
The First Marathon Races

1st International Olympic Games 1896

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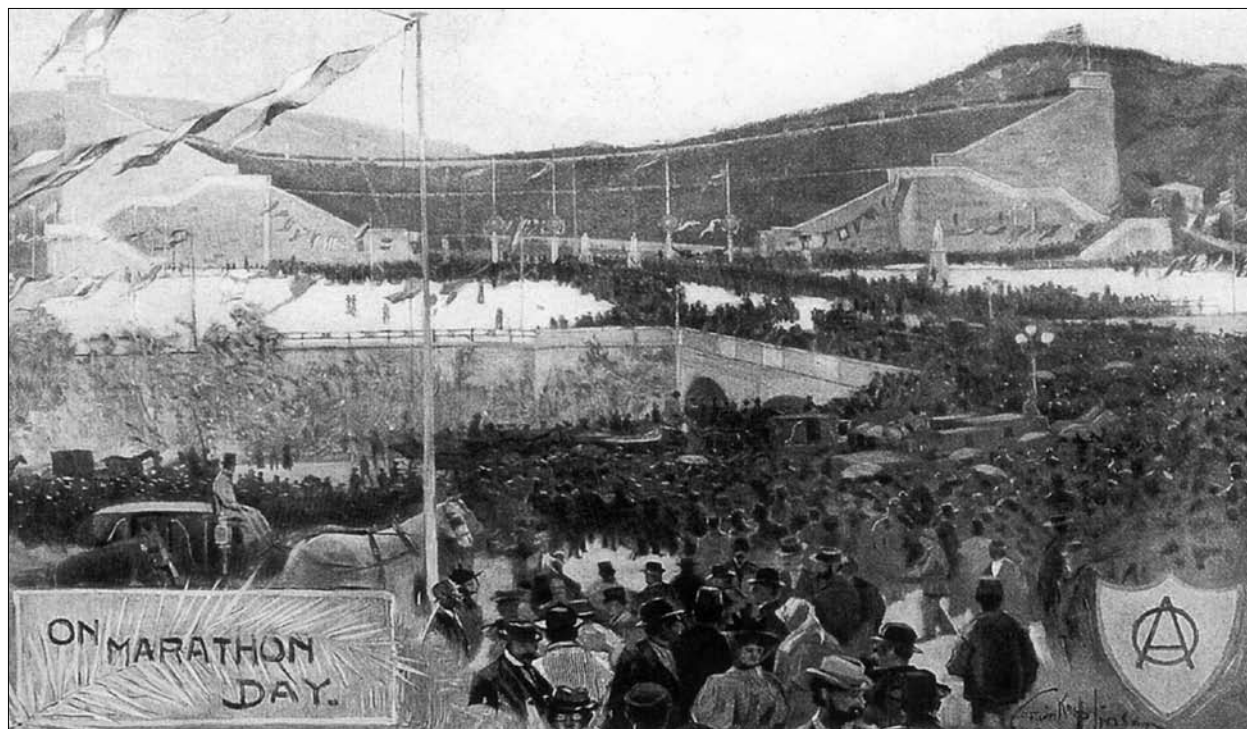
There is hardly any book or monograph on the history “Olympic Games” which does not make some reference to the first Marathon Race. Nowadays, for the majority of people, it is associated with Spyros Louis, the winner of the first race in 1896, and with the current distance of 42,195 metres. The press of the time covered the organization of the “First International Olympic Games of 1896” in detail and promoted the marathon race as a major national event. Although a great deal of different and conflicting information concerning the Marathon race has been recorded, certain points have been left unclear, particularly with regard to the preparatory and trial races which preceded the final Marathon race. Both these preparatory and trial races highlight the historical evolution of the Marathon and are an area which has not received sufficient analysis.

A lot of significant information which supplemented and clarified specific important aspects of the historic

Marathon race, came to light as a result of the Athens Olympic Games of 2004. In addition, contemporary technology which digitised the printed press of the time made it more accessible.

The beginning

Michel Bréal, a French philhellene and intellectual suggested that a marathon race should be held to commemorate the feat of the messenger from the battle of Marathon and his idea gave the impetus for the establishment of this new race.¹ During the first meeting of the Temporary Committee of the Olympic Games (12-24 November 1894) when the programme of games was agreed, the Marathon was included among the sports events. Thus, the marathon, a race which would eventually become one of the world’s most popular events, was born. The programme of the games was published in the



third issue of the Bulletin of the International Olympic Committee (January 1895) and bears the signatures of the members of the Greek committee responsible for the preparation of the 1896 Olympic Games (K. Manos, S. Skouloudis, Al. Soutsos and Th. Rets(z)inas).²

While the official marathon races of the first Olympics (i.e., the preliminary Panhellenic marathon on 10 March and the final Olympic Marathon on 29 March 1896) are familiar to many, relatively little is known about either of the races held prior to the two official ones or of the runners' efforts to prepare themselves for participation in the final Olympic Marathon.

The first Panhellenic preliminary games

In January 1896 "the specific programme for the athletic and sports events of the Panhellenic Games as they were regulated for the Olympics" was issued. The programme was very detailed and clearly outlined both the required sporting conditions and the specific details concerning the outfits to be worn not only by the instructors but also by the members of the athletic clubs.³

Preliminary Panhellenic Games would take place over a period of three days (9-11 March) in the stadium⁴ in order to select Greek athletes to participate in the final Olympic events: "It was decided that the Panhellenic games, would precede the Olympic Games and take place the first week of March. Winners of these contests would then participate in the Olympics."⁵ Before these preliminary games, "the specific regulation of the marathon run for the Panhellenic Games" was issued.⁶ This six-page document clearly describes the parameters for the marathon race, and the deadline for Greek athletes to register was set at 20 February. Likewise, the first issue of the official publication of the International

Olympic Committee, the periodical Bulletin du Comité International des Jeux Olympiques,⁷ records not only the programme of the Olympic Games but also the fact that a preparatory Marathon took place:

This endurance race will be a part of the programme of the Games. M. Bréal, a member of the Institute of France, has donated a trophy for the winner. Preparatory events were held in order to prepare the athletes. Mr. Georgios Grigoriou, a member of the National Athletic Club, got to the finish line first. Having set off with the other runners from the Tomb (of Marathon) at 9:30 a.m. Georgios Grigoriou arrived in Athens at 12:20 p.m. He covered the 48 kilometres from Athens to Marathon in 2 hours and 50 minutes, which means that he ran at a rate of more than 15 km per hour.⁸

This achievement is not widely mentioned in printed literature. However, Ioannis Chrysafis, whose work dominates among Greek authors of the time and who at the age of 23 played an active role in the first International Olympic Games, mentions the following:

Meanwhile, on 11 February the National Athletic Club carried out the first trial marathon during which the runner Georgios Grigoriou was the first to cover the whole distance from Marathon to Athens at the double, revealing to those in charge the absolutely miserable situation of the road which they tried to repair afterwards but in an off-handed way.⁹

The dates of the two reports are so close to each other that they probably refer to the same race. The establishment of a new event which was considered quintessentially Greek aroused great interest among both Greek and foreign runners. Coubertin, though perhaps prone to

exaggeration, highlights the importance of the event for Greeks as he writes:

One event only seemed likely to be theirs from its very nature: the long-distance run from Marathon [...] The road is rough and stony. The Greeks had trained for this run for a year past. Even in the remote districts of Thessaly young peasants prepared to enter as contestants. In three cases it is said that the enthusiasm and the inexperience of these young fellows cost them their lives, so exaggerated were their preparatory efforts.¹⁰

Australia's Edwin Flack Olympic 1500m champion in 1896 also took part in the marathon. He wrote in a letter to his father: "Several of them including the winner are accustomed to walk 20 or 30 kilometres a day along these roads."¹¹

Likewise, one finds interesting information concerning the American team and its participation in the marathon run in the writings of Ellery Clark, a member of the Boston Athletic Association (BAA). He writes:

Through the summer and autumn of 1895 the papers, from time to time, would speak of the project, then on foot, for a revival of the Olympic Games, at Athens, in the spring of the following year. And yet, rather curiously as it seems to us now, in view of the excessive excitement of recent years, there was little interest in America over the plan, and it was not until the winter of 1896 that the BAA decided to send a team to the games. The whole idea sprang from a chance remark uttered in jest. At the club's annual games in January, Arthur Blake, our best distance runner, won the thousand yards, after a spectacular finish and in very good time. After the race Mr. Burnham, one of Blake's friends and a prominent member of the club, was congratulating him on his showing, and Blake laughingly answered: "Oh, I'm too good for Boston. I ought to go over and run the Marathon, at Athens, in the Olympic Games." Mr. Burnham looked at him for a moment in silence, and then: "Would you really go if you had the chance?" he asked. "Would I," Blake returned, with emphasis; and from that moment Mr. Burnham made up his mind, if it could be brought about, that the BAA should send a team to the games. A month later everything was definitely decided upon.¹²

Such an important event as the revival of the Olympic Games provided material for Greek daily and weekly-illustrated newspapers, which actively chased news and made almost daily references to the events leading up to the Olympiad. The descriptions that follow depict both the eagerness of the Greek runners to achieve victory as well as their ignorance of the endurance races. The example of the Greek runner, Georgios Grigoriou¹³ is typical. He ran more than five Marathons in six weeks, a nearly impossible feat even for marathon athletes today. The following excerpts are illustrative:

Last Sunday, a second test of the marathon race took place. Both runners, Mr. Giannoulis and Mr. Grigoriou, wearing only a naval jersey, a short spatter dash and

very light shoes, set off from Marathon at 8:00 am. Giannoulis arrived at the gymnasium of the National Gymnastic Club (which is located at Kifissias Street) at 11:45 and Grigoriou ten minutes later. However, Giannoulis covered five kilometres on a carriage and as a result the victory belongs to the athlete who got to the finish line second.¹⁴

Yesterday Grigoriou (a member of the National Club) started first to exercise regularly on the road, running at the double 20 kilometres per day. Tomorrow, Delighiannis and Giannoulis will follow, beginning the same exercises. Yesterday, Grigoriou covered 20 kilometres in 1 hour and 27 minutes keeping an average speed of 4½ minutes per kilometre. He likes heat and prefers it to mud, just like Delighiannis.¹⁵

Last Sunday, trial races of the marathon run took place. D. Delighiannis, a 23-year old student of philology from Stemnitsa in Gortynia, was the winner, having covered the distance in 3 hours, 42 minutes and 10 seconds. His time was better than that of Grigoriou who during the previous test had covered the same distance in 3 hours and 55 minutes.¹⁶

The tireless runner Mr. Grigoriou carried out a new experiment. He covered the 40 kilometre distance of the Marathon in 3 hours and 27 minutes and therefore he excelled everybody who had ever covered the same distance.¹⁷

The newspaper *Akropolis*, in its main article about the marathon entitled "The Games", mentions, among other things, the runners of Piraeus:

Yesterday, Mr. Mbartzoukopoulos and Mr. Kelaidis, runners who belong to the Peraeus Hikers' Club, ran the Marathon. Both of them started from the fortieth kilometre of the Athens-Marathon road at 1:00 p.m. but only the former managed to complete the route, running the distance up to the Panathenean Stadium in three hours and forty-one minutes. Mr. Kelaidis, who had distinguished himself both in endurance and in speed in previous trial races longer than the marathon, was not able to proceed farther than the eighteenth kilometre of the road leading from Athens to Marathon due to a sudden injury to his feet. The runners were accompanied by Mr. Kalfios and Mr. Koukkakis, members of the administrative council of the Hikers' Club. The doctor, Mr. Aneroussis was with them. They were all on a carriage.¹⁸

Ta Olympia, a weekly illustrated edition, was among the newspapers of the time which covered the Olympic events with specific references to the marathon run as well as illustrative sketches:

The famous hiker Airoidi¹⁹ from Milan comes to Greece in order to participate in the marathon. He is going to hike from Milan to Athens." "A priest from Livadia, called Spyros Vitzakos, also asked to participate in the marathon. He is known for his ability to run remarkably quickly. In order for the priest to

participate, permission was requested from the Holy Synod.”²⁰ And again, “After some weeks, Mrs. Misteau, who is an excellent runner, arrives from America. She comes in order to take part in the Marathon and she is thirty years old.”²¹

The first official marathon was held on 10 March 1896 as part of the Panhellenic games, preliminary contests for the qualification and participation of Greek athletes in the first Olympic Games. As part of the organization, special programmes were issued for each of the three days of the games. Despite the problems that arose during the Olympic Games themselves, the specifications set for the preliminary Panhellenic events were fairly strict and most of them are still in force even today. Furthermore, a document was issued containing the names of all the marathon participants. A careful examination of the names of the runners (made known to the public for the first time, confirms the participation of several of them not only in the preliminary of 25 March, but also in the final.

PANHELLENIC TRIAL GAMES 1896,
SECOND DAY,
SUNDAY 10th MARCH,
Time: 2 pm,
SPORTS

ARRIVAL OF THE RUNNERS FROM MARATHON

1) C. Vasilakos, Laconia, 2) I. M. Mamais, Panhellenic, Athens, 3) A.T. Sakellariou, Panhellenic, Athens, 4) G.K. Roufogalis, Akrotatos, 5) K.P. Agapitos, Crete, 6) A. H. Roilos, Panhellenic, Athens, 7) L.A. Theofanis, Panaitoliko, Mesolonghi, 8) C. Dedes, Hikers of Piraeus, 9) E. C. Gerakakis, Panhellenic, Athens, 10) K. C. Markou, Amarousion, 11) G. M. Rodakis, Panhellenic, Athens, 12) P. Stamatiou, Tanagraios, 13) D. K. Delighiannis, Panhellenic, Athens, 14) A. C. Barnavas, Greek, Athens, 15) S. G. Belokas, Athens Athletic Association, 16) D. N. Livadas, Hikers of Piraeus, 17) N.G. Belokas, Athens Athletic Association, 18) D. X. Christopoulos, Company of Patras, 19) X. N. Mercouris, Kekropos, Kropia, 20) S. Lagoudakis, National Club of Athens, 21) D. Papagiannopoulos, Panachaikou, Patras, 22) Th. Tsikaloudis, Macedon, 23) X. Douvanas, Company of Patras, 24) Th. Noulis, Macedon, 25) G.K. Grigoriou, National Club of Athens, 26) M. Paterikos, Filippoupoli, 27) K. X. Gikas, Kekropos, Kropia, 28) D. S. Kountouris, Panhellenic, Athens, 29) X. J. Ziktis, Greek, Athens, 30) J. S. Giannoulis, National Club of Athens, 31) D. Louis, Amarousion, 32) P. Kelaidis, Hikers of Piraeus, 33) N. Bartzoukopoulos, Hikers of Piraeus.

The first five arrivals at the stadium as well as those who arrived before the fifth runner had reached the stadium's final tiers, qualified for the Olympic Games.²²

The thirty-first runner above, D. Louis, bears no relation to the later marathon winner Spyros Louis. In his book, Llewellyn Smith²³ refers to the latter as a participant,

hypothesizing that a typographical error had occurred. However, Spyros Louis never took part in the Panhellenic trial runs. One piece of information which cannot be confirmed is whether the runner listed twentieth above (S. Lagoudakis) actually took part in this race. Most probably he did not, as he re-appears as a runner of the French team in the Olympic Marathon Run on 29 March. Additionally, several athletes who took part in this race were not registered with any athletic association, despite the firm stance against this taken by Konstantinos Manos (overseer and judge), who interpreted the specification set out by the conference in 1894, quite stringently.²⁴

The number of Greek runners who took part in the trial marathon runs is confirmed in the print media of the time.

The following numbers of people will compete in the Panhellenic Games: in the 100m foot race, 14; in the 400m, 14; in the 800m, 6; in the 1500m, 16, in the 110m with hurdles, 7; in the marathon run, 33; in wrestling, 11.²⁵

Of the 33 registered participants, eight dropped out before it began and the 25 who arrived in Marathon around dusk, on Saturday, sought lodging for the night. [It] was nearly 2 p.m. The order was given, ‘Attention!’ Accordingly, the runners assumed their bent positions and immediately following the signal, they set off. The attention of every spectator was fixed on the twenty-five straining athletic figures which like electrically powered machines would be in motion for at least three hours along the course marked out for the race.²⁶

It is worth mentioning, here, a common mistake related to the number of runners who ran this race. Charalambos Anninos probably draws on the preceding report or similar ones, when he wrongly transfers the number of twenty-five runners to the Olympic Marathon itself, which took place on 29 March:

A large number of competitors had registered for this contest, but most of them, doubting their strength, had retired at the last moment. Those who remained, around the number of 25, accompanied by the Committee members, went to Marathon the day before the race to spend their night there.²⁷

Many researchers and writers continue to use this record, considering it trustworthy. However, this account is not accurate, as we certainly know not only the names of the participants, but also the exact number who ran, seventeen.²⁸ The Olympic bulletin reports in detail the finishing order and times:

The sound of five consecutive cannon volleys from the Rizarios School announced that the first victors had arrived at the finish line. First to enter the stadium was Mr. Ch. Basilakos, from Sparta, having run the course in three hours and eighteen minutes; followed closely by Mr. N.G. Mpelokas of the Sportsman's Group (Athens Athletic Association), a mere four and a half meters after the first runner. Third to finish



From the left: Delighiannis, Mpelokas, Christopoulos and Basilakos Illustrations for the newspapers HESTIA and TO ASTY of 29 and 30 March 1896

was Mr. Delighiannis (Panhellenic Gymnastic Club), who ran the course in three hours and thirty-three minutes; fourth was Mr. D. Ch. Christopoulos off the (Gymnastic Company of Patras), who finished in three hours, thirty-three minutes and fifty seconds; fifth was Mr. Grigoriou of (National Gymnastic Club), finishing the race in three hours, thirty-six minutes; and sixth was Mr. Evang. Gerakaris (Panhellenic Gymnastic Club), finishing in three hours, thirty-seven minutes and seven seconds.²⁹

International pre-qualifying races

The Committee for the Preparation of Greek Athletes could see how great the interest was and, as a result, it decided to hold a repeat of the marathon. It announced to the newspapers, clubs, and any individual who might be interested, that a second preliminary marathon race would be held, and that anyone who had entered by Easter day (24 March) could take part, along with any runner who covered the distance in a time of 3 hours and 18 minutes or less.³⁰ A new date was set for the international pre-qualifying races: 25 March, the first day of the Olympic Games.

For the period between the Panhellenic games (10 March) and the final marathon run itself, we have very little information, partly as a result of the conduct of Konstantinos Manos, the overseer of the event, who prevented newspapers from reporting on the lead-up to the race. In protest, the administrators and chief editors of the newspapers *Ephimeris*, *Neas Ephimeris*, *Akropolis*, *Kairos*, *Asty*, *Hestia*, and *Skrip* decided to suspend publication of all announcements and advertisements received from

the office of the Olympic committee.³¹ There was a second factor contributing to the paucity of information now available. Fire broke out a month after the conclusion of the Olympic Games in 1896, in the Mela building on Loudoviko (Kotzia) Square. The building had been the headquarters of the Olympic Committee, and the blaze destroyed a portion of the archives.³²

Nevertheless the initiative to find more capable runners to participate in the new preliminary marathon brought about the desired results, and the runners from Chalandri and Amarousion proved especially energetic. According to the *Akropolis* newspaper, “[...] eighty-five runners had registered; in the end thirty-eight runners were gathered in Marathon on 24 March, as notified.”³³ Among these was Spyros Louis from the area of Amarousion (Marousi).

The weather was nasty. Rain had fallen throughout the night and it was still drizzling, making this race a difficult one for the runners. At 7 a.m., starter Major Papadiamantopoulos gave the signal with a shot into the air. The competition was intense, as only the first six runners to finish would take part in the final. The following runners finished in the allotted time: Georgios Lavrentis 3 hrs 11’23”, I. Vrettos 3 hrs 13’34”, Eleftherios Papsimeon 3 hrs 13’37”, Georgios Kafetzis 3 hrs 15’50”, Spyros Louis 3 hrs 18’25”, and Stamatis Masouris 3 hrs 18’35”.³⁴

It is often noted that the starter of this marathon, Major Papadiamantopoulos, had requested that Louis and Masouris be accepted for the final competition, as both had raced under miserable weather conditions and finished with times nearly as quick as that of Vasilakos. Even if it is the case that Papadiamantopoulos submitted a special petition, the announcement of the International Olympic Committee prescribed that runners would be



From the left: Grigoriou Illustration for the newspaper HESTIA of 29 March 1896; Spyros Louis Illustration for the newspaper TO ASTY of 30 March 1896

accepted for the final race “who finish the course in the space of no more than three hours and eighteen minutes”. Thus, both Louis and Masouris were within a fraction of the limit.

The big final

The day of the Marathon race had arrived. On Friday, 29 March, Athens had the appearance of a city under siege. A large crowd started assembling outside the ticket-booths at three o’ clock in the morning. By 6 a.m. it had filled a quarter of the Panathenean Stadium.

[...]The run from Marathon was felt by all the Greeks to be the principal event of the games. National pride would have been deeply touched at losing it. Some of those who had practised this run in anticipation would have been almost, if not quite, content to reach the goal, and like the ancient runner on the day of the great battle, shout out with their remaining breath, “Χαίρετε νικώμεν”, and die.³⁵

The excitement surrounding the marathon race had escalated into a frenzy; the other events that were held on that day went almost unnoticed. A wave of anticipation had gripped spectators who were packed into stadium and had poured over onto the surrounding grounds. Who would win the race? Would it be a Greek?³⁶ The comment made by the Hungarian G. Kellner who took part reflects the general enthusiastic and euphoric atmosphere: “I couldn’t have run faster. But even if I could I wouldn’t have done it because I didn’t want to deprive the Greeks of such a glorious joy.”³⁷

The press of the day described the course, the competitive

spirit among the Marathon runners and the triumph of Spyridon (Spyros) Louis:

The weather conditions were bad. It had rained heavily on the eve of the marathon race and snow had covered the nearby mountains. The peaks of Mt. Penteli were covered with snow and a chilly northerly wind could be felt through the bones. Groups of athletes were sitting around the tables at Miltiades’ Trophy – the village café – chatting with the locals. Delighiannis, sober-faced and aloof, was deep in thought about the race on the following day. A vague concern was casting a light shadow around his eyes. Grigoriou and some others were discussing the results of the races up to that point, while Gerakaris was daydreaming with his hands buried in his pockets. In his child-like voice wide-eyed Vasilakos, the best among the Greek runners, was complaining about some minor pain in his foot, confident that it would go away by the time the race started. Dr. Mentzelopoulos, his personal physician, would not let him out of his sight. Vrettos and Kafetzis, the two runners from Chalandri, had gone out early to inspect the course. They were both in very good physical condition. As a matter of fact, six days earlier, both Vrettos and Kafetzis had run the entire stretch of the marathon course.³⁸

Lagoudakis, a medical student who spoke French, addressed the foreign athletes: “If you win, we will still think of you as brothers. The Olympic Games in antiquity united all the Greek cities. The Olympic Games today unite all the people around the world.”³⁹ At exactly thirty seconds after 1.56 pm Major Papadiamantopoulos raised his pistol and the loud shot signalled the start of the

race. The dream of an Olympic Marathon had become a reality.

The winner of the first marathon race and his participation in the final

The victory of Spyros Louis was the highlight of the first Olympic Games and has been part of Olympic lore ever since. His victory had a symbolic dimension and helped establish the prestige of modern Olympic Games in general.⁴⁰

In the Olympics of 1896, the upper classes of Athens longed for a Greek victory. People who had never met nonetheless shared a similar ambition which was growing day by day, due to the press and every social, political and spiritual class of that period wished for the same outcome. The expectation for the grand victory that came from an athlete of a low social background was received with such an enthusiasm that as a consequence, class differences were temporarily put aside. There were three main factors: an emotional burden, gratitude to the winner and the wish to celebrate a great victory together. The way the royal family received Louis's success is quite interesting, as they ignored protocol and etiquette. Although Louis was illiterate he was gentle, humble, naive and well-behaved. He nourished love for the country of his descent. All these qualities are reflected in the telegram he sent to Georgios Averof, after his victory in the Marathon race:

To the Great Patriot in Alexandria
The glory of this victory is indebted to you
Louis from Amaroussion.⁴¹

Born in early 1872⁴² in what was then the village of Marousi, on the outskirts of Athens, Spyros Louis earned his living by selling water to Athenians who did not have good water sources in the city. Twice a day, Louis would load two barrels of water on his mule and run beside the animal the fourteen kilometres (8.6 miles) from the water supply in the village of Marousi to Athens. Without any prior athletic training, he made his first appearance at the second Marathon trials on 25 March 1896.

Louis himself gave an account of the events in an interview with the Athens daily *Athinaika Nea*:⁴³

It was pure chance. In 1895, I was doing my military service as an ostler for General Mavromichalis. One day we passed by the [Panathinaikon] stadium, which was then under construction for the Olympics, and the general, pointing at the stadium, said to me: "This is where the Olympic Games will take place and where the marathon runners will race. Could you also run the Marathon course?" Without much thought, I answered: "Why couldn't I?" By the following day, though, I had forgotten all about it, and, a year later, one week before the Olympic Games, I simply worked in the fields.

When asked whether he had any intention of participating in the Games, he said:

No, I did not. The Games would start on Easter Sunday,

and on Holy Thursday I had no idea that I would run. I only knew that Papasymeon from Marousi and G. Kalantzis or Karras from Chalandri trained for the Marathon race and that they would participate in the trials. The Committee had said that anyone who could run the Marathon in three hours and five minutes would qualify for the Olympics. A group of us from Marousi went to Marathon to watch the trials, where the guy from Chalandri beat our friend from Marousi. Because of the defeat of our comrade, we had to make our way home under mocking jeers from all the people of Chalandri. We could not stomach it and we swore revenge. Masouris, Lavrentis, Papasymeon's brother, I and one more friend went down to Athens on the Saturday before Easter and told the Committee that we wanted to enter the race. They told us to run a trial race and if we could cover the distance in three hours and five minutes we would be accepted. Our fellow-villagers took up collections and raised some money to buy us shoes – a pair of shoes cost twenty-five drachmae at the time – so on Easter Monday we took off from Marathon.

It is worth mentioning another interview that Louis gave a year later. In his article "Olympic Champion of the 1896 Marathon Race" Karl Lennartz, quotes the whole interview given by Louis to the German journalist, which was published in the *Sport Telegramm*, Magdeburg (13.6.1936). A comparison of the two interviews brings up a lot of common points. The German journalist's interview is more detailed and in many parts, analytical. And it is strange indeed that an illiterate person, who covered that distance only twice, with no prior involvement in sport, manages to describe with such an ease the proceedings of the Marathon. Lennartz makes an apt remark about the way Louis describes the race. Louis, being illiterate, described his story, embellished with his resourceful imagination.⁴⁴ Spyros Louis did not continue his athletic career; he stopped at that single race. What more could he ask for after Olympic glory?

In 1935, the Germans announced that 1896 marathon winner Spyros Louis would be the guest of honour at the 1936 Berlin Olympics. Forty years after his victory, Louis received one of the greatest honours ever bestowed on him. Dressed in the traditional uniform of the Evzones⁴⁵ (elite soldiers of the Greek infantry) and holding the Greek flag, Louis carried the Olympic flame from the altar in Lustgarten to the stadium in Berlin, to the sound of a standing ovation. In front of thousands of spectators, marathon race victor Louis presented Adolf Hitler with olive branches from ancient Olympia. On 26 March 1940, 'Barba (uncle) Spyros', as he was affectionately known by many, passed away at the age of 68. On his death certificate the doctor scribbled "asthmatic bronchitis".

Through the years, the Marathon Race has become an international symbol of man's effort to transcend his limits. The analysis of the preparatory and the trial phases of the Race reveals information which completes our knowledge about the First Marathon race. Last but not least, tribute is paid to the runners who participated in

the first race and contributed to its prevalence as a world-wide event which promotes the values of peace and cooperation. ■

Notes and References

- This myth was the reason that the eminent French linguist Michel Bréal (1832-1915), a member of the Institute of France, would write to Coubertin after a conference (Sorbonne 1894): "Since you are going to Athens, see whether it is possible to organize a race from Marathon to the Pnyx. This would have an ancient character. If we knew the time the Greek warrior needed for this stretch, we could make a record of it. It is my suggestion to donate a Marathon Trophy". See MÜLLER, Norbert: *Bréal und die Idee des Marathonlaufs und Coubertin*, in: <http://www.sport.uni-mainz.de/mueller/>, last visited on 16 December 2009. It has also been reported in LENNARTZ, Karl: "Following the footsteps of Bréal", in: *Journal of Olympic History* 6 (1998)2, 8 – 10, p. 9 and in GEORGIADIS, Konstantinos: "Die ideengeschichtliche Grundlage der Erneuerung der Olympischen Spiele im 19. Jahrhundert in Griechenland und ihre Umsetzung 1896 in Athen", in: *Olympische Studien* 4(2000), p. 448 – 449.
- Bulletin du Comité International des Jeux Olympiques* 3 (Janvier 1895), p. 3: "Cours à pied, dite de Marathon, sur la distance de 48 kilomètres, de Marathon à Athènes, pour la coupe offerte par M. Michel BRÉAL, membre de l'Institut de France". For more information, see MOURATIDIS, Ioannis: *Istoria Physikis Agogis kai Athlittismou*. Part II, Thessaloniki 2009, p. 189 – 195. MACALOON, John J: "The Revival of the Olympic Games", in: *International Academy Proceedings*, 24th session 1984, p. 169.
- SKIADAS, Eleftherios: *100 chronia neoteri Elliniki Olympiaki Istoria : 1894-2004*. Athens 2004, p. 86. See also, "Specific program for the Athletic and Sports of the Pan-Hellenic Games as they were regulated for the Olympics, 16 January, 1896." Athens 1986.
- The reconstructed stadium, also called *Kalimarmaro* (meaning "of fine marble") became one of the jewels of Athens. In 1896, the Panathenean Stadium, or *Panathinaiko Stadio*, (in Greek "the stadium of all Athenians") was used for the first modern Olympic Games.
- Ta Olympia* (Athenian Illustrated Weekly Review), 20 January 1896, p. 2.
- According to the regulation: "1. The Marathon is to be held on Sunday 10th March; 2. The starting point is to be at Marathon at 2 p.m. At 1 p.m. the runners must appear at the 40th kilometre of the public street before the representative of the supervision committee for the preparation of Greek athletes and the general supervisor of the course; 3. The starting point is 40 kilometers in distance from the designated finishing point in the Stadium, in which the runners will arrive through its right side." Specific regulation, National History Museum – Old Parliament: Archives of the Historical and Ethnological Society of Greece). See also *Ta Olympia*, 9 March 1896, p. 2.
- The name of this publication was changed in 1896 to *Les Jeux Olympiques*.
- Les Jeux Olympiques*, le janvier (8 février 1896)1, p. 2.
- CHRYSAFIS, Ioannis: *Modern International Olympic Games*. Athens 1930, p. 297. See also MANITAKIS, Pavlos: *100 chronia neoellinikou athlittismou 1830-1930*. Athens 1962, p. 51.
- COUBERTIN, Pierre de: "Olympic Games of 1896", in: *Century Magazine* (1896), p. 53.
- FLACK, Edwin H. 'Ted': *Letters to his father from Athens, 4 April and 18 April, 1896*. Transcribed by Ian Jobling, Dept. of Human Movement Studies, University of Queensland, from a photocopy of the handwritten letters made available to him by the Australian Olympic Federation in Melbourne, January 1982. Also available at: http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/eserv/UQ:114262/australia_1896_olympics.pdf. Edwin FLACK (1874-1935) the champion in Athens for the 800 m (2:11,0 min) and the 1.500 m (4:32,2 min) and several times Australian champion in the middle distance races.
- CLARK, Ellery H.: *Reminiscences of an Athlete: Twenty Years on Track and Field*. Boston and New York 1911, p. 124 – 125.
- Runner Giorgios Grigoriou was among those who took part in the Olympic Marathon run. During the competition course, however, he abandoned the effort. Grigoriou (unlike Louis who ran the Marathon only once and won) was a trained athlete and it seems likely that ignorance and the multiple trial marathons deprived him of victory.
- Ta Olympia*, 17 February 1896, p.2. See also *Les Jeux Olympiques*, le janvier (17/29 février 4, 1896), 14.
- Acropolis*, 23 February 1896, p. 2.
- Ta Olympia*, 24 February 1896, p. 2.
- Ta Olympia*, 2 March 1896, p. 2.
- Akropolis*, 2 March 1896, p. 2.
- 'A foreigner had been disqualified before the start of the race. Carlo Airoldi had travelled nearly a thousand miles from his home in Italy to Athens on foot, only to be kept out of the race on the grounds that he was a professional athlete. Airoldi had more experience at long-distance racing than any of the entrants in the Olympic race, having run several 50k races. But the Olympics, as Coubertin had planned, adhered to a strict code of amateurism. The Italian would not race.' In: LOVETT, Charlie: *Olympic Marathon*. Westport, Ct. 1997, p. 4.
- Ta Olympia*, 3 March 1896, p. 2.
- Ta Olympia*, 17 February 1896, p. 2. See also *Les Jeux Olympiques*, le janvier (17/29 février 1896)4, p. 14.
- "Panhellenic trial games 1896, second day, Sunday 10th march, time: 2 pm, sports". National History Museum – Old Parliament: Archives of the Historical and Ethnological Society of Greece).
- LLEWELLYN SMITH, Michael: *Olympics in Athens, 1896: The Invention of the modern Olympic Games* (in Greek). Athens 2004, p. 147.
- There were ten runners who did not belong to any athletic organization. Winner Charilaos Vasilakos was a university student. See CHRYSAFIS: *Modern*, p. 297.
- Ta Olympia*, 9 March 1896, p. 2. See also *Acropolis* 50(1896), 8th March, p. 2.
- Asty*, 12 March 1896. Here there is a complete description of the Panhellenic marathon run.
- ANNINOS, Charalambos: "Perigraphi ton Agonon", IN: COUBERTIN, Pierre de, PHILEMON, Timoleon J., POLITIS, Nikolaos G. & ANNINOS, Charalambos (EDS.): *The Olympic Games 776 BC – AD 1896, Part II*. London 1897, p. 86.
- DASIOS, S. E.: "Marathonios Entiposeis Dimosiografou", IN: GAVRIILIDIS, V. (ED.): *I Hellas kata tous Olympiakous Agones tou 1896*. Athens 1896, 113 – 115 p. 114. Dasios was a journalist of the Acropolis newspaper. His accounts are the most reliable source, as he followed the Marathon runners on a bike as a correspondent of the newspaper. See also ARGYROS, A.: *Oi protoi en Athenais diethneis Olympiakoi Agones tou 1896*. Athens 1896, p. 53; and *Ta Olympia*, 6 April 1896, p. 1. A similar inconsistency in the total number of participants appears in the information provided in the "Olympic Marathons" permanent exhibition of the Centre for the Promotion of the Marathon Race in the area of Marathon, which is based on the archives of the Olympic Museum of Lausanne. Specifically, while there is a detailed account on the environmental conditions of the 1896 marathon race (temperature, humidity and wind), the number of participants is only estimated around the number of 25, probably drawing on Annino's accounts.
- Ta Olympia*, March 1896, p. 2. The names of the winners of the contests are given as announced to Timoleon Philemon by the Committee for the Preparation of Greek Athens. The competitors' performances were not recorded. See PSYLLAS & LAMBROU (first names?): "Letter to Philemon (Athens), 15 March, 1896". *Hellenic Olympic Committee Archive: Correspondence Book of the Committee for the Preparation of Creek Athletes*, No. 291, p. 337 – 339. MOURATIDIS: *Istoria*, p. 216.
- GEORGIADIS, Konstantinos: *Olympic Revival. The Revival of the Olympic Games in Modern Times* (translated by Richard Witt). Athens 2003, p. 147.

- 31 *Asty*, 12 March 1896, p.3. See also CHRYSAFIS: *Modern*, p. 297.
- 32 The building is located on the north-east side of Kotzia Square. Until 1973 it housed the Panhellenic Post; today it houses the Greek National Bank. It belonged to the national benefactor Vasilios Melas, a native of Repetistis Epirus; he was the uncle of Dimitrios Vikelas.
- 33 *Acropolis*, 25 March 1896, p. 1.
- 34 *Hestia*, 25 March 1896, p. 2. The times may vary in different sources: see *Paligenesia*, 26 March 1896, p. 2; BIJKERK, Anthony Th. and YOUNG, David C.: "That memorable first marathon", in: *Journal of Olympic History* 7(1999)1, 5 – 24, p. 24. GEORGIADIS: *Olympic*, p. 147: (G. Lavrentis 3 hrs 11'27", I. Vrettos 3 hrs 12'30", E. Papasymeon 3 hrs 13'37", G. Kafetzis 3 hrs 15'50", S. Louis 3 hrs 18'27", S. Mousouris 3 hrs 19'15"); SYMEONIDIS, Argiris: *Spyros Louis: I alithini istoria*. Athens 1985, p. 54: Lavrentis 3 hrs 11'23", Vrettos 3 hrs 13'33", Papasymeon 3 hrs 13'37", Kafetzis 3 hrs 15'50", Spyros Louis 3.18'.25" (finished 17th), Masouris 3.18'.35" (finished 18th) and Vathis with 3.19'.04"). Of these runners, Lavrentis, Papasymeon, Louis and Masouris were all from the area of Marousi, while Kafetzis and Vrettos were from the area of Halandri.
- 35 In English: "Greetings! We have conquered!" See RICHARDSON, Rufus: "The New Olympian Games", in: *Scribners Magazine* 20(1896). The phrase can also be found in related texts as "Nenikikamen", which means "we have won".
- 36 SYMEONIDIS: *Spyros*, p. 62. See also p. 66 of the same source for Charles Maurras's handwritten account of the Marathon.
- 37 *Acropolis*, 30 March 1896. KARDASIS, Vasilios: *Oi Olimpiakoi Agones stin Athina 1896-1906*, Athens 2003, 178, 287 n. 124. About the Marathon and the general public's interest, see KOULOURI, Hristina: *Athlitismos kai opsis astikis kinonikotitas. Gymnastika kai athlitika somatia 1870-1922*. Athens 1997, p. 112.
- 38 *Acropolis*, 29 March 1896, p. 2.
- 39 MORAITIS, Karolos: *Spyros Louis: O thrilos ton Olympiakon Agonon 1896 – 1996*. Athens 1996, p. 92. See also TSONIAS, Stavros: *Marathon Races 490 B.C., 1896, 1906*. Athens 2003, p. 39.
- 40 LIPONSKI, Wojciech: *World Sports Encyclopedia*, Ozgraf, Olsztyn 2003, p. 388.
- 41 For more details regarding, see MACALOON, John J.: "The Revival", p. 179. KAIMAKAMIS, Vasilios: *I prosfora ton Vlahofonon Ellinon stin Anaviosi ton Olimpiakon Agonon*, Thessaloniki 2002, p. 64. KARDASIS, Vasilios: "O marathonios" in: *Olimpika Istorika* vol. 2, p. 314.
- 42 Encyclopedias as well as literature record different dates for Louis' birth. His tombstone is marked with the birthdate 12 January 1873; his death certificate records that he passed away on 26 March 1940 at the age of 68. Thus, I have settled on the birth date of 1872.
- 43 "Interview with G. Chanioti", in: *Athinaika Nea*, 4 November 1935. See also TSONIAS, Stavros: *Marathon*, p. 44, 45.
- 44 LENNARTZ, Karl: "Olympic Champion of the 1896 Marathon Race Narrates", in: *Journal of Olympic History* 7(1999)1, 24 – 27.
- 45 This uniform of Louis' is on display on the upper floor of the old Parliament building in Athens.