

HBI NEWS

THE HADASSAH-BRANDEIS INSTITUTE

A RESEARCH CENTER AT BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY

For Immediate Release

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Contributions of long-overlooked Jewish sports heroines finally recognized

Hadassah-Brandeis Institute's 'Jewish + Female = Athlete' calendar and exhibition acknowledge tremendous athletic accomplishments of women around the globe

Waltham, Mass. – When people discovered that the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute was producing a calendar about great Jewish women in sports, many were surprised to learn there were enough athletes to fill an entire year – and then some.

"Jewish + Female = Athlete: Portraits of Strength from around the World" profiles 14 current stars and 13 legends from the past in an inspirational tribute to the accomplishments of Jewish women in sport. The calendar and a companion traveling exhibition are the culmination of a two-year project by the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute (HBI), a research center at Brandeis University that develops fresh ways of thinking about Jews and gender worldwide.

"What we discovered as we worked on this project was that the challenge would not be finding enough athletes worthy of recognition, but deciding which ones we would have to leave out," said Shulamit Reinharz, HBI's founding director. "We hope to help expand the understanding of Jewish women's lives, interests, and accomplishments and encourage the Jewish community to rethink traditional gender definitions."

While many Jews are hard-pressed to name a prominent Jewish female athlete, the reality is that Jewish women can be credited with many sports milestones, and the record of their accomplishments continues to grow. “Jewish + Female = Athlete” encourages a new understanding of feminine strength and beauty while exploring the rich, often-overlooked history of Jewish women in sports. The calendar and exhibition bring to light both the achievements made by individual athletes and the pivotal role Jewish women have made in the advancement of women’s sport – from basketball to kitesurfing.

“This calendar adds to the historical record about Jewish women seeking opportunities in sport and society,” said Western Michigan University History Professor Linda J. Borish, who has done extensive research on Jewish women in American sport history. “By exploring Jewish female athletes in the past and present, the ‘Jewish + Female = Athlete’ project provides an interesting and Significant perspective on the record of women in sports and encourages the growth of women’s sports throughout the world.”

“The calendar provides inspirational stories and imagery of just what is possible when women focus on achievement,” said Donna Orender, the president of the Women’s National Basketball Association (WNBA). “With the growth of young women involved in sports increasing exponentially in the last 30 years – now one in three girls participate – the ability to find Jewish female athletes as role models is also importantly increasing.”

Featured athletes include:

- Charlotte “Eppy” Epstein, who fought to have United States women’s swimming recognized as an Olympic sport and organized competitions for a long line of champion swimmers.
- Senda Berenson, a physical education teacher at Smith College who wrote the rules for the game of women’s basketball.
- Judo star Yael Arad, who won Israel’s first Olympic medal.
- Limor Mizrachi, the first Israeli to play pro basketball in the United States.

- Fencer Sada Jacobson and marathoner Deena Drossin Kastor, who last summer in Athens became the first Americans to win Olympic medals in their sports in more than two decades.

“Jewish girls deserve to grow up knowing that strength is beauty,” Reinharz said, “and Jewish children of both genders should look to these amazing athletes as role models. With all due respect to Hank Greenberg, Sandy Koufax and Mark Spitz, the list of sports heroes in our community is a lot longer than is common knowledge.”

HBI will launch the exhibit and calendar at a celebration of Jewish women in sport on Sept. 18 at Brandeis. The free-standing exhibit is available to museums, schools, universities, community centers, synagogues, and libraries for one to three weeks.

Partners in the project are the Consulate General of Israel to New England; JCC Maccabi Games; Jewish Community Centers of North America; Jewish Family & Life!; Jewish Sports Hall of Fame; Maccabi USA: Sports for Israel; Maccabi World Union; New England Women’s Fund; ShalomBoston.com; Wingate Institute for Physical Education and Sport; and the Women’s Sports Foundation.

The calendar is available for \$13.95, and is available online at www.brandeis.edu/hbi or by phone at 781/736-8114. Contact the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute at hbi@brandeis.edu for information on booking the traveling exhibition. Details are also available online.

Athletes included in “Jewish + Female = Athlete”:

Contemporary Athletes

| Name | Country | Sport |
|--------------------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| Zhanna Pintusevich-Block | Ukraine | Track and Field (sprint) |
| Myriam Fox-Jerusalmi | France | Kayaking (slalom) |
| Emily and Sada Jacobson | USA | Fencing |
| Deena Kastor | USA | Track and Field (marathon) |
| Keren Leibovitch | Israel | Swimming |
| Sara DeCosta-Hayes | USA | Ice Hockey |
| Daniela Yael Krukower | Argentina | Judo |

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|------------------|-----------|------------------------------|
| Anna Smashnova | Israel | Tennis |
| Nicole Freedman | USA | Cycling |
| Tal Karp | Australia | Soccer |
| Hagit Oz | Israel | Kitesurfing |
| Limor Mizrachi | Israel | Basketball |
| Jillian Schwartz | USA | Track and Field (pole vault) |

Sports Legends

| Name | Country | Sport |
|------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Irena Kirszenstein-Szewinska | Poland | Track and Field (sprint) |
| Eva Szekely | Hungary | Swimming |
| Ildiko Ujlaki-Rejto | Hungary | Fencing |
| Fanny "Bobbie" Rosenfeld | Canada | Track and Field |
| Judith Deutsch | Austria | Swimming |
| Carina Benninga | Holland | Field Hockey |
| Yael Arad | Israel | Judo |
| Angela Buxton | Great Britain | Tennis |
| Lillian Copeland | USA | Track and Field |
| Thelma "Tiby" Eisen | USA | Baseball |
| Charlotte "Eppy" Epstein | USA | Swimming |
| Senda Berenson | USA | Basketball |
| Agnes Keleti | Hungary | Gymnastics |

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