

The Neighborhood Files, Sports

Suffolk Y JCC Hosts National Jewish Sports Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony

Hall of Fame honored Jewish athletes and sports icons from all over the country, including two Long Island natives.

By Kaitlyn Piccoli | [Email the author](#) | April 4, 2011



Jewish athletes and sports figures from all over the country convened at the Suffolk Y JCC in Commack for the National Jewish Sports Hall of Fame and Museum Induction Ceremony on March 27.

Originally conceived as a way of preserving history and inspiring the young Jewish community, The National Jewish Sports Hall of Fame is in its nineteenth year.

On Sunday morning, honorees and inductees spanning three generations mingled and shared their sports stories, surrounded by photographs and memorabilia of fellow Jewish athletes like baseball legend Sandy Koufax and figure skater Sarah Hughes.

"Every year, I'm proud," said Hall of Fame Chairperson Lynne Kramer.

"We have people from all over the country, athletes who are really an impressive bunch of people."

The annual Hall of Fame ceremony honors the top scholar athletes in the country and the newest inductees at the museum. Each year, candidates undergo a nomination process, and inductees are chosen based on their recognition status and accomplishments in their respective sport, and whether they identify as Jewish.

This year's honorees came from all over the country and covered a wide range of sports, and included two Long Island natives.

Hal Richman paved the way for sports simulation games when, as an 11-year-old, he invented the wildly successful Strat-O-Matic game in his Great Neck bedroom. Fifty years later, both Richman and Strat-O-Matic are baseball legends on a local a national scale.

"In my 50 years of work, this is perhaps the most important award I've ever received, and its coming at the very end of my career," said Richman, just before being inducted. "It's very gratifying."

Also in attendance was Hewlett High School football star Niv Sultan, who was honored with the Jules D. Mazor Award for Outstanding Male Jewish High School Scholar/Athlete of the Year. The 6'4", 245-lb. athlete was the 2010 Jay Fielder Top Scholar-Athlete in Nassau County, and has recently played for the Israel Football League. Sultan heads to Harvard in the fall.

The ceremony carried on into the auditorium, as the awards were handed out and the newest inductees were welcomed.

During his post-invocation speech, Rabbi William Berman spoke about the stereotype Jewish Athletes are often compared to. "Jewish athletes break the stereotype—the stereotype that Jews are nerdy or bookish. No offense to nerds—I am one," he joked.

He went on to commend all the honorees and inductees, saying "To this day, when we see a Jewish athlete do well, we have a certain kind of pride."

Other 2011 inductees included three-time U.S. Olympian and 2010 Gold Medalist bobsledder Steve Mesler, Olympic Synchronized Swimmer and aquatics innovator Jane Katz, and former San Francisco 49er Harris Barton.