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## Hungarian boys catch up on sleep, Maccabi Games in Akron

### Soccer team happy to be here, despite travel mess

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The Hungarian boys soccer team left their homes in Budapest at 2 a.m. Sunday full of anticipation.

"This was the first trip to the United States for everybody," said 15-year-old David Herendi, "and we all were really excited to get to Akron."

But instead of playing soccer Monday as scheduled in the Akron JCC Maccabi Games, the 12-person Hungarian contingent ended up participating in a marathon travel nightmare, which included sleeping on desks in the Philadelphia International Airport and a nine-hour bus ride from Philadelphia to Akron.

Kata Ligeti, head of the Hungarian soccer delegation, said the misadventure was caused by a late flight from Vienna to Paris and bad weather in Philadelphia.

Because of the late flight, the Hungarians missed their plane from Paris to Detroit and had to take a later one to Philadelphia. Bad weather forced the cancellation of flights from Philadelphia to Detroit.

Each member of the delegation paid \$1,800 for round-trip tickets to and from the United States.

"It was supposed to take about 20 hours and we were supposed to get into Akron on Sunday night," Ligeti said. "But it took nearly two full days, and we were lucky to get here for the opening ceremonies Monday night."

"A lot of us don't have our luggage — I'm still wearing the clothes I put on in Budapest Friday night — and we're all tired. But we're all thankful to finally be here."

The Maccabi Games — held annually in various cities since 1982 — have brought 350 Jewish athletes, ages 12 to 16, to Akron this week from across the country and from Israel, as well as Hungary.

The opening ceremonies at the James A. Rhodes Arena lifted the spirits of the travel-weary Hungarian delegation, sponsored by the Maccabi Fencing and Athletic Club, which was shut down by the Nazis in World War II and by the Communists during the Cold War.

"The opening ceremonies were unbelievable," said 16-year-old Balazs Filczer. "Everybody was so nice to us and treated us kind of like rock stars."

The Hungarian athletes missed their two soccer games on Monday, and their schedule was revised to play three games on Tuesday.

They lost their early morning game and tied the late-morning match after fatigue and injuries took their toll.

The day's third match was canceled so the short-handed Hungarians — David Herendi is out with a bad cold he caught in the air conditioning in the Philadelphia airport, and goalie Adam Gyorgydeak is trying to play while recovering from a broken right forearm — could catch their breath.

"We are all very, very tired," Filczer said. "With all the problems with the travel and everything being so terrible, we just couldn't go anymore."

The Hungarian players spent Tuesday afternoon resting and getting medical attention at the Shaw Jewish Community Center.

Even the tough start to a two-week soccer trip — they will play in Detroit's Maccabi Games next week — can't put a damper on the spirit of the Hungarian contingent.

"It's a very good adventure," David said. "The American people are so much more open-minded [about Jewish people] than the Hungarian people.

"The Americans are interested in what we have to say and how we feel about things. And it's amazing that people get excited about us simply because we are Hungarian soccer players.

"That's really a great feeling to have, and no matter how tough it was to get to Akron, it was worth it. It's always nice to be noticed in a positive light because that doesn't happen in Hungary too often because we are Jewish."

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