

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARATION OF AN ELEMENTARY GRADE BASEBALL FIELD

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Every baseball organization has its "field of dreams". Before it is attainable, or required for that matter, it is best to start at the beginning with a basic and simple field on which to get started. The intent of the following brief description is to share the experience of the development, in Israel during the 1990's, of an elementary grade, but highly usable, field.

Set forth below is a checklist of the steps taken (in chronological order) in the development of just such a field in a small farming community (Moshav Zofit) in the center of Israel for purposes of providing facilities for minor, juvenile and cadet teams. When appropriate, diagrams and photographs are provided for assistance.

- (I) **Identifying/locating potential field site** – The following aspects should be taken into consideration when engaged in identifying potential sites for a field:
- A more or less level piece of land, of soccer field or greater dimensions
 - Access to transportation
 - Access to emergency services (particularly medical)
 - Availability of potential ball players
 - Access to electricity (for future lights, pitching machine, etc.)
 - Access to source of water
 - Ability to obtain permission to use

In the case of the Zofit field, a little used, undeveloped and neglected soccer field located in the middle of the community, was taken over by the baseball organization (see Appendix I-A, as the field originally appeared). Vacant dirt fields or unused agriculture area can be enlisted (in one instance, in Israel, a basketball court was used for local baseball practice).

- (II) **Clearing area** of debris, large stones, building materials and protrusions. This can be accomplished with the volunteer help

of parents and ball players and is of utmost importance to ensure the safety of all participants using the field.

- (III) **Leveling of area** should be accomplished with the assistance of a tractor, for the purposes of eliminating rocks and large obstacles. In leveling of the field, particular attention should be given to determine the high and low areas that require work – by first locating (more or less) a zero point and from there to break ground lowering high areas and filling in low areas. Some soil may need to be added. Thereafter the area should be **graded and flattened** with the aid of a hand or tractor attached roller.
- (IV) **Covering or filling holes** in the area with soil should, where required, be carried out and thereafter the area should be leveled and rolled.
- (V) **Determining location of backstop** – the following factors should be taken into consideration when determining the location of the backstop:
- Availability of existing soccer or other form of backstop
 - Location of the sun during the anticipated period of workouts and games
 - Lengths of possible right and left fields
 - Existence of overhanging impediments (trees, electrical lines, etc)

In the case of the Zofit field, an existing soccer goal was initially used – the netting was replaced with a double thickness of heavy duty fish netting (see Appendix I-B). When deciding to erect a baseball backstop, the Zofit baseball organization was forced to compromise on the matter of the sun (locating the backstop in the northeast corner of the soccer field) giving preference to having a seventy-five (75) meter left field line and a thirty (35) meter right field line (and not vice versa). A diagram showing the layout of a baseball field, similar to the new Zofit field on the prior existing soccer field, is found in Appendix II-A. Diagrams found in Appendices II-B and II-C reflect alternative means of laying out a baseball field on an existing soccer field/s. (Diagrams II-A, B and C have been provided by and used with the permission of the Facility Committee of KNBSB).

The **backstop** was constructed of 2 inch galvanized piping and 6 mm mesh wiring. Side and front views of the backstop in Zofit, as well as a diagram are found in Appendices III-A, B, C, D and E.

- (VI) **Erection of protective fencing** on each side of the backstop. Fencing, 1.80 meters above ground level, was erected as an extension of the backstop, for the purpose of protecting ball players and fans sitting along the first or third base lines. The fencing was constructed of 2 parallel 6mm galvanized pipes and 6 mm mesh wiring. The extension fencing is seen in Appendix III-A.
- (VII) **Construction of team benches and shade overhangs.** Simple benches made from 2x4 painted wood beams, connected and resting on thick round wooden bases, were installed. (The benches used in Zofit are seen next to the backstop in the picture - Appendix III-A). Depending on the availability of funding and need, an overhang can be constructed to protect the seated players from the sun and elements (examples of such a structure are provided in Appendices IV-A and B).
- (VIII) **Construction of bleachers for fans** – two tiered bleachers for approximately 30-50 fans can be easily constructed from 2x4 painted wooded beams on a metal (15-22 mm width) frame (a picture of the bleachers constructed and used in Zofit is found in Appendix III-A). The metal frame of the bleachers can have round or square slots for purposes of holding umbrellas (with sponsor's logo) or removable cover (See Appendix V). The frame should be painted with anti-rust paint and the wood should be treated for wet weather and painted.
- (IX) **Installation of pitcher's mound** – either a permanent or movable pitcher's mound can be built. A permanent mound demands very exacting dimensions (see Rule 1 of the Major League Baseball Rules) and preparation – they require good dirt and clay, substantial effort in building layer by layer, and requires constant attention.

If, as in the case of the Zofit field, the field is going to be used for both Juvenile and Cadet workout and games, a permanent mound is not feasible. Accordingly, in the case of the Zofit

field, a pitcher's plate was located at the appropriate place (according to age level) on a level portion of the infield for purposes of practices and games.

A moveable mound, while possible, is heavy and unwieldy. On the other hand, lack of a pitcher's mound, necessitates a period of adjustment when the pitcher comes in contact with a mound for the first time. An example of an available portable youth mound (8 inches high) which are under US\$400 and light weight can be found at <http://www.portamound.com> This mound cannot be used for games with lead and pick-offs, and used only for Juveniles.

- (X) **Erection of outfield fencing** – for practical purposes, some outfield fencing might be required, necessitating installation of same. In the case of Zofit, the field was located in the center of a residential area. In light of the fact that the right field was very short and on the edge of a paved road and a line of houses, a 1.80 high wire mesh (6 mm) fence was erected on the edge of right field to prevent balls rolling into the street and players being endangered by following the ball. If necessary, a higher fence can be erected to compensate for a short right or left field, particularly when a converted soccer field is to be used.
- (XI) **Scoreboard installation** – The players and fans like to know what the score is and to have the pleasure of adding another run for the home team. A simple scoreboard is a must. In the case of Zofit, the scoreboard was prepared from wood and served the dual purpose of scoreboard and memorial dedication. In this way, the scoreboard was, in effect paid for by a sponsor. The scoreboard (a picture of which is found in Appendix VI), the cumulative runs scored by each team and the current inning – for the normal fan, that is enough. Stamped metal plate numbers are hung on headless nails and changed as the game progresses.
- (XII) **Batting cage construction** – a batting cage comprised of 6 to 8 3 mm galvanized metal hoops, at 3-4 meter intervals, covered with some form of heavy weight netting, can easily and inexpensively be erected adjacent to the field, as in the case of Zofit.

- (XIII) **Water fountain and toilet facility installation** – assuming a source of piped in water, the installation of a simple water fountain is a must; the installation of a simple one stall toilet is a luxury, but nice to have, particularly where a mixed gender team and fans are expected. Only one problem, someone has to be responsible for the upkeep of the facilities.
- (XIV) **Trash container** – some form of trash and garbage container should be permanently available adjacent to the field, with strict rules to coaches and players to clean up after themselves at the end of every practice and game. Appearance is important, particularly if there is an interest in receiving sponsorship of the field or teams playing on the field; moreover, for the sake of the players' safety and positive attitude about their home field it is nice to have a clean field to come to for each practice and game. It is recommended that if the container is movable, it should be chained to avoid theft.
- (XV) **Sprinkler system and in-field grass installation** – this is where expert advice and funding is required. In the case of Zofit, the settlement was pleased to have a central green area that could serve a dual use function – baseball and community affairs. Accordingly the settlement paid for the installation of a permanent sprinkling system and, thereafter, the planting of the particular grass which was considered appropriate for the climate and the rough use of the field. Here, the upkeep (and attendant expense) of the grassed field must be considered. If the field is not going to be looked after and kept cut for practices and games, you might as well save your investment – stick to a sand lot field.

With plenty of water, the grass should grow rapidly – after being cut a couple of times, it will be ready for use. There is no need to cut out base lines – with use of a white lime or chalk marking machine, the base lines can be easily marked and are very visible. If the base lines are cut out, the grove quickly deepens and can become a hazard.

In the case of Zofit, the baseball field continues to be used, occasionally as a soccer field. For such purpose, portable soccer goals are kept on the sidelines and out of bounds when the field is being used for baseball. As a result of the Zofit

field's dual use, the entire baseball field is covered with grass, save for the home plate area, which is covered with fine gravel for good drainage. If, on the other hand, the intention is to use the field exclusively for baseball, then in the process of planting grass, a semi-circular area between the grassed in-field and grassed out-field (as well as the pitcher's mound and home plate areas), should be covered with gravel having good drainage. A diagram illustrating a grassed/graveled baseball field is found in Appendix VII.

(XVI) **Marking machine** – a simple device can be constructed from metal for purposes of marking the field with chalk or lime powder. It should be kept in a shed together with the powder properly protected from the elements. When marking the field, a long rope or cable (the length of the field), should be available to ensure a straight line (base line and out of bounds), starting from the back tip of home plate (which should be properly situated in the backstop prior to the marking of the field). Pictures of the marking device used in Zofit appears in Appendices VIII-A and VIII-B.

(XVII) **Equipment shed** – a small 2x2 or 2x3 shed should be erected adjacent to the field to house and safeguard equipment. Needless to say, a secure lock should be installed even when the field is in an otherwise secure area. In the case of Zofit, a shed was constructed and has been used for many years – there was one break in and equipment, including a pitching machine were stolen. In that the Israeli Baseball Association carries theft insurance covering baseball equipment stored in locked facilities, we were able to recover for the items stolen. Insurance is a nice thing to have, in such a case.

(XVIII) **Installation of lighting** – here, undoubtedly, is a major element of expense, requiring access to electricity and expert advice. Clearly, a careful evaluation of use versus expense must be made, before considering taking such a step.

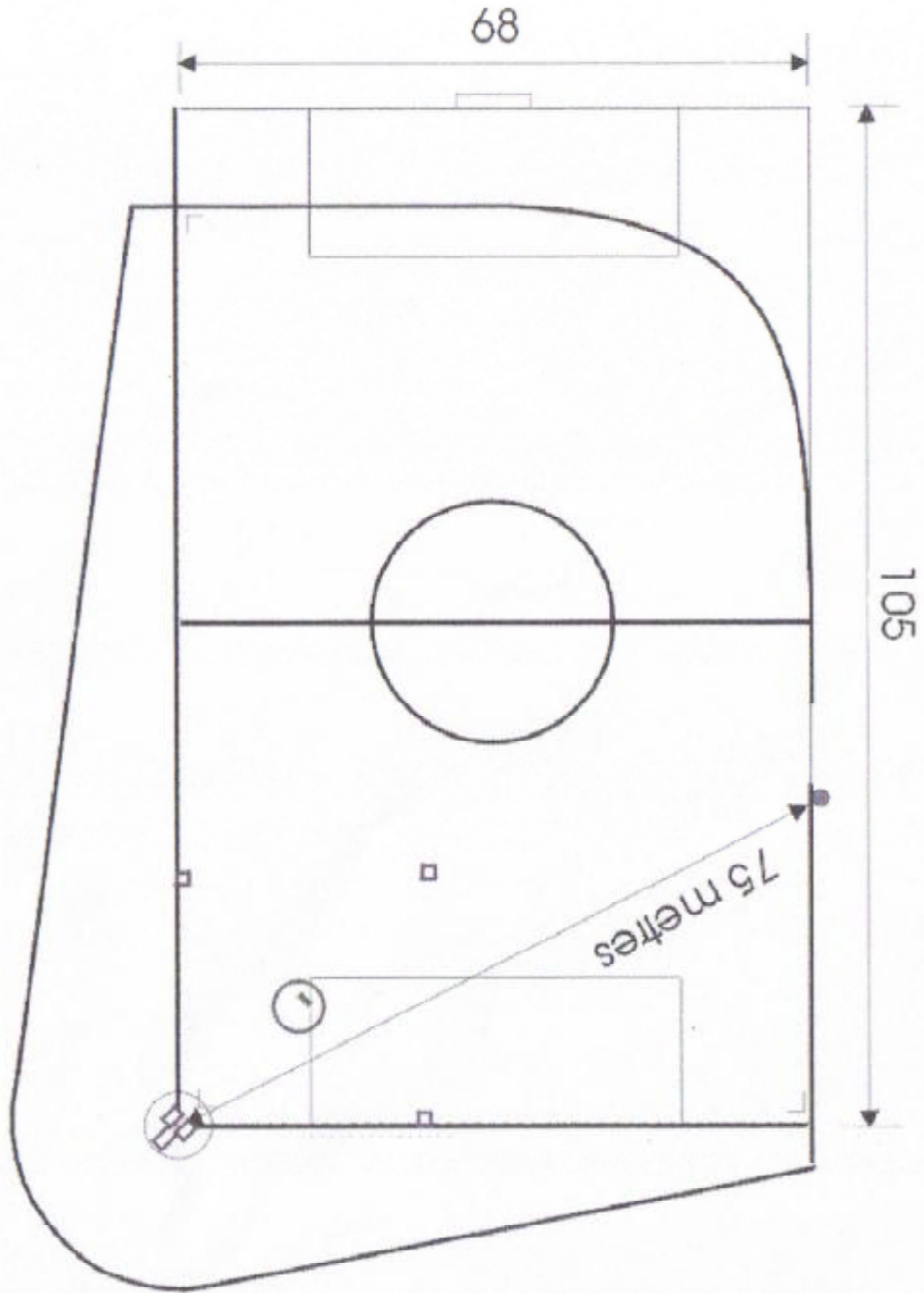
APPENDIX I-A



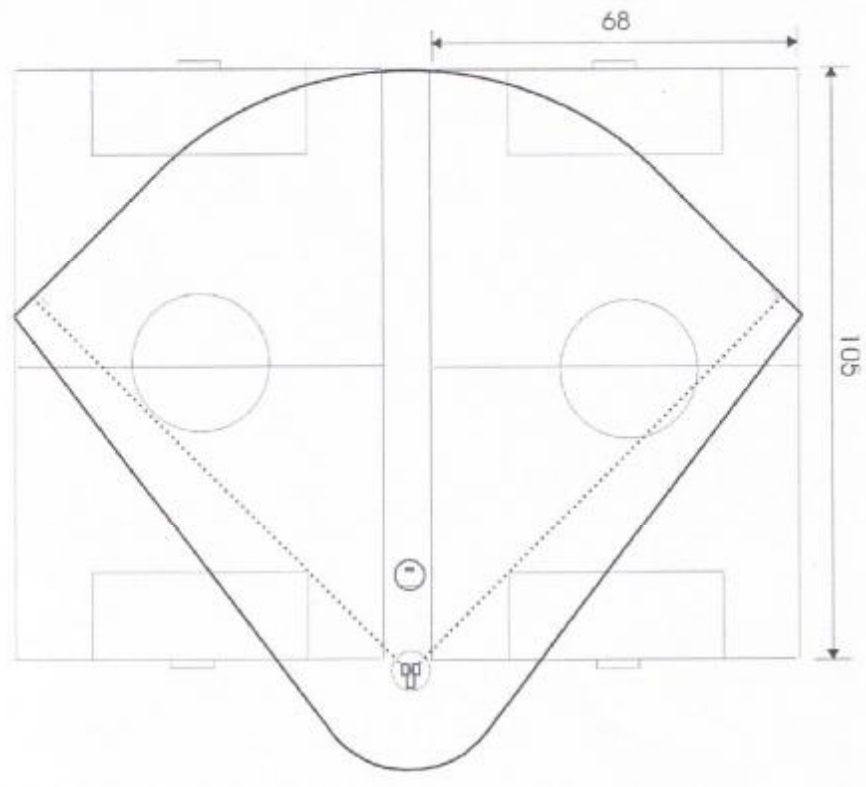
APPENDIX I-B



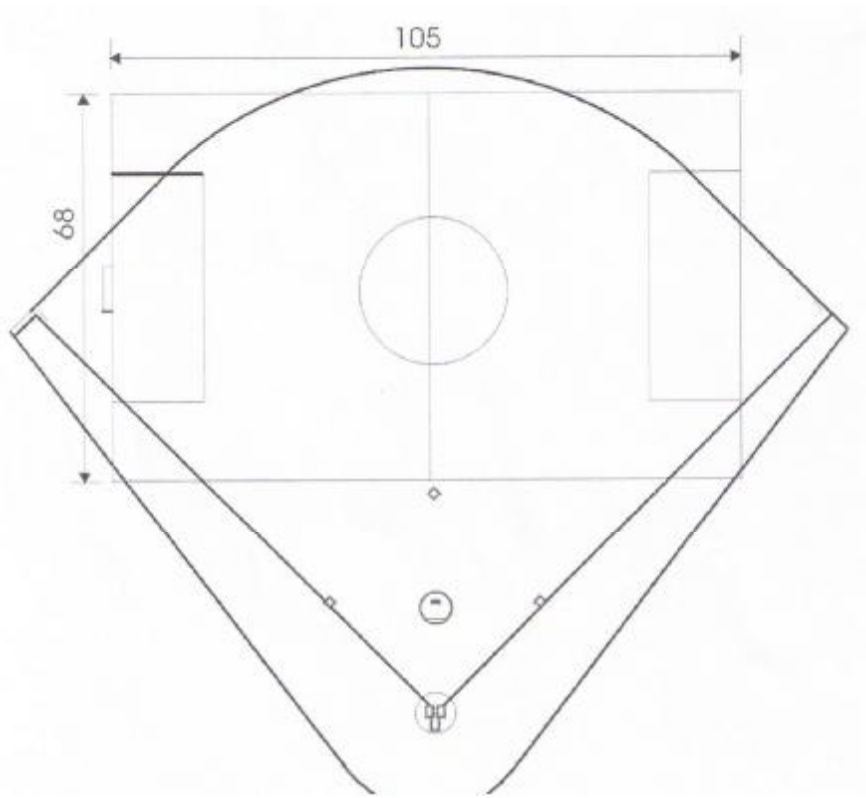
APPENDIX II-A



APPENDIX II-B



APPENDIX II-C



APPENDIX III-A



APPENDIX III-B



APPENDIX III-C

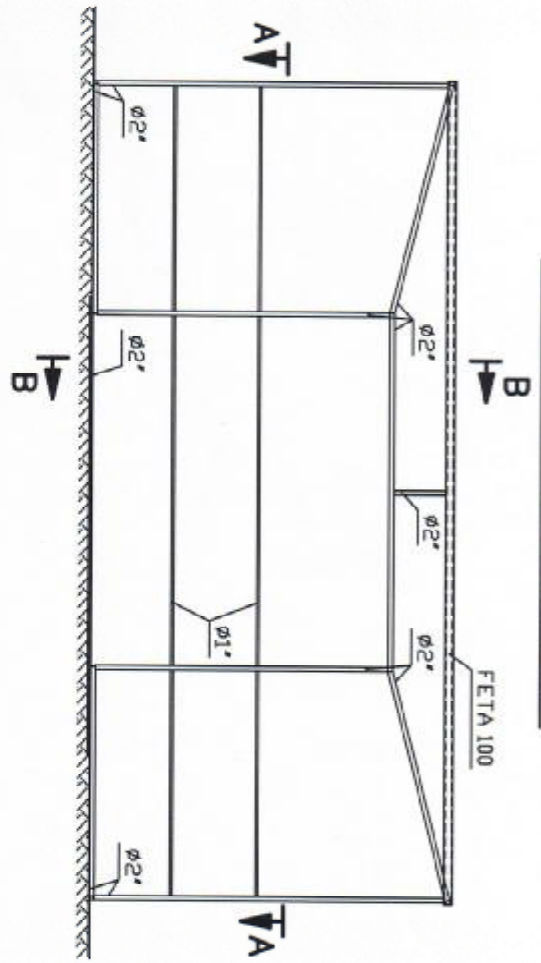


APPENDIX III-D

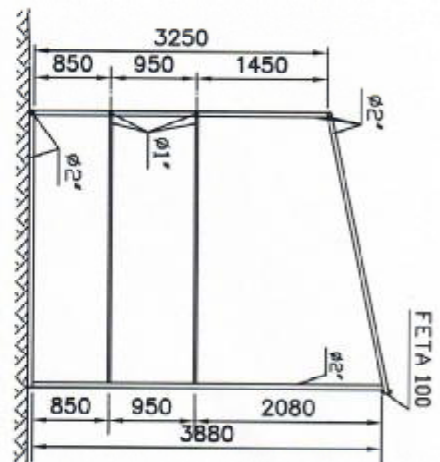


APPENDIX III-E

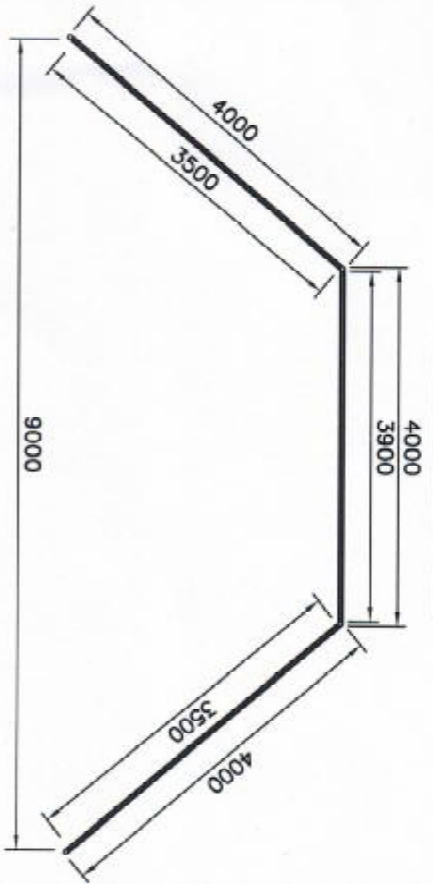
VIEW OF BACKSTOP



SECTION B-B



SECTION A-A

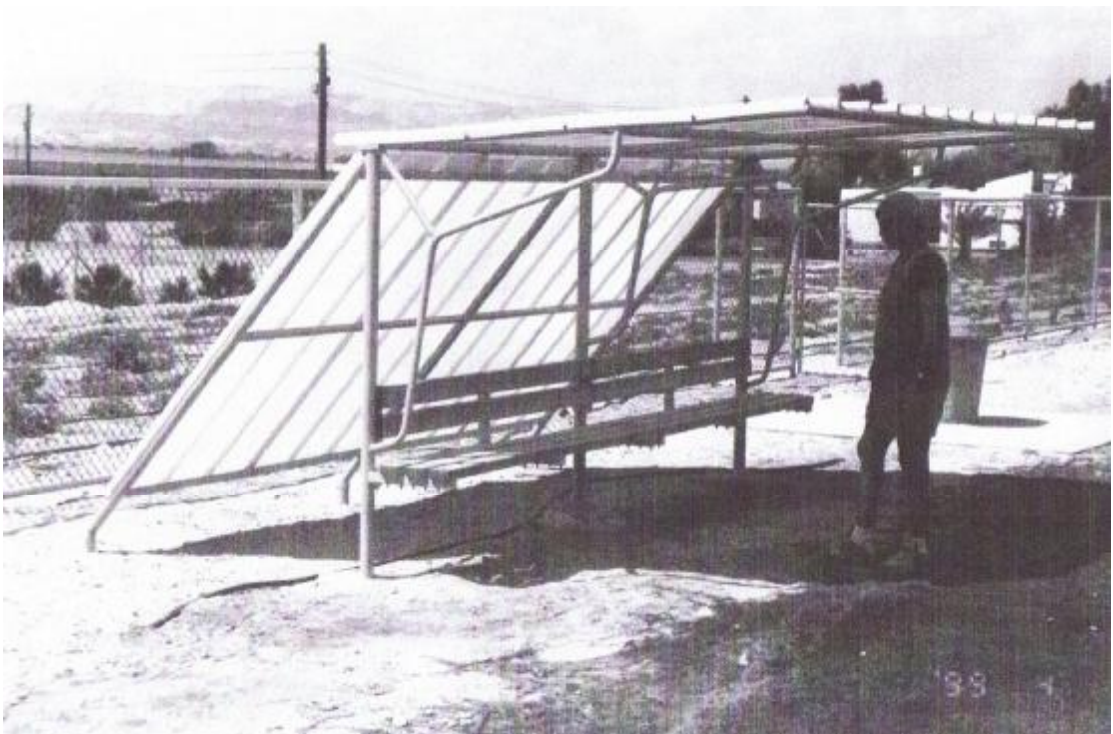


BASEBALL
BACKSTOP

APPENDIX IV-A



APPENDIX IV-B



APPENDIX V



APPENDIX VI



APPENDIX VIII-A



APPENDIX VIII-B

