

# Maccabiah Games

## How Jewish Winnepeggars fared at the Maccabiah Games

By **BERNIE BELLAN**

Ten Winnepeggars recently participated in the Maccabiah Games in Israel (if you include Leonard Asper as a Winnipegger). The Maccabiah Games are held every four years. This year's games saw 10,000 athletes representing 80 different countries come to Israel from July 4-18. In addition, 22,000 fans also came from outside Israel.

Athletes are divided into four categories: junior, 15-18; open - open to any age; masters - different minimum ages in different sports; and paraplegic.

Two of the Winnipeg athletes who competed in individual sports acquitted themselves very well.

Swimmer Sydney Hnatuk Swick, who is 15, competed in a variety of swimming events at the games. She was the top performing Canadian swimmer in the junior (under 18 category), making it to the finals in each event in which she was entered. In the open water competition Sydney placed fourth out of 40 swimmers. Next up for Sydney are the Canada Games - right here in Winnipeg. (Sydney will be competing in the second week of the games, in the 100 and 200 m. backstroke, 1500 m. freestyle, and in the open water competition, to be held at Birds Hill Park.)

For Matthew Bernstein, 25, track and field was the area in which he decided to compete - in the open category although, as he noted to Harvey Rosen in an article which we published two issue back, Matthew played mostly football and basketball during his high school years. Even though he had some experience in track, coming up against some of the best Jewish athletes in the world was sure to prove a formidable challenge. Yet Matthew tells me he finished fifth in both the 100 m. and 200 m. finals and was part of the Bronze Medal-winning Canadian team in the 4 x 400 relay.

Other Winnipeg participants, all of whom participated in team sports, included: Shea Gorenstein and Max Mclean - junior hockey (where they won silver medals); Keenan Benarroch - men's basketball; Amanda



**SYNDEY HNATUK SWICK**

**top performing Canadian swimmer in Junior category, making it to the finals in every category in which she was entered.**

Greenberg - women's softball (silver medal); Jessica Hartog, junior girls' basketball; Sean Dollinger, men's softball); David Nepon (basketball coach/chaperone); and Leonard Asper, masters hockey (silver medalist).

Thanks to Al Greenberg for providing us with information.



**MATTHEW BERNSTEIN** (pictured above in red shirt) finished fifth in both the 100 m. and 200 m. finals. He was also a member of the Canadian 4x400 relay team which captured bronze - not bad for someone who played mostly football and basketball during high school!

## *My grandfather would have been proud of his great-great-grandchildren's performances at the Maccabiah Games*

By



**GERRY POSNER**

My grandfather Herman Posner had some skills, but athletic abilities were not part of the genetic package

he gave his seven children - including my father. Thus, if he could have been present recently in Israel at the Maccabiah Games, he would have wondered how it was possible that three of his great-great-grandchildren were competing in these games. Never mind competing - actually getting a medal. Yet, it's true.

For starters, his great-great grandson, Asher Segal Braves, from Toronto, a 16-year-old boy, ran for Canada on the junior track team in the 4 x 400 meters and as part of that team, he won a silver medal. In doing so, he was up against mainly 18-year-old boys. Asher is, in fact, my sister Linda's grandson and that he could be good enough just to make the team is astonishing in itself given Linda's complete lack of running talent.

Another great-great-granchild of my grandfather, Sophie Goodman, who just turned 17 and lives in Atlanta, Georgia was a member of the United States junior fencing team that won a silver medal. Sophie is the granddaughter of the late Beth Diamond Goodman, of Winnipeg, later of Montreal. Beth was, like my sister, lacking in athletic abilities.

As well, Gabby Meltzer, 15, a resident of North Carolina, was part of the junior American team that won gold in volleyball. Her grandmother, Cynthia Posner, still lives in Winnipeg. Gabby was born in Winnipeg and lived there until she was three years of age.

There you have it. A gold and two silvers for Herman and Katie Posner's great great grandchildren. How could that have happened?

For starters, what each of these three youngsters had was a desire to compete. That has to be the foundation of success in any sport. Second, each was part of a team, and that certainly helped to inspire their individual efforts. Third, the truth is that each trained hard for these games and were deserved winners. Last, I suppose that another reason the Posner descendants excelled was that they wanted to do their great great-grandparents, Herman and Katie proud, but if you believe that statement,



**ASHER SEGAL BRAVES**  
Gerry's great-nephew from Toronto won silver at the Maccabiah Games in the 4x400 relay as a junior.



**SOPHIE GOODMAN,**  
of Atlanta,  
won silver in fencing.

you deserve a medal for naivety. The reality is that even with the medal count in the family, one area where there would be no medals for the family is in knowledge of the family tree. None of the three cousins at the Maccabiah Games had the slightest idea that there were other Posner cousins in attendance.

I have tried to speculate what in the Herman Posner story could somehow connect to these medals. And then it struck me: Herman may not have been an athlete but he was, for a period of his life, a bootlegger, and he had to sometimes make a quick get away. Thus, he had to have some experience in getting a fast start similar to his great-great-grandson, Asher Segal Braves on the track. More significantly, just like Asher, he loved the track, only Herman's affection was for the kind of track the ponies run on.

Now, it is certain Herman was not used to fencing and likely never knew what it was, but he was used to the threat of a weapon when he was involved in running liquor. And, in that sense, he had much in common with his great-great-granddaughter Sophie Goodman, although Sophie did not have to fear getting hurt. And, it is also a fact that Herman was short, so volleyball was not in the cards for him. But, just as Gabby Meltzer had to move around on the volleyball court sometimes with bursts of speed, so too, Herman Posner was used to moving around and quickly, if necessary, to avoid going to court.

It's a long way from 1906 when Herman and Katie Posner came to Canada, and clearly they could not have imagined that 111 years later three of their descendants would win medals at something called the Maccabiah Games in Israel. But, you can bet on this: In the "nachas" department, Herman and Katie would have won gold.



**GABBY MELTZER,**  
who was born in Winnipeg and who now lives in North Carolina, won gold in volleyball.