

2001 Maccabi write-up

2001 was a difficult year as there was much political unrest around the world especially the Middle East. Israel was the site of many suicide bombings and as the departure date grew closer more and more Americans were having second thoughts about traveling to Israel.

I was 22 years old and had just graduated from Vassar College. I had a college degree, no job, and a burning desire to wear a USA on the back of my jersey while playing volleyball. I told my concerned parents “I’m going!” I felt that I was preordained to go to Israel and wear a USA jersey and represent America.

We went with six indoor men players, just enough for an indoor women’s team and two men’s beach teams. The women lost to Israel in the finals of the indoor tournament and the beach guys took the Gold and the Bronze. Israel gave us two Israeli middles to help round out our squad, as we had no middles. Roy and Eheud played middle, Will Shapiro of Vassar college infamy set, Mitch Sadowsky banged on the opposite, and Greg Spector played outside opposite yours truly. Danny from the beach team came and played libero while Sandy and Edan came in off the bench. Steve Carlat coached up a storm and got the most out of what we had.

We started off the tournament beating an aging German team 3-0. Followed by a 3-0 win over Turkey and we were feeling pretty good about ourselves. Then we lost to Brazil in 4 games and lost to Israel 3-0. But a 3-1 win over Mexico secured us a spot against Brazil for the semi-finals. We beat Brazil 16-14 in the fifth game to go to the finals. It was a great match. We lost the next day to Israel in the finals to win the Silver medal.

It was a great trip, great volleyball, great culture, great friends made. We got to see so much of Israel, got to represent the USA, got to play awesome international volleyball, and got to connect with Jewish athletes from across the globe. I am so glad that I went. This for sure will not be my last Maccabi experience.

-Sam Shweisky