

## A View from Israel

Carl Alpert

HAIFA – The announcement that the names of six more sports personalities have been added to the International Jewish Sports Hall of Fame serves as reminder, as one commentator notes, that the Jews may be recorded not only as the People of the Book, but also as the People of the Muscle. It also makes obsolete the contention that the only sport Jews engaged in was to jump to conclusions.

Since the Hall of Fame was inaugurated in 1979, 299 Jewish sports champions and athletes have been added to the list, which is displayed in the Hall of Fame, located on the campus of the Wingate Institute for Physical Education, at Netanya.

Among the names, representing 23 countries, are many that should be instantly familiar, like Benny Leonard (boxing), Tal Brody (basketball), Amy Alcott (golf), Barney Ross (boxing), Sid Luckman (football), Angela Buxton (tennis), Mark Spitz (swimming), Hank Greenberg (baseball), Cecil Hart (ice hockey), Okey Gefen (rugby), Johan Harrmenberg (fencing), Nat Holman (basketball) and others, perhaps familiar only to those court in the field of sports. A special international committee chooses new names each year.

The occasion offers opportunity to take another look at the Wingate Institute, which, though it plays a central role in physical education and sport in Israel, is not sufficiently known overseas. In 1989, its role in Israel formally was recognized when it was awarded the prestigious Israel Prize.

Some 5,000 coaches, athletes, academics and students regularly utilize the services available on the well-equipped 125-acre campus. Perhaps chief of its activities is the Nat Holman School for coaches and instructors, with close to 2,500 students. Also on the campus is the Zinman College for Physical Education and Sports, which offers academic degrees in its area of operations. Its graduates provide the entire educational system in Israel with trained instructors in physical education.

Tourist buses speed by on the coastal highway north of Tel Aviv, but few of them stop to give their passengers a look at another side of Israel. Among the few who were recently given opportunity for a visit to this off-the-beaten-track facility were American Jewish Federation missions from Houston and Memphis.

If the members of these missions went through the Institute museum and if they have good memories, they will be able to answer such questions as: Which Jewish wrestler won 400 consecutive bouts from 1939 to 1952? Which Jewish track star is the only runner to win medals in four consecutive Olympic Games? Which Hungarian Jew won 23 men's world championships in table tennis?

The Wingate Institute's role on the national scene goes far beyond curiosa such as the above. A special center aims at developing, to the maximum, the potential of talented young athletes. Selected on merit, these sports-gifted boys and girls board at the Institute and train in such sports as judo, swimming, tennis and men's and women's volleyball. It is expected that from their ranks will come the next generation of Israeli champions in international competitions.

One of the many unique activities at Wingate is the program for the blind. Over five years ago the Institute's expertise and knowledge were utilized to conduct the only course in Israel for medical massage by the blind. A 600 hour, live-in program had 16 participants, Jews, Arabs, Christians

and Druze, living together. All the graduates have found employment in spas, community centers, hotels and clubs. This year a new course, in reflexology, will train the blind participants to become self-sufficient.

The academic side of the Institute's program has not been overlooked, and last year over 15 research articles by staff members were published in Israeli and international journals, as well as 15 book chapters. In addition, more than 30 presentations were made at national and international congresses, seminars and workshops.

A unique aspect of the Institute: Generous international supporters are afforded access to the many, varied facilities, a plum which few other important institutions in Israel can offer to their friends. The Institute is named for Major General Orde Wingate, the British army officer who provided invaluable underground military assistance to the country's fledgling Haganah prior to establishment of the State. His spirit lives on in the peacetime program at the institution, which bears his name.

---

*Jewish Herald-Voice*  
<http://www.jhvonline.com/>