

Sports >>>

Young athletes compete in 2008 JCC Maccabi Games

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By Mike D'Agruma

GREATER AKRON – Through Aug. 15, Akron and Beijing will have at least one thing in common – they'll both be hosting international competition.

From Aug. 11 through Aug. 15, Akron is playing host to the JCC Maccabi Games, an annual international Olympic-style, athletic, cultural and social event expected to bring more than 400 Jewish athletes from 24 delegations to the city. Akron is the smallest city to be invited to host the North American Games, which began in 1982, and its selection as a host location reflects both the spirit of its Jewish community and the quality of its civic life, according to Maccabi Games organizers.



Of the 24 delegations, Akron produced one of its own, which was comprised of 60 athletes, coaches and a delegation head. Team Akron's delegation is shown at right top as it enters during the Parade of Athletes at the Maccabi Games' Opening Ceremonies Aug. 11 at The University of Akron's (UA) James A. Rhodes Health & Physical Education Building.

Thom Mandel, who led the Games' Spectator's Oath with Joe Kanfer, is shown at left as he lights the Maccabi Games' ceremonial torch after a flame-carrying procession during the Opening Ceremonies.

The Akron JCC Maccabi Games includes basketball, soccer, tennis, bowling and track and field. Competition takes place at venues throughout the Akron area. Team Akron Gold's Alex Salzman (No. 13) is shown at right bottom as he drives past a Team Miami Beach defender during a Maccabi Games match up at the Shaw Jewish Community Center Aug. 11.

Though the JCC Maccabi Games are a chance for fun and competition, there is also an emphasis on history. According to organizers, the opening ceremonies of every JCC Maccabi Games include a tribute to the 11 Israeli Olympians murdered at the 1972 Olympics in Munich. Part of the Akron Games' tribute included a performance by The Dance Institute of UA, shown at right middle.

In addition, officials said the Maccabi Games strive to teach teens the value of "tikkun olam," the Hebrew phrase for "repairing the world." That value took center stage during the Games' Day of Caring and Sharing Aug. 13, a community service project that is a part of each JCC Maccabi Games and provides all athletes a chance to give back to the host community. Delegates were able to participate in four different community projects in Akron.

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