



A.B. Labell is a two-time All Star in the Cape Ann League.

Meet the ‘facilitator’ at Hamilton-Wenham

BY STEVE MARANTZ([HTTPS://JEWISHJOURNAL.ORG/AUTHOR/STEVE-MARANTZ/](https://jewishjournal.org/author/steve-marantz/))

October 17, 2024



JOB POSTING: Associate editor
Jewish Journal
OF GREATER BOSTON

(<https://jewishjournal.org/job-posting-associate-editor-jewish-journal-of-greater-boston/>)

Basketball and bar mitzvahs don’t typically converge, but in the atypical tale of A.B. Labell, a senior at Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School, they do.

A two-time All Star in the Cape Ann League, at guard, Labell averaged 10.5 points, 6.8 assists and 9.9 rebounds as a junior. The Salem News named him “Best Facilitator” among North Shore hoopsters.

“That’s someone who is able to help his teammates get involved, so it’s not just one person going one-on-one,” explained Labell. “That was my job. I was getting shots but also getting everyone else involved.”

His facilitating emerged prior to high school basketball. When Labell was bar mitzvahed, he invited some friends. None were Jewish.

“I don’t think there was one other Jewish kid in attendance besides my family and extended family,” Labell said. “I thought it was really cool that I could teach my friends about what I did to prepare, teach them a little more about what it means to be Jewish, and how we do things.

“They found it really interesting, and I thought it was amazing to be able to share it with them.”

Amazing, too, because he was homeschooled in Hebrew. He didn’t attend Hebrew school because his schedule was crammed with sports from a young age. His parents, Bryan and Stacey, along with another Jewish family in Hamilton, created a homeschool for the study of Hebrew and Judaism.



utm_source=display&utm_medium=banner&utm_campaign=Seaweed300x600_Acquisition_Act&utm_content=venus&supporter.a

“We called it HSHS,” said Labell. “Hamilton Home School Hebrew School.

“It allowed us to have ceremonies and practice Judaism on our own time, and when we were able to be together. Through that I found a book that taught me how to read and speak Hebrew, which I studied for eight or nine months. Then I met with a rabbinic intern (Emma Mair) who helped me learn my *haftorah* and other prayers specific to my bar mitzvah.”

Labell’s father Bryan, who owns a physical therapy clinic in Danvers, said A.B. was influenced by his older brother Eli’s bar mitzvah at Temple Ner Tamid in Peabody.

“A.B. looks up to Eli – when he saw Eli do it, he wanted to be bar mitzvhed,” recalled Bryan. “He ran it himself; we helped but didn’t force it. He met with a tutor and rabbi, but he really taught himself Hebrew.”

The bar mitzvah, an outdoor service at Woodman’s in Essex, took place in June 2021.

Labell’s bar mitzvah playbook hinted at his role on the court. As a freshman at Hamilton-Wenham, he made the varsity basketball squad and got a few starts on a senior-dominated team. “My only job was to catch and shoot for three-pointers,” he recalled.

As a sophomore, he took over as point guard and began to facilitate: “I had to get others involved and beat people off the dribble and

also just find my own way to score. That evolved even more last year [as a junior],” Labell said. “Defenses keyed on me, so I had to find other ways to score – there was a lot more movement and getting open without the ball and working with teammates to get them involved.”

As a junior, Labell was elected captain by his teammates. “A natural leader, he’s like having another coach on the floor,” said Mike DiMarino, Hamilton-Wenham varsity coach. “As he’s matured, his game has grown. He can defend and rebound. His regular position is shooting guard, but if we’re in a crisis he’ll run point and handle the ball. I like to have him off the ball so he can create offense.

“He’s around a triple-double every game, but he’ll sacrifice some scoring for the good of the team,” DiMarino said. “Instead of 25 points he’ll get 15 while he’s setting up his teammates.”

Labell’s game is anchored by his sturdy 6-1, 180-pound frame, according to his father.

“My [physical therapy] practice is a lot of foundation work to get people strong,” said Bryan. “A.B. takes it seriously. He does the body work to get solid. On the court he’s always the dirty-work guy with the body. Rebounds, outlet passes, good quick decisions that make his team run smoothly. On defense, he mainly covers the other team’s best player.”

Labell credits his parents for enabling his athletic resume, which includes varsity soccer and baseball at Hamilton-Wenham. Bryan and Stacey are 'booster parents' for the basketball program.

"My parents encouraged me to play a variety of sports, which I believe helped me become a well-rounded athlete," he said. "Lots of my friends play just one sport and either got burned out or aren't as well-rounded."

Also credited is brother Eli, who now runs cross country at Roger Williams University in Bristol, R.I.

"My older brother is a stud athlete," said Labell. "Growing up with a brother like him pushed me to my athletic limits. Competing against him since I was little helped me reach my potential."

Younger sister Asa, a sophomore at Hamilton-Wenham, runs track and cross country. The youngest sibling, Talia, in eighth grade, is credited for her brother's moniker. "My name is Abram, but when she was little she could only say A.B., so that kind of stuck," recalled Labell.

Strong academically, with a 4.05 GPA (on a 4.3 scale), and AP classes in statistics, calculus and psychology, Labell is preparing college applications, with a focus within New England.

He wants to play college basketball, according to his father, and he has the “talent and mindset” to do so, according to his coach. ☹

Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked *

Comment *

Name *

Email *

POST COMMENT

TOP STORIES

Silent dancing on Simchat Torah? A joyous Jewish holiday is remade for a mournful anniversary.

(<https://jewishjournal.org/2024/10/22/silent-dancing-on-simchat-torah-a-joyous-jewish-holiday-is-remade-for-a-mournful-anniversary/>)

BY JACOB GURVIS, DEBORAH DANAN

Will Sinwar’s death end the Gaza war? The US hopes so, but Hamas and Netanyahu say they’ll keep fighting.

(<https://jewishjournal.org/2024/10/21/will-sinwars-death-end-the-gaza-war-the-us-hopes-so-but-hamas-and-netanyahu-say-theyll-keep-fighting/>)

BY JTA STAFF

Audrey P. (Shulman) Adelman

(<https://jewishjournal.org/2024/10/21/audrey-p-shulman-adelman/>)

BY JEWISH JOURNAL

Hamas chief Yahya Sinwar killed in Gaza; terror leader orchestrated Oct. 7 attack

(<https://jewishjournal.org/2024/10/17/yahya-sinwar-at-the-opening-of-a-new-mosque-in-rafah-in-the-southern-gaza-strip-feb-24-2017-abed-rahim-khatib-flash90/>)

BY RON KAMPEAS

One2One forges connections between Israeli and American teens

(<https://jewishjournal.org/2024/10/17/one2one-forges-connections-between-israeli-and-american-teens/>)

BY JEWISH JOURNAL

Jewish Journal is reader supported

DONATE

(HTTPS://WWW.PAYPAL.COM/CGI-BIN/WEBSCR?CMD=_S-XCLICK&HOSTED_BUTTON_ID=Z5VSKBEUW2PQ6&SOURCE=URL)

SUBSCRIBE

(<HTTPS://JEWISHJOURNAL.ORG/SUBSCRIBE/>)

About Us

Contact Us

Advertise With Us

Archived Issues

Privacy Policy

Jewish Journal
OF GREATER BOSTON

(<https://jewishjournal.org>)

(htt
ps:/
/w
ww.
you
tub
e.co
m/
@Je
wis
hJo
urn
alof
Gre
ater
Bos
ton)

□

(<https://jewishjournal.org>)

