

September 11, 2009

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## **A Discussion of “Baseball and the Jews” to include a Screening of *Holyland Hardball* Film**

**WEST HARTFORD, Conn.** — The Maurice Greenberg Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Hartford will screen the award-winning documentary film *Holyland Hardball*, by Brett Rapkin and Erik Kesten, detailing the efforts to establish a professional baseball league in Israel **on Thursday, Oct. 1 at 7 p.m., in Wilde Auditorium, at the Harry Jack Gray Center, at the University of Hartford, 200 Bloomfield Ave., West Hartford.** This event is free and open to the public.

The festive evening will also feature opening remarks by University of Hartford President Walter Harrison on baseball and American Jews and a book signing by John Frascella, author of *Theo-logy: How a Boy Wonder Led the Red Sox to the Promised Land*.

The evening's events are co-sponsored in part by the Arnold C. and Beverly P. Greenberg Fund and the New Britain Rock Cats baseball team.

*Holyland Hardball* focuses on the efforts of Boston bagel maker Larry Baras to create a professional baseball league in Israel. Among the ballplayers swept up in his unlikely quest are a 41-year-old father of three with a Peter Pan complex; a 27-year-old Brooklyn artist/DJ still finding himself after the disappointment of not being drafted out of college; a 34-year-old father-to-be whose own father, now deceased, fought for Israel's independence in 1948; and a 22-year-old African-American who was told by a preacher at a young age he would one day “play in front of God's people.” Also featured in the film are the former Jewish major leaguers Art Shamsky, Ken Holtzman, and Ron Blomberg — all as team managers in the Israel Baseball League — as well as Dan Duquette, former general manager of the Boston Red Sox and now director of baseball operations for the Israel Baseball League.

The film, winner of the audience award for best documentary at the 2008 Boston Jewish Film Festival and an official selection as an AFI/Documentary Channel Silverdocs documentary, has been described by IndieWire as “an infectious feel-good experience.”

President Harrison, in addition to serving as chair of National Collegiate Athletic Association's Committee on Academic Performance, is also an expert on the history of American baseball. His doctoral dissertation, “Out of Play: Baseball Fiction from Pulp to Art,” is one of the earliest scholarly treatments of baseball and its place in American life. He has also published an article on Jews and baseball, titled “Six-Pointed Diamond: Baseball and American Jews.”

Following the program, John Fracsella, author of *Theology: How a Boy Wonder Led the Red Sox to the Promised Land*, will sign copies of his book, which is an examination of Theo Epstein's rapid rise to the top, his managerial skills, and his cutting-edge methods for evaluating players and running a professional baseball franchise. *Theology* gives Red Sox fans a unique perspective from which to relive their recent World Series victories while offering all baseball lovers an insightful account into one of the game's most fascinating figures.

"Baseball and the Jews" is the first in a new series of programs at the Maurice Greenberg Center for Judaic Studies, called the First-of-the-Month Contemporary Issues Forum. Subsequent topics will feature "The Jews and Mental Healthcare" on November 1, and "The Maurice Greenberg Center for Judaic Studies Book festival" on December 1.

For more information, contact the Greenberg Center at 860.768.4964.