



Pitching in the Promised Land: A Story of the First and Only Season in the Israel Baseball League

Aaron Pribble

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It was the first (and last) season of professional baseball in Israel. Aaron Pribble, twenty-seven, had been out of Minor League Baseball for three years while he pursued a career in education when, at his coach's suggestion, he tried out for the newly formed Israel Baseball League (IBL). Of Jewish descent (not a requirement, but definitely a plus) and former pro, Pribble was the ideal candidate for the upstart league. In many ways the league resembled the ultimate baseball fantasy camp with its unforgettable cast of characters: the DJ/street artist third baseman from the Bronx, the wildman catcher from Australia, the journeymen Dominicans who were much older than they claimed to be, and, of course, seventy-one-year-old Sandy Koufax, drafted in a symbolic gesture as the last player.

After falling in love with a beautiful Yemenite Jew, enduring an alleged terrorist attack on opening day, witnessing a career-ending brain injury caused by improper field equipment, participating in a strike, and venturing into the West Bank despite being strongly advised against it, Pribble must decide whether to forgo a teaching career in order to become the first player from the IBL to sign a pro contract in the United States. His is a story of coming of age spiritually and athletically in one short season in the throes of romance, Middle Eastern politics, and the dreams of America's pastime far, far afield from home.

Learn about Holy Land Hardball, a documentary on the Israel Baseball League.

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