball.org](http://www.pitchinforbaseball.org).

### Baseball Spreading in Israel

Traditionally baseball in Israel has been limited by the number of baseball dad's willing to coach teams. As a result we're primarily located in areas with a critical mass of North American immigrants. All that is changing now as we have developed 2<sup>nd</sup> generation coaches, players who have grown up in our system and became certified IAB coaches and can now penetrate baseball to schools and community centers in areas where a ball or strike were never called.



Baseball lesson in Jaffa

Some of these programs are crossing cultural barriers such as in Jaffa and in Jerusalem where Arab and Jewish kids throw baseballs to each other instead of rocks and bullets at each other. Other areas where we have started programs are Binyamina, Bat Yam and Cesarea. A lot of resources and efforts go into this project and in order to expand our efforts we need assistance from our friends.



11 year old Noam Calisar starts team in Binyamina

### David Immerman and Carly B New Members of IAB B&B Mitzva club

For their bat and bar mitzvah projects Carly B and David Immerman chose to help support youth baseball in Israel. Carly sold bracelets which read on one side "Play Ball Israel" and on the other side read שחק כדור She also organized a baseball equipment drive collecting new and slightly used equipment generating a number of baseball gloves, bats, baseballs, helmets and various other pieces of equipment. Both David and Carly raised sizable donations to us promote our programs, particularly to those who cannot afford it.



### Alon Leichman Accepted to MLB Academy

We are proud to report that Alon Leichman participated in the MLB academy, a 3 week intensive baseball program for the 60 best players in Europe held in Italy last August. This is the first time that an Israeli was accepted to this program where 10 – 20 players/year are offered pro contracts. Dan Rothem also attended the first week of the tryout as an assistant coach and returned full of accolades.



### Richard Kania comes to coach Summer Clinics

The IAB again held a successful 2 week summer clinic in Kibbutz Gezer under the direction of Ephraim Keren. We were particularly fortunate to have the help of Mr. Richard Kania, a senior coach from the Czech Republic, who assisted with the programming of the clinics. The clinic had about 40 players, half of which the juvenile national team, and half players who wanted to improve their baseball skills. Richard is a very

resourceful, and positive coach who likes to generate confidence to the players. His standard opening remarks to the players: I would like you to take a little test. Fill your bathtub up with water, and try to stand on the water. If you can stand on the water, then you will not make any mistakes playing baseball. If your feet hit the bottom of the tub, then you will make mistakes playing baseball, and our job is to help you get better.

### MLB's Pat Doyle Conducts Clinics

Pat Doyle, head of the MLB Coaches Envoy program held clinics for 2 weeks in April. They were attended by about 250 players and close to 50 coaches (About 40% of our players and over half of our coaches) including an 8 day mini-camp for the senior national team, 2 clinics each for the juvenile, cadet and junior national teams, and 5 local clinics throughout the country.

Pat exposed to the players and coaches to a new level of coaching, emphasizing a positive, refreshing approach to the children, coaches and administration.

### Israel Prepares for Maccabia Games



For the 2nd time the IAB will host the junior Maccabia baseball tournament at the 18'th Maccabia games from July 12 –July 17. Besides the returning gold medalist USA team and the silver medalist Canadian team, and the host, 3 additional teams have registered for the tournament: Holland, Venezuela and Mexico. David Schenker, who organized the tournament for the 17'th

Maccabia games will continue in heading this year's committee. In 2001 the IAB had planned to a Maccabia baseball tournament, but the outbreak of the 2001 Antifada cancelled all junior events that year.

### Sam Pelter Elected Secretary General of CEB (European Baseball Federation)



Former IAB Secretary General and long time board member Sam Pelter, was elected secretary general of CEB, Confederation of European Baseball. CEB is governing body of baseball in Europe and organizes all tournaments for the 36 member European countries. Sam has been instrumental in reorganizing CEB to make it a relevant force in advancing baseball in Europe, by rewriting its bylaws and creating committees which meet the needs of European countries trying to develop baseball.

### Baseball Diplomacy

Probably most Israeli diplomats these days are inundated with questions regarding the probability of Israel attacking Iraq or the implications of Olmert's tours and who will be the next prime minister. Last summer I accidentally assumed the unofficial position of Israeli ambassador to Freeport, Pa. a small rural community along the Allegheny River valley, 50 km north east of Pittsburgh with a tempo of life of about 50 km/h slower. Like a 'real' ambassador I found myself the center of attention giving daily interviews to the local press, and answered many questions by local residents regarding life in Israel. But unlike a 'real' ambassador the only 'bomb' I had to comment on was that by our third baseman Golan Maimon who hit a 90 m shot over the left field fence for 3 run homer. The only troop deployment anyone was interested in was the number of baseball players who came from Israel and when we would make our next trip. Some frequently asked



*Israel's first baseman Jonathan Alter congratulates second baseman Yuval Pick after making a double play in the fifth inning of their opening game in the Freeport International Baseball Invitational on Monday. Louis B. Ruediger/Valley News Dispatch Story*

questions at a typical 'press conference':  
What, some of your players have to travel an hour and a half just to get to a practice? How many players do you have. Your should be proud of your team who performs well for having such few players in the country. I was in Israel 10 years

ago, had a wonderful time. Do you no Binyamin Netanyahu? I like the way he talks.

We came to Freeport to participate in the International baseball tournament – “For the Love of the Game”. The structure of the tournament fits the tempo of the town, no winners, no losers, no medallions, no standings, no trophies – 40 teams from around the world get together to play as much baseball as possible for a week. Teams came from further (Australia and Japan) and most teams were better (particularly Brooklyn) but none received the amount of attention and greetings than that of the Israeli team.

In the quintessential baseball movie, Fields of Dreams, Ray Kinsella heeds his inner vision “If you build it they will come!” building a baseball field in the middle of Iowa to welcome the baseball greats of the past. The people of Freeport made us feel like they created this tournament so the “Israelis would come”. Dave Bretensky, a young electrical engineer who works in one of the few remaining steel mills in the area is infected by the incurable, but non-fatal disease known as baseball fever. The disease which transcends all geographic boundaries, does not affect one’s life span, but consumes all one’s available free time in either playing, coaching, umpiring or organizing baseball games. After a tough loss by the youth team he coaches, Dave introduced me to his players and had them shake my hand, afterwards the entire coaching staff of both teams came over to greet me. They didn’t do this because I’m Haim Katz, they did it because I am representing Israel and he wanted his players to have contact with an Israeli. I enter a gas station to buy some water with our team uniform, 3 people come to greet me and thank me for coming to the tournament.

While our baseball prowess left much to be desired (one exhilarating victory in 15 games), the local paper was filled by

### **Last Word to our IAB Family**

We hope you like staying in touch with our growing activities and with us. The love of the game is rapidly spreading throughout the Holy Land, bringing more and more Israeli kids onto the field. While we are delighted with the popularity of the game, and the wonderful values of good sportsmanship, cultural exchange and team spirit which we are promoting, the increased demands on the IAB for more teams, coaches, and equipment - on top of our already stretched-to-the-maximum budget - is more than we can handle on our own.

So we turn to you, lovers of the game and staunch friends of Israel, to ask you to show your support and enthusiasm for the resounding success of **Baseball in Israel** by sending us a donation that will help us plant grass on rocky fields, buy badly needed equipment, spread the gospel of baseball

interviews with our players and coaches. Full page photos of our players adorned the sports pages and sometimes the front page. After 15 games, some of the local residents were humming Hatikva. Our single victory, a 17 – 14 slugfest, had 500 fans who couldn’t pronounce the names of most of our players, cheer our every move.

After 30 years in Israel I have acquired my fair share of cynicism and criticism regarding Israeli society and Israeli politics. Like most Israelis I complain about our ‘image’ in the world press and how little we do to both as a government and as individuals to improve this image. But from the lush green rolling hills along the Allegheny River I gained a new perspective of how people see us, and the wealth of good public relations a well bred Israel baseball team can generate. For most Israeli’s it is difficult to explain American’s emotional attachment to the game of baseball. To Israeli’s it’s a slow moving game with mysterious rules. To an American, baseball is a timeless tradition, a constant anchor in a turbulent ever changing society. What is Israel to the average American? The land of the Bible, where Abraham, the kings and prophets of Israel and Jesus and his apostles walked. Israelis therefore represent the caretakers of the birthplace of western civilizations values. Our Israeli team playing on an American field, created a synergy of emotions which made us a little larger than life. Yes the people of Freeport are keenly aware of Israel’s shortcomings and the threats on its survival. But Israel also has a baseball team, a bunch of kids whose most important mission in life in the immediate future, is to hit a round ball with a cylindrical stick. That makes the kids of Israel very similar to the kids in Freeport. Therefore life in Israel can’t be as bad as the news makes it seem.

throughout Israel, and send our players as Goodwill Ambassadors to baseball tournaments around the world.

The IAB is a non-profit organization, duly registered in Israel, and dedicated to developing and promoting baseball in Israel. The IAB has a number of projects which are in need of funding, and are crucial to the continued growth and development of Israeli baseball.



*The Pittsburgh Federation has made it easy to make your tax deductible donation to the IAB. Just surf to [www.ujfpittsburgh.org](http://www.ujfpittsburgh.org) and click on donate now. Scroll to the bottom of the page and type “Israel Baseball” in the comments field.*