



PO Box 441
Garrison, NY 10524
www.ironboundfilms.com

Ironbound Films presents

ISRAEL SWINGS FOR GOLD

A Documentary by Seth Kramer, Daniel A. Miller, and Jeremy Newberger



WORLD PREMIERE

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77 minutes

Distributor

Neil Friedman
Menemsha Films
2525 Ocean Park Blvd., Suite 111
Santa Monica, CA 90405
(310) 452-1775
neilf@menemshafilms.com

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Logline

In 2021, Israel's baseball team competed in the Olympics for the first time. They learn quickly that representing Israel on the world stage is not just fun and games.

Short Synopsis

In 2021, Israel's baseball team competed in the Olympics for the first time. With no media allowed in Tokyo's Olympic Village, the players record their own experiences. Mostly newly minted Israelis, they log unexpected battles against anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. Victory for Israel comes on the playing field, even if not on the podium. *Israel Swings for Gold* follows the 2018 hit *Heading Home: The Tale of Team Israel*, about Israel's Cinderella run at the 2017 World Baseball Classic.

Long Synopsis

In 2021, Israel's baseball team competed in the Olympics for the first time. With no media allowed in Tokyo's Olympic Village, the players are given cameras to record their own experiences. The majority of Team Israel is American-born. Bombarded by Hamas rockets, they become citizens of Israel. Harassed by anti-Israel protesters, they play exhibition games in the States. When Team Israel finally reaches the Olympics, they discover a competition absent of the goodwill it's intended to promote. The Munich massacre is memorialized during the opening ceremony, but for the first time in fifty years. Heightened security measures are supposed to prevent a similar tragedy, but provide no shelter from the anti-Semitism that still thrives. The players get the cold shoulder from fellow athletes and death threats from spectators. Victory for Team Israel arrives on the playing field, even if not on the Olympic podium. *Israel Swings for Gold* follows the 2018 hit *Heading Home: The Tale of Team Israel*, about Israel's Cinderella run at the 2017 World Baseball Classic.



Directors' Statement

In 2017, the directors of *Israel Swings for Gold*—Seth Kramer, Daniel A. Miller, and Jeremy Newberger—directed *Heading Home: The Tale of Team Israel*. *Heading Home* charts the underdog journey of Israel's national baseball team as it competed for the first time in Major League Baseball's World Baseball Classic. Israel defeated South Korea, Taiwan, the Netherlands, and Cuba. But more importantly, they quashed the world's misconceptions about the prowess of Jewish athletes.

Released by Menemsha Films in 2018, *Heading Home* was a runaway hit. Its theatrical run lasted an unprecedented eleven months, held over by popular demand in markets like Chicago, South Florida, and Toronto. *Heading Home* enjoyed more than 500 often sold-out screenings in film festivals, synagogues, schools, and community centers around the globe. It won eight best documentary awards and widespread critical acclaim, including being counted among *Rotten Tomatoes*' "35 Best Baseball Movies of All Time."

And then, Israel's baseball team performed a second miracle. In 2019, Israel was ranked a lowly 24 among the world's teams. Tokyo added baseball to the 2020 Olympics, the first time since 2008, but would only allow six nations to compete. With wins across European tournaments, and perhaps some divine intervention, Israel shocked the world by clinching one of the spots. Israel had not participated in any team sport in the Olympics since 1976.

As the directors of *Heading Home*, we jumped at yet another opportunity to capture history being made by Israel's baseball team. Little did we know how much more complicated and fraught with obstacles their journey would be. While *Heading Home* captures the triumph of the underdog, *Israel Swings for Gold* documents a seemingly unwinnable struggle against hatred, prejudice, and high expectations. It's a story that, we guess you can say, is more Israeli.

About the Filmmakers

Seth Kramer, Daniel A. Miller, and Jeremy Newberger are Ironbound Films. Headquartered in an old inn on the Hudson River opposite West Point, Ironbound creates documentaries for theaters, television, and the web. We produced and directed *Israel Swings for Gold*. In addition, Daniel wrote, Seth edited, and Jeremy field produced the film.

Our most recent documentary, *Yung Punx: A Punk Parable*, chronicles the meteoric rise of Color Killer, a punk band of four eight-to-twelve-year-olds. A cult classic at children's film festivals, *Yung Punx* makes its international premiere on all platforms care of Gravitas Ventures on February 7, 2023. *SNL/Rick and Morty's* Chris Parnell narrates.

Before that, *Heading Home: The Tale of Team Israel* won eight film festival awards, was a huge hit in theaters, and is now available on all digital platforms. "It's hard to imagine a true-life underdog tale more engaging than *Heading Home*," raved the *Los Angeles Times*, "a winning David vs. Goliath baseball documentary that covers all the crowd-pleasing bases."

Our previous documentary was *The Anthropologist*. Hailed as "utterly winning" by the *Los Angeles Times* and "stealthily insightful" by *The New York Times*, *The Anthropologist* premiered at DOC NYC, screened at more than 50 film festivals, and won numerous awards. It hit theaters care of Argot Pictures in 2016 and maintains a 100% rating on *Rotten Tomatoes*.

Before that, *Évocateur: The Morton Downey Jr. Movie* premiered at Tribeca, hit theaters care of Magnolia Pictures, and aired on CNN in 2015. It was a *New York Times* Critics' Pick and chosen in 2013 as best documentary by NY1, a top-ten movie by *LA Weekly*, and a top-ten documentary by *USA Today* and the International Press Academy.

We also produced and directed *The New Recruits*. It profiles social entrepreneurs in Kenya, India, and Pakistan using market principles to fight poverty. Narrated by Rainn Wilson, *The New Recruits* aired on PBS and in 2011 was nominated for an Emmy for Outstanding Business and Economic Reporting.

Our documentary *The Linguists* is the world's first look at how languages become endangered, and how scientists document, archive, and help return them to use. The first film funded by the National Science Foundation ever to premiere at Sundance, *The Linguists* aired on PBS and in 2010 was nominated for an Emmy for Outstanding Science and Technology Programming.

Seth was nominated for an Emmy for Outstanding Historical Programming for *Resistance: Untold Stories of Jewish Partisans* (PBS, 2002). Daniel was nominated for *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann* (PBS, 1997).

Seth is an Artvark (University of the Arts in Philadelphia, 1996), Daniel a Brunonian (Brown University, 1994.5), and Jeremy a Great Dane (SUNY Albany, 1995). They are all dads: of Lillian, Sander and Asa, and Samson and Annabelle, respectively. They live within play-date proximity in the Hudson Valley, New York.



About Israel Baseball

The Israel Association of Baseball (IAB) was founded in 1986, and has overseen the growth of the sport in the country ever since. Today, there are nearly 1,000 players on 80 teams across six leagues throughout the country. The IAB is a member of the Israel Olympic Committee, Confederation of European Baseball, World Baseball Softball Confederation, Major League Baseball International, and Little League.

As part of the expansion of baseball activities in Israel, the IAB is building new fields in conjunction with the Jewish National Fund-USA's Project Baseball. The IAB looks forward to the completion of the new Bet Shemesh complex in Bet Shemesh, Israel, which will host international tournaments. Ezra Schwartz Ballpark was opened last year in Ra'anana, Israel. There are also plans to expand and add lighting to the Sportek Tel Aviv field.

Team Israel has made noise in recent years at the international level. After reaching the quarterfinals at the 2017 World Baseball Classic, Team Israel qualified for the 2020 Olympic Games and finished fifth in Tokyo. It followed that up by earning the silver medal at the 2021 European Championship. Team Israel will next compete in Pool D of the 2023 World Baseball Classic in Miami alongside the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela.



Film Credits

Israel Swings for Gold

Directed by
Seth Kramer
Daniel A. Miller
Jeremy Newberger

Written by
Daniel A. Miller

Editor
Seth Kramer

Field Producer
Jeremy Newberger

Associate Producer
Graham Wright

Team Israel Producer
Nate Fish

Featuring the 2021 Israel National Baseball Team and their footage

Jordy Alter
Jeremy Bleich
Scott Burcham
Jonathan de Marte
Tal Erel
Nate Fish
Jake Fishman
Blake Gailen
Mitch Glasser
Eric Holtz
Alex Jacobs
Richard Kania
Alex Katz
Ty Kelly
Ian Kinsler
Peter Kurz
Ryan Lavarney
Alon Leichman
Shlomo Lipetz
Andrew Lorraine

Assaf Lowengart
Jon Moscot
Nate Mulberg
Robb Paller
Zach Penprase
Nick Rickles
DJ Sharabi
Danny Valencia
Joey Wagman
Ben Wanger
Zack Weiss
Josh Zeid

Additional Cinematography

Simone Boccalatte
Nikolas Diener
Roger T. Grange, III
Seth Kramer
Dror Lebendiger
Graham Wright

Sound

Alex Lingle
Nick Rumaczyk
Justin Smigley

Sound Editor
Sara Stern

Sound Mixer
Kevin Wilson

Colorist
Alex Berman

Legal
Laverne Berry

Executive Producer
Matt Wasserlauf

Produced by
Seth Kramer
Daniel A. Miller
Jeremy Newberger