

Israeli basketball tour to stop in Princeton

By Bob Nuse
Sports Editor

Tal Brody was a basketball legend in Trenton.

Tal Brody is a basketball legend in Israel.

Brody, who was part of the 1960-61 Trenton Central High basketball team that captured a state championship, had an outstanding career at TCH and then at the University of Illinois. He was drafted by the Baltimore Bullets and played on the United States team that won a gold medal at the Maccabiah Games.

Brody, who turned down offers from the NBA, helped the United States to the 1970 World Championship and then went to Israel, becoming a basketball legend with Maccabi Tel Aviv, leading the team as its captain to the 1977 European Championship.

This week, Brody makes a rare trip back to his home area, as he will bring a group of young basketball players to Princeton today as part of a trip through the America-Israel Friendship League and the U.S.-Israel Citizenship Through Sports Exchange.

The America-Israel Friendship League is a non-sectarian, non-political, not-for-profit organization strengthening ties between the people of the United States and Israel; bridging distances to reveal the beauty, the humanity, and the modern dem-

Visit brings Brody close to home

ocratic values that define both nations.

"It's a group of young players from the northern part of Israel who felt a brunt of the 400 rockets that were launched," Brody said. "It's nice of the American-Israeli Friendship League to invite the boys to come over and play. It's during the holidays in Israel when the kids don't have school.

"They're all young basketball players. But they were picked especially because of living in Northern Israel. A lot of them had to flee their homes and take refuge in the center of Israel. They took the brunt of the rockets. There was a lot of damage, but we got through it."

The team will spend time in New York and Philadelphia, but today will be a day in Princeton. Howard Levy, an assistant coach at Princeton University, has organized the Princeton portion of the trip. The team will get a tour of the PU campus from some of the PU basketball players and other students, then head over to Princeton High for a 4 p.m. scrimmage game against some players from Princeton High.

"It will be informal because the kids at Princeton aren't in season yet," Levy said. "The kids who play for Princeton who are not involved with a fall sport are going to play. Hopefully it will be good game conditions for

the visiting boys. And after the game we'll have a reception at the Center for Jewish Life.

"It's something we're happy to be able to do. There is actually a good Princeton community over in Israel. Scott Greenman is playing professionally over there. And one of our former players, David Blatt, was a coach there for a long time and is now in Italy. He's known as one of Europe's top coaches."

The visiting team from Israel will get a nice taste of Princeton, which is just part of a packed week-long visit.

"For many of them this is their first visit to the United States," Brody said. "It's a great opportunity for them because they are young players and to be able to do things like go to the New York Knicks facility and the Philadelphia 76ers facility are great experiences. To be able to visit New York City and to get to meet Jim Calhoun at the University of Connecticut and then to come to Princeton, it's a great thrill. Princeton is where one of our coaches, David Blatt, played and also where Brooke Shields went to school."

The team will visit the NBA office in New York and meet commissioner David Stern. They will have plenty of big moments. But for Brody, the biggest moments will come in Princeton, a town close to where he grew up.

"When I saw the list of places where we would be playing and saw that we were coming to Princeton, I got very nostalgic," said Brody, who was on the 1965 All-America team with Bill Bradley. "That's not far away from where I played for Trenton High School. We won the state championship against Camden in 1960-61. I was co-captain of the team with George Lee. Our coach was Fred Price, who was a great coach. I'm hoping some of my old teammates will hear that I'll be around and be able to attend. I have not seen many of them in 46 years."

He's also happy to see his old friend Levy, who has even had to step in and play for some of Brody's teams in the past.

"There were very few people his height who could also be a playmaker, which he is," Brody said. "We came over with our older team and played the Fire Department of New York and Howard helped us out by playing. He's a big player, but he's a great playmaker."

And he'll also be a great host, helping make Brody and his group of young players feel comfortable on this leg of the trip.

"I'm very excited about bringing this group to Princeton," Brody said. "They'll get to see Princeton University. I have a lot of nice memories of that area. It was such a great area for basketball."