

The 18th Maccabiah - Maccabiah Chai

Maccabi World Union* is a Jewish world sports organization that traces its origins to the end of the nineteenth century. This global organization spans five continents, and has some 400,000 members. Many Maccabi clubs in Europe and Latin America serve as community centers, providing a diversity of educational, cultural, social and sports activities under one roof. Throughout the year, these clubs conduct regional and inter-regional games, providing opportunities for bonding and sharing with other Jewish communities throughout the world. The highlight is the quadrennial Maccabiah Games, which bring Jews from all over the world together in Israel.



The **Maccabiah Games** are an international athletic event similar to the Olympics, but for mostly Jewish athletes. Arab Israelis can also participate. The International Olympic Committee and World Federation of Sports sanctions the Maccabiah, one of the five largest sporting events in the world by participation. It is categorized a Regional Games by the IOC.

The first Maccabiah took place on March 28, 1932. About four hundred sportsmen took part. By the time the second Maccabiah Games was held in April 1935, the

number of participants increased to about 1,350. The third Maccabiah, scheduled for 1938, was delayed until 1950 due to the outbreak of the Second World War.

Many Olympic gold medalists, world champions, and world record holders have competed in the Maccabiah Games: Mark Spitz, Lenny Krayzelburg, Jason Lezak, and Marilyn Ramenofsky (swimming); Mitch Gaylord, Abie Grossfeld, Agnes Keleti, and Kerri Strug (gymnastics); Ernie Grunfeld, Danny Schayes, (coaches); Larry Brown, Jordan Freed, Nat Holman and Dolph Schayes (basketball); Carina Benninga (field hockey); Lillian Copeland, Gerald Ashworth, and Gary Gubner (track and field); Angela Buxton, Brad Gilbert, Julie Heldman, Allen Fox, Nicolás Massú, and Dick Savitt (tennis); Angelica Rozeanu (table tennis); Sergei Charikov and Vadim Gutzeit (fencing); Isaac Berger and Frank Spellman (weightlifting); and Fred Oberlander and Henry Wittenberg (wrestling); Bruce Fleisher (golf); and Adam Bacher (cricket); and Elizabeth Foody (interpretive dance).



July 13 marked the opening of the **2009 18th Maccabiah**, or as we call it in Israel, **Maccabiah Chai**. The organizing committee believes that this will be the largest games yet. Fifty-two delegations will participate, including Ethiopia, Finland, Thailand and others. The athletes will compete in 31 different sports.

To learn more please visit: <http://www.maccabiah.com/>

*Maccabi World Union is one of JCC Association's partners in the annual JCC Maccabi Games for Jewish teens, which are hosted by North American JCCs.