

New Jersey Jewish News
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Israeli Junior All Stars play Princeton High



by [Marilyn Silverstein](#)
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In the late hours of an early October afternoon, the scoreboard in the Princeton High School gymnasium read Princeton, 72, Israeli Junior All Stars, 59. But in the eyes of Israeli basketball legend Tal Brody, everyone on the basketball court that day was a winner.

“It’s an unbelievable experience for both teams,” said Brody, who was heading up the [America-Israel Friendship League](#) delegation of 12 high school basketball players from the north of Israel.

“This is a special, happy event to bring in teams from the North,” he said. “It’s a great prize for these guys, who experienced 4,000 Katyusha rockets falling on all of their homes — a great experience to come to the United States and see what’s going on at Princeton High School. It’s a great eye-opener for them.”



A native of Trenton, Brody is famous for leading the U.S. basketball team to gold in the 1965 Maccabiah Games in Israel and the Maccabi Tel Aviv basketball team to the finals of the 1967 European Cup basketball championships. He made aliya in 1970. Now an Israeli businessman residing in Herzliya, Brody was asked by the AIFL to lead the Israeli teens on their weeklong tour of the East Coast under the auspices of the nonsectarian, not-for-profit agency’s Citizenship Through Sports Exchange Program.

While in Princeton, the Israeli teens also enjoyed a reception and dinner at Princeton University’s Center for Jewish Life. Then it was on to New York and Philadelphia. During their tour, they visited the United Nations and the Statue of Liberty, played basketball with the Abraham Joshua Heschel High School team and the U.S. Junior Maccabiah team, enjoyed home hospitality, and were welcomed at the offices of the New York Knicks and the

Philadelphia 76ers.

“It’s a lifelong dream for all of these kids to come here,” said Maya Tadmor-Anderman, director of marketing and community relations for the AIFL. She explained that since it was founded in 1971, the AIFL has been bridging the differences between Americans and Israelis through sports.

“The goal is really to bring them together through sports. This is the commonality they have,” she said. “There are so many shared values through the two countries. The whole essence is to create a cross-cultural experience between the two people.”

Though exhausted from their game, two of the Israeli teens had more than enough breath to express the pleasure they were taking in that experience.

“I’m just very excited to be here,” said 17-year-old Itamar Ayali. “It’s very surprising — just tasting everything, watching everything. I’m amazed by how large everything is. I will always remember it. It’s a once-in-a-lifetime experience.”

Yonatan Zohar, the 17-year-old center of the Junior All-Stars, said he was very thankful to have the opportunity. “It’s very good,” he said. “It’s my first time in the States. I’m very happy to meet new people and new cultures. It’s an amazing experience.”



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