

The early development of Hebrew football in Eretz Israel, 1910–1928

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By adopting a developmental approach, this essay describes the central processes that marked the early years (1910–28) of Hebrew football in Eretz Israel (Land of Israel). The essay also examines the initial evidence regarding the establishment of football teams in Israel, the first institutionalized games, the various international meets and the place of football as a consequence of political and social relationships in Eretz Israel during that period. This effort mainly relates to the initial period preceding the establishment of the football association. The formation of the football association, as described in this essay, marks the end of the formative period and the beginning of a new era in Israeli football.

Introduction

Football (soccer) is the most popular sport in Israel. This popularity is reflected both in the numbers of participants and spectators involved and in the extensive coverage the game receives in today's Israeli media.¹ This essay will describe the central processes that marked the early years of Hebrew football in Eretz Israel (Land of Israel). By adopting a developmental approach, it will also examine the initial evidence regarding the establishment of football teams in Israel, the first institutionalized games, the various international meets and the place of football as a consequence of political and social relationships in Eretz Israel during that period. This essay will relate to the initial period preceding the establishment of the football association. The formation of the football association, as described in this essay, marks the end of the formative period and the beginning of a new era in Israeli football.

Football during Ottoman rule: early records

The first gymnastics and sports associations were established in Israel at the end of the Ottoman period at the beginning of the twentieth century. The 'Rishon Lezion' association, founded in Jaffa, was the first of them. Others followed, such as 'Shimshon', which was established by the Zion 'Maccabi' workers in Jerusalem, and Maccabi associations in various settlements. In September 1912 the Maccabi organization was founded in Tel Aviv and became the roof organization uniting all the gymnastics associations in Israel.²

The principal question that arises is, when did football begin to be played within these or other frameworks? The gymnastics associations were intended to promote general fitness activity and not competition and the few sources available do not provide an accurate answer. Various evidence from the early years of the century mentioned football games in Jerusalem, Nes Ziona, Rehovot, Tel Aviv and Zichron Ya'acov between 1910–12.³ In other words, the establishment of the first gymnastics associations coincided with the years in which football games began to be played in Israel. We have no information concerning who brought the game to Israel. It is known

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that in those very years the game began to gain popularity in Russia leading to the establishment of the Russian Football Association. Therefore it is more likely than not that the game was brought to Israel by newcomers during the second 'Aliya' (wave of immigration), consisting mostly of Russians.⁴

The first written account of a football game in Eretz Israel was published in *Hacherut* newspaper on 14 April 1912. The news refers to the Rehovot Games – the main sporting event of that time which was held annually at Passover.⁵ The report stated, *inter alia*, 'that the Rehovot Games included gymnastics exercises and various games such as football'.

Additional evidence of the game's popularity was the publication in 1913 of *Football*, a book written by Zvi Orlev (Nishri), which contains the rules of the game, practice methods and relevant terms, including Hebrew words in use to this day (for goal keeper, forward, runners, defence, free kick, penalty kick, etc.). The need for such a book would indicate the importance of the game in contemporary Israeli society in those years. Nishri, who taught gymnastics at the Gymnasia Herzlia (secondary school) in Tel Aviv, was a staunch proponent of the Swedish approach to exercise and opposed the English method with its emphasis on team activities using a ball. The fact that he authored a book about football suggests that there was a strong need for it in general, and especially among his students.⁶

Football teams and first challenges

During this period there were no institutionalized games, no permanent pitches (most of the games were being played on makeshift fields),⁷ and the transportation available in Eretz Israel did not allow great mobility. Thus, opportunities for geographically distant teams to compete were very limited and most of the competitions held then were more like neighbourhood pick-up games today. Nevertheless, there are some indications that *organized* football teams with regular line-ups, coaches, uniforms and so on did exist. Information is sporadic and partial, but sufficient to cull a few facts.

The Gymnasia Herzlia in Tel Aviv had a football team, which, based on several records, was called Ofer. The Maccabi Tel Aviv (also called Maccabi Jaffa) football department was organized in 1912 or 1913, and in 1915 the Ayala⁸ football team was established as part of Maccabi Tel Aviv. Other Maccabi football departments were created during those years, and the sporadic data at hand tells us of football departments in Petach Tikva, Mikveh Israel, Rechovot, Rishon Lezion, Nes Ziona and Jerusalem.

The football teams from the various clubs held friendly games on Saturdays, which were sometimes mentioned in the newspapers. Competitions were also held between Jewish and Arab teams, mainly teams composed of Arab students studying at the American College in Beirut that played during vacations, usually against Maccabi Tel Aviv, or a mixed team composed of Maccabi Tel Aviv and Gymnasia Herzlia students.⁹ This evidence indicates that, even under the difficult conditions prevailing during the First World War, football was played in Eretz Israel. Some evidence points to ties created between Maccabi Tel Aviv and Turkish soldiers.¹⁰ Maccabi players instructed the Turkish soldiers and even held games against them.¹¹ One can assume that this cooperation ended when Ottoman pressure on the Jewish settlement increased and sports activities were stopped.

The British conquest, cup tournaments and leagues games in Eretz Israel: the British influence

In 1917 the British conquered the southern part of Eretz Israel. By the end of 1918 the entire country was under its military rule. In July 1920 the British Mandate began unofficially in Israel

and, following the San Remo decisions of April 1920, the first British High Commissioner, Herbert Samuel, arrived in Israel. In July 1922 the League of Nations authorized the mandate which included a commitment to establish a national home for the Jewish people in Eretz Israel, and British mandatory rule in Eretz Israel commenced officially, continuing until May 1948.

The British did not leave a lasting cultural mark on the Jewish settlement in Eretz Israel and the Jewish settlement nurtured its own autonomic frameworks which were almost completely free of British influence. Because of the desire to create a new Hebrew culture, cultural influences that might endanger the new cultural national hegemony were often rejected with great zeal. English did not become the vernacular and typical colonial British sports such as cricket and hockey were rarely played in Israel. The British for their part did not intervene in the activities of various institutions, including sports organizations, which began before the British conquest.¹² Football was, in this sense, an exception. Football was a British game to begin with and the most popular sport in the Isles from the middle of the nineteenth century. It was the British who spread the football culture around the world, especially in South America. Although the British did not bring football to Eretz Israel, their contribution to its development was crucial. The British forces in Israel organized their own football teams, spurred the establishment of additional Jewish football teams, and significantly accelerated the process of making football the number one game, a process which had begun during the Ottoman period. The creation of more teams led to more games and attempts to institutionalize them. Thus, the establishment of the football association in 1928 did not mark the beginning of football in Eretz Israel, but rather marked the climax of a process begun early during the British Mandate.

Establishing football teams

The combination of football's popularity and the British influence resulted in the establishment of many Jewish and Arab teams in Eretz Israel.¹³ The first Jewish football teams under British influence were those set up by the Jewish Brigades. When the British army conquered the south of the country in 1917 a Jewish Brigade composed of young men in Eretz Israel was created. Many Maccabi members in the country enlisted in the brigade, and its four squadrons set up their own football teams. A Jewish Brigade all-star team was also established. The teams competed against each other and against British army unit teams. Members of the Jewish teams included players who had been active footballers before the outbreak of the war.¹⁴

The sources available to us do not provide full information about all the new Hebrew football teams created in Eretz Israel during the 1920s. From what we have we can classify them into three categories. The first were football departments within existing Maccabi associations. There was almost no Maccabi association at that time without its own football division or section (as it was called in those days). The strongest football team in those years was Maccabi Tel Aviv, thanks mainly to Shimon Leumi (formerly Lomek), an elite European player. Lomek had played for several years in the top Jewish team Hakoach Vienna before immigrating to Israel in 1920. In that same year he joined Maccabi Tel Aviv, and contributed greatly to the creation of a structured, systematic game not seen in the country until then.¹⁵ Other football teams came from Maccabi clubs in Jerusalem, Nes Ziona, Rehovot, Petach Tikva, Haifa, Gedera, Ekron, Tiberius, Zichron Ya'akov and Rishon Lezion.

The second category consisted of football associations belonging to 'Hapoel'. The process of establishing the Hapoel associations, which belonged to the Labor movement in Eretz Israel, began in 1923 with Hapoel Tel Aviv and in 1924 with Hapoel Haifa. The economic crises that marked the end of the third Aliya in 1923 and the fourth Aliya (beginning at the end of 1926) resulted in unemployment and enforced leisure time, which was utilized by workers for sports activities, mainly football. The establishment of Hapoel Haifa is a good illustration. Initially,

groups of pioneers in Haifa decided to establish a football team, so they set up a football club to which, over time, other sports were added. The change in the organizational process in comparison to the Ottoman period is quite salient here: instead of starting with gymnastics associations that later added a football department, during Mandate times the primary basis for establishing a club was football, to which other sports might or might not be added.¹⁶

The Haifa branch of Hapoel was followed by additional workers' teams in the Jezreel Valley (also initiated on the basis of football)¹⁷ and, in May 1926, by the creation of a national confederation under the control of the Hapoel organization. Hapoel branches sprung up throughout the country in those years, all of them with football teams. But only the Hapoel teams from Haifa and Tel Aviv distinguished themselves in the official games of those years.

The third category consisted of youth teams independently organized to establish football teams. News reports of football games of that era contain the names of youth teams not associated (in name) with Hapoel or Maccabi, but even without sufficient information about them one can assume that some of them were affiliated in one way or another with Maccabi because they participated in cup and league games organized by that organization.¹⁸

Towards the end of the 1920s most of these teams disappeared. They probably merged with the 'Maccabi' association, and sometimes the old name was retained: for instance, in 1925 Maccabi Chashmonai merged with Maccabi Jerusalem (to be called Maccabi Chashmonai Jerusalem). The 'Hazvi' club also added Maccabi to its name.¹⁹ In Haifa the 'Hagibor' association merged with Maccabi.²⁰

An episode, which especially riled feelings at the time, was the decision of the 'Allenby' youth team to join Hapoel Tel Aviv in 1927, shortly after its establishment. At the same time, the Allenby team published a sharp letter criticizing Maccabi, including severe allegations about how the atmosphere in Maccabi was 'poisoning through professionalism and the commercialization of football'. Both Allenby's decision to join Hapoel and the allegations against Maccabi angered Maccabi personnel and the issue became a cause of concern in the press.²¹ Allenby substantially reinforced Hapoel, creating the skeleton of Hapoel Tel Aviv that would later become the strongest team of the Hapoel centre.

The 'Eretz Israel' British cup

The creation of so many football teams led to football matches between Jewish teams, between Jewish and British teams and at times between Jewish and Arab teams. The press of the period is full of short reports about these games. Although these games were not 'official' in that they were not part of league or cup competitions, they generated considerable interest and drew many spectators.

The first attempt to institutionalize football in Israel was made in 1923 by the establishment of the 'Sport Club' in Jerusalem by high echelon British officials. The club arranged Eretz Israel Cup tournament games with the participation of any football teams in the country that wished to register. The Flying Team of Ramla, representing the British Air Force, won most of the cup games.²² The Hebrew press barely reported these competitions and only occasionally mentioned the participation of one Jewish team or another in them.

British hegemony came to an end as a result of a policy change. Lord Plumer, who assumed his post as High Commissioner in 1925, was of the opinion that too many military forces were crowded into Eretz Israel and he initiated reforms intended to reduce the British forces there. In 1922 there were 6,300 army personnel and 100 policemen. In 1929 there were only 300 British soldiers.²³ The reduction in the number of British military forces also diminished the number of football teams, the leave-takers including the league-leading Flying Team of Ramla. At the same time, sentiments turned towards revamping both the cup tournament and football in general in

Eretz Israel,²⁴ which would lead to the institution of cup tournaments and to the establishment of the Football Association in 1928.

Magen Shimshon (Samson Shield)

In 1923 the Maccabi organization initiated cup games for its teams, the first such games for Jewish teams in the country. Because of transportation limitations, teams in the centre of the country played against one another and the winner played for the cup against Maccabi Haifa. In the final, Maccabi Nes Ziona defeated Maccabi Haifa and thus became the first Hebrew team to win a Hebrew cup. The daily Hebrew press reported sparingly on these games and therefore our information is patchy and is drawn mainly from the Maccabi journal, which also supplied partial information. In 1924 Maccabi Nes Ziona again won the cup (against whom we do not know) and in 1925 Maccabi Tel Aviv trounced Maccabi Petach Tikva in the final by a score of 7-0 to win the cup. In 1926 only eight teams participated in the games and Maccabi Tel Aviv whipped Chashmonai Jerusalem by a score of 6-1 to take the cup again.

In 1927 the *Magen Shimshon* games were held for the last time and in the final, held in Jerusalem, Maccabi Gibor Haifa defeated Maccabi Chashmonai Jerusalem 4-0.²⁵ This was the swan song of these games, to be replaced by the Eretz Israel Cup Games organized in 1928.

Regional leagues

As the inconvenience and expense of transportation in those years made it difficult to conduct national leagues for the whole country, the alternative was regional leagues, about which we learn from the sporadic reports that appeared in the press, which, incidentally, hardly ever mentioned the framework in which the games were played. From the partial data available, we know of four regional leagues at one stage or another: the first in Jerusalem, the second in Tel Aviv, the third in Judea (the southern settlements) and the fourth in Haifa.

The Jerusalem league was organized by the Association of Football Teams in Jerusalem under Maccabi patronage and included 11 Jewish teams at its inception. However, it is known that eventually there was a league of six Jerusalem teams.²⁶ Other football projects were also held in Jerusalem: a tournament for Jewish teams, the Nashashibi cup (named after the mayor of Jerusalem) for all Jerusalem teams and the British Deeds cup (named after Windham Deeds, the secretary of the British government in Eretz Israel at that time), for the various British government departments. This British league, established in 1920, was actually the first British attempt in Eretz Israel to establish a football league. The high turnover of British officials during those years caused the league to cease operations and they were renewed only in 1925.²⁷

The first league matches in the Tel Aviv district were held in 1923 with the participation of Maccabi Avshalom Petach Tikva, Nordia Rishon Letzion, Maccabi Tel Aviv, Maccabi Nes Ziona and Hakoach Tel Aviv. The Maccabi journal of November 1923 presents all the game results and the standings at the end of the first round. Maccabi Tel Aviv led with 12 points (six wins and one loss).²⁸ However, we do not know if another round was held and what happened to the league later on. We do know that at the end of 1928 a regional league was again held in Tel Aviv and along with Maccabi Tel Aviv and Maccabi Avshalom Petach Tikva, Hapoel Tel Aviv and three British teams also played: Zerifin Hospital, a new Flying Ramla team and Wireless Zerifin.²⁹

At the end of 1923 another league in the Judea region was organized that included Rishon Lezion, Nes Ziona, Gedera, Rechovot and Ekron. Rishon Lezion came in first, ahead of Nes Ziona, Ekron and Rechovot. The weak Gedera team withdrew during the course of competitions. We have no additional knowledge about this league either.³⁰

An English officer named Holmes also established a Haifa league consisting of nine teams. We do not know their names, but unlike other regional leagues at that time it also included non-Jewish teams. The fact that the teams in the league were not all Jewish created a great deal of tension, stress and violence. According to a news item published in *Haaretz* on 3 March 1925, Colonel Holmes decided to cancel the league ‘due to brawls and quarrels’.

Eretz Israel cup of 1928

The departure of the British forces prompted by the reforms instituted by High Commissioner Plumer, including players of the cup holders Flying Ramla, led to a reorganization of Eretz Israel Cup Games. In March 1928, a meeting of representatives of Jewish, British and Arab teams was held to organize the games. The cup itself was donated by the Carmel Mizrachi company and 12 teams registered, half of them Jewish: Maccabi and Hapoel Tel Aviv, Hapoel Haifa, Maccabi Chashmonai Jerusalem and Hapoel Jerusalem and Maccabi Petach–Tikva. In addition, the Arab Carmel Haifa team registered as well as five British teams: the British police all-stars, Eretz Israel Police all-stars, Flying Gaza, the Military Hospital all-stars, and Flying Amman (the British Mandate included both sides of the Jordan).

The results of the games clearly indicated the changes engendered by the reduction in British forces: the Jewish teams were now far superior. Two Jewish teams reached the finals. Hapoel Tel Aviv overcame the Military Hospital in the quarter-finals 3-1 (in a re-played game after the first ended in a 3-3 draw) and Flying Gaza in the semis, 1-0. The other team, Maccabi Chashmonai Jerusalem, surprisingly defeated the strongest team, Maccabi Tel Aviv, 3-2 in the quarter-finals and Hapoel Haifa in the semis, 1-0. The final took place on the Maccabi pitch in Jaffa before 5,000 spectators in May 1928, where Hapoel Tel Aviv overcame Maccabi Chashmonai 2-0. Maccabi Chashmonai appealed, arguing that one of Hapoel’s players was not legally registered. The cup committee accepted the appeal, rejected Hapoel’s protest and rebuffed their proposal to replay the game. Instead, the committee decided to share the cup between the two teams. This game, which was played before the official establishment of the football association, is considered today as the first final of Eretz Israel Cup Games, which later became the Israel Cup Games.³¹

International meets

The development of football during the 1920s was not only an internal matter. There were international aspects as well, with teams coming from abroad and more important, visits of football teams from Israel to countries outside the mandatory borders. The aims of these meets may be classified into two main planes: On the Jewish plane, the competitions were intended to strengthen ties between Jews in Eretz Israel and Jews in the Diaspora, and to create positive propaganda for Jewish settlement in Eretz Israel. An Eretz Israel team manifesting sports prowess is an impressive expression of the new muscular Jew developing in Zion and a source of pride and identification. On the international plane, the many visits of Eretz Israel teams abroad constituted a part of the Jewish settlement’s desire to win international legitimization and another stepping stone in establishing the state-in-formation. Furthermore, there was a great desire to improve relations with the neighbouring Arab countries, as an attempt to fit into the Middle East and avert Arab hostility based on the tense relations with the Arab population in Eretz Israel.³²

The visits of Hakoach Vienna

The Jewish Hakoach Vienna football team was considered one of the best in Europe at the time, winning Austria’s first professional championship in 1925. In January 1924 Hakoach arrived in

Eretz Israel for a series of games at the invitation of Maccabi Eretz Israel. During this visit the team played three games: the first against Maccabi Tel Aviv ended 5-1 for Hakoach; the second, against an English team composed of players from senior British teams in the country such as Flying Ramla, the Gendarmerie and others, was held in Jerusalem in the presence of High Commissioner Herbert Samuel. Hakoach won this game as well, 3-0. The third game, played in Haifa against an English team from the northern part of the country, ended in a 1-1 draw.

A year later, in January 1925, Hakoach made a second visit to Eretz Israel, during which it played two games. In the first it overcame a composite Maccabi team put together after a series of competitions (there were six players from Maccabi Tel Aviv, three from Hatzvi Jerusalem and two from Hagibor Jerusalem) by a score of 11-2. The second game, held in Jerusalem, was played against an all-British Eretz Israel Team and this game was also won by Hakoach, 4-2. An additional game was scheduled for Haifa but Maccabi Haifa did not manage to complete arrangements for it.³³

Hakoach's visit to Eretz Israel was one of the bedrock events in the history of football in the country. Hakoach players were welcomed enthusiastically and received coverage in the Hebrew press. These visits were the first sport event to receive especially broad exposure, and thousands of spectators attended each of the games.³⁴ The Hakoach Vienna visits also played a decisive role by demonstrating the propaganda power of the sport. All visits by Hebrew clubs abroad were to a great extent an outcome of the publicized visits of the Viennese team.³⁵ Professionally, the visits set a new standard for the sport in terms of attitude, training, technique and facilities. It is not surprising that the first organizational attempts to establish football and a football league in Eretz Israel began in this period.

Maccabi Tel Aviv in Europe and Maccabi Hagibor Haifa in the United States

The first Eretz Israel team to play games outside Eretz Israel was Maccabi Tel Aviv. The team played first in Vienna where it lost to the 'Jewish Austrian team' (aka Hakoach Vienna) 5-1. It then moved on to Czechoslovakia and Poland. All of Maccabi Tel Aviv's games were against Jewish Maccabi teams, indicating the Zionist propaganda intent of the visit. Of the 20 games it played, Maccabi Tel Aviv won 13, drew four and lost three.³⁶

The idea of inviting Maccabi Haifa to the United States was initiated by an American promoter who wanted to play one-upmanship with a colleague who had earlier invited Hakoach Vienna to the United States. The success of the Viennese team's visit evidently sparked the idea of bringing another Jewish team to the United States. Since the quality of football in Israel was low, it was decided to send a Maccabi Haifa team with reinforcements in the form of Jewish Hungarian players, some of who had been suspended from the league for various reasons (one of them, presumably, anti-Semitism). It was obvious that the reinforcements from Hungary were motivated by money and by ideology, sparking a sharp dispute between the new Hapoel association and the Maccabi organization in Eretz Israel. For Hapoel, the inclusion of 'ringers' was conclusive proof of Maccabi's illegal 'professionalism'.

Maccabi Haifa left the country at the end of May 1927 and returned in August of the same year. Its journey was widely reported and at times made the top headlines in the daily national newspaper *Doar Hayom*, which normally paid little attention to sport in Eretz Israel. Overall, Maccabi Haifa played 11 games in the United States, winning five, losing five and drawing one.

Maccabi Haifa's tour ended with a resounding silence. As expected by the detractors, the Hungarian players and even some of the players from Israel remained in the United States. At a meeting of Maccabi Haifa members, as described in *Doar Hayom* on 6 September 1927, team manager Chaim Weissburg presented a report that completely contradicted the glowing accounts he had written (for the same newspaper) during the preceding months. The number of spectators

in attendance was not large because soccer is not popular in the United States. The impresario in charge of arrangements ran off with the money, leaving the team to beg for assistance from the Zionist Federation in the United States to complete its visit.³⁷

Games in Arab countries

Throughout the period of the British Mandate, Eretz Israel teams maintained ties with neighbouring Arab countries – Egypt, Syria and Lebanon – but a lack of sport relations prevailed between Arabs and Jews in Eretz Israel, mostly from the 1930s and onwards. Geographical proximity, convenient transportation links and the fair, even enthusiastic, treatment showered on the Jewish athletes all contributed to the ties, especially in Egypt. It should be remembered that these countries were under the patronage of Britain and France, the superpowers of the time, and not independent nations. The good relations which were formed in Egypt also help Eretz Israel to be accepted by FIFA.

The ties in those years were few and rudimentary. The first football ties with Egypt we know about were with the Jews of that country. In July 1925, the Hazofim (Scouts) Alexandria team visited Israel and held several games against Jewish teams. Along the way they were beaten by Maccabi Tel Aviv 5-3 and they defeated Hapoel Haifa 3-1. In April 1927 the Egyptian-Greek Ramla-Atis football team visited Israel and defeated Maccabi Tel Aviv 1-0, and in November 1927 Maccabi Chashmonai Jerusalem visited Alexandria and Cairo where they were beaten by Zamalak Cairo 5-2 and apparently drew 1-1 in a second game held in Cairo.³⁸

In March 1928 the first Hapoel team to venture outside the borders of Israel was Hapoel Haifa, which was invited to compete with the American University team in Beirut. Haifa won by a score of 4-1.³⁹

The team that did not go to England

In 1928 a first attempt was made to create an all-star team to represent Eretz Israel. The initiative came from Sir Alfred Mond (Lord Melchett) who visited Eretz Israel and in June 1928 announced that he was ready to allocate £2,000 to a Jewish team that would tour England and play against strong British sides. Maccabi and Hapoel representatives set to the task. They organized the Mond Cup Games for the four top teams in the country at the time: Maccabi Tel Aviv, Maccabi Chashmonai Jerusalem, Hapoel Tel Aviv and Hapoel Haifa. At the end of two round robin games, Hapoel Tel Aviv remained undefeated. Three committees were also set up to prepare the all-star team: a central committee, a professional committee and an administrative committee.

Assembling a team was not an easy task. Each centre strove to include as many of its members as possible in the 18-person delegation. The Hapoel people claimed that Hapoel Tel Aviv's superiority called for a larger number of representatives from that team. In addition to the various confrontations in the committees on technical matters connected to preparing the team (flying the Jewish flag, determining the composition of the team and so on), the press criticized the whole idea, contending that the level of football in Eretz Israel was too low and the shameful results would only bring shame and discredit to its image.

At the Hapoel centre meeting held on 5 August 1928 it was decided to postpone the trip for a year and to ask Lord Mond to bring a coach from England to prepare the local team during that year. Abba Chushi and others from Haifa argued that a one year postponement would not significantly change the situation. This decision evidently put an end to preparations. A coach from England never arrived and the whole idea eventually disappeared from the sports agenda.⁴⁰

Politics and violence on the football grounds

The 1920s were the years in which the political character of the Jewish settlement in Eretz Israel was formed. Numerous political camps were formed. The workers' camp included several parties under a roof organization called the 'Histadrut'. The civilian camp was a proponent of private enterprise and a capitalistic economy, and it included the Revisionist party. Other camps were the religious camp and various ethnic camps. These camps engaged in a fight to determine the identity and nature of the society evolving in Eretz Israel and each set up its own institutions (sick funds, military organizations, educational streams, etc.) with defined political agendas. The establishment of political camps meant hostilities and disputes.

Relations between the political camps were also one of the main reasons for the creation of Hapoel. When Hapoel Haifa was established, the original idea was for it to function independently within the Maccabi framework. However, the political tensions in the Jewish settlement led to a split with Maccabi and the establishment of an independent workers' sport association. Maccabi, for its part, had no intention initially of becoming a political organization but the establishment of Hapoel pushed it, against its will, to a great extent, towards the civilian camp. Various attempts by Maccabi to prevent the rift failed because of the hostilities and suspicions prevailing between the parties.⁴¹

Football became one of the prime means for expressing inter-camp hostility. It was the most popular sport in Israel at the time and many suggestions were made to create proper institutions and to maintain competitions on a regularly scheduled basis. Yet, as the matches became more official, expressions of hostility grew stronger, and maintaining regular sports relations in football became more difficult. The hostility was manifested in violence by players and fans at the games themselves, and in the many conflicts between the sports centres on emotionally sensitive issues. Not surprisingly, much criticism was levelled in those years against football in general and many expressed reservations about the *hysteria* and violence that enveloped the sport.

Violent incidents on the field

Football matches between Maccabi and Hapoel (mainly in Tel Aviv and Haifa) became in many cases a violent arena for the fans of each team as well as for the players on the field. Violence between fans is a common sight at football matches, but here there seemed to be an additional dimension. The football pitch *legitimized* the discharge of political rage, which in other circumstances would have been harder to express. Many illustrations of this phenomenon appeared in the newspapers of the time, which often had their own political axes to grind. Thus they tended to blame the violence on the *other side*, exaggerating the violence perpetrated by the other side and downplaying the level of violence on *their* side.

This violent behaviour provoked concern among many people. An example of this concern appeared in an article published on 28 February 1929 by Shimon Samet, writer of a sports column in *Davar* (and later in *Haaretz*). According to Samet, every match between the Jewish teams aroused 'wild hate and strife that may endanger people's lives'. In his opinion, the causes were the competitiveness stimulated by the various cup games and the differences in status and social class between the teams. The games were held in 'a tense atmosphere ... the crowd bursts onto the pitch, a phenomenon that might become extremely dangerous'. Samet suggests showing mutual tolerance between the sides and in his opinion, 'Healthy valuable ties should be formed with the other side. The relegation or defeat of a team should not cause contention and hatred and wildness on the court. This sickness should be eradicated because of the great danger that lies therein.' This conclusion was not acted upon then and is still relevant today.⁴²

Confrontations between associations

Political confrontations were not confined to the pitches; they were also accompanied by numerous conflicts between the associations concerning events directly connected with the game. As on the fields, the hostility between Maccabi and Hapoel was visible mainly in Haifa and Tel Aviv, and as mentioned above, the shift of Allenby Tel Aviv to Hapoel and the trip of Maccabi Hagibor Haifa to the United States stirred an exchange of allegations, mainly about professionalism. Other sources of contention included the flying of the association flags over the courts. The strife between the two large associations occasionally led to boycotts against teams belonging to the opposing organization and a long list of contretemps that made for juicy reading in the newspapers.

Establishment of the football associations

The Maccabi football association

The spread of football in Eretz Israel in the early 1920s spurred the Maccabi association to initiate the establishment of a national association to institutionalize Hebrew football in Eretz Israel. A detailed proposition for such an association appears in the Maccabi journal published in October 1923, including how football should be organized in the country. It was never implemented. In essence, the Maccabi Football Association was established only at the end of 1924. The Maccabi journal of November 1924 reported that eleven teams in Jerusalem united as the 'The Football Association in Jerusalem' under Maccabi patronage. The founders of the Jerusalem association would later assist in establishing the Maccabi Football Association and the National Football Association. The December 1924 Maccabi journal reported that on 28 November 1924 the Association of Football Teams was founded and representatives of the regional associations were chosen. The management sat in Jerusalem and its duty was to 'manage all football team matters, to organize the championship and Eretz Israel Cup games, in full coordination with the central management of Maccabi Eretz Israel'.

Eretz Israel football association

The 'national board' of Maccabi did not serve as the Eretz Israel Association. Obviously it did not include the British and Arab teams but above all it did not include the Hapoel teams. Mutual hostility, suspicion, violence on the pitches and political tensions in the settlement all contributed to the inability of Hapoel and Maccabi to come to an agreement, even though the positions between the sides were not far apart.

But the growing popularity of the football and the increasing number of Hapoel teams necessitated the establishment of a union that would consolidate and institutionalize football. Maccabi was already reconciled to the fact that it would not be the roof organization for Hapoel teams and set out to reach a general arrangement that would focus on establishing a football association unrelated to the centres. The first step towards the establishment of such an association was initiated by Yosef Yekutieli, of Maccabi. Yekutieli's ambition was to integrate Eretz Israel sports in the international sports community but that required recognition from the international sports organizations. As early as 1925 Yekutieli applied to FIFA, the international football association, for recognition of the Maccabi Association, but he soon learned that such recognition entailed setting up an Eretz Israel football association composed of all the teams represented in the land – English, Arab and Jewish, and not only those of Maccabi.

Two projects paved the way to establishing the association. In March 1928 a committee was set up to organize cup games, with representatives of English, Arab and Jewish teams belonging to both Hapoel and Maccabi participating. The sources we have encountered do not mention the

names of the committee members but most of its members were British and two Jews were included: Stephen Trek of Maccabi and M. Karmi of Hapoel.⁴³

A second project, in June 1928, centred on Lord Mond's efforts to arrange an all-star Eretz Israel team to visit England. Such a project required cooperation between Maccabi and Hapoel and as has already been mentioned joint committees were set up and the Mond Cup Games were organized. Some of the members on this committee had also participated on the committee to send a team to England that had been established a short time earlier and continued to function for a short while after the association was established.⁴⁴

In early August 1928 the Maccabi Association asked the Eretz Israel football teams to send representatives to the founding assembly of the Eretz Israel Football Association (EIFA), set to take place on 14 August in the Maccabi Eretz Israel offices on Hasolel Street in Jerusalem. Fourteen Jews and one Arab attended the meeting. The Maccabi members were: Rosenthal, Uri Nadav, Perez Dagan, Yosef Yekutieli, Yisrael Gott, Stephen Trek, Mordechai Ben-Dror, Ezra Ichilov, Yula Braun, Meir Kaspi and Ephraim Rubinstein. The Hapoel members were: Yisrael Karmi, Aaron Oriq and Ephraim Pearlstein. The Arab representative was a member of the Nuseiba family and represented the Islamic A Nadi A-Riadi sports club. A five-member directorate was elected: three Maccabi members (Trek, Rosenthal and Yekutieli) and two Hapoel members (Karmi and Oriq). Stephen Trek of Maccabi served as the first chairman of the Association.⁴⁵

Because the EIFA delegates represented all Eretz Israel teams (no British representatives attended the founding assembly but they joined later. A British representative, Spicer, also served as the second chairman of the Association), it could request membership in FIFA. In December 1928 the Association was accepted provisionally by FIFA and on 17 May 1929 its membership became permanent.

The establishment of EIFA did not mark the end of disagreements between Hapoel and Maccabi. Hapoel was a member of the International Workers Sport Association (SASI), which opposed FIFA on ideological grounds: it also represented professional football and was considered bourgeois. Because the EIFA was a member of FIFA, Hapoel withdrew temporarily from EIFA and returned only in April 1930. Hapoel's membership was described as temporary and the Eretz Israel Association had to ask FIFA for permission to allow Hapoel to participate in EIFA activities without being associated with FIFA. The 'temporary' status became a permanent fact and in the following years this problem did not arise.⁴⁶

Summary

As early as the Ottoman period people began playing football in Eretz Israel, but it was the British influence that helped to make it the most popular sport in the country in the 1920s. Football's immense popularity can be seen in the large number of football teams that were established, the many games played in different frameworks between Jewish, English and Arab teams and in the meets between Jewish teams and teams from abroad, both overseas and in Eretz Israel, as a part of the Jewish settlement's endeavour to strengthen relations with the Diaspora and earn international legitimization.

The Maccabi Association initiated several attempts to institutionalize football in Eretz Israel. It set up its own football union and initiated regional games and cup games for its teams. The main problem facing Maccabi was the politicization that overcame Eretz Israel sports in those days with the creation of the Hapoel association. Political hostilities in the Jewish settlement were reflected in the football games, which were filled with violence, and in relations between the associations, which engendered many conflicts, some of which reached the courts and led to mutual boycotts.

Only in 1928 did conditions become favourable for the institutionalization and establishment of a football association in Eretz Israel. The decrease in the number of British teams in the country combined with the increase in the number of Jewish teams made this step inevitable. The cooperation between Maccabi and Hapoel in the cup games of 1928 and in organizing the Mond Cup significantly promoted the establishment of the EIFA. Although the establishment of the association did not solve the critical relations between the sports unions (which remained a central problem for decades even after the association was established), it marked the beginning of institutionalized representative football in Eretz Israel and later in the State of Israel.

Notes

1. Ben-Porat and Ben-Porat, '(Un)Bounded Soccer Globalization and Localization of the Game in Israel', 421.
2. There was a big difference between 'gymnastics' and 'sports' in the late nineteenth century. The gymnastics movements were oozed to sports, which were basically competitive and focused on results rather than process, whereas gymnastic exercises were designed for everyone and were aimed at the all-round development of physical skills. This argument petered out in the twentieth century when gymnastic clubs began participating in competitive sports. Maccabi, for example, defined itself from the outset as a 'gymnastics association', but among its activities it notes, 'the founding of Hebrew gymnastics and sports clubs'. (*Hamaccabi*, 2–3, Summer 1919). See also Simri, *The Sport Associations in Eretz Israel from World War I*; Kaufman, 'The Missing Sport Association "Shimshon" of "Zion Workers"'.
3. Halevi, *Seventy Years of Football*, 3–10.
4. The information concerning the Russian association and the distribution of the football in Russia was taken from a lecture in the ninth congress of ISHPES Cologne 2005 by Dahlmann Dittmar, 'Football Comes to Eastern Europe'.
5. Simri, *Rehovot Games*; Naor, 'Rehovot Games 1908–1914'.
6. Ram, 'Curriculum Planning in Sports in Eretz Israel'.
7. In the course of the years permanent pitches were created. They also disappeared and were changed over time. This essay does not deal with the location of the different grounds. For examples of the inauguration of permanent grounds see, for example, *Hamaccabi*, *Davar* of 13 December 1925.
8. Yekutieli and Tidhar, *The Maccabi Album Tel Aviv–Jaffa*.
9. Halevi, *Seventy Years of Football*, 38–44.
10. Tidhar, *In the Service of the Motherland (1912–1960)*, 35–7.
11. Halevi, *Seventy Years of Football*, 42–5.
12. Harif and Galily, 'Sport and Politics in Palestine between 1918–1948', 58–9.
13. Sorek, 'Arab Football in Israel – Identity Games'.
14. Halevi, *Seventy Years of Football*, 46–7.
15. Lerrer and Porat, *Jerry*; Halevi, *Seventy Years of Football*, 48–9.
16. For the process of establishing Hapoel in general and Hapoel Tel Aviv and Hapoel Haifa in detail, see Kaufman, 'The Establishment of the Hapoel Sports Association'.
17. Concerning the football games in Emek Yisrael and in which the poet Avraham Shlonski took part, see Gil, *The Story of Hapoel*, 43–4.
18. At the time of its establishment Hapoel Haifa was a part of Maccabi. For details, see Kaufman, 'The Establishment of the Hapoel Sports Association'. 'Ayala' Allenby was a part of Maccabi Tel Aviv.
19. The Merge of Chasmonai and Maccabi, *Hamaccabi*, December 1925. It is worth mentioning that *Doar Hayom* of 16 October 1925 noted that 'Hagibor' and 'Hazvi' were united before 'Chashmona'. Yet, Hazvi appears as an independent association with the prefix Maccabi. *Doar Hayom*, 3 October 1926.
20. *Hamaccabi*, December 1925. It is worthy to mention that prior to the Association there was a time when Maccabi Haifa did not have any activities and Chaim Weissburg, the 'Hagibor' Association chairman became the chairman of the joint association after the unite. For the ceasing of activities of Maccabi Haifa, see the Hapoel committee protocol on 8 July 1925, the Labor Party Archive IV 344–874. See also, news in *Haaretz* of December 1925.
21. The original letter of the Allenby team is found in Netanya at the Wingate archive, 5 January 1925. See also *Hamaccabi*.

22. *Haaretz* on 3 February 1927 and *Davar* on 27 March 1927 relate to the supreme military headquarter of Amman as the cup runner-up of 1926.
23. Shavit and Bigger, 'The British Mandatory on Eretz Israel', 92–3; Slutzki, *The Book of the Hagana History*, 212–18.
24. See *Haaretz* of 23 February 1927 for the criticism and the call up of a new guardian for the cup games.
25. *Hamaccabi*, April 1927.
26. Halevi, *Seventy Years of Football*; *Hamaccabi*, April 1927, 70; Simri, *Sport Associations in Eretz Israel from World War I*, 36.
27. Speed and Yekutieli, 'Football in Palestine'.
28. See also Halevi, *Seventy Years of Football*, 65. Halevi uses another source and presents earlier information on the league.
29. *Haaretz*, 26 February 1929; *Davar*, 14 February 1929.
30. Halevi, *Seventy Years of Football*, 65–71.
31. For further information concerning the cup games, see *Davar*, 9 May 1928, 20 May 1928 and 27 May 1928; *Haaretz*, 14 May 1928. See also Yekutieli's criticism on 10 June 1928; Brenner, *The Cup is Ours*, 6–7. For a detailed description of the final, see Goldberg, 'A visual Memory', *Haaretz*, 11 August 2002.
32. For further information concerning the political functions of Eretz Israel and Israeli sport, see Harif, 'Sports and International Politics'.
33. For further information concerning 'Hakoach' visits in Eretz Israel see the newspapers issues of *Doar Hayom* and *Haaretz* from 2 January 1924 to 14 January 1924 and also the issues from 7 January 1925 to 29 January 1925. On 9 January 1924 the *Hadoar Hayom* published a special edition in honour of the event. For additional information, see also Polak, *The Experiences and Adventures of a Football Player*, 43–58; Simri, *The Sport Associations in Eretz Israel from World War I*, 35–8. See also Harif, 'Sports and International Politics', 169–71.
34. According to *Doar Hayom* of 14 January 1925, 10,000 spectators were present at the game against the Maccabi team. Tel Aviv in those days had about 40,000 residents. For further information, see Giladi, 'The Jewish Settlement during the Fourth Aliya', 47. The data show that about 25 per cent of Tel Aviv's residents watched the game.
35. Harif, 'Sports and International Politics', 171.
36. *Doar Hayom*, 29 July 1925, 2 August 1925, 9 September 1925, 23 September 1925, 25 October 1925. For a full list of Maccabi Tel Aviv games in the Diaspora see *Hamaccabi*, December 1925. See also Simri, *Physical Education and Sport in Eretz Israel during the Years 1917–1927*, 38; Yekutieli and Tidhar, *50 + Memories from the Maccabi, from the Turkish Army in World War I and from the Hebrew Sports in Eretz Israel*, 51–2.
37. The journey of Maccabi Haifa to the United States is described in detailed in *Doar Hayom* in the issues of June and July 1927; Kaufman, 'The Journeys of Sports Teams Abroad'.
38. For further information concerning the visit of the Alexandria scouts, see *Davar*, 19 July 1925, 21 July 1925. For information concerning Ramla Atis, see *Haaretz*, 21 April 1927. For Maccabi Chashmonai in Egypt, see *Haaretz*, 21 November 1927; *Doar Hayom*, 27 November 1927. See also Paz, 'The Settlement and Egyptian Sports', 108–13; Yekutieli and Tidhar, *50 + Memories from the Maccabi*, 60–1. Paz notes that Maccabi Jerusalem was beaten twice but all the mentioned sources record only the loss for Zamalk in Cairo. A picture of Maccabi in Cairo was preserved in the Association archives for football. The team names and the dates were not mentioned (photograph number 02169). The only information provided was that the photo was taken after a game which ended in a 1-1 draw. Since we do not know about other visits of Maccabi teams in Cairo it is possible to assume that this was the result of the second game.
39. For more information concerning Hapoel Haifa in Beirut, see *Davar*, 29 April 1928. It is worth noting that in 1929 Hapoel Tel Aviv journeyed to Damascus, which provoked an acute confrontation there, and was one of the causes for the establishment of the Hapoel association in that city. *Davar*, 12 May 1929, 16 May 1929.
40. The professional committee meetings, 30 July 1928 (Labor's Archive IV, 68–244); the central committee meeting, 27 July 1928 (Labor Archive IV, 120–244); the central committee meeting, 16 August 1928 (Labor Archive IV, 80a–244). *Davar* of 14 June 1928 provides the description of the three committees and their composition. The composition of the committees in the protocols is not similar to the report in *Davar* and it seems that only two committees were active: the central and the professional. In this regard, see also *Davar*, 9 August 1928; *Haaretz*, 1 August 1928 and 14 August 1928.

41. Kaufman, 'The Zionist Sports Associations'; See also Kaufman, "'Maccabi" Against "Hapoel"', 89–112.
42. *Davar*, 28 February 1929.
43. Yekutieli's letter to *Haaretz*, 10 June 1928; M. Karmi's letter to *Davar*, 18 June 1928.
44. See protocol of 16 August 1928 (Labor Archive IV, 244–80a).
45. See invitation from 5 August 1928 (Labor Archive IV, 120–244). See also comments number 2 and 3; Gabay and Paz, *70 Years of the Football Association in Israel*, 22–4; *1959 Association Yearbook* (Wingate archive).
46. Kaufman, "'Maccabi" Against "Hapoel"'

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