

# THAT MEMORABLE FIRST MARATHON

BY ANTHONY TH. BIJKERK AND PROF. DR. DAVID C. YOUNG.

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I shall never see anything like it again" (Andrews). "[O]ne of the most extraordinary sights that I can remember. Its imprint stays with me" (Coubertin, 1896). "Egad! The excitement and enthusiasm were simply indescribable" (F.). "What happened that moment. . .cannot be described" (Anninos). "[T]he whole scene can never be effaced from one's memory. . .Such was the scene, unsurpassed and unsurpassable. Who, who was present there, does not wish that he may once again be permitted to behold it" (Robertson).

What had these people seen? An epiphany? Fish multiplying? No. They had seen Spyros Louis. They had seen the finish of the worlds first Marathon, the highlight-the climax, three days before their end-of the world's first modern International Olympic Games.

"The sight in the stadium was one never to be forgotten" (Clark). "[S]uch a scene as Athens has not witnessed for a thousand years" (Holmes). "At his entry into the stadium. . .it seemed that all of Greek antiquity entered with him.

Cheers went up such as have never been heard before. This was one of the most extraordinary spectacles of which I have any memory" (Coubertin, 1931).

"All who were present will remember the commotion of the crowd in the Stadion in that moment of victory as one of the greatest scenes of their lives" (Richardson). "It is impossible to describe the enthusiasm within the Stadium--nay, in the whole city of Athens." (Waldstein). "[It was]--indescribable--" (Argyros).

Happily there are a number of eyewitness accounts of the 1896 Athens Olympics. We proposed, Tony Bijkerk and

I, David Young, that it might be a good idea to collect them, or at least most of the major English versions,<sup>1</sup> and some others as well, and make them available in a single volume, so that Olympic fans and scholars need not search piecemeal through bibliographies and old journals in hopes of finding these sources.

Not every one of these old journals is available in every country nor has anything close to a "full" list of first-hand accounts of the 1896 Games ever been published, although Bill Mallon and Ture Widlund's latest publication titled: THE 1896 OLYMPIC GAMES (published in 1998) comes very close. No scholar has yet based an account of IOC Olympiad I on all available eye-witness reports, nor even located them all.

I illustrate from my own case. Burton Holmes' account is one of the fullest and best; yet I did not even know it existed until after I wrote my *Modern Olympics: A Struggle for Revival* (1996). Then George Dales was the first to tell me of it and send me a copy; Tony

Bijkerk soon followed, pointing out my omission. I was not alone in my ignorance; neither MacAloon nor Mandell seems to have known this prominent article, nor have we seen reference to it anywhere (not in Bill Mallon and Ture Widlund's book too).

Less prominent, but still valuable--its account of the triple jump, unique, wholly different from any other--is the article published by Andrews in an obscure American college alumni magazine and understandably passed over in all previous Olympic research. I found Andrews' piece by pure luck in an Athens library just a year or so ago.

At the end of this paper, Tony Bijkerk and I list the eye-

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*Photographs are from the book "1896 Athens: The Pictures of the First Olympiad" by Albert Meyer and other photographers.*

witness reports that we know <sup>2</sup> -inviting ISOH readers to add to that list whatever significant new entries they may have. Perhaps it will never be complete. But the 1896 Athens Games are so monumental an event in Olympic history that we owe it to our research to have every possible angle on them. We have therefore excerpted the accounts of the Marathon finish from a number of these 1896 reports, as a sample of what benefit there might be in collecting a large number of the 1896 accounts in full.

As crime reports in police reports and sworn testimony in the courtroom teach us, eye-witness reports of the same event are often not the same. So reports of the 1896 Games, though in general agreement and seldom mutually exclusive, express varied points of view and different impressions of what happened before those authors' eyes. I cited above Andrews' unique account of the triple jump. Yet Horton's account of the same event-which has prevailed in recent scholarship-differs from all others, as well.

With respect to the matter at hand, the finish of the Marathon, Pierre de Coubertin's version differs from all others. Coubertin wrote: "Louis reached the goal fresh and in fine form." Whereas

Horton tell us: "When Louis arrived at the goal he was a pitiable object. . .his costume soaked with perspiration. . .covered with dust<sup>3</sup>. . .shoes. . .nearly worn from his feet. . .face purple and blotched with blood. . .he stood reeling at the goal. . ."

Which account is right? Probably both. Louis was no doubt a pitiable object, and all the other things Horton say. But, of all the runners, he probably finished the freshest.

The truth is perhaps somewhere between the versions of Coubertin and Horton.

That is what Clark clearly suggests: "panting, dusty, travel-stained, but still running true and strong, Spiridon Loues. . ." Argyros' report says the same, but elaborates (see below). I conclude that Louis was in bad shape, but his competitors-that is, those few still strong enough even to

finish-probably looked even worse. so Coubertin's "fresh and in fine form" would be true-if one compares Louis to the other runners, and to the condition one might expect of a man who had just run 40 kilometers non-stop as fast as he could. But every student of the 1896 Olympics must draw such conclusions on his or her own from the available evidence. Tony and I make that evidence available below in a medley of eyewitness accounts of the finish of that first Marathon. To complete all eyewitness reports, we also decided to include the 1936 interview, which Spyros Louis gave to a German journalist, just before he went up to Berlin to attend the Games of the XIth Olympiad, as a guest of the German Organizing Committee.

In this interview, which we publish without changing a word, Louis gives his own, very animated view on



GREECE'S SPYROS LOUIS, MARATHON CHAMPION

how he experienced the most glorious day in his life. We pay tribute to Prof. Dr. Karl Lennartz for his fine assistance in preparing this article. Karl loaned his personal archive on the 1896 (and 1936) marathon freely to Tony!

Here follow the extracts:

A First-Hand Account of the First Of the Modern Olympic Games, by Eugene P. Andrews in: *Cornell Alumni News*

(1972).

"The runners had started from Marathon two hours ago. A cannon shot was to announce the entrance of the leading man into Athens. At last there came the dull thud. The suspense and excitement became almost unendurable. Greece had to win this. A Greek had won a minor victory in a gymnastics event but this was the last chance for the blue and white flag to climb that pole for a major victory.

"A cavalryman came spurring down the street. At the entrance he spoke a word to someone there and it flashed around the stadium and drove fifty-thousand people crazy-'Eleen!' 'A Greek!' At last the white-clad figure comes in sight. All the officials, except one, scurry to the entrance. Professor Wheeler, "judge at the finish," stays where he belongs, at the finish.

Crown Prince Constantine, President of the games, dropping all pretense of royal formality and reserve, meets the runner and trots along beside him to the tape. Women strip off jewels and hurl them at this villager from Marousi who has saved the honor of Hellas. Fifty thousand people absolutely mad with joy! I shall never see anything like it again."

"The Marathon Race," by Ch. Anninos in: *"Olympic Games, 776 B.C.-A.D.1896, Second Part, 1896-1897."*

"Many had registered for this most important event, but most withdrew at the last moment, not feeling that they had enough strength. The remainder, about twenty-five, went to Marathon from the previous day together with the special committee and spent the night there. Around 2 p.m. of the following day they were placed in two lines, a few steps apart; in positions drawn by lottery, close to the bridge of Marathon plain, which was the starting line. The starter, major G. Papadiamantopoulos after a short oration gave the starting signal by pistol shot and immediately the runners, wearing light garments, set forth. The runners were followed by cyclists, officers and soldiers on horseback, surveying their course, and at a distance carriages with doctors having the necessary emergency medicaments for the care of the exhausted.

"Their course had variegated dramatic phases and episodes. Up to Pikermi the agile Frenchman Lermusiaux is in the lead; after him follow the Australian Flack, the American Black, the Hungarian Kellner, and then the Greek runners, of whom the first is Lavrentis from Amaroussi. Mr. Lermusiaux has a lead of three kilometres on Mr. Flack, who is second. He has run the distance to Pikermi in 52 minutes. Along the route, at all spots, many of the inhabitants of the villages of Attica have taken up positions awaiting the contestants with great curiosity and interest, and greet them with encouragement without any discrimination as to nationality, offering them refreshments. After Pikermi many begin to feel the strain through fatigue and withdraw

and get into the carriages that are following. Louis from Amaroussi passing by the inn close to Pikermi asks for and drinks a glass full of wine, makes inquiries regarding the runners in front of him and announces with confidence that he will catch them up and pass them.

"Black falls out at the 23rd kilometre and the third place is taken by Vassilakos. At Harvati it is Lermusiaux who arrives first followed by Flack who is second. The crown that the villagers had prepared for the first runner to arrive there, under a triumphal arch, rests on the brow of the Parisian, who continues hastily in the lead. But at this spot there is an uphill, the Frenchman gets tired and his fellow countryman, the cyclist Guisel, rubs him down with alcohol, which gives time for Flack to pass him. Louis continually gets closer and closer, while many peasants from his village follow him, running and constitute, so to speak, a guard of honour. At the 32nd kilometre Lermusiaux staggers and falls and is collected by those who are following and placed in a carriage. At the 33rd kilometre Louis catches up with Flack and passes him but keeping a distance ahead of him of not more than twenty paces, up to the 36th kilometre. After Flack come the Hungarian Kellner, Vassilakos, and the very young Belokas, full of energy. At the 37th kilometre, outside Ambelokipi Louis hastens his pace and Flack despairing of victory, staggers and falls and is carried unconscious into a carriage. Louis arrived first at the Rizarios school and a gunshot announced his arrival. His victory is now assured. The many curious along the route greet him and encourage him with enthusiastic shouts.

"In the stadium, in the meanwhile, there is an agony of expectation. Impatience cannot be contained from 4½ when it was reckoned that the first runner would reach the stadium, since the hour of the start was unknown. The phases of the contest of the pole vault, full of interest, manage temporarily to absorb the interest of the crowd. Suddenly, unknown how, it is rumoured from mouth to mouth that the Australian Flack is arriving first. The news was brought by the German cyclist Goedrich. A mournful sadness spreads over all the faces and complete silence reigns through the discouragement. But the delusion does not last long. The starter of the Marathon race, covered with dust from the long ride on horseback, is seen to enter the stadium, who, going directly to the Royal thrones announces that Louis is in the lead. The news is spread like lighting, an immense shout emerges from all breasts, while simultaneously the gunshot announcing the arrival of the Greek victor is heard. The spectators henceforth listen to no advice, to no order; standing they have their attention glued to the entrance. The same excitement reigns also outside the stadium, and the Chief of the Police, on horseback, together with his retinue, coming from Kifisia Avenue, announces with emotion to the crowds in Herodes Atticus street, that

the winner is a Greek, and is accosted with myriads of uninterrupted acclamations.

"After a few minutes, which seemed centuries, a movement is noticed at the entrance of the stadium. The officers and members of the committee hasten thither. Finally a man wearing white, sun-burnt, and covered in perspiration, is seen to enter. It is Louïs, the victor of the Marathon race. He arrives running, on the right side of the arena, most fatigued, but not to exhaustion, followed by the members of the committee and the ephors who cheer him. The Crown Prince and Prince George run with him, one on either side.

The King, when the runner reached his place in the sphen-done and bows to Him in greeting, gets up and waves his nautical cap, for a long time in deep emotion.

"Some of the aide-de-camps rush forward, embrace the runner and kiss him. The two princes, who were joined by Prince Nicholas, lift the victor up in triumph. The foreign officials applaud with emotion.

"What happened at that moment in the stadium cannot be described. The sailor delegated to hoist the flags on the mast, so soon as he saw the number 17, which the victorious runner bore on his breast, hastened to raise the Greek flag, the sight of which raises a storm of enthusiasm. The air

echoes with the shouts of victory; hats are thrown in the air; handkerchiefs wave as also small Greek flags, up to then hidden and now unfolded. The whole of the crowd in a state of excitement celebrates the victory. The public demands with shouts and the bands play the national anthem. The moment is sacred and before its greatness the foreigners who are present are captivated and in various languages acclaim the Greek victory. Louïs is led to the changing rooms. He has covered the distance of 40 kilometres in 2 hours, 58 minutes and 50 seconds. Second, after a few minutes, Vassilakos arrives, and his arrival causes a second explosion of enthusiasm. He covered the distance in 3 hours, 6 minutes and 3 seconds. Third arrives the younger Athenian Belokas, who showed the greatest endurance against tiredness, having covered the distance in 3 hours 6 minutes and 30 seconds. Fourth comes the Hungarian Kellner, five seconds after Belokas. He also showed remarkable endurance, circulating in the arena and conversing with his fellow nationals, before going to the changing rooms, he is cheered with particular sympathy by the

crowds. Following them, come: Vretos, Papasymeon, Deliyannis and Massouris. Those who were exhausted during the race, and picked up in the carriages, are conveyed to the changing rooms where doctors administer the attentions of their profession. After the arrival of the runners the contests which follow lose their interest and many of the spectators depart; besides the hour is already advanced. In spite of this, in order to complete the programme, the pole vault is continued, after which there follows. . ."

Letter from Edwin Flack to his father, dated April 18th, 1896.

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"JUST AS I WAS ON THE POINT  
OF GIVING IN A GREEK  
PASSED ME  
LOOKING VERY FRESH  
AND RUNNING WELL.  
I STAGGERED ON FOR  
ANOTHER 100 YARDS  
ROLLING ABOUT FROM ONE SIDE  
OF THE ROAD TO ANOTHER  
THEN STOPPED AS I SHOULD  
HAVE FALLEN IF I HAD  
GONE ANY FURTHER."

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EDWIN FLACK TO HIS FATHER

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"I think if I remember rightly my last letter was completed on the Thursday morning before the final of the 800 metres which I had no difficulty in winning. As soon as it was decided I dressed and then drove out to Marathon in order that I might take part in the race from Marathon to Athens on the Friday. It took us over four hours to drive there and I did not much like the idea of having to run over the same road on the morrow. I spent the night at the house of the Greek where I was very comfortable and at two o'clock on the Friday afternoon we were started on our long journey. The distance is 40 kilometres equal to 25 English miles. The excitement which had been

worked up over this event was simply extraordinary and the Greeks were very anxious to win it. They were all in a mortal funk of me and also of the Americans. In the morning I believe a service was held in the Marathon Church when special prayers were offered up that a Greek might win. Most of the competitors took the sacrament before they started.

"As soon as we got away several of the runners went off fairly fast and soon established a lead. A Frenchman was the most prominent. I had made up my mind not to force the pace but run with the Greeks and remain with them until about four kilometres from home when I hoped I would be able to make the running as I had more pace than any of them. I must tell you that the Greeks had been training over this road for the last month or two and were all very fit.

"Several of them including the winner are accustomed to walk 20 or 30 kilometres a day along these roads. For the first 20 kilos the road is all more or less uphill and after that downhill. I was running about sixth for the first 7 or 8 kilos

when I began to move up a little as I saw that the Frenchman was establishing a long lead. At about the 10th was second with the Frenchman out of sight. For the first portion of the journey the road is straight and after that it winds about in the hills. At the 20 kilos the Frenchman was leading me by 3 minutes and the American was about 50 yards behind me. The latter gave in very shortly afterwards. I had some refreshment awaiting me here but I did not take any. After this I put on more pace as I felt that I ought to catch the Frenchman as soon as possible. At the 25 post I had gained on him. There I had some issue of cold water but did not stop running and drank it as I went along. About the 30 kilo post I caught up with the Frenchman and passed him. He very soon gave up. I saw that he was about run out when I passed him. I then began to feel rather done myself and I had the feeling that I should not be able to finish. I felt fairly well except for my legs which I feared would fail to carry me through.

"However, I kept going because a friend who was riding near me on a bicycle said that I must win if I could only keep going as there was no one in sight. I managed to struggle on to the 34 kilo post when I felt that I should not be able to go another kilo as I had scarcely any feeling in my legs whatever by this time.

"Just as I was on the point of giving in a Greek came passed me looking very fresh and running well. I staggered on for another 100 yards rolling about from one side of the road to another then stopped as I should have fallen if I had gone any further. I got into a carriage and was driven to the stadium which was packed to overflowing with people. All along the roads there were crowds of people. I think that almost every house and building in Athens must have been locked up and their occupants present to see the finish. I know that there was not a single person left in the leading hotel the whole place having been locked up.

"Of course I should like to have won very much but everyone said it was better to turn out as it did because the Greeks had so set their minds on winning this event that if a Greek had not pulled it off there was no saying what might not have happened.

"When the news was brought in that I was leading the crowd was very much upset and blackguarded the man for bringing such bad news. When however they heard that a Greek was leading and that I had given in a change came

over the scene and when he came into the stadium he received a tremendous reception. People rushed up and kissed him and if his friends had not surrounded him and whisked him away he would have been half killed. I do not wish to reproach the group for being as anxious to win this race because I think they deserve it as they had been defeated in almost every other event.

"They were always very generous with their applause and right through the games they behaved in the most commendable manner. I have no complaint to make against the Greeks in their games and consider that the greatest credit is due to the management for the manner in which the arrangements were conducted. It has to be remembered that this is the first occasion on which they have held anything of this kind. Of course I saw that there was room for improvement in several ways but then I think that allowances ought to be made for inexperience.

"In a great measure the success of the games is due to the manner in which the three Princes have identified themselves in everything connected with them. Prince George who is a splendid man acted as judge right through the games and made himself most popular with all the competitors as he had a kind word for one and all. He stands about 6'3 and

weighs just on 18 stone and is about 24 years old. I have seen a great deal of the Princes during the last few days.

"Prince George and Prince Nicholas both presented me with an old coin as a memento of the games. I am very proud of them more especially as I have not heard that they conferred a similar honour on any of the others. Prince Nicholas was very kind to me when I came in from Marathon as he walked up to the dressing room with me and sent off for an egg and brandy and waited about to see that I got everything that I wanted."

"The Olympian Games," by E. Burton Holmes in: *"The Olympian Games in Athens"* Volume Three of the Burton Holmes Lectures (1901).

"I must begin the record of the fifth day with the statement that while the runners are preparing for the start from Marathon, twenty-five miles away, other athletes are contending in the presence of a hundred thousand people. . . . The Greeks begin to tremble at the thought that our Blake is even now running against their champions on the road



EDWIN FLACK, 800-METRE CHAMPION

from Marathon. . . . Meantime we must not forget the events transpiring far away on the Marathon road. There Greeks and barbarians are running with grim determination. They know that he who wins the race from Marathon, will gain more than ephemeral honor; that the story of his victory will be recited to admiring generations long after the other contestants have passed into oblivion. . . . The spectators are all a-tremble with excitement. They remain on tiptoe as if eager for the first glimpse of the runners who are still eighteen miles away.

"The Princes make their way to the entrance to await the victor who must soon arrive. The excitement is intense. The suspense is almost painful. All eyes are gazing westward, when at last a cannon-shot is heard. It means that the first runner has reached the outer boulevards, that in a moment he will be here. Who or what he is no one can tell until the crowd outside thunders its joy in a great roar, 'A Greek! It is a Greek! Zito, Louës!' And a young Greek peasant, Spiridione Louës, all dust and perspiration, staggers into the Stadium, where a hundred thousand people acclaim him as the hero of the hour. Then, while from the sloping sides of the Stadium avalanches of applause come crashing down; while the King of Greece so far forgets his royal dignity as to rip the visor from his royal cap in waving it like mad; while staid and proper citizens embrace each other frantically; while tears of joy are shed; while doves, to which long white ribbons are attached, are loosed and flutter in the air; while all Athens utters a triumphant shout, Louës, the simple peasant, the farmer from the little hamlet Amarousi, is escorted by two Princes and a Russian Grand Duke—all three embracing, even kissing him—from the entrance to the far end of the Stadium where he is greeted by a royal hand in the midst of such a scene as Athens has not witnessed in a thousand years. All the other runners who arrive in quick succession are, with one exception, Greeks. The native cup of happiness is full. The innate endurance of the Greek peasants prevailed in the great test, over the scientific training of the 'American Invincibles.' The winner's time, as announced by the judges, was two hours and fifty-eight minutes, the distance forty kilometers, a trifle over twenty-five miles."

"The Recent Olympian Games," by George Horton, in: *Bostonian* 4, 1896.

"...The most important day in point of interest was Friday, known as Marathon day, when the race was run from the scene of the ancient battle to the goal in the Stadion. Every classic scholar has read of the exploit of Phidippides, and how he dropped dead after announcing the news of the Athenian victory. A silver cup was offered by an enthusiastic Frenchman for the modern Phidippides who should win the race. A pretty story is connected with the offering of this prize cup. The winner of the Marathon

race was a Greek hunter and shepherd, from the beautiful little village of Amarousi, situated about twelve miles from Athens. When Spiridon Louis decided to enter for the Marathon race, he went to his church and prayed to the Virgin for success, promising her, if he won the cup, to leave it in the church as a thank offering, and a perpetual reminder of his gratitude. To this fact he attributed his success. Many times on the road, when he felt his strength leaving him, he breathed a prayer to the Virgin, and felt refreshed. There were about thirty entries. They went out to Marathon the night before the race, and remained there until the time of the start, which was early in the afternoon of the following day. The others say that the Frenchman sat up the entire night drinking bottle after bottle of the excellent wine which is made in the neighbourhood of the ancient battlefield. As a natural result, he was in a state of great exhilaration at the time of the start, and set a pace entirely too hot for a long-distance run. To this fact Blake, of the Bostons, and Flack, the Australian, both of whom should have given good accounts of themselves, attribute their defeat. Both tell the same story: a drink of water at a wayside inn, subsequent faintness, and the remainder of the journey was finished in a carriage. The Frenchman, strangely enough, made the entire run, arriving about fifteen minutes late. Louis, the winner, did not allow himself to be misled. Toughened by daily tramps over the mountains of Greece, and accustomed to the rocky roads, he knew exactly what pace he could keep up for the entire distance. When he came up the little flight of steps at the entrance to the Stadium, and started down the long arena, a Greek audience for once threw seriousness to the winds, and broke out into uncontrollable enthusiasm. Ladies arose and fluttered their white handkerchiefs; men sprang upon the seats, and threw their hats into the air, while thousands of Greek flags were unfurled and waved frantically. How these latter had been so carefully concealed it would be hard to say. Seemingly every compatriot of the victor produced a flag at the moment of his appearance, yet not one had been visible the instant before. When Louis arrived at the goal he was a pitiable object; his white costume was soaked with perspiration and covered with dust, his shoes were nearly worn from his feet, his face was purple and blotched with blood. As he stood reeling at the goal his father sprang into the arena, embraced him and kissed him upon both cheeks. At the same instant Crown Prince Constantine and Prince George rushed forward, put their arms around the victor's waist and supported him into the dressing-room in the tunnel. Louis is now a great man in Greece. Various cafés and hotels have offered him refreshments for a year free; a house and lot has been presented to him in his native town, and money has been collected for his benefit to the amount of thirty thousand drachmas. This latter he is said to have refused. He has, however, furnished a gymnasium in

Amarousi, and will doubtless figure for the rest of his life as a patron of athletic sports. According to his promise to the Virgin, he has presented the prize cup to the village church, and there it will remain to all time, a sacred reminder of her power.

"Louis made his run in two hours fifty-eight minutes. The distance over the modern road is about twenty-five miles, and is probably longer than the route taken by Phidippides. The modern road is very rough and stony. If the next Olympian games are held in Athens, and if the race from Marathon is repeated, a north American Indian, or better still, a Tarumahari runner should be brought here.

"There has been considerable discussions among archaeologists from time to time as to the capacity of the ancient Stadium. On Marathon day 71,800 tickets were sold. As a result of this, every seat was filled, and the standing room in the aisles and on the landings was crowded. In addition, the surrounding hills were black with people, and the road leading to Marathon was thronged for a long distance with those waiting to see the runners come in. At least one hundred thousand human beings were collected in and about the Stadium. . ."

"The New Olympian Games," by Rufus Richardson, in *Scribners Magazine* 20, 1896.

"... 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 νικῶμεν", and die. For this run there were eighteen entries, twelve of them Greeks. Germany, France, Hungary, The United States and Australia were also represented.

"Stories were circulated regarding the prowess of the Australian and the American, who had come in first and second in the 1,500 metre race. A mile run, to be sure, was a different thing from coursing that long road from Marathon. Still the Greeks were anxious. The men started from Marathon at two o'clock on Friday, to run into the Stadion to a string stretched out at the Sphendone, a distance of forty kilometres, or about twenty-five miles. The one-hundred thousand people waiting for them in and about the Stadion could know nothing of the stages of the contest, how three foreigners, the dreaded Australian and the dreaded American, and even before them, the Frenchman, took the lead and held it up to a point within a few miles of Athens; how they one by one then felt the awful strain of the agony, and at last succumbed easily to anyone who seemed to have retained more strength than they; and how others, fiercely laboring, came one by one into the first places-stages afterward so graphically told by

those who watched them.

"Shortly after half-past four a cannon-shot, the signal that the leading runner was approaching, electrified the mass. The pole-vaulting could not go on. After awhile a man wearing the Greek colors, light blue and white, was seen struggling toward the Stadion amid the yells of myriads of throats, "Elleen! Elleen!" (A Greek! A Greek!), and as he made his way through the Stadion, the crowd went mad for joy. The stalwart Crown Prince, the president of the games, and the still more stalwart Prince George, the referee, led, or rather almost carried, this victor before the royal seat in the Sphendone, and the usually quiet king himself had meanwhile nearly ripped off the visor of his naval uniform cap in waving it wildly in the air. Pity it would have been had a foreigner won this race. None felt this more keenly than the foreign athletes themselves. All who were present will remember the commotion of the crowd in the Stadion in that moment of victory as one of the greatest scenes of their lives. In the gentle light of the sun of Attica, as it inclines toward the horizon, a light not known elsewhere in the world, the magnificent gift of Averoff, the new Stadion-and yet the old-receives its real dedication.

"Athletics were crowned in it as never before in modern times. Here was inspiration for a painter. The one coveted honor of the games was fairly won by the Greeks, and held almost beyond the reach of envy. Shortly after the winner's arrival came two other Greeks, and then a Hungarian. The next five in order were also Greeks.

"It was a Greek victory with a vengeance. The winner, who accomplished the run in the remarkable short time of two hours, fifty-eight minutes, and fifty seconds, is Spyridion Loues, a well-to-do farmer, twenty-four years old, from Marousi, a village on the road from Athens to Kephissia, and near to the latter place. He was one of the latest entries for the race. Just before going out to Marathon on Friday, he is said to have taken the sacrament from the priest of his native village, saying that he wished to invoke the aid of heaven in his great struggle.

"It is difficult to ascertain just what Loues has been doing since the race. A cycle of myths is already growing up about him. It is not uninteresting to be present at this genesis of myths in which the newspapers play a considerable part. It was reported of Loues that he declined all gifts offered him, and declared that all he wished was the royal clemency for his brother, who was in prison. But since he has asserted in print that he has no brother in prison, and since others have asserted for him that he has no brother at all, that myth is for the present disposed of as far as Athens is concerned; but who can stop a fiction that is gone out into all the earth? . . ."

"The Olympic Games," by G.S. Robertson, in: *Fortnightly Review* 65, 1896.

“... But as the public seemed disinclined for vigorous expressions of disapproval, so it also was incapable of expressing very great enthusiasm.

“Much has been written in the papers about the tremendous scene at the conclusion of the race from Marathon. The *coup d’oeil* indeed was surpassingly fine, but the outward expression of emotion really mounted to very little. It seemed to us that the five thousand people who were present at the conclusion of the Oxford and Yale sports in 1894, displayed, proportionately, much more outward enthusiasm than the one hundred and twenty thousand people who witnessed the termination of the Marathon race in 1896. Yet the whole scene can never be effaced from one’s memory . . .

“On every day of the meeting the crowd present was enormous, but the two central moments were the conclusion of the Marathon Race and . . . presentation of the prizes. Then every available inch of space was occupied . . .”

“The Olympian Games at Athens” by Charles Waldstein, in: Harper’s Weekly, 18 April 1896.

“Cairete nikvmen”.

“REJOICE! We have conquered! The two Greek words shouted by one panting runner were taken up by a hundred thousand voices, and rang through the Stadium, across the Ilissus to the distant Pentelicus, to the Hymettos on the right, and on the left the rocks of the Acropolis caught up the sound and sent it back. But the shout lost itself in one cavern of the rock, where it lingered, and seemed held as by the familiarity of some vague and distant association. The

shouting multitude in and about the Stadium were not aware of what was going on in the grotto of Pan, under the rock of the Acropolis. For the old god Pan, who had been sleeping here for two thousand years, awoke and smiled. He remembered how, 2276 years ago, he had gladdened the heart of the runner Pheidippides when he raced back from Sparta in despair at not obtaining Lakonian help to meet the Persian foe threatening Athens before Marathon; how he, the great god Pan, had promised him and the Athenians success against their barbarian enemies.

But it was not Pheidippides who, after the victory of Marathon, as Browning puts it, ‘flung down his shield. Ran like fire once more: and the space ‘twixt the fennel-field.’ And Athens was stubble again, a field which a fire runs through. Till he broke, ‘Rejoice, we conquer!’ Like wine through clay, Joy in his blood bursting his heart, he died—the bliss!”

The Marathon runner who died with the blessed words on his lips, sinking down in the market-place of Athens, according to the account of Lucian, was a certain Philippides. It is impossible to describe the enthusiasm within the Stadium—nay, in the whole city of Athens—over the result of this the most important contest in the games during these ten days. The Stadium packed with over 50,000 people; the walls around it, the hills about, covered with a human crowd that from the distance looked like bees clustering over a comb; and this mass of humanity rising in one great shout of joy with the advent—the one runner who was first to cross the line within the Stadium, caught in the arms of the Crown-Prince, who led him before the King,



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THE NEW GREEK HERO, AMID OTHER OLYMPIC CHAMPIONS AND THE ROYAL FAMILY AT DAPHNI. FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: HERBERT JAMISON (USA), ELLERY CLARK (USA), JAMES CONNOLLY (USA), CHR. HADJIPETROS, SPYROS LOUIS, ROBERT GARRETT (USA), PRINCE GEORGIOS, TOM CURTIS (USA), PRINCE NIKOLAOS, THR. MANOS, CROWN PRINCE KONSTANTIN, THOMAS BURKE (USA), EDWIN FLACK (AUS), ANASTASIOS METAXES (ARCHITECT IN CHARGE OF RECONSTRUCTING THE STADIUM), ARTHUR BLAKE (USA), WILLIAM HOYT (USA) AND ALBERT TYLER (USA).

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embraced and kissed by those who could get near him; all this and much more send a thrill through every heart, which few could have experienced before with the same intensity. It might almost have been Philpides of old bringing to the anxious inhabitants of Athens the news of their glorious victory, the salvation of their country and home.

'We can well understand how the Greeks themselves should, from all these associations, have viewed this race as especially their own; and we must admire them the more for the fairness and generosity with which they received the news (while the pole-jumping, in which the American, Hoyt, proved victorious, was going on in the Stadium) that Flack, the Australian, and then that Blake, the Boston man, were leading after 20 kilometres. But when, finally, three of their own men came in as the leaders, we can equally sympathize in their unbounded joy. While, with strong protests on his part, the victor was being rubbed down in the dressing-rooms behind the Stadium, presents were showered upon him. One person sent a gold watch, another a gold cigarette-case; I am told that he has had a small farm given him, daughters offered in marriage—in fact, all that a hero can wish for. I hope this will not counteract one of the chief aims of these games, namely, the preservation of strict amateur principles in not giving valuable prizes.'

"The Olympic Games," in *The Sporting Life*, April 29th, 1896. ('from our own correspondent', who is an unknown journalist).

"This was the most eventful day in the whole course of the games. The Stadium was completely crowded. In one glance 70,000 people could be seen, for besides the 60,000 seated in the arena (the sitting accommodation of each division allowing of an almost accurate calculation), the ground rising behind the walls of the Stadium was black with a mass which could not have numbered less than from 10,000 to 15,000 individuals. . .

"During the progress of the Pole Jumping great excitement appeared to be spreading among the immense crowd of spectators. It was approaching the time when the runners from Marathon might be expected. Heads were constantly being turned to the entrance of the Stadium and every ear was on the alert to hear the report of the cannon which was to give notice of the first sight of the victor. For the previous two hours bicycle riders had been arriving, bringing in reports of the relative positions of the competitors. Many reports announced that Flack, the Australian, was leading. A gloom spread around, and increased as other couriers confirmed this. Women were heard praying to the Virgin that the foreigners might win at everything else, but that the Greeks might have this Marathon race. At last a messenger arrived—'The Greeks are ahead.' A deafening roar of applause rolled round the Stadium, and the excitement of

the next ten minutes was intense. In spite of the efforts of the Military Police to keep order, and compel the spectators to remain seated they would, from time to time, rise in a body and crane their necks towards the entrance. At last the sound of the cannon is heard. 'Greeks' Greeks!' now shouted the constantly arriving bicyclers. The mighty multitude spring up in a few minutes later, when Louis, with the Greek colours bounded into the arena, amidst the shouts of 70,000 throats. Flags, handkerchiefs, hats, hands waving in the wildest gesticulation. Numerous pigeons, with small Greek flags attached, were let loose, and flew in all directions around the Stadium. When Prince George, who was standing in the arena, saw the Greek victor entering the Stadium he ran to meet him, and turning, ran by his side up the track to the goal behind which King George was sitting. On Louis reaching the Royal seat the King rose and shook hands with the victor demonstratively, while the Crown Prince and Prince George embraced him with great excitement, and the whole Stadium continued to actually yell with delight.

"Fully 80,000 people lined the road, eight to ten deep, from Marathon. Public and private carriages were drawn up along the road, of which the roofs were taken forcible possession of and swarmed with occupants.

"I am informed by a friend who accompanied Flack from the start at Marathon, on a bicycle, that in spite of the advice of his friends, who knew the waiting power of the Greek countrymen competing, he had started at too great a speed. His running for the first eighteen miles was wonderful. It could not be expected, however, that his powers could endure against a peasant whose whole life had been a training. These country Greeks are accustomed from childhood to travel immense distances on foot, on rough paths not worthy of the name of road. Flack kept ahead, and long ahead, till within four miles of Athens, when he entirely succumbed and was taken into the accompanying carriage. He fainted on being put in the carriage. The Greeks then came steadily up, and it was only a question of endurance between a hardy villager and a student of the University. Of course the villager, Louis, gained, but only by about five minutes. The Hungarian Kellner, came in fourth, and so ended the famous Marathon race. . ."

"The Marathon Race," in *The Field*, London, 1896. (report of the fifth day, by an unknown author.)

"The Marathon Race (40 kilometres=24 miles 1500 yards). - S. Louis, Greek (2hrs 58 min 50 sec), 1; X. Vasilacos, Athens (3hrs 6 min 8sec), 2; N. Balocas, Athens (3hrs 6min 30sec), 3; J. Kellner, Budapest (3hrs 9min 55sec), 4; not timed: I Vrotos, Greece, 5; E. Papasymeon, Greece, 6; D. Deliyannis, Athens, 7; E. Yeracakes, Athens, 8; S. Masouros, Greece, 9; S. Lagondakoa, France (a Greek), 10; There were eighteen entries, including an Australian, an American, a

Frenchman, a German, and a Hungarian, the other thirteen being Greeks, six of whom were peasants from neighbouring villages. This race, for which a handsome silver cup was offered by M. Bréal, of the Institute Française, was looked upon as the blue ribbon of the meeting, and the Greeks were determined to make every effort to win the victory in a contest so full, at least to them, of historic interest. The competitors were driven out to Marathon the previous evening, where arrangements had been made to ensure them a comfortable night's rest, and a solid breakfast in the morning. The start had been fixed at two p.m. From, noon all traffic on the road was stopped, and the way kept clear by cavalry patrols. Seventeen competitors appeared at the starting point, the sole absentee being the representative of Germany. They were arranged in four lines, one-and-a-half metres apart, the first three lines containing five each, the last two, one of whom eventually proved the winner. Punctually at two the pistol was fired. The Frenchman, who was in the first line, at once took the lead, and set the pace, followed by the Australian and the American, four Greeks and the Hungarian forming a group a little way behind. They soon got into a long straggling line, each runner being closely followed by a mounted cavalry officer, and in some cases by a friendly bicyclist, who came as near as he was allowed. The first eight to reach Charbati (about halfway) were the following: Lermusiaux (French), at 3.34 p.m.; Flack (Australian), at 3.35 p.m.; Blake (American), at 3.38 p.m.; Vasilacos (Greek), at 3.41 p.m.; Loues (Greek), at 3.41½ p.m.; Keller (Hungarian), at 3.44 p.m.; Balocas (Greek), at 3.45 p.m.; Dollyanais (Greek), at 3.45 p.m. The others were all a considerable distance behind. Flack had been making up on Lermusiaux, and after a few kilometres got level and passed him; soon afterwards the latter felt sick and stopped. Flack went on steadily, and passed through Keptunia and Marouzi some distance ahead of the nearest Greek, whom the groups of peasants by the road side cheered on his course. But soon the Australian felt his legs giving way, and his pace began to slacken, and at five kilometres from Athens he was passed by Loues, going fast and apparently fresh, so he shortly afterwards followed Lermusiaux's example, and got into a carriage. The American had dropped out long before; and as the first three were Greeks,

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"HE IS A PEASANT  
FROM MAROUSI,  
A VILLAGE ON THE ROUTE,  
ABOUT SEVEN MILES  
FROM ATHENS,  
AND HAD RUN THE DISTANCE  
FOR THE FIRST TIME  
A FEW DAYS BEFORE,  
WITH NO OTHER TRAINING  
THAN A HARDY,  
OUTDOOR LIFE,  
DIGGING IN HIS VINEYARD  
FROM MORN  
TILL DEWY EVE."

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with the Hungarian a good way behind, a Greek victory was assured, and the crowds on the road leading into the city raised a loud shout, which was taken up along the route and heralded the foremost runner into the Stadium. In the Stadium itself, as five o'clock approached, the excitement became intense, and reached its height when cannon shots announced that the leader had entered the city. Flack's name was on every tongue, but, popular as the young Australian was, no Greek wanted him to win, and a great shout rang through the vast multitude as, at two minutes to five, a runner slowly entered the Stadium and dragged his weary limbs along to the winning post. He bore the No.17, and was at once recognized as a Greek, and the scene of wild delight, which followed his arrival will never be effaced from the memory of anyone present. Sixty thousand people rose to their feet as with one impulse, and all, from king to peasant, waved their caps in the air and shouted their loudest. The victor was congratulated first by the Crown Prince and Prince George, who escorted him to the edge of the arena, where he was met and embraced by a crowd of enthusiastic admirers on his way to the dressing-rooms. He is a peasant from Marousi, a village on the route, about seven miles from Athens, and had run the distance for the first time a few days before, with no other training than a hardy, outdoor life, digging in his vineyard "from morn till dewy eve." He is tall and dark, with Albanian features, and looks quite handsome in his national dress. His performance--nearly twenty miles in 2hrs 28min 50sec--is a very good one, when we consider that it is only 25min 6sec slower than the track record for twenty miles, viz. 2hrs 38min 44sec., made by Dunning at Stamford Bridge in 1881. The second and third, the two favourites among the Greeks, came in fully seven minutes afterwards, both appearing to be very fresh, especially Belocas, who is a young runner of great promise, followed, three minutes later by Kellner the Hungarian, the only foreigner who finished the distance. All three received great ovations. The others above-mentioned came straggling in, the tenth man an hour behind the winner. The rest had dropped out at various points on the way, including the much-puffed Gregorion, whom a benignant deity tripped up some few kilometres out of Marathon, just as the pace was beginning to tell on him."

"De Olympische Spelen," in *Nederlandsche Sport*, No. 717, April 1896, pp. 16-17.

"Het hoofdnummer op het programma van Vrijdag 10 April 1.1. was de wedloop van Marathon naar Athene, een afstand van 42 kilometer. Deze Wedloop was op het programma der Olympische spelen geplaatst, ter herinnering aan een beroemde episode uit de Grieksche geschiedenis. Na de overwinning van Miltiades op Xerxes (490 v.Chr.), liep een soldaat, die den strijd had meegemaakt, naar Athene, om aan zijn medeburgers de heugelijke tijding to brengen, doch bij zijn aankomst viel hij dood neer onder het uitspreken van de woorden: 'Verheugt u, wij hebben overwonnen!' De heer Michel Bréal, van de Fransche academic, had als prijs voor dit nummer een prachtige antieke vaas uitgeloofd. De Grieken verlangden niets vuriger, dan dat deze prijs door een Griek zou gewonnen worden. Sinds twee maanden hadden de Grieksche mededingers zich voor dezen wedloop getraind. De spanning onder de bevolking was dan ook zeer groot, en de uitslag heeft haar niet teleurgesteld, want de drie prijzen zijn alle door Grieken behaald. Om kwart voor vijf vernam het publiek in het Stadion, ongeveer 70,000 menschen, dat de deelnemers aan den Marathon-race naderden, en de opgewondenheid werd onbeschrijfelijk, toen men bemerkte dat een Griek de leiding had. De eerstaankomende was Louis, een jonge boer uit Amarusie, een dorp nabij Athene. In goeden vorm liep hij het Stadion binnen, en toen hij den eindpaal vóór de koninklijke loge had bereikt, werd hij bedolven onder een regen van bloemen en bouquetten. De geestdrift was zoo groot, dat het programma moest geschorst worden, terwijl de kroonprins den overwinnaar uit het Stadion leidde. De tweede prijs werd gewonnen door Vasilakos, een Laconiër, en de derde door Belokas, beiden te Athene woonachtig. De tijden waren: Louis 2 uur 58 min.; Vasilakos 3 u. 6 min.; Belokas 3 uur 6 min. 28 sec. Een Hongaar was vierde. Er waren 20 mededingers. De uitslag werd vlug naar alle steden in Griekenland geseind, en op vele plaatsen werden demonstratiën gehouden ter eere der overwinnaars."

(Translated into English by Tony Bijkerk)

"The main number on the programme for Friday, April 10th, was the race from Marathon to Athens, a distance of 42 kilometres. This race was placed on the programme for the Olympic Games, to commemorate a famous episode from Greek history. After the victory of Miltiades over Xerxes (490 B.C.), a soldier, who had fought the battle, ran to Athens, to inform his fellow-citizens about the joyful tidings, but upon his arrival fell down dead, while speaking the words: 'Rejoice, for we have conquered!' Mr. Michel Bréal, of the French Academy, had offered as trophy for this race a magnificent antique vase. The Greeks ardently desired that this trophy should be won by a Greek. For two months, Greek participants had been training for this race.

The suspense of the people was very high, and the results not disappointing, as all three prizes were won by Greeks. At a quarter to five, the people in the Stadium, about 70,000 human beings, heard that the participants in the Marathon-race were approaching, and the excitement became indescribable, when they discovered that a Greek was leading. The first one to arrive was Louis, a young peasant from Amarusie, a village close to Athens. In good shape he ran into the Stadium, and on reaching the goalpost in front of the royal box, he was buried under an avalanche of flowers and bouquets. The enthusiasm was so intense, that the programme had to be suspended, while the crownprince guided the victor out of the Stadium. The second prize was won by Vasilakos, a Laconian, and the third by Belokas, both of them living in Athens. The times were: Louis 2 hrs. 58 min.; Vasilakos 3 hrs. 6 min.; Belokas 3 hrs. 6 min. 28 sec. A Hungarian came in fourth. There were 20 competitors. The results were quickly telegraphed to all cities in Greece, and in many places demonstrations were organized to celebrate the victors."

"De olympiska spelen i Athen 5 - 14 april 1896," in: *Tidning för Idrott*, article in the issue number: 21/1896 (May 21), written by V(ictor) G. Balck.

"Femte täflingen. Marathon-löpningen, 40 kilometer. Af 18 anmälda, deraf 13 greker, af hvilka 6 voro bonder från byarne i Attika, startade alla utom Tysklands representant. De anmälda främlingarne voro en engelsman, en amerikan, en tysk, en ungrare och en fransman. M. Bréal, medlem af Institut de France, hade instiftat denna täflan och härtill skänkt en vacker silfvervas. Grekerna hade helt naturligt ansträngt sig till det yttersta för att få godt folk med i denna täflan, som af dem betraktades, och detta med skäl, som äkta grekisk, hvilken borde vinnas af en grek; den klassiska förebilden och den klassiska marken hvarpå den egde rum, fordrade detta, hette det. Det var alltså med oro och hopp de motsågo utgången af denna kamp. Samtliga täflande hade qvällen förut begifvit sig till Marathon, der goda kvarter med lämplig utspisning voro anordnade; starten var utsatt till kl. 2 e. m., sedan hvilken tid all trafik på landsvägen mellan Marathon och Athen var förbjuden, hvilket öfvervakades af ridande militärpatruller. Vid starten ordnades de täflande på fyra led med 1 ½ meters mellanrum mellan leden. På slaget kl. 2 small startskottet. Fransmannen Lermusiaux tog genast ledningen med god fart, tätt följd af engelsmannen Flack och amerikanen Blake; fyra greker och ungraren Keller bildade en slutna grupp för sig som följde på något afstånd från de förstnämnda. Det dröjde dock ej länge förr än alla de täflande bildade en lång fil med större eller mindre mellanrum. De följdes af kontrollerande kavalleriofficerare till häst; somliga af någon välvillig velocipedryttare. Halfvägs, vid byn Charbati, var ordningen följande: Lermusiaux, Flack, Blake, Vasilacos,

Belocas, Delyannis, med endast ett par minuters mellanrum; d. v. s. tre främlingar i teten och tre greker tätt efter; alla de öfriga voro på betydligt afstand efter förtruppen. Nu började Flack sätta in mera fart och passerade fransmannen samt lemnade alla de öfriga långt efter sig. Det dröjde nu ej länge förr än fransmannen måste gifva upp löpningen; han hade synbarligen varit allt för ifrig i början; amerikanen måste ock sluta och nu återstod endast engelsmannen eller australiern, som han ock kallades, jemte alla grekerna. Flack drog emellertid åstad stadigt och säkert samt ökade allt jemt afståndet från den främste greken. Han bibehöll samma fart allt jemt och man böjade nu närma sig målet; en ryttare sprängde i förväg till Stadion och förkunnade att en engelsman var först med betydligt försprång. Detta väckte visserligen oro och förstämning bland den stora grekiska församlingen. Skall äfven denna seger gå oss ur händerna? hette det. Flack var visserligen mycket populär på grund af hans vackra föregående bedrifter på stadionbanan och hans namn var nu på hvar mans läppar; men ingen grek önskade honom seger, det förbjöd dem deras patriotiska känsla; han var dock högt respekterad. Så stodo underrättelserna då tiden för de täflandes annalkande var inne. De båda amerikanerna hade under tiden fortsatt deras skarpa duell i stafsprång och uppmärksamheten var allt jemt spänd på deras dugtiga språng - då plötsligt förmärkes en rörelse bland folket på höjderna kring Stadion, hvarifrån man hade utsigt öfver landsvägen från Marathon; man pekar åt det hållet - det är Marathonlöparne, som börja synas - amerikanernas språngtäfling förlorar sitt intresse för ögonblicket och den afstannar af sig sjelf; så väl funktionärer som täflande gå nu upp i allmänhetens stora fråga: hvem är den förste? Är det Flack eller en grek? Det blir allmän uppståndelse; ingen kan sitta stilla på sin plats; spänningen blir oerhörd innan man får veta hvilken nationalitet som är först. Det är på denna kamp grekerna byggt sitt hopp; det är i denna klassiska löpning de satt in sina bästa krafter. Nu smäller ett kanonskott, som förkunnar att den förste har kommit in i Athen, och som Stadion ligger nära stadens utkant, gälde det blott några minuter innan man hade att vänta den förste. Det blir en obeskriflig rörelse. Hundratusen hjertan klappa af oro för samma intresse och allas ögon riktas åt samma håll, ingången till Stadion, der prisdome och funktionärer samlats. Nu synes en hvitklädd yngling i de grekiska ljusblå färgerna; han svänger in på Stadion. Det är en grek som är först! skallar det från tusentals läppar. Ett glädjebjel utbryter; hänförelsen är oerhörd, gripande; den rycker alla med sig; greker som främlingar jubla unisont; qvinnornas näsdukar och manens hattar kastas i luften. Kronprinsen och prins Georg, som stått vid ingången till Stadion, svänga sina mössor och följa segraren på ömse sidor fram till kungens marmortron. Gamla och unga gråta af glädje; män och qvinnor störta fram för att helsa segraren, som omfamnas och kysses. Från

öfversta amfiteatern skickas ut en dufva, som flyger öfver Stadion med en liten grekisk flagga. Skådespelet var gripande storartadt, sådant man säkerligen icke bevittnat under nyare tiden; det gaf en idé om forntidens klassiska täflingsspel, då ett helt folk gick upp i samma intresse. Segraren var en Attikas son, en ung bonde vid namn Loues, från byn Marousi, nära Athen, der han är vingårdsarbetare. Efter en god stund förkunnade ett nytt kanonskott annalkandet af näste man. Det var ytterligare två grekiska ynglingar som svängde in på banan i god fart och i fullkomligt god kondition. En glänsande seger för Grekland! Nytt jubel och nya omfamningar. Omedelbart härpå kommer en kraftigt byggd ungersk gymnast, som utan att synas det minsta ansträngd efter sin 40 kilometers språngmarsch loper ett extra hvarf kring Stadion, liksom på lek. Kommer så ytterligare en grek, något medtagen och blödig; men fram till målet springer han. Nu kommer den ena efter den andra med korta mellanrum. Resultatet var följande: 1. S. Loues, grek 2 t. 58 m. 50 sek.; 2. X. Vasilakos, Athen, 3 t. 6 m. 3 sek.; 3. M. Belocas, Athen, 3 t. 6 m. 30 sek.; 4. J. Kellner, Budapest, 3 t. 9 m. 35 sek. Vår dugtige engelsman Flack hade ett par kilometer från målet fått mjelthugg och måste utgå."

(Translated into English by Ove Karlsson)

The fifth day of competition. The Marathon running, 40 kilometers. Out of 18 entries—13 of which were Greeks, including 6 farmers from the villages in Attica—all started except for Germany's representative. The entered foreigners were one Englishman, one American, one German, one Hungarian and one Frenchman. M. Bréal, member of the Institut de France, had instituted this competition and donated a nice silver vase. The Greeks had naturally done their utmost to have good people in this competition, which by them was considered, and rightly so, as genuinely Greek, which should be won by a Greek; the classic model and the classic ground on which it took place, demanded this, it was said. It was thus with anxiety and hopes they were looking forward to the outcome of this struggle. The previous evening all competitors went to Marathon, where good quarters with suitable feeding had been arranged. The start was set for 2 o'clock p.m., from which time all traffic at the main road between Marathon and Athens was prohibited. This was supervised by mounted military patrols. At the start the competitors were placed in four rows with 1 ½ meters between the rows.

"At exactly 2 o'clock the starting shot went off. The Frenchman Lermusiaux took the lead at once in good speed, closely followed by the Englishman Flack and the American Blake; four Greeks and the Hungarian Keller formed a close group some distance behind. However, soon all competitors formed a long row with larger or smaller gaps in between. They were followed by supervising caval-

ry officers on horseback; some by a kind bicycle rider. Midway, at the village of Charbati, the order was: Lermusiaux, Flack, Blake, Vasilacos, Belocas, Delyannis, with only a couple of minutes intervals; i.e three foreigners in front and three Greeks closely behind; the rest was left at considerable distance. Flack now began to increase the speed, passed the Frenchman and left all others far behind. After a short while the Frenchman had to give up; he had obviously been too eager in the beginning; the American also had to abandon and now remained only the Englishman, or the Australian as he also was called, along with all Greeks. However, Flack went ahead firmly and increased the lead ahead of the best Greek. He kept a regular speed when the field came nearer the finish. A mounted messenger went ahead to the Stadium and announced that an Englishman was first with a considerable lead. This indeed caused anxiety and a gloomy atmosphere among the large Greek assembly. Will also this victory pass by us, it was said. No doubt, Flack was very popular due to his previous great feats at the stadium track and now his name was mentioned by everybody. Though highly respected, no Greek wanted him to win; that was contrary to their patriotic emotions. This was the situation shortly before the arrival of the competitors.

“Meanwhile the two Americans continued their sharp fight in pole vault and the attention was still focused on their fine vaulting when movement suddenly was noticed among the people at the hills surrounding the Stadium, from where one had a view over the main road from Marathon; people are pointing in that direction, the marathon runners can be seen, the Americans’ vaulting competition is losing its interest for the moment and it stops by itself as both officials and competitors joins the public’s vital question: who is first? Is it Flack or a Greek? In the great stir none can sit calm; the excitement becomes tremendous before the nationality of the leading runner is known. It is on this struggle the Greeks have built their hopes; it is in this classic race they put in their best efforts. Now a gunshot goes off, signaling the arrival of the first runner. As the Stadium is situated close to the city’s outskirts it is only a few minutes before the first runner can be expected. Indescribable movement occurs. Hundred thousands of

hearts are beating in anxiety for the same reason, and everybody’s eyes are turned in the same direction: the entrance to the Stadium, where judges and officials have gathered. Now a white-dressed young man in the Greek light-blue colours can be seen; he turns into the Stadium. A Greek is first! Thousands are shouting. A shout of joy breaks out; the enthusiasm is enormous, touching; everybody is carried away; Greeks as well as foreigners are jubilant in unison; the women’s handkerchiefs and the men’s top hats are thrown in the air. Standing at the entrance to the Stadium, the crown prince and prince George are waving their caps

and they follow the winner on each side towards the king’s marble throne. Old and young are crying of joy; men and women are rushing to greet the winner, who is embraced and kissed.

“From the top of the amphitheatre a pigeon is released and flies over the Stadium with a small Greek flag. The spectacle was magnificently touching; something one certainly hasn’t witnessed in recent time; it gave an idea of the ancient, classic competitions, when an entire people went in for the same interest.

“The winner was a son of Attica, a young farmer named Loues from the village of Marousi, close to Athens, where he is a vine-dresser. After quite some time a new gunshot announced

the arrival of the next runner. It were another two young Greeks which turned into the track with good pace and in excellent condition. A glorious victory for Greece! More shouts of joy and hugging. Immediately after arrives a strongly built Hungarian gymnast, who without the slightest sign of strain after his 40 kilometers run was running an extra lap around the Stadium track as if it was just for fun. Another Greek is arriving, somewhat exhausted and weak, but he reaches the finish. Now one runner after the other is coming with short intervals. The result was the following: 1. S. Loues, Greek, 2 h 58 m. 50 sec.; 2. X. Vasilakos, Athens, 3 h. 6 m. 3 sec.; 3. M. Belocas, Athens, 3 h. 6 m. 30 sec.; 4. J. Kellner, Budapest, 3 h. 9 m. 35 sec. Our able Englishman Flack got a stitch in the spleen a couple of kilometers from the finish and had to abandon.”

“The Olympic Marathon 1896,” by A. Argyros in: *Oi protoi en Athenais diethneis Olympiakoi agones, n,d.*, (translated from the Greek by David Young).

“The anticipation was not protracted much longer. At

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IN THE GREAT STIR  
NONE CAN SIT CALM:  
THE EXCITEMENT BECOMES  
TREMENDOUS BEFORE  
THE NATIONALITY OF THE  
LEADING RUNNER IS KNOWN.  
IT IS ON THIS STRUGGLE  
THE GREEKS HAVE BUILT  
THEIR HOPES;  
IT IS IN THIS CLASSIC RACE  
THEY PUT IN  
THEIR BEST EFFORTS.

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five till five there appeared in the arena, midst the immense excitement of all and an ecstatic shout of triumph--inde-scribable--the victor of the Marathon, Louis of Amaroussi. His clothes were white and his neck glistened as if made of bronze. And he was heading for the goal with the stride of an athlete, an athlete completing, in heroic fashion, a race of so many kilometers in a period of two hours, 58 minutes and 50 seconds, in which the sensation of fatigue was neu-tralized by the feeling of triumph. He neared the goal, hold-ing onto his strength by his teeth, now more slowly, but moving forward normally and steadily. Prince George and Crown Prince Constantine wel-comed him, and ran beside him as far as the locker room."

"The Olympic Games," by Miss Maynard Butler, in *Outlook* 30, 1896.

". . . The runners from Marathon were to leave that place, twenty-four and three quarter miles away, at exactly two o'clock, and by half-past four the strain of curiosity as to the man first on the road was raised to an unbearable pitch by the rushing of an orderly along the path to tell the King who was first. 'Is it a Greek?' the crowd began to shout, and a representative of the chief Athens morning paper left his seat, determined to find out. He returned in about five minutes, his brown eyes dancing, and said, 'A Greek, a Greek!' and

then arose a tremendous sound. Not even the runner of old who fell dead at the feet of the King was awaited with keen-er interest; and as he came up to the gates, a brown-faced, white and blue clad figure, making the countryman's sign of greeting to his Princes, the whole sixty thousand people within and the forty thousand without the gates joined in a loud cry. Either side of him as he approached the seat of the King, ran the handsome Princes and as he made his obei-sance each flung an arm around him.

"Greece had indeed won, and every stranger rejoiced with her. There will not be soon a scene like that again. An officer of the war-ship San Francisco, familiar with many lands and who has seen many strange sights, was heard to say that he knew nothing comparable with it. Long may the spontaneous, courteous country live, and long the noble, generous, manly family at its head! . . ."

"The Olympic Games of 1896," by Ellery Clark, in: *Reminiscences of an Athlete*, 1911.

"... by far the most important to the general public, the Marathon. The Greeks seemed to feel that the national honor was at stake; the excitement was so great as to be almost painful; and on all sides we heard the cry, 'The other events to the Americans; the Marathon to a Greek.'

"The sight in the stadium was one never to be forgotten. Hours before the games began, every seat was taken; the aisles, and the space between the lowest tier of seats and the running track, were filled with people; the surrounding

hills, as on the days preceding, were blackened with a dense throng; and in addition, from the entrance of the Stadium, as far as the eye could see, people stood, three and four deep, lining both sides of the road, eager to catch the first glimpse, or even the first news, of the Marathon runners, who were to start on their long journey at noon. Altogether, at least one hundred and fifty thou-sand people must have been pre-sent on the great final day.

"The events in the Stadium were quickly decided. Burke won the final of the hun-dred metres; in the hurdles Curtis defeated Goulding by inches, in the most exciting finish of the games; I won the high jump; and Hoyt, after a hard tussle with Tyler of Princeton, won the vault. He had his bad quarter of a minute, as I had had mine in the

broad jump. With the bar up around ten feet, Tyler got over in safety, and Hoyt missed twice. I can remember now the anxiety with which I saw him coming running down the path on his last trial. His nerve held; he caught things right, and was over in safety, eventually to prove the winner.

"The name of the last champion was announced; and then, suddenly, there fell utter silence over the Stadium. The same thought rose in every mind: 'Who wins the Marathon?' Slowly the moments dragged, and then, on a sudden, a murmur arose in the long line of watchers out-side the entrance, --a murmur which grew to a shout, and then swelled to a vast roar,--'A Greek! A Greek wins!' and a moment later, panting, dusty, travel-stained, but still run-ning true and strong, Spiridon Loues, a young Greek peas-ant, burst into the Stadium, the winner of the race, the hero of the day, and the idol of his people. For a few moments the wildest confusion reigned. Snow-white doves, decked with



ELLERY CLARK, LONG JUMP CHAMPION

ribbons of blue and white—the national colors—were set free in the enclosure; flowers, money, jewelry, were showered upon the victor; and completing the circuit of the track, with the Crown Prince and Prince George on either side, Loues was borne away to the dressing-rooms on the shoulders of the crowd. The second and third places were also won by Greeks, and the fourth by a Hungarian.

“The after history of the race was most interesting. Lermusiaux, the Frenchman, started out at a terrific pace, and at ten miles was far in the lead, with Flack second and Blake third. Then the Frenchman’s strength failed him, and he had to stop. Blake, running strongly and easily up to fifteen miles, at that point suddenly collapsed, and fell, unable to continue. A few miles farther on, Flack followed suit, and then the Greeks, who had wisely set a slower pace, came to the front, and fought it out for the first three places among themselves. Thus the games came to an end. . .”

“The Glory That Was Greece,” by Thomas P. Curtis, in: *The Sportsman* 12, (1932).

“On the last day of the Games, Greece came into her own. Loues, a Greek donkey boy led all the other contestants home in the great Marathon. As he came into the stretch, a hundred and twenty-five thousand people went into delirium. Thousands of white pigeons which had been hidden in boxes under the seats were released in all parts of the stadium. The hand clapping was tremendous. Every reward which the ancient cities heaped on an Olympic victor—and a lot of new ones—were showered on the conqueror, and the games ended on this happy and thrilling note. . .”

“Olympic Games of 1896,” by Pierre de Coubertin, in: *Century Magazine* 53, (1896).

“One event only seemed likely to be theirs from its very nature—the long-distance run from Marathon, a prize for which has been newly founded by M. Michel Bréal, a member of the French Institute, in commemoration of that soldier of antiquity who ran all the way to Athens to tell his fellow-citizens of the happy issue of the battle. The distance from Marathon to Athens is 42 kilometers. 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. As the great day approached, women offered up prayers and votive tapers in the churches, that the victor might be a Greek! The wish was fulfilled. A young peasant named Louës, from the village of Marousi, was the winner in two hours and fifty-five minutes. He reached the goal fresh and in fine form. He was followed by two other Greeks. The excellent Australian sprinter Flack, and the Frenchman Lermusiaux, who had been in the lead

the first 35 kilometers, had fallen out by the way. When Louës came into the Stadion, the crowd, which numbered sixty thousand persons, rose to its feet like one man, swayed by extraordinary excitement. The King of Serbia, who was present, will probably not forget the sight he saw that day. A flight of white pigeons was let loose, women waved fans and handkerchiefs, and some spectators who were nearest to Louës left their seats, and tried to reach him and carry him in triumph. He would have been suffocated if The Crown Prince and Prince George had not bodily led him away. A lady who stood next to me unfastened her watch, a gold one set with pearls, and sent it to him; an innkeeper presented him with an order good for three hundred and sixty-five free meals; and a wealthy citizen had to be dissuaded from signing a check for ten thousand francs to his credit. Louës himself, however, when he was told of this generous offer, refused it. The sense of honor, which is very strong in the Greek peasant, thus saved the non-professional spirit from a very great danger.”

“Memoires Olympiques,” by Pierre de Coubertin, 1931, p. 40-41.

“Quand je dis que rien de sensationnel ne s’était produit, il en faut excepter la course de Marathon. Issue de l’initiative d’un membre illustre de l’Institut de France, M. Michel Bréal, qui, dans son enthousiasme, m’avait écrit le lendemain du rétablissement des Olympiades qu’il donnait une Coupe pour cette épreuve, la course de Marathon dépassait les audaces de l’époque. C’était une distance énorme—entre 42 et 44 kilomètres—et propre à être jugée déraisonnable même par les techniciens. Nous avons hésité à créer une telle épreuve bien qu’elle fût dotée si glorieusement dès avant sa naissance, mais il n’était guère possible, le mot prononcé, d’éviter la chose. Les Grecs avaient peu de coureurs. Nul de nous ne pensait que le vainqueur serait l’un d’eux et surtout un “improvisé”. Spiridion Louys était un magnifique berger vêtu de la fustanelle populaire et étranger à toutes les pratiques de l’entraînement scientifique. Il se prépara par le jeûne et la prière et passa, dit-on, la dernière nuit devant les icônes parmi la clarté des cierges. Sa victoire fut magnifique de force et de simplicité. A l’entrée du stade où s’entassaient plus de soixante mille spectateurs il se présenta sans épuisement et quand les princes Constantin et Georges, par un geste spontané, le prirent dans leurs bras pour le porter jusqu’au roi debout devant son trône de marbre, il sembla que tout l’antiquité hellénique entraînât avec lui. Des acclamations inouïes montèrent. Ce fut un des spectacles les plus extraordinaires dont je me souviens. J’en conservai l’empreinte en ce que dès lors, je fus persuadé que les forces psychiques jouaient en sport un rôle bien plus effectif qu’on ne leur attribue; d’autres expériences ont confirmé cette conviction en moi depuis 1896, mais. . .”

“Die Olympischen Spiele in Athens 1896”, by Kurt Doerry in *Sport im Bild*, No.17, page 268/269, 1896. “Athen, den 11. April 1896.

“Der gestrige Tag war entschieden der Haupttag der Olympischen Spiele. Der Lauf von Marathon nach Athen sollte stattfinden. Es sollte sich entscheiden, ob die Technik der ausländischen Athleten über die natürliche Zähigkeit und Ausdauer der griechischen Landleute den Sieg davontragen würde. Schon am frühen Morgen was ganz Athen in fieberhafter Aufregung. Der kühle Nordländer kann sich kaum einen Begriff davon machen, welch’ enormes Interesse das griechische Volk den Olympische Spielen entgegenbringt. Den Siegern in den Vorkämpfen, den sogenannten panhellenischen Spielen, erwies man überall die grösste Hochachtung. Einem derselben, einem Patenser, brachte die ganze Stadt bei seiner Rückkehr nach Patras einen grossartigen Fackelzug. Und nun sollte der grosse Marathonlauf stattfinden. Schon in aller Frühe drängte man sich in den Billet-Verkaufstellen. Gegen 10 Uhr war das Stadion ausverkauft.

“. . . Der Mittag nahte heran. Die Läufer sollten um 2 Uhr den Lauf von Marathon aus antreten. Das Endziel war das Stadion. Dort hatte sich schon um 1/2 2 Uhr eine kolossale Menschenmasse eingefunden. Nicht ein Apfel hätte zur Erde fallen können. Auf allen Gängen des weiten Baues drängte und schob sich eine ungeduldig harrende aufgeregte Menge. Auf den Bergkegeln stand das Volk Kopf an Kopf, die weissen Kleider der Wlachen, der griechische Bauern, hoben sich klar vom blauen Himmel ab. Um 1/2 3 Uhr begannen die noch auszutragenden Wettkämpfe.

“Inzwischen war es 4 Uhr geworden, und der Zeitpunkt, bei welchem die Läufer aus Marathon eintreffen mussten, ruckte näher und näher. Wie lautes Sausen wogten die halb lauten, aufgeregten Gespräche des Publikums durch das Stadion. Aller Augen waren auf den am Eingange sichtbaren Weg gerichtet. Alle fünf Minuten erhob sich die vor Aufregung zitternde Menge, um zu sehen, ob nicht schon eine Spur der Läufer zu entdecken sei. Wenn sich in der Ferne ein Staubwölkchen erhob, sprangen die vielen Tausende von ihren Sitzen, in der Erwartung den ersten der Läufer nahen zu sehen. Gegen 1/2 5Uhr traf ein Kurier bei dem Komitee ein, welcher dem Prinzen Georg eine Depesche überreichte. “Der Australier Flack führt mit grossem Vorsprung. An ein Einholen ist nicht zu denken”, so lautete der Inhalt des Schreibens. Grosse Niedergeschlagenheit machte sich in der Nahe des Prinzen bemerkbar, doch kein Wort von dem Inhalt der Depesche gelangte unter das Publikum. Immer aufgeregter sah man dem Resultat des Marathonlauf entgegen. Das Stabspringen, welches inzwischen begonnen hatte, fand kaum irgendwelche Beachtung. Da plötzlich, kurz nach 3/4 5 Uhr, wallte in der Ferne eine dichte Staubwolke auf. Dumpfes Sausen, gleich der Brandung des Meeres, tönt an

aller Ohr. Am Eingang des Stadions, wo die Prinzen sich aufgestellt hatten, macht sich eine Bewegung bemerkbar. Das Publikum, welches alle diese Vorgänge mit grösster Spannung verfolgt, bricht in tosendes Geschrei aus, denn noch weiss man nicht im Stadion, wer an der Spitze ist. Da erscheint eine weisse staubbedeckte Gestalt am Anfang der Bahn. Ein Grieche.

“‘Nenikikamen’ donnert es aus hunderttausend Kehlen. Enikisainen Marathon’.

“Wir haben Marathon gewonnen”, ruft alles, und in wahnsinnigem Jubel springen die Griechen von den Sitzen. Es ist ein wunderbares, kaum fassbares Bild, welches sich unserem Auge bietet. Der staubbedeckte Marathonläufer eilt mit müdem Schritt die vorgeschriebenen 200 m die Bahn entlang. Neben ihm, zu seiner Rechten, der Kronprinz, zu seiner Linken Prinz Georgs riesenhafte Gestalt. Beide, begleitet von einem halben Dutzend Offiziere und Komiteemitgliedern, eilen neben der Erschöpften dahin, die Arme ausgestreckt, um ihm im Notfalle zu stützen. Das Publikum rast vor Freude. Es streut dem Sieger Blumen und Oelzweige auf den Weg. Eine Taube, mit einer griechischen Fahne am Halse, fliegt durch das Stadion. Die allgemeine Begeisterung macht sich in ohrenbetäubendem Klatschen Luft. Inzwischen hat der Läufer das Ziel erreicht. Vom Thron, auf welchem auch der König von Serbien Platz genommen hatte, springt der König von Griechenland auf, eilt dem Marathonsieger entgegen und drückt ihm bewegt die Hand. Major Souzos und Oberst van Reineck, Flügeladjutanten des Königs, springen von ihren Sitzen und umarmen und küssen den staubbedeckten Kämpfer unter lautem Jubel der Massen. Langsam und sorgfältig führt man den fast Zusammenbrechenden zu den Umkleideräumen.

“Ein Griech hat gewonnen!

“Noch immer kennt die allgemeine Freude keine Grenzen. Ein hoher Beamter des Königs überreichte dem Sieger einen Check über 25000 Drachmen, ein anderer nimmt seine goldene Uhr und schenkt sie ihm. Hoch in den Lüften schwebt die griechische Flagge. Auf dem Nummernbrett lesen wir die Zeit, welche der Sieger brauchte: 2 St. 55 Min. 20 Sek. Eine grossartige Leistung, wie sie eben nur ein das Ersteigen der Berge und die im Süden herrschende Hitze gewohnter Bauer fertigbringen konnte. Denn ein solcher ist der Sieger. Sotirios Louis aus Marusia ist sein Name.

“Inzwischen hat sich der Begeisterungssturm des Publikums noch kaum gelegt, da taucht eine zweite weisse Gestalt am Eingang des Stadions auf. Wieder erhebt sich donnernder Jubel, denn auch der zweite Sieger ist ein Grieche, Basilakos mit Namen. Auch ihm bereitet man die grossartigsten Ovationen. Sein Zeit ist 2 Stunden 58 Min. 50 Sek. Nun ist es gespannt auf die übrigen Läufer, denn man beachtete ja allgemein, dass die Amerikaner auch dieses

Rennen gewinnen wurden. Wo bleiben sie, die gefurchteten Gegner? so fragt sich jedermann. Doch schon wieder richtet sich aller Aufmerksamkeit nach den Eingang. Auch der dritte Läufer ist ein Grieche. . .Griechenland siegte auf der ganzen Linie. Das griechische Volk ist glücklich, denn es hat ja den Marathonlauf gewonnen. Ihr sehnlichstes Wünschen und Hoffen seit langem ist in Erfüllung gegangen. Man kann sich vielleicht ein Begriff machen von den Wert, den die Griechen auf den Marathonlauf heben, wenn ich hier einige Beispiele gebe von der. . .und Weise, in welcher sich die Begeisterung der. . .ausserte. Ein Hotelier versprach den Sieger. . .Jahr umsonst wohnen zu lassen, ein anderer speist ihm ein Jahr umsonst., während ein Schneider wiederum. . .Anzuge liefert. Ein Friseur wird ihn sein ganzes leben lang umsonst rasieren, und auch die Stiefel. . . zer schworen, von Louis, dem Marathonsieger, keinen Lepton anzunehmen. Louis ist ein geachter Mann, er wird es noch bis zum Minister bringen. - Doch kommen wir zu unserem Bericht zurück. Während sich die Wogen der Begeisterung langsam legten, wurde das Stabspringen fortgesetzt. u.s.w. . ."

"The Olympic Games," by "F", in *Bailey's Magazine of Sport* 65, 1896.

. . .Next come the Greeks themselves, who accounted for ten prizes, including that pièce de resistance of the meeting, the Marathon to Athens race. The scene at the finish of this struggle was truly remarkable, for women were even heard praying to the Virgin that the foreigners might win everything else if only this event fell to a Greek. When, during the Pole Jump, bicycle messengers came ahead to announce that a Greek was leading, thunders of applause rolled round the arena. And when shortly afterwards, Loues, the Greek, bounded into the Stadion a gallant winner, egad! the excitement and enthusiasm were simply indescribable. Prince George ran forward to embrace his victorious countryman, the King descended from his seat to shake hands, and the whole Stadion literally yelled with delight."

"Ein klappriger Gaul zug uns Marusioten am Donnerstag nach Marathon. Es regnete, und wir brauchten zu dieser Fahrt beinahe fünf Stunden. Der Bürgermeister traktierte uns nach unserer Ankunft ganz gehörig, damit wir wieder warm werden sollten. Kinder!", so nötigte er immer wieder, 'nun eßt und trinkt, damit ihr morgen aushaltet. Habt ihr noch irgendeinen Wunsch? - 'Ja!' schrien wir einstimmig, bringe uns noch ein bißchen Wein, Herr Bürgermeister!' Wir haben an diesem verregneten Donnerstag gefeiert, wie Sportleute wohl niemals vor einem Start gefeiert haben; denn was wußten wir von Trainingsenthaltung und Diät? Bis zum späten Abend wurde gesungen und getrunken, gelacht und gegessen. Als am anderen Morgen die fremden Läufer von ihren Begleitern massiert und geknetet wurden, sagte ich meinen

Kameraden: 'Los, laufen wir jetzt ein paar Runden um den Dorfplatz, damit wir uns die Beine auch etwas vertreten!' Gesagt, getan. Wir liefen also die neuen Schuhe ein, die uns die Gemeinde Marusi - das habe ich vergessen, zu erzählen - gekauft hatte. Sie waren gut, kosteten aber pro Paar an 25 Drachmen. Das war damals für Schuhe ein Heidengeld. Als wir wieder in der Schenke saßen, kam der Arzt und klopfte jedem mit einem Hämmerchen auf das Knie. Was ist das für ein Witz?', fragte ich den Musara; aber der mußte es auch nicht. Da war der Arzt auch schon bei mir; er klopfte einmal, zweimal und ein drittes Mal. Er lachte, wenn mein Knie hochflog, und er kam, als er mit allen fertig war, noch einmal zu mir und beklopfte mein Knie ein viertes Mal. 'Vielleicht schafft er es!' hörte ich ihn zu einem Herrn vom Komitee sagen, und ich mußte darüber lachen. Um 11 Uhr gab es Milch und für jeden Mann zwei Eier. Um 2 Uhr standen wir endlich startbereit auf der Straße. Es hatte auch während der Nacht geregnet und sogar gehagelt. Wir zitterten deshalb vor Kälte, und die Marathonier warfen uns mitleidig ihre kurzen Jacken um die nackten Schultern. Wir waren siebzehn Läufer. Ich hatte die höchste Nummer und die 'siebzehn' auf Brust und Rücken. General Papadiamantopoulos hielt zu Roß und mit der Startpistole in der Hand noch eine kurze Rede in griechischer und französischer Sprache; dann schoß er die Pistole ab, und wir sausten los. Als ich dazu kam, nach den anderen zu sehen, merkte ich, daß ich mit ein paar Landsleuten in einer Gruppe und ziemlich rückwärts im Rennen lag. Der Franzose und der Australier waren schon sehr weit vorn und zogen in gewaltigem Tempo ab. Beim Kloster Hagios Konstantin sagte ich darum zu den Kameraden: Wie lange, Kinder, soll das bei uns so ölig weitergehen? Wollen wir nicht ein bißchen Dampf aufdrehen?' Weil aber keiner Miene machte, mitzukommen, zog ich allein los und hatte nach kurzer Zeit Gregoriu aus Chalandri eingeholt.

"'Hallo, Landsmann! Wie geht's?' rief ich ihn von hinten an. 'Ich bin's, der Luis aus Marusi!' Gregoriu drehte sich um, und sein Gesicht war krebsrot.

"Nicht sprechen!""keuchte er. "Das - Sprechen - schadet! Was meckert dieser Schafskopf!' dachte ich, machte lange Beine und ging an ihm vorüber. Als ich mich nach einer Weile nach ihm umdrehte, war er weit zurückgeblieben. In Pikermi stand mein nachmaliger Schwiegervater Konios an der Straße und streckte mir einen Becher Wein und ein rotes Osterei entgegen. 'Da, Spyros, trinkt und iß - das tut dir gut!' Ich schlürfte das Weinehen im Laufen und fühlte mich hernach so gestärkt, daß ich mich ins Zeug legte und auch den Christopoulos aus Marusi sehr rasch erreichte. Als ich vorüber ging, rief er mir zu daß in der Mittelgruppe schon alle aufgegeben hätten. Das stimmte, denn bei Madrigal erblickte ich schon Basilados, unseren besten Läufer, der in der Spitzengruppe liegen mußte. 'He, Basilados, he! Wie geht's dir?' stieß ich ihn an. 'Gut!' antwortete er. 'Gut!' und

lief unverändert und wie eine Maschine weiter. Da man in Basilados allgemein die Hoffnung setzte, daß er neben den fremden Läufern für Griechenland ehrenvoll abschneiden würde, beschloß ich, an seiner Seite zu bleiben und das Rennen neben ihm zu beenden. Ich tat es eine Zeitlang, doch als ich merkte, daß Basilados etwas langsamer wurde, rief ich ihm zu: 'Ich mache, daß ich weiterkomme! Bleib hinter mir!' Ich lief von diesem Augenblick an ein rasendes Rennen, denn weit vor mir sah ich einen der Fremden. Die Menschen, die die Straßen nun schon in dichten Reihen säumten, schrien mir zudem zu: 'Los, Luis! Vorwärts! Luis, nicht nachlassen! Luis, los!' Das feuerte mich mächtig an. Ich lief und muß die Fersen bis ins Genick geworfen haben, denn ein Wachtmeister, der mir zurief: 'Courage Luis Du hast jetzt nur noch Fremde vor dir!' mußte im scharfen Trab ein Stück neben mir herreiten. In Levkas gab mir jemand eine Orangeade. Sie tat mir nach dem roten Weinchen gut. Ich sah mich um. Basilados hatte etwas aufgeholt und lag wiederum dicht hinter mir. Nur hundert Meter weiter vom lief der Amerikaner. - ich habe seinen Namen in der langen Zeit vergessen. 'Dich werde ich mir kaufen!' dachte ich und versuchte, noch ein bißchen Tempo zuzulegen. Es ging, und an der Wegerkreuzung sauste ich an ihm vorüber. Auch Basilados überholte ihn, so daß ich mich zu ihm wendete: 'Los, laß uns nun wieder zusammen laufen!' Basilados war aber vollkommen fertig. Er konnte nicht mehr weiter. So ließ ich ihn nunmehr also allein und jagte mit langen Schritten hinter dem Franzosen her, den ich jetzt vor mir hatte, und auf Ongia Paraskewi zu. Der Franzose-ich glaube, er hieß Lemiseau-versuchte, was er konnte, aber plötzlich schwankte er und sank zu Boden, Er war fertig. Als ich an ihm vorüber war, erblickte ich weiter vorn auf der Straße eine Menge Menschen. Dort gallopierten Reiter, und ich begriff: dort war der Erste, der Australier. Von allen Seiten schrie und brüllte es um mich: 'Luis, los! - Hole ihn! Luis, du mußt ihn fressen!'

"Und: 'Hellas! Hellas!' Da packte mich zum ersten Male der Ehrgeiz. Ein Fremder durfte in diesem Lauf nicht Sieger werden. Ich streckte die Schritte so lang, wie es nur ging. Immer dichter kam ich an den Australier heran, aber er war ein verteufelt zäher Bursche. Als ich neben ihm lag, schoß ein Offizier seine Pistole in die Luft und schrie:

"'Es lebe Hellas!' und alles schrie mit. Ich weiß nicht, ob es hundert, zweihundert oder fünfhundert Meter gewesen sind, über die ich mit dem Australier Seite an Seite im Endkampf lag. Ich beobachtete ihn ununterbrochen aus dem einen Augenwinkel und ließ ihn keinen Schritt Boden mehr gewinnen Wenn er vorstoßen und mich abhängen wollte, stieß ich mit vor, und schließlich verlor er den Atem und fiel weiter und immer weiter zurück. Nun trabte der General Papadiamantopoulos mit seinem Gaul neben mir einher. Willst du etwas zu trinken haben?' fragte er. Ich nickte: "Wasser!" Sie gaben mir aber Kognac, und ich spie ihn aus.

Nein, Kognac war in diesem Augenblick für mich nichts. Der General hielt mir sein Taschentuch hin, und ich wischte mir damit den Schweiß aus dem Gesicht. Es fiel mir aus der Hand, als ich es zurückgeben wollte, und ich wollte es aufheben, doch der General schrie: 'Laß es nur liegen, Luis! Laß es nur liegen! Schone dich jetzt und laufe langsamer, damit du bis ans Stadion aushältst!'

*'Als ich nach Athen kam'*

"Ich mußte lachen. Der General war ganz umsonst besorgt. Ich fühlte mich noch ausgezeichnet bei Lunge und bei Kräften und lief noch immer regelmäßig wie eine Maschine. Jemand rief mich an. Ich erkannte einen aus unserem Dorf. Er streckte mir ein Fläschchen Wein entgegen. Ich griff zu, trank und schlug das Glas in tausend Stücke. 'Mag das ein gutes Zeichen sein!' dachte ich, denn jetzt ging es der Stadt Athen zu. 'Du darfst nicht erschrecken, Luis, wenn du am Evangelismos schießen hörst!' schrie der General, und es war gut, daß er mich vorbereitet hatte, denn als ich in die Straßen der Stadt Athen kam, wurde der Lärm ganz unbeschreiblich. Kanonenschläge donnerten, Raketen zischten, die Menschen schrien und tobten. An der Straße des Herodos Attikos beugte sich der General noch einmal vom Pferde und sagte: 'Jetzt reite ich dir schnell voraus zum Stadion, um anzusagen, daß du kommst und Sieger bist!' Er gab bei diesen Worten seinem Pferd die Sporen, doch ich dachte: Warum soll er allein reiten? und lief mit, denn die Straße fiel jetzt so angenehm zum Stadion hinab, daß das Laufen leichter wurde denn je. Als sich der General am Stadion umwendete und mich erblickte, war er ganz erstaunt. 'Wie kommst denn du schon hierher?'

"'Hinter deinem Gaul, Herr General!' Da warf er seine Mütze in die Höhe, schrie 'Sito i Ellas!' und alle Hunderttausend am Stadion schrien mit. Ich mußte von lauter Lärm und Drängen nicht, wohin ich sollte und mußte einen aus der Menge fragen. 'Zum Zielband mußte du!'" sagte er. Wo, zum Teufel, ist aber dieses Zielband? dachte ich, als ich ins Stadion einbog, doch endlich sah ich es. Am Ziel erwartete mich der damalige Kronprinz, unser späterer König Konstantin, mit allen Prinzen. Ich kannte damals keinen von allen, die auf mich zukamen und mir die Hände schütteln wollten, und fuhr sie aus: 'Platz da, erst muß ich noch die Runde im Stadion machen!'

*'Jetzt fiel ich um'*

"Diese Runde war etwas Unvorstellbares, und ich empfinde sie noch heute, in der Erinnerung, wie einen Traum. Alles rief meinen Namen. Es regnete Blumen und Zweige. Alles schrie. Alles rief meinen Namen, schwenkte die Hüte und warf die Mützen hoch. Endlich stand ich wieder am Ziel, doch da hielt es mich nicht mehr auf den Beinen. Solange ich im Laufen gewesen war, war alles gut gegangen. Jetzt, da ich Stehen wollte, fiel ich regelrecht um. Ein Arzt, den ich noch von der Militärzeit her kannte, gab mir scherzhaft einen Klaps auf die Schulter und fragte, was

mir fehle. 'Ich habe Hunger!' habe ich ihn angeschrien. Da bekam ich Milch und Biskuits. Die Könige, die Prinzen und die halbe Welt haben sich für mich interessiert, doch wenn in den Zeitungen hernach geschrieben wurde, ich hätte Pferde und einen Wagen als Belohnung verlangt und auch erhalten, so ist das unwahr. Außer der Goldmedaille und der Siegerurkunde blieb eine goldene Uhr, die eine Dame dem Kronprinzen für mich schickte, das einzige Geschenk. Mein seliger Vater hat sich den Sieg dagegen etwas kosten lassen. Er gab drei Tasser Wein und an 500 Drachmen aus, um alle Marusioten und die Fremden gehörig zu traktieren und mit ihnen der griechischen Sieg zu feiern!"

(For the translation, please read the contents of the following article by Dr. Karl Lennartz, starting on Page 24.)

#### NOTES BY THE AUTHORS:

1. Since the language of the *Journal of Olympic History* is in English, we have not included here among our selected accounts of the Marathon finish more than a sample of those in other languages: Argyros' in Greek (English translation by David Young); Kurt Doerry's in German; Spiridon Louis' own story in German from 1936 (English translation by Karl Lennartz in the article immediately following this one); Victor G. Balck's in Swedish (English translation by Ove Karlsson) and a Dutch newspaper article (English translation by Tony Bijkerk). We did not translate the German article by Doerry, because of its length. Anyone interested in its exact contents should have it translated themselves.
2. An asterisk before the entry indicates that the Marathon account in that entry is included in the collection published here.
3. Cf. "...all dust and perspiration"" (Holmes, 72).

'Kanonenschläge donnerten-die Menschen tobten', the story as it was told by Spyros Luis himself in an interview made in July 1936 by the German journalist C.M. Rudolph, published in the German paper *Sport-Telegramm*, (Magdeburg), from 13 July 1936.

- \*Andrews, Eugene P. "A first-Hand Account of the First of the Modern Olympic Games," Cornell Alumni News, December 1972, 22-24 (24).
- \*Anninos, Ch. "Description of the Games," pp. 50-117 in: *Olympic Games, 776 B.C.-A.D.1896, Second Part, Part 2 of 1-volume German/English version Athens, 1896-1897*, Sp. P. Lambros and N.G. Politis, eds.; facsimile edition reprinted, Kassel, 1996 (88-90); Part 2 only also reprinted, with separate versions in original Greek, original French translation, and new (1966) English translation, (pp. 129-155 [143-41]), Athens, n.d. (1988?); I judge this 1966 English version a better translation of the Greek than the 1896 version (David Young).
- \*Argyros, A. *Oi protoi en Athenais diethneis Olympiakoi agones*, Athens, n.d. (1896?) (60-2).
- \*Balck, V.G. "De olympiska spelen in Athen 5-14 april 1896", in: *TIDNING FÖR IDROTT*, Numbers 19, 20, 21, 23, and 24, Stockholm, 18%.
- 'Butler, Miss Maynard. "The Olympic Games," Outlook 53 (30 May

1896): 993-995. (995).

- \*Clark, Ellery. "Olympic Games of 1896," pp.124-141 in: *Reminiscences of an Athlete*. Boston and New York: 1911 (137-9).
- \*Coubertin, Pierre de. "Olympic Games of 1896; by their Founder, Baron Pierre de Coubertin." *Century Magazine* 53 (1896), 39-53 (46).
- \*Coubertin, Pierre de. *Mémoires olympiques*, Lausanne, 1931; revised reprint, Lausanne, n.d. (1979?) (26).
- \*Curtis, Thomas. "The Glory that was Greece," *The Sportsman* 12 (July, 1932), 21-22, 56; a somewhat briefer version in *Review of Reviews*, 86.2 (1932), 50.
- \*Doerry, Kurt. "Die Olympischen Spiele zu Athen." *Sport im Bild* 17. April 1896 pp. 268-269. (Many more pages published about the 1896 Olympic Games in the previous and later issues of this magazine.
- Elliot, W.M. "The New Olympic Games," *Chatauquan* (Jamestown, N.Y.) 23 (1896), 47-51 (article written before the Games, about preparations in Athens).
- \*Flack, Edwin H 'Ted'. "A letter from Edwin Flack, written from Athens in April 1896 to his father"; (one letter dated April 4th, 1896, and a second letter dated April 18th, 1896). Transcribed by Ian Jobling, Dept. of Human Movement Studies, University of Queensland, from a photocopy of the handwritten letter, made available to him by the Australian Olympic Federation in Melbourne; January 1982.
- \*F. (no other signature). "The Olympic Games." *Bailey's Magazine of Sport* (London) 65 (1896), 439-441 (440-441).
- Guth, Jiri. "Die Olympische Spiele in Athen 1896." In *Zeitschrift f.d. Österreich. Gymn., Nov. 1896* (Erste Abteilung; Abhandlungen) pp.961-975.
- \*Holmes, Burton. "The Olympian Games," pp.57-91. In *Volume Three, The Burton Holmes Lectures*, McClure, Phillips & Co., New York (1901) (71-75)
- \*Horton, George. "The Recent Olympian Games," *Bostonian* 4 (1896), 215-229 (222-226).
- Horton, George. "Revival of Olympian Games," *North American Review* 162 (1896), 266-273 (article written before the Games, about preparations in Athens).
- Hueppe, Ferdinand. Article in *Allgemeine Sportzeitung*, Wien (Vienna) 18%.
- Maurras, Charles. "Lettres des jeux olympiques," pp. 255-283. In *Maurras, Anthinea. D'Athènes à Florence*. Paris: 1912.
- \*Richardson, Rufus B. "The New Olympian Games." *Scribners Magazine* 20 (1896), 267-286 (280-281).
- \*Robertson, G.S. "The Olympic Games." *Fortnightly Review* 65 (18%): 944-957 (954, 956-957).
- \*Rudolph, C.M., interview with Spiridon Louis, published in the German newspaper *Sport-Telegramm*, in Magdeburg, from 13 July 1936.
- \*Waldstein, Charles. "The Olympic Games at Athens," *Harper's Weekly*, April 18, 1896; "The Olympian Games at Athens," *ibid.*, May 16 (489-490); "A Last Word on the Olympian Games," *ibid.*, May 23, 1896.
- \*The Marathon Race, in "The Field", London, 1896. (report of the fifth day), by an unknown author.
- \*The Olympic Games, in "The Sporting Life", April 29th, 1896. ('from our own correspondent', which is unknown).
- \*De Olympische Spelen, in *NEDERLANDSCHE SPORT*, No. 717, April 1896, pp. 16-17.

Note I: Although James B. Connolly was an eyewitness (and the first IOC Olympics' first victor), his novel, "*An Olympic Victor: A Story of the Modern Games*" (New York, 1908; first published in *Scribners Magazine* 44 [1908], 18-31, 205-217, 357-370), is not, and does not claim to be, a report of what actually happened there. It is rather a fictitious romance, suggested by--but not based on--the 1896 Olympics and their star, Spyros Louis. It is therefore of some interest, but does not belong in the above list.

Note II: Some of the articles mentioned above: Charles Waldstein's, Pierre de Coubertin's, Miss Maynard Butler's, Thomas I? Curtis', Rufus Richardson's and G.S. Roberston's articles have recently been reprinted in Bill Mallon's *The 1896 Olympic Games*, (McFarland & Company, INC., Publishers, Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640, USA), which he published with co-author Ture Widlund from Sweden in 1998.

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### Olympic Champion of the 1896 Marathon Race Narrates

By Karl Lennartz

A lot has already been written on the subject of the marathon race of the Olympic Games in 1896. And yet there still remains quite a bit to be researched, discovered and new historical facts to be imparted. Recently I was looking through some newspaper excerpts of the archive of the German Sports University Cologne (Deutsche Sporthochschule Köln) which were collected by the Organisation Committee of the Games in 1936. Doing so I discovered a series of articles which were based on Spiridon Louis the marathon champion of 1896. The organisers of the Games of 1936 had come up with the idea of inviting Spiridon Louis as a guest of honour to Berlin. There were even talks about using him as the final torchbearer. When the matter of the invitation became public, a few German journalists journeyed to Athens to interview Louis. These were the articles that I had now found. One of them which C.M. Rudolph had written for the *Sport Telegramm*, Magdeburg (13.6.1936) especially caught my interest. For Rudolph had let Spiridon Louis narrate himself. And I thought to begin with that it was a ghost-writer who was describing the story as he pictured it, because I knew that Louis could neither read nor write very well. I quickly realised though that this must be Louis' own imagination at work. Many already known facts were very precise, some were new but plausible and fitted into the picture. Rudolph had probably only edited Louis' words. Since the story still is as exciting as it was, it is well worth reading it again.

Some of it though, must be explained in annotations:

LOUIS NARRATES:

"I want to take part!"

"It was 1895 when the repairs<sup>1</sup> commenced on the sta-

dium of Athens. I was getting through my time of military service as an ostler for General Mavromichalis. I often rode past the building site together with him and it was on one of these occasions that he said to me: 'Look Spyros this is where the finishing line for the marathon runners at the Olympic Games will be. Competitors from all over the world will come and run from Marathon to this stadium.'

"I would like to be among them once. I can run damned well, general.' I answered.

"You Spyros, you and running!" As he said this he tapped his finger at my forehead. When I returned to my home village Marusi having finished my military service the young people were preparing for the Olympic Games in next spring. We had a few good runners and a first-class wrestler called Papasymeon<sup>2</sup>. He was beaten by a German during the Games. The committee had arranged one last fight for this Papasymeon on Good Friday in the next village Chalandri. He was to wrestle with George Nara and since all work was put aside on this day, not one of us young Marusiots was missing on this occasion. For some reason though our comrade was not in proper shape on that day to keep it short: he lost and we had to make our way home under mocking jeers from all Chalandri. They threw old tins and empty petrol canisters after us which made an awful lot of noise. We were in a rotten mood. Nobody said a word. I then stepped, a couple of hundred metres before we reached our village, in front of the others and said: 'Lads, it's no use if we let our heads hang now. Today we have been embarrassed. There is nothing we can change about that. But tomorrow we will show the Chalandri what our village Marusi is worth.'

'The next day, after Good Friday, the heat for the marathon was to be run. It was the original Marathon stretch and anybody who needed longer than three hours and five minutes was out of the contest. Apart from myself Lavrentios, Mussara, Papamichael and a couple of others were to start for Marusi. I had never run the whole stretch before and I, so that you know, came fifth. Lavrentios<sup>3</sup> came first. But the committee also chose me to run the Olympic race which was to take place on the first Friday<sup>4</sup> after Easter. I still had another six days until then but three of those days I was of absolutely no use. From Sunday until Tuesday I was freed from running and I was aching all over. 42 kilometres aren't exactly an easy run!

On Thursday an old horse pulled us Marusiots to Marathon. It was raining<sup>5</sup> and it took us almost five hours to get there. The Mayor belaboured us to a great extent in order to warm us up again. He kept saying 'Lads, now eat and drink so that you can bear tomorrow's strain. Is there anything else you desire?'

'We all shouted: Yes, bring us some more wine Mayor.'

'We celebrated on that rainy Thursday as athletes probably never celebrated before a race. For what did we know

about the rules of training and a proper diet. We sang and ate and laughed until late into the evening. While the other athletes were being massaged and treated the following morning I said to my comrades: 'Come on let's run a few rounds in the village to exercise our legs a bit.' And that is what we did. We all ran in our new shoes which, I forgot to mention that, the community of Marusi had bought for us. They were good shoes but each pair had cost 25 drachma. In those days that was an awful lot of money for shoes.

"When we were back at the inn the doctor came and gave all of us a knock on the knee with a little hammer. 'What kind of a joke is this?' I asked Musara<sup>6</sup>, but he did not know either. And then the doctor was already next to me; he knocked once, twice altogether three times. He laughed when my knee shot up and he came back to me after he was finished with all the others and gave my knee a fourth knock. 'He might make it.' I heard him saying to a man from the committee. This made me laugh. At eleven o'clock milk was served and each man got two beers. At two o'clock at last we were all standing in the street ready to set off. It had also rained during the night and even hailed. We were therefore shivering with the cold and the people of Marathon took pity on us and slung their short jackets round our naked shoulders. We were seventeen<sup>7</sup> runners. I had the highest number and the number 17 on my breast and back. General Papadiamantopoulos<sup>8</sup>, on horseback, ordered for silence and held, pistol in hand, a short speech in Greek and French. Then he fired and we set off.

Problems at the beginning!

When I came to have a look out for the others, I noticed that I was together with a group of my countrymen and that we were pretty much at the end of the line. The Frenchman<sup>9</sup> and the Australian<sup>10</sup> were already far ahead and were running at a great pace. Therefore at the monastery of Hagios Constantin I said to my comrades: 'How long is this supposed to carry on like this with us? How about turning up the

speed?

"But since nobody seemed interested in keeping up I set off on my own and had already, after a short while, caught up with Gregoriu<sup>11</sup> from Chalandri. 'Hello fellow countryman. How goes it?' I called to him from behind. 'It's me Louis from Marusi.' Gregoriu turned round and his face was as red as a lobster's. 'Don't talk,' he choked. 'Talking is bad!'

'What's this blockhead grumbling about I thought as I made a few long strides and overtook him. When I turned round after a while, to look for him, he had fallen far behind. In Pikermi<sup>12</sup> my second stepfather was standing at the roadside and he held out a beaker of wine and a red Easter egg. 'Here Spyros eat and drink, that will do you good.' I drank the wine while running and felt so refreshed after it that I put my back into it and also quickly reached Christopoulos from Marusi. As I overtook him he called out to me that all of the middle-group had already given up.



FORTY-TWO YEARS AFTER THAT FIRST MARATHON, GERMAN CHANCELLOR ADOLPH HITLER GREET'S SPYROS LOUIS DURING THE 1938 OLYMPIC GAMES. PHOTO FROM THE 1936 OFFICIAL REPORT.

That was true, for at Madrigal, I already saw Basilados<sup>13</sup> our best runner who had to belong to the leading-group. 'Hey Basilados, how are you doing?' I called over to him. 'Fine', he answered and ran on, unchanged like a machine. Since the people of Basilados in general hoped that he would achieve an honourable result for Greece in comparison with the foreign runners, I decided to stay by his side and to terminate the race next to him. I did this for a while but when I noticed that Basilados was slowing down I called over to him: 'I'll be off, stay behind me!' From this moment onwards I ran at a tremendous pace, for far in front of me I could see one of the foreign runners. And the people that were standing in closely knit rows along the roadside were shouting over to me: 'Come on Louis! Keep on running! Come on Louis!' That encouraged me greatly. I ran and must have shoved my heels back up my spine while doing so, for a sergeant calling over to me: 'Courage Louis! You've only got foreigners in front of you now!' had to run alongside me at a considerable speed. In Levkas somebody gave me some orangeade to drink which had a good effect on me after the red wine. I took a look around me. Basilados had caught up a bit and was now behind me again. Only a hundred metres ahead the American<sup>14</sup> was running. After all this time I've forgotten his name. 'I'll get you alright!' I thought to myself and I tried to increase the speed I was running at. It worked and at the crossing I overtook him. Basilados also overtook him, so I turned round to him and said: 'Come on let us run together again now.' But Basilados was completely fagged out. He couldn't run any further, so I left him on his own and I chased with long strides after the, Frenchman who was in front of me now at Hagia Paraskewi. The Frenchman, I think his name was Lemiseau<sup>15</sup>, tried as hard as could but suddenly he wavered and fell to the ground. He was finished<sup>16</sup>. After I was passed him, I saw a lot of people ahead on the road. There horsemen were galloping and I understood: there was the leading runner, the Australian<sup>17</sup>.

"I heard screams and shouts from all sides: 'Go on Louis, get him! Louis you've got to beat him!' and 'Hellas, Hellas!'"

"And then for the first time I was full of ambition. A foreigner should not come first in this race! I made my strides as long as possible. I kept coming closer to the Australian but he was a damned tough guy. When I was alongside him a officer shot into the air with his gun and shouted: 'Long live Hellas!' and everybody joined in. I don't know whether it was a hundred, two hundred or five hundred metres that the Australian and I were fighting<sup>18</sup> each other side by side. I looked at him perpetually out of the corner of an eye. And I didn't let him gain one metre's ground on me. When he wanted to take the lead and shake me off I stayed with him and in the end he carried on breathlessly falling further and further behind.

"At this stage general Papdiamantopoulos rode next to

me on his horse. 'Do you want something to drink? he asked me. I nodded 'water!'"

"In spite of my request they gave me cognac. I spat it out after having realized. Wine, cognac was not the right thing at this point. The general offered me his handkerchief. I used it to wipe the sweat from my face. It fell out of my hand as I wanted to give it back and I wanted to pick it up but the general shouted: 'Let it lie there Louis! Just let it lie! Spare your energy now and run slower, so that you hold out till you reach the stadium!'"

*"When I came to Athens!"*

"I had to laugh. The General had no reason for worrying. I still had more than enough breath in me and was still strong and I was still running as constantly as a machine would have done. Somebody called to me whom I recognised as someone from my village. He held out a small glass of wine towards me. I took it, drank and broke the glass into a thousand pieces. 'That shall be a good sign.' I thought, for now I was heading for the town of Athens.

"'You mustn't be frightened when you hear shots at the Evangelismos, Louis,' the general shouted. And it was just as well that he had prepared me for this, for when I came into the streets of Athens, the din became indescribable. Fireworks and rockets were going off and the people were screaming and raving. On the street of Herodes Attikos the general leant down from his horse again and said: 'I'll quickly ride ahead to the stadium now, to tell them that you're coming and that you're the winner.' With these words he set his spurs to the horse, but I thought: 'Why should he ride alone?' and since the road now went downhill to the stadium in such a pleasant way, so that it made running easier than it ever could be, I ran with him. When the general reached the stadium and turned round he was very astonished.

*"'How did you get here so soon?'"*

"'Behind your horse, general!' He then threw his hat into the air and shouted. 'Sito i Hellas!'<sup>20</sup> and all the hundred thousand at the stadium joined in. With all the noise and shuffling of people I had no idea where to go and I had to ask one of the crowd. You have to go to the winning-post!' he said. 'But where the hell is this winning-post,' I thought to myself as I turned off into the stadium. But at last I saw it. The then crown prince was waiting for me at the finish, our later King Konstantin<sup>21</sup> with all the princes. I knew none of the people of Athens, who came to towards me in order to congratulate me. I cried to them 'Out of my way. I first have to run the round of honour in the stadion.'

*"Now, I fell down!"*

"That hour was something unimaginable and it still appears to me in my memory like a dream. People were calling my name. Twigs and flowers were raining down on me. Everybody was shouting. Everybody was calling my name waving and throwing their hats up in the air. At last I

was back at the finish, but I simply could not stand on my feet anymore. As long as I had been running everything had been alright. And now that I wanted to stand still I fell over downright. A doctor, whom I still knew from the time of my military service, gave me a playful smack on the shoulder and asked me what was wrong. 'I'm hungry,' I shouted at him. I then got milk and biscuits. The king the princes and half the world were interested in me, but if afterwards it was printed in papers that I had asked for horses and a wagon as a reward and also received them, it is untrue. Apart from the gold medal<sup>22</sup> and the winner's diploma, a golden watch, sent to the crown prince for me by a lady, remained the only present<sup>23</sup>. My blessed father, though, was not stingy concerning my victory. He paid for three barrels of wine and spent nearly five hundred drachma to celebrate the Greek victory with the strangers and the Marusiots!"

RUDOLPH NARRATES:

"It is still noticeable to this day that the honour concerning this victory was a great reward for Spyros Louis. On days of celebration he has his gold medal pinned to his suit and that's how the people of Berlin will also see him. He is so exceedingly proud of being able to bring the Attikan olive-branch to Berlin, and not only himself but also his home town of Marusi is immensely proud of Berlin's invitation. The Marusiots organised a money collection for this event. The money gained will be invested in a skillfully golden stitched national costume, the fustanella<sup>24</sup>. Spyros Louis is to take it with him on his flight to Berlin and to present it to the German Führer and chancellor as a present from the Attikan village Marusi."<sup>25</sup>

Annotations

1. Construction works.
2. Georgius PAPANIDERIS who came third in the shot-putting contest is probably meant by this. The Greek, who Carl SCHUH-MANN beat at wrestling, was called Georgios TSITAS.
3. The Greek had already launched a heat for the stretch from Marathon to Athens on March the 22nd, 18%. They organised another heat five days before the Olympics, on the fifth of April, due to weak results in the first heat (1. Charilaos VASILAKOS in 3:18:00 h) Results of the second heat: 1. G. LAVRENTIS in 3:11:27 h, 2. Ioannis VRETTOS in 3:12:30 h, 3. Eleftherios PAPANIMEON in 3:13:27 h, 4. Elias KAFETZIS in 3:15:50 h, 5. Spiridon LOUIS in 3:18:27 h (!), 6. Stamatis MOUSOURIS in 3:19:15 h (The runners from Amaroussi are underlined).
4. 10th of April respectively in Greek calendar terms on 29th of March 1896.
5. In many fantastic stories burning summer temperatures are mentioned. The Olympic Games of 1896 took place in spring under such bad weather conditions that the swimmers under-cooled and the rowing contests had to be cancelled. The marathon runners had very good conditions according to today's standards.
6. Stamatis MOUSOURIS later came eighth.

7. 14 Greek and 4 foreigners, all in all 18.
8. The main organiser of the marathon race.
9. Albin LERMUSIAUX (1874-1940) had, three days previously, come third in the 1.500 m in 4:18,4 min. A year previously he twice ran the 1.500 m in world-record breaking time (4:18,4 respectively 4:10,4 min) After the Games he stayed in Athens and set up a new French average speed-record towards the end of April 1896 (17,779 km). LERMUSIAUX ran the marathon race wearing white gloves, supposedly due to the presence of the king. The truth is that his fingers were probably freezing in the same way it is today with thoroughly trained athletes.
10. 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 also entered for tennis in Athens (single and doubles). He dropped out after the first round in his single's but came in third in his double's together with the Briton George Stuart ROBERTSON.
11. Georgios GRIGORIOU had already ran the stretch twice in February. He also took part in the heat on the 22nd of March (5th in 3:36:00 h). So it was already his fourth marathon race, but he dropped out in this one.
12. Kilometre 14. LERMUSIAUX was the first to pass this location after 52 minutes.
13. Charilaos VASILAKOS, who later came second.
14. Arthur BLAKE (1872-1944) from Boston, came second in the 1.500 m in 4:34,0 min. At home he had more or less joked that he would also fancy taking part in the marathon race. His colleges took him at his word. But he was prepared, in any case he had nearly run the whole stretch once while training. His club organized the first marathon race in Boston a year later.
15. LERMUSIAUX.
16. At km 32.
17. Edwin FLACK.
18. At km 34-36.
19. Approximately at km number 36 FLACK gave up. In a letter addressed to his father he described his condition as follows: "My legs were numb" The typical symptom when the glycogen reserves are exhausted!
20. "Long live Greece !"
21. King from 1913-1917 and 1920-1922.
22. Today in the possession of the Hellenic Olympic Committee. It was exhibited in a glass case in the new Olympic stadium of Athens.
23. On top of this there came the trophy donated by the French archaeologist Michel BRÉAL who had initiated the race. It is still in the possession of family LOUIS.
24. The Greek committee did not want to put him under the strain of an air journey and so they booked him on a sleeping-wagon to Berlin. During the Games he uttered the wish to do a circular flight over Berlin. He enjoyed this so much that he persisted on flying back to Athens with Lufthansa.
25. HITLER grasped the opportunity, as so often during these Games, of playing the role of a peace-loving ruler.

NOTE: Due to the long period between Louis' victory in 1896 and the time of the interview in 1936, it is obvious that both the interviewer and the interviewed, made mistakes in the some of the names mentioned in this piece.

\* \* \* \* \*