

LOCAL

FITTING SOLUTION
Kippah design a godsend for Jewish athletes. 3B

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BULLETIN BOARD 2 • COMMUNITY NEWS 4-5 • OBITUARIES 9 • WEATHER 1

KEEPING THE FAITHFUL IN THE GAME

A skullcap with
sewn-in clips helps
Jewish athletes
compete.

BY LOIS K. SOLOMON
STAFF WRITER

This kippah stays put. Every Jewish man who wears a kippah, also known as a yarmulke, is familiar with the problem: The skullcap, a sign of modesty before God, falls off when the wind blows or he stands up.

Athletes at Weinbaum Yeshiva High School, an Orthodox private school west of Boca Raton, have faced this problem for years and risked being banned from state competitions because the Florida High School Athletic Association said the bobby pins keeping their skullcaps in place were a hazard.

Jon Kawebum, Weinbaum's athletic director, has come up with a solution: He engineered a kippah with two clips sewn in under the fabric so it stays in place. Kawebum has applied for a patent and launched a Web site this month, klippedkippahs.com, to sell the caps for \$10 to \$15 each. They are also available at Holyland Judaica, 5650 Stirling Road, Hollywood, and Judaica Enterprises, 1125 NE 163rd St., North Miami Beach.

The kippahs appear to have resolved a national problem: Kawebum, 26, a Florida Atlantic University architecture student, said 10 Jewish high schools nationwide have purchased them for their teams, including Hillel Community Day School in North Miami Beach and Rabbi Alexander S. Gross Hebrew Academy in Miami Beach.

People of many faiths cover their heads as a sign of submission to God: Muslims wear a kufi, Buddhists don a bao-tzu and some Catholic priests wear a zucchetto.



SOLUTION: Aryeh Genet plays soccer with a kippah securely fastened on his head. The kippah has clips inside to keep it from falling off. Jon Kawebum, who engineered the kippah, has applied for a patent and launched a Web site to sell them. Staff photo/Carey Wagner

Observant Jewish men wear kippahs as a recognition that God is above them. Some Jewish women also cover their hair, either with a wig or a scarf or a hat.

Kippahs come in many shapes, fabrics and creative designs. But keeping them on has been a problem for generations. Web sites are filled with Jews telling stories about when their kippahs fell off.

Chad Baruch, a coach at Yavneh Academy of Dallas, said his Orthodox high school has wrestled

with this problem for the past three years.

"It was a particular problem under Texas rules because they are strict about metal hairpins," Baruch said. "It left us in a bind."

Baruch bought 30 of Kawebum's kippahs for his basketball team and used them for the last game of the season. He said he plans to issue one to each of his players next year.

Florida high school games have similarly strict rules, said Denarvise Thornton, senior director of athletic

operations and officials.

"The issue with pins is there is physical contact in basketball, and you have to make sure the pins are not harmful to an opponent," Thornton said.

Kawebum's soccer team wore headbands over their kippahs last fall in an attempt to comply with state rules. But the headband forced the skullcap to the back of the head, when it should be worn on top of the head, Kawebum said.

Michael Schiff, 17, a Weinbaum

junior who plays basketball, said he has converted to Kawebum's kippahs full time. He wears them not only to play sports but all day long because he said they are just as comfortable and more likely to remain in place.

"There's no reason to go back to the other ones," he said.

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