

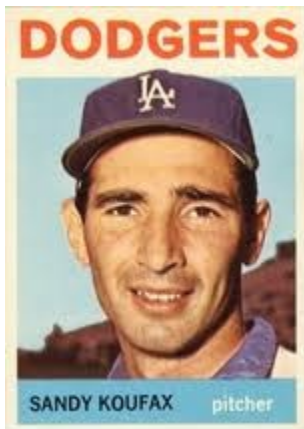
## Your Jewish Connection – Let’s Go Out to the Ball Game!

Brought to you by the Lifelong Learning Committee

Written by Linda S Trapasso

Sports are very much a part of our heritage, culture, connection, community, and memory. As a group not usually associated with sports, Jews, however, are well represented and have many sports heroes. One place to start discovering this is at the National Jewish Sports Hall of Fame with a focus on Americans (<http://www.jewishsports.org/jewishsports/index.shtml>). Each year they induct sports figures and others associated with sports into the Hall of Fame. (Click on “Inducted/Honored” at the top of the page for a comprehensive list). There are over 40 sports represented and include professionals, amateurs, collegiate, and high school athletes. Click on “Video” at the top of the page to watch the 2009 Induction Ceremony.

Do you enjoy baseball? In 2007, Jonah Keri wrote:



“Mark Spitz, the seven-time gold medalist swimmer at the 1972 Olympics, is Jewish. So’s Dolph Schayes, honored as one of the 50 greatest NBA players of all time. Then there’s the great Sandy Koufax. His refusal to play on Yom Kippur in 1965 sparked a firestorm of criticism and philosophical debate, since the holiday fell during Game 1 of the World Series. But Koufax came back to start three times, including a complete-game shutout in Game 5 and a three-hit shutout on just two days rest in Game 7, which clinched the Series for the Dodgers.

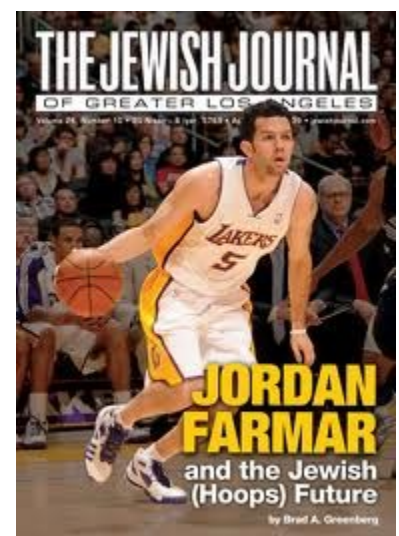
“Koufax’s decision to put his religious beliefs ahead of his pitching career enhanced his Jewish folk hero status and his legacy remains a big reason why so many otherwise non-observant Jews take the day off every Yom Kippur. Yet Spitz, Schayes and Sandy represent an exceptionally rare group of Jewish athletes who have reached the top of their profession.” (Copyright © 2011 Salon Media Group, Inc.)

Keri goes on to discuss his own brief sports odyssey and his choices for the 18 best Jewish ballplayers of all time ([http://www.salon.com/2007/09/01/jewish\\_baseball/](http://www.salon.com/2007/09/01/jewish_baseball/)), listing Sandy Koufax as number one.

If you’re into basketball, there’s a Web site for you – the Jewish Basketball Hall of Fame (<http://www.jewishhoopstars.com/index.html>). Their mission is to “... celebrate a proud Jewish cultural heritage of popular excellence and personal achievement in sports.” Click on “Directory of Players” to get a list of all the Jewish basketball players, coaches, referees, and managers/owners. Click “About the DVD” to find out about a DVD with footage of Jewish basketball players in action.

The Jewish Sports Foundation

(<http://www.jewishsportsfoundation.com/index.php>) is based in Illinois and aims to connect Jews in various ways through sports. Hover over “Jewish Sports Awards” on the left and then click on “Categories.” You’ll see that this organization honors professionals and amateurs as well as others associated with sports, plus an Israeli sports team.



For international sports figures, visit the International Jewish Sports Hall of Fame (<http://www.jewishsports.net/links.htm>). The International Jewish Sports Hall of Fame is a partnership between the Wingate Institute for Physical Education and Sports (which houses the Hall of Fame) in Netanya, Israel, and some of the world's leading sports authorities plus interested, active and philanthropic Jews. Click on "Honorees" at the top of the page and you'll discover that several awards are given to those who make a difference in sports around the world. Go to the "Munich Eleven" ([http://www.jewishsports.net/munich\\_eleven.htm](http://www.jewishsports.net/munich_eleven.htm)) for a tribute to those Israeli athletes we lost at the Munich Olympic Games in 1972.

Speaking of Israel, did you know that there are currently several Israeli teams playing American-style football? What is unique about this is that the team membership includes those from all parts of Israeli society. The belief is that if these mixed groups of athletes can come together as team, why can't the State of Israel? To learn more, go to Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com>) and search for "Touchdown Israel." This Facebook page is about a film being done by an American and looks at the teams as a model for peace and as a way to help bring about cooperation among those in Israel.

One last thing...if you're looking for more sports inspiration, there are quite a few books on Jewish sports figures. Go to any bookstore on the Web and do a search (<http://www.amazon.com> has about 500 titles and <http://www.barnesandnoble.com> has about 200 titles). Find a book that's perfect for you or a family member, and encourage yourself and others to engage in sports!