

The Awards of Spyros Louis

By Stavros Tsonias and Athanasios Anastasiou



Spyros Louis poses for photographer Ioannis Lampakis in front of an artistic background after his Olympic victory in the Marathon race. On his robe of honour, a splendid *fustanella*, he wears the Olympic medal fastened to a brooch.

Photo: Lampakis Family Archive

Sometimes an event in the present day will thrust an episode from the past back into the spotlight. So it was that the sale of a silver cup, shortly before the 2012 London Olympic Games, brought new headlines for the first Olympic Games of the Modern era, held in Athens 116 years before.

The Silver Cup had been held by the runner Spyros Louis, the winner of the first Olympic Marathon in 1896.

The decision to sell the trophy was made by the grandson, then 72 years of age. He also bore the name Spyros Louis but never met his famous grandfather. "... he died a few days before I was born. Obviously, it was a difficult decision to make. The Silver Cup always held a prominent place in our home. My children and I grew up with it. I could not, however, do otherwise", he said.

"The wreath of victory", writes Philostratus, "one can just as freely sell as can freely buy".² And so, the Silver Cup³ was sold for £ 541,250 (860,000 USD). The sale was made in London on Wednesday, 18th April 2012, and broke the record for an item of Olympic memorabilia. The Stavros Niarchos Foundation acquired the historical Silver Cup, once presented to Spyros Louis, at the auction held at Christie's.

In the Ancient Olympic Games the prize awarded to the winners was an olive branch, "the wreath". Pausanias states, "By the back road (of the Temple of

Zeus) there stands an oleaster (a wild-olive tree) named 'elea kallistefanos' and it is habitual for the winners of the Olympiads to be presented with wreaths from this particular tree."⁴

An olive branch was also presented to the winners of the First Modern Olympic Games of 1896 in Athens. The ancient Greek ritual was respected. The olive branches that will be given as rewards to the Olympic victors were cut from Olympia region.⁵

At those Games, awards were given to the first two winners only. The first place winners were awarded a silver medal and olive branches and those who finished second a bronze medal and laurel branches. Silver, at the time, was considered more precious than gold. From 1904 and thereafter, medals were given to the first three winners of the Games; gold, silver, and bronze respectively. The presentation of medals and diplomas was a practice adopted by athletic competitions in the 19th century.

Ancient Greek themes dominated the medals in the First Games of the Olympiad. The front of the silver medal depicts the face of the god Zeus, his hand holding a globe surmounted by the winged Nike, the goddess of victory, who in turn is holding a laurel branch. Inscribed on the left side of the medal is "OLYMPIA". On the reverse side of the medal the Acropolis, with the Parthenon and the Propylaea, is depicted. The inscription on the top of the medal states: "INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC GAMES", and on the bottom of the medal: "IN ATHENS 1896". The Frenchman Jules Clement Chaplain, one of the greatest engravers of the 19th century, was commissioned to engrave them. The diplomas presented at the Games were designed by Nikolaos Gyzis, following the refusal of the French artist Puvis de Chavannes to do so.⁶

Nikiforos Litras received the commission to design the commemorative medal and was informed, "His Highness, successor to the King, approves the design you are working on concerning the commemorative medal



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for the Olympic Games ... the fee for the designing of the medals has been voted on by the Board and is in the amount of 1,000 drachmas, which is at your disposal".⁷

Spyros Louis's silver medal, the first medal ever awarded for the Marathon, is to be found in the museum in Marathon, Greece. Originally, the medal was loaned by Louis's grandchildren to The Olympic Athletic Center of Athens (OAKA) during Kimon Koulouris' (General Secretary of Athletics) term in office. The main stadium at the

place runner, Harilaos Vasilakos, can be found at the museum of the Modern Olympic Games in Olympia. At the present time, the museum is closed, and the memorabilia is being destroyed by moisture. Also on display there is the wreath which was presented by King George I.

The description of Anninos, in reference to the day of the Olympic awards ceremonies encapsulates almost everything mentioned above:



The silver medal of Spyridon Louis is the *pièce de résistance* of the Marathon Run Museum.

Left: title page of the magazine *Asti* of 6th April 1896 (18th April) with a portrait of the marathon winner. Adjacent: Louis after the victory ceremony with some of the gifts and the olive branches.

Photos: Stavros Tsomas; Albert Meyer

OAKA was also named after Spyros Louis who had been a resident in the local district of Marousi. It was through the mediation of The President of Greece, Karolos Papoulias that the medal was made available to Marathona and their museum.⁸

It must be noted that all of Louis's prizes were distributed to his three children. His first son Panagiotis Louis (1895–1955), and wife Hrisoula Kalitsari (1913–1984) were given the medal and the fez. To his second son Georgios Louis (1904–1952), and wife Eftihia Vatopoulou (1918–1999) came the Bréal Cup and all his correspondence. Finally, his third son Nikos Louis (1909–1943), and wife Kiriakoula Sideri (1915–1984) received the second Cup.

In 1975, Volker Kluge⁹ photographed the wife of Louis's first son, Hrisoula, and the grandson Georgios, holding the silver medal and a diploma (unfortunately not from the Olympic Games), and the fez. All three of these items can be found today at the museum in Marathon.

The Olympic certificate awarded to Louis has not been found. However, the diploma belonging to the second

"After having warmly congratulated Mr. Robertson¹⁰ the King stepped on a sort of platform, erected before the Royal seats, and richly decorated with carpets and flags. On a small table were placed the olive branches, to remind one of the ancient Altis, some laurel branches and the different diplomas, written on blue or white paper and folded up in long rolls. The medals, struck in silver for the first, and in bronze for the second prizes, were real masterpieces of workmanship; the model being engraved by the celebrated artist Chaplain. On the table lay also the presents for the winners, amongst them were a rich

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The two cups which Spyros Louis received for his marathon victory: left, the silver “Bréal Cup”, right, a prize from the workshop of Sidney Noel made from galvanised alloy metal, which is today in the possession of Louis’s granddaughter Eleni Topaloglou.

Photos: Stavros Niarchos Foundation; Stavros Tsionias



silver cup, given by Mr. Bréal and an antique vase presented by Mr. Lambros, both destined for the winner in the Marathon Race”¹.

In addition to the silver medal, the winner of the marathon was to receive a cup, donated by the inspirer of the event, the prominent French linguist, intellectual, and philhellene Michel Bréal (1832–1915), a member of the Institute of France. “Mr. Bréal wrote to me that a cup would be required for the Marathon of 1896 for the distance covered by the famous warrior (day-runner). This will represent the local area’s historical legacy”, wrote Pierre de Coubertin to the Greek Dimitrios Vikelas, who accepted the IOC presidency until the end of the year 1896.¹²

Michel Bréal did not attend the 1896 Olympic Games to present the cup to the winner, as was his intention. He sent it to the Director of the French School in Athens, Mr. Omol. His friendship with Vikelas, however, allowed Bréal to have constant telegraphic communication with him. Although he was far away this enabled him to make sure that the cup was presented as he had intended.

A letter sent by Bréal to Vikelas in January of 1896 has come to light and is certainly worth a mention. It requests Vikelas to translate the text engraved on the cup into modern Greek, “I would beg you to translate the following into Modern Greek, in epigraphic style as best as possible: Olympic Games (athlon, prize, aristeion) Marathon Trophy Donated by Michel Bréal”.¹³

In an article entitled “The Prize of the Marathon”, the newspaper *Scrip* cites, “Apart from the wreath that will be presented to the winner of the Marathon, there will also be awarded a Silver Cup. This cup was sent yesterday to Vikelas from Paris by the linguist Mr. Bréal. There will also be presented to one of the other winners of the other events an ancient cup which will be donated by the Frenchman and philhellene Mr. Herve”¹⁴.

One week later, Saturday’s edition of the newspaper *Estia* reported the delivery of the cup: “Yesterday at the

offices of the Committee for the Games, Mr. Omol, the Director of the French School, delivered the cup sent by the scholar Mr. Bréal to be awarded to the winner of the Marathon. The cup is silver. At the top it bears the following inscription: ‘OLYMPIC GAMES 1896 MARATHON TROPHY DONATED BY MICHEL BRÉAL’ and is decorated all around with lemnos plants and flying birds”.¹⁵

Urged on by the articles and their references to the cup, reinforcing the idea of the Marathon and the Marathon runner and the connection between the present and classical antiquity, Spyridon Lambros, Professor of History at the University of Athens, has an interpretive approach concerning the cup donated by Bréal. “It is as they have written, a cup made from pure silver. It should rather be said that it is a ‘flask’.”¹⁶

Lambros uses the term ‘flask’ to describe its shape and its height of about 15 centimetres (six inches). With regard to the material it is made of, it being a silver cup, he suggests that Bréal was inspired by the verses of Pindar’s ‘Ninth Ode to the Olympics’, which praises the wrestler Epharmostus of Opunta. There, it is referenced that the Herakleia at Marathon were celebrated; formal races held in honour of Hercules, and the award was a silver ‘flask’. The Marathonites honoured Hercules and, according to the testimony of Pindar, were the first to worship him as a god. There lies the temple of Hercules where the Athenians made camp during the battle.

PINDAR’S NINTH ODE TO THE OLYMPICS

*Twice, Epharmostus, too, thy matchless Might
Fair Corinth saw, and Twice Nemea’s Ground:
Argos thy manly Brows with Glory dight,
And Attica thy youthful Forehead crowned:
What Praise thou met’st in Marathon’s famed Curse!*

*Now, scorning with the beardless Youths to run,
Matched with the veteran Race, thy rapid Force,
Tempered with Skill, the Silver Goblet won;
Shout with exulting Voice the friendly Train,
To see the loveliest Youth the fairest Trophies gain.*¹⁷

The bottom of the cup, in direct reference to the Battle of Marathon, is adorned with “birds in flight and aquatic plants” representative of the swamps of the Marathon plain that were well known in antiquity. The smaller swamp was located at Brexiza in Nea Makri, and the larger swamp in the area of Shinia.

Motivated by the initiative of Bréal to donate the Silver Cup, the distinguished numismatist John P. (Ioannis) Lambros,¹⁸ hastened to write a letter asking the successor to the throne to allow him to donate an ancient vase to the winner of the Marathon.

"Your Royal Highness, The distinction, which the Marathon Race is called upon to give to the Olympic Games, joined to the ancient reminiscences, which this difficult race is sure to awake, have suggested to me the idea of offering as a most appropriate prize to the winner, who will be worthy of so much glory, an ancient vase, which I have in my collection; on it are represented a dolichodrome under the guidance of Hellanodices. May I hope that Your Royal Highness will allow me to add this prize to the Silver Cup, which Professor Bréal has donated. Antiquity seems in this way to contribute to celebrate the victory of the winner of the Marathon Race"¹⁹.

The Prince accepted the donation saying that, if the winner was a foreigner, all procedures would be followed "complying with all provisions of the law for the exportation of antiquities". The ancient vase pictured here was published in the *Estia*.²⁰

That same vase of the Attic black-figured skyphos Foot race (about the end of the 6th century BC and beginning of the 5th century BC) is photographed and published in *The Official Publication of the Games* by Charles Beck. It was also printed as a stamp in April of 1967 in conjunction with the VII Classic Marathon Race in Athens. 2,465,697 of these stamps were printed. They were designed by Anastasios Tassos at the Aspiotis ELKA Printer.

In *Scribners Magazine*,²¹ it is said that the vase was granted to the National Archeological Museum founded at the end of the 19th century. With all our efforts and the help of the archaeologists of the National Archeological Museum we were unable to locate the vase. The ancient vase was a gift to Louis by a private citizen, was not registered and most probably never given to the museum. It may have been granted by Louis himself. It is most likely that it may be in someone's private collection.

In the aftermath of the sale of Bréal's Silver Cup, a second cup has surfaced and is in the possession of Spyros Louis's granddaughter Eleni Topaloglou. This cup is not considered a prize or award from the Greek government, but was probably a gift to Louis. There is no more information available concerning the circumstances under which the cup was given to the Marathon winner. It was one of many gifts given to Louis.

This second cup was ordered from an English company "Sidney Noel", who had premises on Stadiou Street at the end of the nineteenth century. The cup is made of galvanized alloy metal. It is 19 centimetres in height and its riser takes the form of the Caryatid. The cup is decorated all around with flowers and inscriptions, one of which mentions the name of Sidney Noel, and a second which states, "Olympic Winner of the Marathon Spyros Louis 776-1896".



It is surprising to note that Bréal's cup was never photographed or illustrated in magazines or newspaper at the time. Although it was not an official award it was widely accepted. It had also become very well known after many articles were written about it and the highest honours were bestowed upon it in the official programme of the Olympic Games and in the Bulletins of the Olympic Organising Committee. The only photograph to appear was in the official book by Charles Beck.²²

On the contrary, the insignificant second cup was pictured on the cover of *The Acropolis* newspaper with the headline "All of the Olympic Winners", and a sub-headline which reads, "The silver cup donated to Spyros Louis by the manager of the Sidney Noel company Mr. Konstantinidis". It was also shown in Beck's official book.²³ The same cup is clearly displayed by Louis to his son in a photograph taken in 1936 at their home in Marcusi on Gliati Street.²⁴ It should be noted that the cup is made of galvanized alloy metal and not silver as stated.

An explanation for this may be found in the national pride that strongly developed after Louis's win and all that he, himself, symbolised; Greece's supremacy over all other nations. It is no coincidence that after the end of the Games, at the farewell dinner, many expressed their enthusiasm for the Games to be held permanently in Greece. Both the revival of the institution of the Olympics and the proposal for conducting the Marathon were French hypotheses. This seems to be a possible explanation; the elimination of everything that wasn't Greek.

In this spirit, Coubertin and his role in the revival of the Olympics were rarely mentioned. He himself, much later, in 1908, expressed his discontent in his work, *Une championne de vingt-et-un ans (1887-1908)*.²⁵

Motivated by the idea of Michel Bréal, the Athenian numismatist Ioannis Lambros donated an antique vessel bearing the representation of runners. In connection with the Pre-Olympic Games of 1967, the image served as a model for a stamp of the Greek post office. The whereabouts of the valuable relic is unknown.



Spyridon Louis at the age of 63 with the Noel Cup.

Photos: Volker Kluge Archive, Stavros Tsonias Archive

In the summer of 1975 the editor of the *Journal* visited the Louis family in Amaroussion and photographed the grandson Georgios, the landlord of a tavern, who had fastened his grandfather's victor's medal to his shirt. Hrisoula, the wife of Louis's oldest son, holds the fez in the hand, which is today as well as the medal and the diploma at the Museum of Marathon.

Photo: Volker Kluge



The gifts of the winner

The Marathon Race was regarded as the national sport par excellence. Emotions and anticipation are high in waiting for the outcome of the race. If the winner is Greek, he will be the darling child of the Athenian people. The victory of Ioannis Mitropoulos²⁶ on the rings the day before was already vivaciously celebrated. In that spirit, we can only imagine what will ensue if the winner of the Marathon is Greek.

Interest is expressed daily, with gifts being offered to the future Greek winner of this new event. Anastasios Skotidas, manager of Chaftia Hotel donates to the winner one year of free meals at the hotel restaurant. Another donation is that of Mr. Paleologlou, a shoemaker on 206 Aeolos Street who promises to mend the winner's shoes for a year.²⁷

The whole city was talking about one thing, the Marathon. Thus, "Bets upon bets are placed and everyone is ready to offer generous gifts to the one who will proudly raise the blue and white flag in the Stadium this afternoon, coming in first to say those same words of the ancient Marathon soldier, 'We have conquered'. Come on Vasilakos, and if you come in first place we will make a statue in your honor like we did with Averof. Nickel by nickel we will collect the money for you".²⁸

It must be noted here that mentioned athlete is Harilaos Vasilakos, who was the first winner of the Marathon Race in the Pan-Hellenic Games on 10th March 1896, one month before the Olympic Games. As a result, he was favoured to win the Marathon in the eyes of the Greek people.

The winner is Greek, from Marousi, and his name is Spyros Louis. The frenzy that grips the people after the win is grand. Spyros Louis is now a folk hero. Many stories were told and written about the many gifts of the winner. Gifts by well-known people and unknown people and donations, most of which were given for promotional and advertising reasons.

The first gift that is given to the Olympic Marathon winner was a gold chain from the President of the Guild of Silversmiths, P. S. Kyparissis, who accompanied him to the retiring rooms at the Stadium with Prince George.²⁹

"The winner Louis received the gold chain from the goldsmith Mr. Kyparissis as soon as he arrived into the Stadium. The other gifts which he is to receive are as follows: a foustanela set (the traditional formal garment of the time) from Mr. Valsamidis; a year's supply of food from Mr. Skotidas; a year's supply of Samian wine from Mr. Papadimitriou; another foustanela set from the Antoniadis brothers; one case of cognac, liqueurs, and a cake from Alexiou; one year's free coffee at the café of Mr. D. Baviar; one year's supply of milk from the dairy of Mr. Zotiadis; a lifetime pass at the Velissariou Barbershop; one barrel of wine from Theofilatos; he will have his visits from the paper supply store Razis; a one year's free supply of newspapers from Mr. Varlan and Mr. Vlassopoulos; and finally, a lifetime of free dental work and therapy from the dentist, Dr. E. Konstantinidis".³⁰

The Chairman of the Archaeological Society and Prosecutor General of the Supreme Court, Dimosthenis Tzivanopoulos, presented to Spyros Louis a precious stone ring.³¹ "The day before last, the representative of the Singer Sewing Machine Company in Greece, Mr. Flamiger sent to the winner of the Marathon, Mr. Louis, the latest make and model of sewing machine, just like those on display at the the company premises on Stadiou Street".³²

The manager of the Bosphorus Café, K. Douros, deeming the Marathon a matter of national pride, declares that he offers the winner, "two coffees every day, and if he has time, he can entertain himself at the billiards hall of the establishment for one hour every day with a friend or alone".³⁴

Such was the paroxysm of the victory that, in Nafplio, a reporter for the newspaper *Tirynthos*, Limberis Kostopoulos, named his one year old son 'Louis', in honour of the Olympic champion.³⁵

Many of the gifts, besides their symbolism, simultaneously constituted an advertisement for their donors. Many were of value, as were the offers made by prominent citizens. "A lady who is an Embassy Secretary (Bahmetief), gave him a silver flask, and a gentleman promised him a gold watch, and it caught Louis's ear as he was headed to the retiring rooms at the Stadium that

the great benefactor Mr. A. Sigrou would give him the amount of 25,000 drachmas".³⁶

Several shops take on the name of the Marathon victor. Among the many donation a large sum was raised by Greeks living in England. They bought him a field, on condition that it should be named "Field of Marathon".³⁷

"The Second Lieutenant, Mr. Socrates Koliatsos of the well-known Athenian family, sent us 50 drachmas enclosed in a letter, enthused with the winner of the Marathon. Mr. Koliatsos suggested that a public fundraiser be held so that a proper gift may be donated to Mr. Louis, who has honoured the Greek name. Let us see whether this noble idea will succeed".³⁸ In the same newspaper an article entitled 'Fundraisers for the Winner' cites, "A committee was set up constituting of Councilmen Kambas, A. Athanatos, Patrikios, and Skouzes, and of the merchants Vasilopoulos, Ginakas, Georgakopoulos, Argiriou, and N. Apergis, to proceed in the collection of money with which a property will be purchased and then donated to Louis". Mr. Kourtis, a customs guard from Piraeus, sent two drachmas to the newspaper to be donated to the winner of the Marathon.

After Spyros Louis exited the Palace, the enthusiastic crowd reserved a warm welcome for him. Cheering and waving their flags, they led him to the Grande Bretagne hotel. Between the cheers and the congratulations, the ex-patriot Stefanovic Skilitsis promised to buy Louis a 'great estate'.³⁹

All of these offers which were published in the print media concerning Louis and did not go unnoticed. Many gifts were donated to him, but there were also plenty of rumours and intentions of donations. The value of the donations is by no means insignificant. The newspaper *Asty* cites some rather caustic comments made by an anonymous source, not toward Louis himself, but toward the way the donations were made.

"Louis is the hero of the day. The crowds cheer him, the newspapers praise him, the foreigners embrace him, the Foreign Press is telegraphing his biography. All this is well and good for it was so in ancient times. However, for fundraisers to be carried out to raise money, and offers of shares, plots of land, and houses to be donated is seen as inappropriate conduct in the purpose of sportsmanship. The same should be said for the awards given to the winners. In antiquity, only honorary awards were given to the Olympic champions, and moral value enjoyed. This is done so that the sportsman can cherish the prestige of victory. Today, modern Greek sport is in danger of unintentionally turning into a business for profit, thus misrepresenting the purpose of the Games and the importance of winning".⁴⁰

We do not know which of the above is true or not. If money was given to Louis out of a kind gesture of

enthusiasm, then that would have excluded him from participating in any future competitions. In accordance with the strict framework of amateurism, that was voted on at the Olympic Founding Congress at the Sorbonne in 1894, "he will be considered a sportsman who does not compete for a monetary prize or for an agreed upon monetary amount".⁴¹

Perhaps this justifies the discontinuance of Louis's athletic career which ended after that race.⁴² A typical example of exclusion from the Games, and indeed in the Marathon Race of 1896, was the Italian runner Carlo Airoidi from Milan, who was deemed a professional.⁴³

For certain, some of the notable gifts to Louis can be confirmed. In an interview given at his home in Marousi, in the aftermath of the Olympic Games, the reporter who goes by *Kiris* asks Louis if he can see the gifts that were donated to him. "On a table," *Kiris* wrote, "the Marathon runner has the Bréal Cup, which he has a special regard for, and inside a cabinet he has the olive branch and various other gifts, including two watches. One is a female watch offered as it is known by a woman from Smyrna in the excitement of the moment"⁴⁴.

The reporter jokingly urges Louis to keep the watch for his fiancé. The female watch was donated by Ms. Kontouli of Smyrna.⁴⁵ The second watch was donated by the goldsmith Mr. Valsamidis. "The goldsmith Mr. Valsamidis, apart from the gold watch he donated to Louis, also donated silver watches to Mr. Vasilakos and Mr. Belokas"⁴⁷.



A railway ticket of the Attica Railways Company, issued on the day after Spyros Louis's Olympic victory and valid for life.

Illustration: Stavros Tsonias Archive

Hôtel Aachener Hof
Fernsprech-Anschluss
Amt 1 Nr. 1246.
Berlin NW., den 21/2 April 1896
Georgenstr. 21.

Ἀξιολογῶντες μοι καὶ Λοῦις
ἐν Ἀμαρουσίου

Μετὰ μετάνη μου χαρὰ καὶ ἰδού
καὶ ἐντυφύασις εἶδε χεῖρ τῆς γυμνασ-
τίας σου, ἐν ἀρετῇ μεγάλῃ μέγιστος, ἐ-
κτελεσθέντων ἐν τῷ μεγάλῳ καλλιτεχνί-
κῳ ἑταίρῳ σου τοῦ Βερολίνου ἐν τῇ
ὁδοῦ Unter den Linden, καὶ οἱ δὲ ἄ-
λλοι ἰσχυροὶ ἐν τῇ γυμναστικῇ σου
καταρτίζονται τῇ γενναίᾳ σου.
Ἐὰν συχαίρω ἀπὸ καρδίας καὶ οὐκ
ἐύχουμαι ἐν τῇ προσυχῇ ἀχθῶν σὶ νό-
δῳ σου καὶ ἐντυφύασις τῇ φήμῃ σου.
Ἐὰν ἀνέχομαι ἀπὸ καρδίας
Εὐχαριστῶ

Among the numerous
messages of congrat-
ulation which reached
Louis was the letter
written by a Greek
fan from Berlin on
21st December 1896.
The sender had dis-
covered a large picture
of the Olympic mara-
thon champion in
an art gallery in the
boulevard Unter den
Linden the previous
day.

In poetic verse the satirical poet Souris will comment,
“... you accept incense and donations from the
multitude vases and cups and precious stone rings
adorned with representations and inscriptions and
old engravings...”⁴⁸

Many writers mention that after the Marathon race
was over the King asked the winner what he wanted
as a gift. Louis asked him for a mule-cart so that he
could distribute water to Athens, which was his main
occupation at the time. According to Louis's grandson,
the King never kept his promise and that it was Mr. Sygros
who bought the mule-cart for Louis. On the other hand,
Louis did have enough money from all the donations he
received at the time to buy the mule-cart. He had also
received a very handsome dowry for that time.⁴⁹

Horton writes, “Spiridon Loues, the young shepherd
who won the foot-race from Marathon, at the Olympiad
Games in 1896, is the chief distributor of the Marous
water. This idyllic little town lies off toward Pentelicon,
on the road to Kephissia and Tatoi, the King's summer

residence. If you start for Marousi on a bicycle or on foot
a little before sunrise on a summer's morning, you are
sure to meet Loues and two or three of his men jogging
city-ward through the violet-gray dawn, with mule-
carts laden with huge red jars of porous earth, for the
Athenian kitchens. The privilege of selling this water
was given to Loues as a reward for his victory in the great
foot-race. His fellow townsmen regard him as a modern
Pheidipides, and they have shown their appreciation of
the honor which he has brought to Marousi”⁵⁰.

An original gift to Louis is a composition march in
honor of the Marathon winner. The march was composed
by the conductor Kesaris and he entitled it ‘We Have
Conquered’⁵¹.

After the awards ceremony the Olympic winners
marched, on the track of the Stadium, to the music of
the new march. The Supervisor of the Games precedes
all others and marching first among all Olympians is
Spyros Louis, wearing his fez, waving a Greek flag, and
greeting the crowd. In his left hand he is holding the
awards he has received at the ceremony: the wreath,
the roll which holds the diploma of the Olympiad, the
box with the silver medal, and the 15 centimetre box
which holds the Bréal Cup.

Telegrams and Thanksgivings

Telegrams arrived in every day from the provinces filled
with enthusiastic congratulations and thanksgivings
to the winner. A congratulatory telegram (Alexandria
11/23 April, 1896) was sent by the national benefactor
Giorgios Averoff.⁵² In the possession of Louis's grandsons
there is a ‘thank you’ telegram sent to the winner of the
Marathon by the Mayor of Marathon with the protocol
275 on 20th April 1896 for the award of a laurel wreath to
Louis, as well as a “lifetime ticket for all railroad lines of
this railway”, donated by the Attica Railways Company.⁵³

Furthermore in the archives of the grandson, Nick Louis,
there is also a congratulatory letter from a Greek fan in
Berlin to Spyros Louis that states “... I saw your picture
yesterday, quite large in size, displayed in the largest art
gallery in Berlin on the boulevard Unter den Linden. And
I am proud of your strength and manliness”.

1 *Tovima*, www.tovima.gr/society/article/?aid=447577: 09/03/2012
07:05 accessed 27 July 2013, (in Greece).
2 Philostratus, *Gymnasticus* [45].
3 At the Museum of the Marathon Run in Marathon, a duplicate of the
cup is on display. A replica was also given to the Marathon winner
of the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, Stefano Baltini (2:10:55) the
year after when he was honorary invitee of SEGAS, where he gave
the starting shot of the 23rd Classic Marathon Run of Athens on 6th
November 2005.
4 Pausanias, *Iliaka*, A, XV 15.3. “κατὰ δὲ τὸν ὀπισθοδρομὸν μάλιστα
ἔστιν ἐν δεξιῇ παφικῶς κῆτινος· καλεῖται δὲ ἑλαία Καλλιστέρανος, καὶ
τοῖς νικῶσι τὸ Ὀλυμπία καθέστηκεν ἀπ’ αὐτῆς δίδουσθαι τοὺς στεφάνους·
τοῦτου πλησίον τοῦ κῆτινου πεποιήται Νόμφας βρομὸς”

- 5 *Estia*, 2nd April 1896, p. 1.
- 6 *Estia*, 3rd April 1896 p.3.
- 7 Tzahrsta Vasiliki, *The First Modern Olympic Games*, Athens, 2002, pp. 29–38.
- 8 Invitation: The Mayor of Marathon, Mr. Spyros Zagaris has the honor of inviting you to the official presentation of the Olympic Medal of Spyros Louis and that of his Olympic heirlooms from the General Secretary of Athletics Mr. Panos Bitaxis at the Marathon Run Museum, Holy Monday, 29th March 2010 at 6:30 p.m., MARATHON RUN MUSEUM IN MARATHON, Marathon Ave., 25th March, Marathon City, Tel: 2294067617, e-mail: mouseio@marathon.gr. The permanent exhibition presents for the first time to the Greek public the history of the Olympic Marathon from 1896 to 2000. Over than 3100 exhibits record the history of the Marathon race from 1896 to today. Among the precious exhibits are the medal of the first winner of the Olympic Marathon race Spyros Louis, a copy of the cup and some of his personal belongings. Cups, medals and numerous relics of the legendary Marathon runner and outstanding patriot Stelios Kyriakides, the winner of the Boston International Marathon in 1946 are also exhibited.
- 9 Volker Kluge, "Ganze fünf Tage nur dauerte die Karriere des Siegers", in: *Junge Welt*, Berlin 29th December 1975. Waldemar Cierpinski, Volker Kluge, *Meilenweit bis Marathon*, Sportverlag, Berlin 1987, p. 15.
- 10 George Stuart Robertson (1872–1967), a student from the Oxford University, who participated in discus throw and in the tennis tournament, recited an ode in Pindarian metre which he had composed for the First Olympic Games.
- 11 Charalambos Anninos, "Perigraphi ton Agonon" in: Pierre de Coubertin, Timoleon J. Philemon, Nikolaos G. Politis and Charalambos Anninos (eds.): *The Olympic Games 776 B. C. – 1896*. Part II: Athens 1896, pp. 111–112. (*Official Report*)
- 12 "M. Bréal ma écrit qu'il faudrait une 'Coupe de Marathon' pour 1896, pour la distance parcourue par le célèbre guerrier ! Voilà qui est couleur locale!" See: Konstantinos Georgiadis, "Die ideengeschichtliche Grundlage der Erneuerung der Olympischen Spiele im 19. Jahrhundert in Griechenland und ihre Umsetzung 1896 in Athen", in: *Olympische Studien* 4 (2000), pp. 448–449, (Mirville par Breauté, Seine Inférieure, le 23 Septembre 1894 P. de Coubertin – D. Vikelas Archive, EBE, Akte 936). Letter from de Coubertin to Vikelas see *Bulletin du Comité International des Jeux Olympiques*; No. 2, Octobre 1894, p. 4.
- 13 Letter from Bréal on 9th January 1896. This document was presented for the first time from Georgios Dolianitis (as he himself recounted to the writer) at the 34th Session of the International Olympic Academy in Olympia in the exhibition "100 Years IOC D. Vikelas First IOC President" in 1994. The letter is illustrated in the exhibit's catalogue (400 in number) and is accompanied by brief explanations. The prototype is found at the National Gymnastics Society. See: Karl Lennartz, "Following the footsteps of Bréal", in: *Journal of Olympic History*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1998, p. 9.
- 14 *Scrip*, 8th March 1896.
- 15 *Estia*, 16th March 1896, p. 2. *Nea Efimeris*, 16th March 1896, p. 7.
- 16 Spyridon Lambros, "The Marathon Run", in: *Estia*, 21st March 1896, pp. 1–2.
- 17 Pindaros, *Olympiaka* 9, "Efarmosto. Opuntio, Palesti" [9.85] and [9.90].
- 18 In the bilingual print that was created by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, "The Bréal Cup of Spyros Louis and the Hellenic Heritage of the Olympic Games", p. 22, it is wrongly indicated that the ancient vase was offered "by Prof. Spyridon Lambros."
- 19 See Anninos, p. 105. *Estia*, 29th March 1896, p. 2. "Ancient gift to the winner of the Marathon". See also Newspaper *Scrip*, 29th March 1896, and *Acropolis*, 28th March 1896, p. 3.
- 20 *Estia*, 30th March 1896. "The Gift of the Marathon Runner. An ancient vase which was given as a gift from Ioannis Lambros (posted is a similar vase to that fine ancient vase which the numismatist Mr. Lambros gave to the Marathon winner). Regarding the vase, we point out that it was found in Thebes inside a grave which was likely that of a winner of an Olympic or some other race, because two runners competing in dolihos and two Hellanodice who are overseeing the race are illustrated on the vase. It is a work of the 4th century, an excellent piece of artwork, and is in mint condition".
- 21 *Scribners Magazine*, "The new Olympian Games". Volume XX, July–December, 1896, p. 282. "He received the magnificent Silver Cup given by the Frenchman Bréal, as well as an ancient vase portraying a race, which he afterwards, with rare good sense, presented to the museum".
- 22 Ibid, Illustration, p. 68. "Silver Cup offered by Mr. Bréal for the winner of the Marathon Race".
- 23 Ibid, Illustration p. 4. "Silver Cup presented to S. Louis, victor in the Marathon Race".
- 24 Argyris Symeonidis, *Spyros Louis: Oi alithini istoria*, Athens 1985.
- 25 Pierre de Coubertin, *Une campagne de vingt-et-un ans: (1887 – 1908)*, Paris, Librairie de l' Education Physique 1909, p. 125.
- 26 Mitropoulcs competed in both the individual and team events of the parallel bars, and the individual rings event. In the rings event, he gave Greece its first gold medal in gymnastics.
- 27 *Acropolis*, 27th March 1896, p. 2, "The Marathon Race Gifts to the Greek Winner".
- 28 Ibid, 28th March 1896, p. 3.
- 29 Ibid, 2nd April 1896, p. 3.
- 30 *Scrip*, 1st April 1896, p. 2.
- 31 *Acropolis*, 2nd April 1896, p. 3. There is also a description of the ring. It is an ancient stone that was found during the excavation of an ancient tomb.
- 32 Ibid, 1st April 1896, p. 3. See *Scrip* 1st April 1896, pp. 3–4.
- 33 Ibid, 23rd March 1896, p. 2.
- 34 *Asti*, 3rd April 1896, p. 2.
- 35 *Acropolis*, 30th March 1896, p. 4. See also *Estia*, 30th March 1896, p. 2. Announcement: "It became known yesterday that Mr. A. Sygros grants to the winner of the Marathon Race the amount of 25,000 drachmas".
- 36 Anninos, p. 87.
- 37 *Scrip*, 1st April 1896, p. 2.
- 38 *Acropolis*, 3rd April 1896, p. 3.
- 39 *Scrip*, 1st April 1896, p. 3.
- 40 *Asti*, 3rd April 1896, p. 2.
- 41 Ioannis Chrysaphis, *Oi Synchronoi Diethneis Olympiakoi Agones Games*, Athens 1930. The notes of the conference were published in: *Bulletin du Comité International des Jeux olympiques*, No. 1, July 1894.
- 42 Spyros Louis run a Marathon only twice in his life time, the second preliminary marathon on 25th March (6th April) 1896 and in the Olympic Marathon race on 29th March (10th April) 1896. See: Stavros Tsonias, Athanasios Anastasiou, "1st international Olympic Games 1896 – the first marathon races", in: *JOH*, Vol. 18, No. 3/2010, pp. 16–24.
- 43 Carlo Airoldi (1869–1929) in September 1895 won the race from Milan to Barcelona, received in 12 stages over 1050 km, for which he got 2000 Pesetas. In 1896 he signed a contract with the magazine *La Bicycletta* about his participation in the Olympic Games in Athens. He accomplished the journey to Greece on foot (and by ship from Dubrovnik to Patras) in 28 days. Once arrived in Athens, he first went to the Royal Palace to enter the Marathon Run, but he was rejected there as he was by the Olympic Organising Committee, where he was known as a professional sportsman. After Spyros Louis's victory he demanded a direct contest, but without success.
- 44 *Estia*, 7th April 1896, p. 3, "The Home of the Winner".
- 45 *Acropolis*, 30th March 1896, p. 3. This is confirmed by what was said by Dimosthenis Tzivanopoulos, Prosecutor General of the Supreme Court, when he granted the ring to Louis. See *Acropolis*, 2nd April 1896, p.3.
- 46 *Scrip*, 1st April 1896, p. 3.
- 47 *Romios*, 6th April 1896.
- 48 Louis Family Archives. Dowry No. 4974, 14th October 1896.
- 49 George Horton, *Modern Athens*, New York, 1901.
- 50 "They paraded before the crowd, marching to the sounds of Kesaris' 'We Have Conquered' on the track of the Stadium." *Estia*, 3rd April 1896, p. 3. "The Awards of the Winners". See also newspaper *Acropolis*, 3rd April 1896, p. 2.
- 51 *Ta Olympia*, 21st April 1896, p. 1. And also *Estia*, 17th April 1896, p. 3.
- 52 See A. Symeonidis [1985], p. 44. Stavros Tsonias, *Marathon Races 490 B.C., 1896, 1906*, Athens, 2003. *Kairoi*, 2nd April 1896, p. 2. "The Board of Attica Railways Company, during its last meeting, decided to grant to the winner of the Marathon Race Mr. Spyros Louis, a lifetime ticket for all the railroad lines of this railway company".
- 53 The hotel "Aachener Hof" nearby the station Friedrichstrasse and the famous Berlin street Unter den Linden was demolished at the beginning of the 19th century. In this place and on the neighboring property the Grand Hotel "Russischer Hof" was built.