



## PLAY BALL

### Books for Kids about Jews and Sports

Available at the Ratner & Technology Media Center

Berkow, Ira. *Hank Greenberg: Hall-of-Fame Slugger*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991. Elementary, Middle School.

Greenberg was the first Jewish ball-player to be elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame. This smooth reading biography chronicles his career and shows how Jewish values influenced his life.

Dublin, Anne. *Bobbie Rosenfeld: The Olympian Who Could Do Everything*. Toronto: Second Story Press, 2004. Elementary, Middle School.

The life story of a remarkable Canadian athlete, Bobbie Rosenfeld, who starred in the 1928 Olympics in Amsterdam, Holland. Besides being an engrossing account of this remarkable woman's life, the writing places Rosenfeld's achievements in the context of both social history and the politics of being a woman athlete at a time when resistance to women in sports was strong.

Goldman, David J. *Jewish Sports Stars: Athletic Heroes Past and Present*. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2004. Elementary, Middle School.

Brief biographies of Jewish athletes organized by sport and accompanied by black and white photographs. A list of Maccabee Award winners and many sports statistics are appended.

Grey, Vivian. *Moe Berg: The Spy Behind Home Plate*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996. Elementary and Middle School.

Moe Berg, one of the few Jews to play baseball in the major leagues, was a top-secret spy during World War II. With his help, the United States won the race against Germany to build the dreaded atomic bomb.

Hotchkiss, Ron. *The Matchless Six: The Story of Canada's First Women's Olympic Team*. Plattsburgh, NY: Tundra Books, 2006. Middle School.

The 1928 Canadian women's Olympic team in track and field made history because of their outstanding performance and for their role in the acceptance of women in sports. Their personal stories are told, along with an account of their training, motivation, challenges, and exploits. Bobbie Rosenfeld, the subject of another book on this list (see above), was the team leader.

Hurwitz, Johanna. *Baseball Fever*. NY: Avon, 1981. Elementary.

Ten year old Ezra Feldman's father cannot understand why his son would rather rot his brains watching men swinging big wooden sticks than read a book or play chess. They find common ground when he accompanies Ezra to a baseball game.

Kornblatt, Marc. *Understanding Buddy*, NY: McElderry/Simon & Schuster, 2001. Elementary, Middle School.

When a new classmate whose mother has just died rejects Sam's gestures of friendship, Sam tries to find solutions and answers based on Jewish teachings. A soccer subplot and realistic characterizations of contemporary children and a Jewish-American family add interest.

Konigsburg, E.L. *About the B'nai Bagels*. NY: Yearling, 1969. Elementary.

What is it like when your mom becomes manager of your Little League team? Find out in this Newbery Award winning story.

Lelchuk, Alan. *On Home Ground*. San Diego: Gulliver/Harcourt Brace, 1987.

A short, readable novel set in Brooklyn in the late 1940's. The theme is of understanding differences, the plot concerns a father-son relationship and Jackie Robinson's first season with the Dodgers. Boys who don't like to read will like this.

Levine, Anna. *Running on Eggs*. Chicago: Front Street/Cricket Books, 1999. Elementary, Middle School.

There are no villains, only misunderstandings, in this story of a tentative friendship between an Israeli girl and an Arab girl who are teammates on their school track team. Although the Arab-Israeli conflict is the central issue, many other aspects of contemporary Israeli life are explored.

Matas, Carol. *Rosie in Chicago - Play Ball!* NY: Aladdin Paperbacks, 2003. Primary, Elementary.

The second story in a series about a plucky immigrant girl. Here, Rosie disguises herself as a boy and fills in for an injured player on her brother's baseball team. She becomes a star in disguise because girls are not allowed to play baseball. The stricture against Jewish girls who desire a life outside the home and an education is a major theme of this book.

McDonough, Yona Zeldis. *Hammerin' Hank*. NY: Walker, 2006. Primary, Elementary.

A colorful picture biography of Hank Greenberg, highlighting not only his career in baseball, but his life and Jewish values as well. The illustrations are striking and the text is clear and concise. A fine introduction to a true Jewish American hero.

Meiseles, Shayna. *The Bat Mitzvah Club: Debbie's Story*. NY: Merkos, 2002. Elementary, Middle School.

Twelve year old Debbie faces her Bat Mitzvah with trepidation until her parents enroll her in a preparatory class called the Bat Mitzvah Club. The weekly club sessions engage Debbie and the other students and teach them to look forward to the responsibilities of the observant Jewish woman. Swimming competitions and a Holocaust mystery form part of the plot.

Portnoy, Mindy Avra. *Matzah Ball: A Passover Story*. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 1994. Primary.

Going to a baseball game with his friends during Passover presents a challenge to a young boy; what is he going to eat? A helpful stranger not only shares his matzah with him, but enables him to catch a baseball while holding onto the matzah. Guess who that "stranger" is!

Rinn, Miriam. *The Saturday Secret*. Los Angeles, Alef Design, 1999. Elementary, Middle School.

Jason Siegel thinks his stepfather has gone too far: no baseball games on Shabbat. This fast paced story combines the action of Little League sports with the moral problems of reconciling Shabbat observance with a Saturday baseball game.

Rosenfeld, Dina. *Yossi and Laibel On The Ball*. NY: Hachai. 1998. Primary

A new boy moves into Yossi and Laibel's neighborhood, showing the brothers that even though he uses a wheelchair, he's a great baseball pitcher. The rhyming narrative and realistic illustrations lend themselves to reading aloud.

Schwartz, Ellen. *Stealing Home*. Plattsburgh, NY: Tundra Books, 2006. Joey is a boy of mixed race who finds it hard to win his grandfather's acceptance when he goes to live with him in Brooklyn. Their mutual love of baseball helps to bridge the gap. Elementary.

Slater, Robert. *The Jewish Child's Book of Sports Heroes*. Middle Village, NY: Jonathan David, 1993. Elementary.

Runners, golfers, swimmers, bowlers and more - they are all here in short biographical sketches, illustrated with photographs.

Waldman, Neil. *Say-Hey and the Babe: Two Mostly True Baseball Stories*. New York: Holiday House, 2006. Primary; Elementary

Written and illustrated by a true baseball fan, this tells two related stories: one about the 1927 New York Yankees in which Babe Ruth starred and the other about the 1951 New York Giants, with Willie Mays as the star. Stickball as played on the New York streets is also part of the mix along with lore, players' nicknames, street slang, and records.



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