

## **STYLIANOS KYRIAKIDES**

### **RUNNING FOR THE HUMAN RACE**

Boston 1938, Kyriakides in the leading group of runners, running with new “unbroken” shoes without socks, develops severe blisters and drops out.

#### **Athletic achievements**

Born in the mountain village of Statos, near Pafos, in Cyprus in 4<sup>th</sup> May 1910. The youngest of 5 children, he left home at the age of 12 to go to Limassol for work to help his poor farming family. After changing many jobs, he ends up as “house boy” for the Limassol medical officer Doctor Cheverton from Bristol UK, who as an athlete himself, encourages Kyriakides to start running at the age of 22, by giving him his first running gear and coaching advice. He learns English while working for the Doctor and in 1932 in his first Pan Cyprian games he wins in two days, Friday and Sunday, the 1500m & the 10000m and the 5000m & 20000m. He is hailed as a great talent and he is asked to go to Greece to run in the national championship where he comes 1<sup>st</sup> in the marathon and second in the 10000m. He trains under Otto Simitchek, the Hungarian coach of the national team who was brought to Greece in 1929 to revive the Greek track and field. He creates the DREAM GREEK TEAM of the 30's and 40's, with Kyriakides, Mandikas, Frangoudis, Syllas, Georgakopoulos, Lambrakis, Siaras, Ragazos and many others who excel in Europe in the 30's and 40's. Although the youngest in the team because of his serious personality and honest character, he is chosen by Simitchek to be the team captain.

1932 - Starts training for first time and wins in two days in the Pan Cyprian games 1500m, 5K, 10K and 20Km

1932 – 1948 : He is Greek champion in 5K, 10K and marathon 12 times in 1933, 34, 36, 37,38 and 39. Best times 5Km 15:33:00 in 1937, 10K 32:28:00 in 1936, marathon 2h 29m 27 secs in 1946

1934 – 1940 : Champion of the Balkans 10 times, winner in the 10K in 1934, 1936, and 2<sup>nd</sup> in 1937 and marathon, winner in 1934,1936,1937 and 1939 and 2<sup>nd</sup> in 1933 and 1938, and 3<sup>rd</sup> in 1940

1934 – 1940 : Marathon champion of Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Romania, Bulgaria.

1935 London : AAA championship, Silver medalist in marathon

1936 Berlin : Olympic marathon, 11<sup>th</sup> place 2h 43m 20secs

1937 London : AAA championship, Silver medalist in marathon, in 2h 40m 20secs

1938 Boston – While in the leading group, using new “unbroken” shoes without socks, he develops severe blisters and he drops out in the 21m.

1940 – 1945 : WWII interrupts his carrier, he does not train or run at all.

1945 December : Undernourished and very thin, decides to start training to run Boston, he goes to Cyprus for better training conditions and corresponds with his couch Otto Simitchek.

1946 Boston marathon : Takes first flight from Athens to New York. Wins in 2h 29m 27secs – world best time and European record

1946 Oslo European games marathon : drops out because of cramps.

1947 Boston marathon : 10<sup>th</sup> with Thanasis Ragazos 6<sup>th</sup>

1948 London : Olympic marathon, 17<sup>th</sup> place, 2h 49m 00secs . A most dramatic marathon. Most runners drop out because of excessive heat and humidity. 41 started and 30 finished. The leader was passed by two runners after entering the stadium because of dehydration.

His athletic carrier ends after the 1948 Olympics, at the age of 38, after 16 years, that were interrupted by 5 years during WWII. Missing two Olympics, 1940 and 1944, these could have been the best years of Kyriakides athletic carrier.

Holder of the Greek marathon record for 36 years 217 days, with 2 h 29m 27secs – refer to GUINNESS book of marathon records.

In 1951 joins as a member of the Greek Athletic Federation and from 1955 until 1981 he is responsible to organize the international marathon of Athens. Many great runners take part including Abebe Bekila 1961, the Fin Veiko Karvonen 1955, Ron Hill and Bill Adcoks GB 1969 and many other great runners from Finland, Japan, South Africa, New Zealand, Turkey, Belgium, Romania, Yugoslavia.

First long distance runner in the world to “run for charity”, in Boston 1946, “run for a cause”, in Boston 1947, use wrist stop watch to pace himself during a race, bought in London 1935, one of the first to buy books for stretching and diet, in London 1935, to train by correspondence with his coach Otto Simitchek, in 1934, 1935 and 1945

### **Personal life, Initiatives, Community and Humanitarian work**

1. First athlete to train by correspondence with his coach Otto Simitchek - 1934, 1935 and 1945
2. Early living conditions for Kyriakides in Greece were not good. Many broken promises, he was out of work, living in bad conditions in the changing rooms of Panathinaic stadium. Disappointed he left in 1934 and went back to Cyprus. Despite that he was not deterred from training and excelling later on.
3. In the Berlin Olympics in 1936, Kyriakides takes to the organizers an ancient warriors helmet to be given to the marathon winner, donated by Greece. The helmet “disappears” and is not given to the winner Shon Kee-chung, the Korean running at the time for Japan. In the 50’s Kyriakides through his athletic contacts finds the helmet and in a special ceremony in Germany in 1960 it is given to Mr Shon Kee-chung. Kyriakides and Shon become good friends. The helmet is now displayed in the Olympic museum in Seoul.
4. He goes by ship to the US to run Boston in 1938, at the invitation of Johny Kelly. He is received by the Greek American community. He drops out of the race because of blisters in his feet due to the unbroken new pair of shoes worn without socks. He vows and promises to Jerry Nason of Boston Globe sports editor, to return and win. (resilience)
5. In 1938 he gets married with Fanuria who dies shortly after in 1939 from tetanus infection, being 3 months pregnant. Kyriakides is devastated.
6. In 1942 he gets is married with Igigenia and have 3 children, Eleni, Dimitri and Maria
7. In 1942 he is arrested by the Germans to be executed by hanging, because of reprisals. He is let free when the arresting German officer sees his Berlin Olympics ID card that he always carried with him.
8. In 1942-1944 he is in the Greek resistance organized by Grigoris Lambrakis his friend and co athlete. During the German occupation they form a group called the “Association of Greek Athletes”. His responsibility was passing messages to the various resistance groups in the north suburbs of Athens, and bringing news from the BBC (he had a short wave radio), The Germans did not go to search his

house because they knew he had run in the Berlin Olympics, so he hides in his basement allied pilots who had been shot down and had parachuted, so that later are transported to the allied forces in Egypt, through the nearby fishing port of Rafina.

9. In 1946 in order to go to Boston he sales the house furniture to buy single ticket to the USA. The rest of the money is given by his employer, the British electric supply company
10. In 1946 in Boston he runs for charity. Crossing the finish line his shouts “for Greece”. He begs the Americans for help and they respond. He brings back to Greece aid from the USA, that was called the “KYRIAKIDES AID PACKAGE”, plus USD 250,000 cash and bulls and cows. Over 1 million Greeks from all over the country wait to greet him at the airport on his return. After his victory he declines offers to stay in the US, as most Europeans were doing at the time, to become a professional athlete and a movie star, and comes back to Greece to help the rebuilding of a dilapidated country.
11. In 1946 he sends messages to the Greek people, asking them to forget their differences in the middle of the civil war and to unite, for the good of the country. In 1946 “Kyriakides was Greece” as put in the NBC documentary by a Greek historical reporter, Petros Linardos.
12. In 1947 in Boston he runs for a cause. He goes back to Boston to run with the aim to collect money and equipment for the Greek truck and field team so that they can go to the London Olympics in 1948, bringing back USD 50,000 and clothing and equipment for the Greek team to train. The teams is able to go to the 1948 Olympic games.
13. Because of the Kyriakides story and publicity, in 1946 and 1947 Greece is the only country in Europe to receive in May 1947 an advance of USD 400 million, from the total of USD 1.4 billion
14. In 1950 he becomes member of the Greek Athletic Association technical committee and starts assisting in the renovation of Greek fiend and track. Because of his English he also receives and is the contact of all foreign athletic teams visiting Greece and leads the Greek teams abroad.
15. In 1952 he is the first person in Greece after the WWII to start organizing athletics for the young people and starts from his community in Filothey. He builds the Filothey track 1954-56 and starts the Filothey Athletic track and field Club 1956
16. From 1950 to 1987 he is a pillar in his community. He starts the boy scouts in 1957, the girl guides in 1958, organizes charity events to collect money to greater community.

17. In the difficult years of the 50's, 60's and 70's with not much money in his private life he spends what he has to buy food and drinks for the Filothei athletes during the championship events.
18. The Filothei Athletic track in 1972, was the 2<sup>nd</sup> stadium in Greece to have TARTAN surface fitted after the Karaiskaki stadium, and has all the equipment necessary for the athletes training. Filothei club although small, under his guidance breeds many Greek, Balkan and Mediterranean Champions
19. In the 50's and 60's when he found homeless children in the streets, he brought them to his home, fed them and clothed them and helped find schools in the "kinoniki pronia" a Royal family program.
20. In the 50's and 60's he organized fund raising dinner-dances with lottery tickets, to collect money for the community.
21. In the 50's and 60's, using his connections he tried to find work, for unemployed people that asked for his help.
22. All his life fought for justice for all people, irrespective of color, gender or race.
23. In 1935 he is the first long distance runner to use hand stop watch to pace himself, next long distance runner to use stop watch is in 1982, he first to buy books on stretching exercises, something unknown for long distance runners of the time, and books on diet. He is also the first runner to train through correspondence with his coach Otto Simitchek in 1934 – 35 and 1946 when he was in Cyprus
24. To go to Boston in 1946, he had to overcome the difficulties of the years of occupation and after the civil war. He was suffering from malnutrition and was very thin. The doctor who examined him before the race refused to admit him to run. He took full responsibility of the decision.
25. He was a believer in the Olympic ideals of clean amateur sport and fair play.
26. From 1950 to 1980 as a member of the Greek Amateur association he is responsible to organize single handed the marathons, local and international. Many of the top runners of the time from Finland, England, Romania, Turkey, Bulgaria, Hungary came to run. Bekila Abebe the 1960 and 1964 Olympic champions ran the race bare footed in 1962. He trains in Filothei club to prepare for the race.
27. In Boston in 1946 although given by the organizers bib no 1 as an honor, Kyriakides asked for bib no 77, because he said it was the lucky number for the ancient Greeks. He died at the age of 77, in 1987 and his winning time was 2h 29m 27 secs. So after all it was his number as hell.

28. Kyriakides had the best time in the world in 1946, which was also a European record, and help the Greek national record for over 36 years 217 days, which according to the GUINNESS BOOK of marathon records is one of the longest ever.
29. In 1962 he receives the "CROSS OF THE GOLDEN PHEINIX" the highest civilian award given by the Greek state, for his contribution to the country. In Greece he is a hero and loved and admired by all the Greeks.
30. Kyriakides was invited as a guest of honor, to be part in many track and field events in Athens and Greece, as a race judge.
31. Kyriakides never forgot he birth place, Cyprus and was a regular visitor there.
32. He has received awards from many Greek and foreign cities and had many friends around the world.
33. Kyriakides was a regular guest as speaker in the Greek TV programs, the Rotary clubs, athletic clubs, social clubs etc.
34. In the MUSEUM OF MARATHO RUN in the city of Marathon the biggest exhibit is the Kyriakides section, that contains not only his athletic medals, diplomas and cups, but also many of his personal items from 1910 and after.
35. In total 5 documentaries have been made for him, with the best being the NBC 2004 documentary "Stylianos Kyriakides, the journey of a worrier" that won the EMMY award in 2004. However the most important is the 1981 Freddy Germanos "FRONT PAGE" TV program that Kyriakides is live. During the program he is awarded a cup "from 9,000,000 Greeks". The cup is in the MARATHON museum. Disney is now making a full feature film about his 1946 epic.
36. A book was written and published in the USA "Running with Pheidipides" translated in Greek as "Born a winner". During the US book presentation in 2001 an exhibit was arranged in the Boston sports museum with the title "Stylianos Kyriakides, running for the human race"
37. Many exhibits about Kyriakides have been organized in the USA, China, Greece and Cyprus. There are 4 sculptures in total. In Filothei, a bust, unveiled in 1998, in the city of Marathon in 2004, in the 1 mile mark of the Boston course, in 2006, and in his birth place in Cyprus, in 2010
38. The Filothei stadium which he build, mainly with donations from fans, between 1954-56, is named after him.
39. In 1946, a two page cartoon called RACE AGAINST HUNGER, was published in the USA after his Boston victory in 1946 and the Greek newspapers were full of sketches and stories about him at the time
40. In 1946 after his Boston victory he is front page news in the NY and Boston newspapers.

41. In 1946 President Truman asks him for an audience in the white House, and after hearing the story of the conditions in Greece, he authorizes special assistance for Greece called the "KYRIAKIDES AID PACKAGE". This is 25,000 tons of grain, medicine, tinned food, clothing, tents, blankets and other items. These are loaded on two LIBERTY ships belonging to a Greek shipping family.
42. In 1946 he receives from the Massachusetts Governor, cows and bulls to bring to Greece.
43. In 1947 Greece receives USD 400 mil. early advance of the USD 1.4 billion allocated from the Marshal aid plan because of the Kyriakides publicity in 1946.
44. In 1947, Kyriakides returns to Boston to run for a cause, asking money and equipment for the Greek track and field team to train to go to the 1948 London Olympics. He collects USD 50,000 plus clothing and athletic equipment.
45. Over the years many people have been inspired by Kyriakides, writing poems about him
46. Kyriakides has been and is an inspiration of many new as well as experienced long distance runners. Many Greek marathon runners want to run Boston to come closer to his spirit.

### **Stylios Kyriakides crossing the finish line in Boston 1946.**

Greek American George Demeter, Massachusetts lawmaker, holds the laurel wreath.

Wearing bib 77, his time was 2h 29m 27secs, best time in the world that year and European record.

Kyriakides died at the age of 77 in 1987. So 7 was definitely the number dominating his life.

Pay attention at the stop watch in his wrist. First long distance runner, to use wrist stop watch to pace himself.

The documentary of NBC "Stylios Kyriakides, the journey of a warrior" won the EMMY award in 2004

Disney films, is now producing the life story of Kyriakides, in a full length film