

KRAFT FAMILY SPORTS CAMPUS SPARKS AMERICAN FOOTBALL GROWTH IN ISRAEL

Jerusalem debut of \$20 million complex for 2017 Maccabiah Games spurs country's sports development. Feature writer Steve Taiman gets insight from major donor Robert Kraft, Jerusalem Municipality and architect Lev Vaksman.

In November 2015, Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat announced that Robert Kraft, **NFL New England Patriots'** owner, had made a \$6 million gift for

development of the **Kraft Family Sports Campus**, a multi-purpose sports center in Emek Ha'Azim, near the 9/11 Living Memorial site.

This significant contribution to advance sport in Jerusalem and Israel is part of the

celebration of the 50th anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem and the 20th Maccabiah Games, hosted in Jerusalem in July 2017.

Mayor Barkat noted: *"The Campus will be an integral part of Jerusalem's burgeoning sports renaissance, which includes the opening of many new arenas and dozens of international sporting events each year. The*



establishment of the Campus is an unprecedented cornerstone of this renaissance, among other things, expanding the culture of US football in Jerusalem, and serving as a complement to the existing Kraft Family Field in Sacher Park."

The total cost of the Campus is \$20 million. In addition to Kraft's \$6 million; the Toto Lottery provided \$2.7 million; Mifal Hapayis Lottery \$6.6 million; and Jerusalem Municipality \$4.7 million.

"The Kraft Family Sports Campus is a central part of my vision for Jerusalem as an international capital of sport and athleticism," Mayor Barkat continued. "My dear friend, Robert Kraft, has been an unwavering partner in the growth and development of Jerusalem. This gift furthers Robert and his family's commitment to the capital of Israel, and to enhancing sport and particularly football in Jerusalem."

Kraft responded: *"The Kraft Family Sports Campus allows me to invest in two things that I have always been very passionate about: My love of Israel and my support for youth athletics and team sports, especially American football. I fell in love with Israel on my first visit in 1963 and have been investing in its future ever since."*

"I have seen the positive impact team sports can have, not just on the individuals who participate, but also in the communities that support them. They help unify those who might otherwise be divided by cultural differences. Team athletics have proven to develop leadership, provide examples of success through teamwork, and promote health and fitness. My family and I are proud to establish this large scale, multi-sports complex, which is the first of its kind in Jerusalem."

CAMPUS 2017 DEDICATION

The 25-acre Campus was established in collaboration with the **Jerusalem Foundation** and the **Jerusalem Development Company – Moriah**. The Campus includes two soccer fields, the first lined US regulation football field, locker rooms and administrative offices, a central pedestrian thoroughfare, parking and a new access road.

Future plans in the pipeline include a gym, basketball courts, baseball fields and a whole array of other state-of-the-art sports facilities.

Together with the **American Football League** in Israel, the

new Campus will further foster the enjoyment of football in Jerusalem.

Last June, the Israeli capital's latest landmark of impressive athletic infrastructure was officially opened when the "green carpet", so to speak, was rolled out for the auspicious inauguration of the Kraft Family Sports Campus.

The emotional ribbon-cutting ceremony was led by Mayor Barkat, with Robert Kraft, three of his sons, 18 Pro Football Hall of Famers in their Gold Jackets, and NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell.

"Thousands of years ago, Jewish pilgrims would pass through this very site on their way to the Temple," said Brachie Sprung, Director of the International Office of Jerusalem Partnerships. *"Now this will once again be a point of pilgrimage for sports lovers and enthusiasts from around the world."*

"A gift like this is not just a donation, but an investment in our sport development here in Israel and the growth of our entire community," said Uzi Dayan, the president of Mifal Hapayis, which together with the Toto Lottery is a >>



Kraft Campus, another Grandstand view with Clubhouse at rear All images courtesy of Jerusalem Municipality

« key partner in the project.
“So from the bottom of our hearts, and in the name of all Israelis, thank you very much Mr. Kraft!”

The symbolic symmetry of the new Kraft Campus being located just off of Israel’s Route 1 was noted, a poetic parallel to the **New England Patriots’ Gillette Stadium** and the US Route 1 journey required to get there. Indeed, Kraft regularly mentions the connection he feels between his success with the Patriots and his love of Israel.

The 76-year-old Kraft was introduced to a standing ovation by the more than 400 attendees and after expressing his gratitude to the presence of the “Gold Jackets” – featuring Lem Barney, Jerome Bettis, Jim Brown, Cris Carter, Dave Casper, Eric Dickerson, Marshall Faulk, Joe Greene, Willie Lanier, Joe Montana, Andre Reed, Mike Singletary, Bruce Smith, John Stallworth, Roger Staubach, Andre Tippett, Aeneas Williams and Ron Yary – he reverted to Hebrew for a full five-minute heartfelt address.

“Shalom Chaverim; It is an honor to be here in Jerusalem, the holy city, the centre of spirituality for all of the nation of Israel,” said Kraft. *“When I reached the age of Bar Mitzvah, I got a pair of Tefillin from my father, of blessed memory. Every morning I would put them on and say the Amida while facing*



Campus aerial construction view

the direction of Jerusalem and dreamed of the day when I could visit Jerusalem and pray at the Kotel.

“Today, I have the privilege and honor of standing here before you and I continue to thank God that I have the ability, with my family, to help in the building of Jerusalem, and with God’s help to continue to do so in the future.”

Barkat also conveyed his gratitude and closeness to Kraft and noted the importance of building sports programmes and infrastructure in Jerusalem, with the new complex to first be used for competition at the upcoming Maccabiah Games.

“These fields will be used extensively by all types of athletes. They are eager and thirsty. You will see people from all backgrounds – Muslims, Christians and Jews – all using these fields together. We know what sharing a team means,

to bring people together and appreciate the common denominator between them. This is one of the major reasons why I support and develop the sports in our city so extensively.”

Kraft was also presented by Barkat with a Builder of Jerusalem award and plaque in recognition of his numerous contributions to the city, both financial combined with his heart and passion. *“To me, this is about roots and tradition,”* said Kraft to The Jerusalem Post. *“To have my sons Jonathan, Danny and Joshua here with me today is crucial as it represents the continued commitment to Israel for our family, something I am sure will be maintained for many generations to come.”*

SOCIAL MEETING SITE

Lev Vaksman, principal with the lead architectural firm, told PS&AM, *“In the last decade, Jerusalem has been developing extensive metropolitan parks in over hundreds of acres that embrace it. Located in forest areas, agricultural fields, valleys and creeks, they will combine a wide range of public activities, leisure and recreation, promenades, play areas and extreme activity, and cyclist paths. They also provide connection to heritage sites and archaeology and cultivation of natural sites.*

“The programme of the campus was formulated and examined carefully in cooperation with the Jerusalem Municipality Sports Department, while considering a wide range of urban needs. Apart from being the capital of Israel, Jerusalem is the capital of the passion for soccer, as the home of dozens of national leagues and amateur teams, which had the most

Patriots’ chairman/CEO Robert Kraft (center, blue jacket) sons Jonathan, Dan and Josh Kraft, with Mayor Birkat and 18 Pro Football Hall of Famers celebrated dedication of first official American football field in Israel.



influence on development of the campus programme.

“Highlight is without a doubt the first standard US-lined football field in Israel, planned and established with the encouragement of the Kraft family that for many years has been encouraging the development of American football in Israel.

“The Campus offers space for all types of population, secular and religious, Arabs and Jews, professional and amateur athletes. It constitutes an informal and egalitarian social meeting site. A great deal of thought was invested in making the site accessible to individuals and public transportation in order to enable all residents of the city to enjoy the facilities.

“Located on the bank of ‘Sorek’ stream, the Campus is surrounded by old groves and plantation. A great deal of work was needed in order to combine two soccer and one dual soccer-football fields, seven basketball courts, play areas, a regulation pump track, exercise and fitness zones, and related structures in mountain topography.

“We used the principles of classic Mediterranean farm estates planning, with extensive surfaces placed in the bottom part of the slope, secondary ground shelves above them and towering buildings at the top. The principle of an orthogonal skeleton of the complex was also adopted, which gives it clarity in orientation, spatial splendor and impressive architectural character.

“The site is part of an area with significant natural values, regional drainage channels, banks of a river with unique flora and fauna, and flocks of deer bands. Together with a team of ecologists, the project integrated ecological corridors, natural vegetation rehabilitation and condensation,

and the regulation of natural flow channels that are harmonious with the Campus plan.”

He praised the teamwork of the entire project team. Included were Structure architect **GAB Architects**; Project Manager **Nir Perzlina, Davelman-Perzlina Project Management Co. Ltd**; Structural Engineer, **Savilia Avraham**; and Services (MEP) Engineer, **Yossi Tiferet, G. Itkin, A. Blum Electrical Engineering Ltd.**

MACCABIAH GAMES & FOOTBALL

“The final result is very impressive,” Vaksman emphasised. “The campus has been very active from its first day, opening with the 20th Maccabiah Games’ women’s soccer and track competition.”

The Campus has become the home site of the “Big Blue” **Jerusalem Lions**, one of eight teams in the current 9-player (vs. 11 in the US) American Football League in Israel (AFLI). The annual Chanukah Bowl game on December 14 with the Judean Rebels drew a nice crowd to see the Lions win 44-32.

Vaksman concluded: *“Since the Maccabiah Games and the first AFLI competition, the new complex has attracted many users of all kinds, integrates organically in the park’s open and natural space and adds to the contemporary image of Jerusalem city.”* ■



Chanukah Bowl was held Dec. 14 with big crowd

KRAFT FAMILY SPORTS CAMPUS	
Project Team and Fact File	
Location	Jerusalem, Israel
Opening Date	July 2017
Construction Cost	€20 million
Owner	Jerusalem Municipal Authority
Operator	Jerusalem Municipal Authority, Moriah Jerusalem Development Corp.
Capacity	1,200-seat Grandstand
Architect	Lead: Gideon Sarig Lev Vaxman; Structure: GAB Architects (Goldschmidt, Arditty, Ben Naim)
Construction Manager	Nir Perzlina, Davelman-Perzlina Project Management Co. Ltd.
Structural Engineer	Savilia Avraham
Services (MEP) Engineer	Yossi Tiferet, G. Itkin, A. Blum Electrical Engineering Ltd.
Landscape Architect	Gideon Sarig Lev Vaxman
Major Tenants	2017 Maccabiah Games women’s soccer & track; Jerusalem Lions, American Football League in Israel; Local leagues and amateur football and soccer teams.
Amenities	Campus include two soccer fields, dual-use US regulation football and soccer field, running track, locker rooms, administrative offices, central pedestrian thoroughfare, parking & access road, with plans for future sports facilities, nature areas and lawns.