

Joe Garber

During the 1960's and even into the early 1980's the talk at Coney Island's West 5th Street among the old-timers was that the greatest handball player who ever lived was Joe Garber.

PHOTOGRAPHS
TO FOLLOW

In his early 20's he had already won National AAU Tournaments in singles (1938, 1940), and was runner-up in '39. He was National AAU Doubles Runner-up in '39 and '40, and in '39 and '40 was Metropolitan AAU Doubles Champion. In '41 he was Metropolitan AAU Singles Champion. Called to defend the country in 1943, Garber gave his life to the struggle for victory and freedom in '44. In his memory Brighton Beach Baths named the greatest handball stadium ever built in his honor – "Garber Stadium." The outdoor arena could seat approximately 2500 people, and, during the years that the weekend sweeps, the invitational events, and the National Tournaments were held there, the stadium was, indeed, filled to capacity. No one will ever be able to declare with certainty who the greatest athlete in any sport is. But it does seem certain, based on Joe Garber's record (See USHA web site.) and the incredible tribute paid him by the management of Brighton Beach Baths, that he was a great player. Had he lived, he might very well have lived up to his early potential and become one of the greatest 1-wallers ever.