

Disney to tell the story of Cypriot Marathon runner

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Bill Wheeler will write the story of runner Stylianos “Stelios” Kyriakides

Disney is lacing up its shoes to tell the story of famed Cypriot marathon runner Stylianos “Stelios” Kyriakides, tapping **Bill Wheeler** to pen the screenplay.

our editor recommends

Mark Ciardi and **Gordon Gray**, who produced the inspirational sports dramas *The Rookie* and *Secretariat*, are producing *Kyriakides*, as the project is titled.

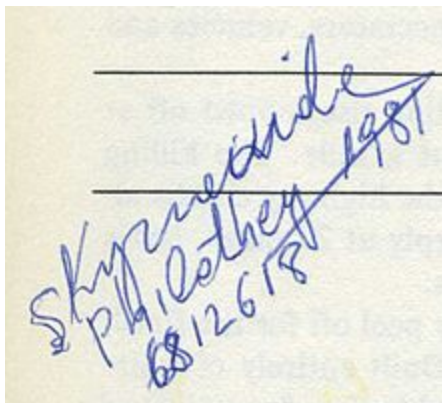
Paris Latsis and **Terry Douglas** are also producing via their 1821 Pictures.

Kyriakides was a champion long distance runner in Greece, competing in the 1936 Olympics, but his career was halted in its tracks due to the Nazi occupation of his home country. After fighting for the resistance, the frail and emaciated man made his way to the U.S. and competed in the 1946 Boston Marathon, a race to which he was initially denied entry – doctors feared he would die while running, so weak was his condition.

During the race, he pulled himself from near last place to finish first, yelling “For Greece!” when he crossed the finish line, with his win enabling him to raise money and food relief for his war-torn country.

Wheeler, repped by UTA, Anonymous and attorney Darren Trattner, adapted the Mohsin Hamid novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, which is being directed by **Mira Nair** (*Amelia*).

Kyriakides was born in Paphos, Cyprus



Signature of Stylianos Kyriakides, 1981

Kyriakides competed for Greece in the 1936 Summer Olympics, placing 11th. He was invited by his friend and fellow Berlin marathoner, Johnny Kelley, to participate in the Boston Marathon in the late 1930s. On the day of the marathon he wore new shoes, which injured his feet and caused him to place poorly.

He returned to Greece, and survived the German occupation during World War II. With the Greek Civil War raging, he returned to win the 1946 Boston Marathon. According to a newspaper report, he was running with Johnny Kelley near the end, when an old man shouted from the crowd, “For Greece, for your children!” inspiring him to pull away and win the race in 2:29:27. According to Life magazine he shouted ‘For Greece’ as he crossed the finish line.

In 1948 he finished 18th in the Olympic marathon at the London Games.

A sculpture of Kyriakides called “The Spirit of the Marathon” was unveiled in Boston in 2004. It is at the 1 mile mark of the marathon in Hopkinton. It was commissioned by the Hopkinton Athletic Association and was dedicated in 2006 to mark the 60th anniversary of Kyriakides’ victory in the 1946 race.

“The winner of the 50th Boston Marathon, Kyriakides used his victory as a call to action to aid his war and famine-ravaged homeland. Kyriakides, who narrowly escaped execution during World War II during the Nazi occupation of Greece, hadn’t run in six years when he came to Boston in 1946, with the help of Greek-American benefactors. He was emaciated from the lack of food in war-ravaged Greece, and at one point was told by doctors in Boston he wouldn’t be allowed to run because they were afraid he would die in the streets. That backdrop only added to the almost mythic race performance, in which Kyriakides came on at the end to defeat the defending champion and set the best time in the world for 1946. Nearly a million people greeted him on his return to Athens in May 1946, when he came back with boat loads of food, medicine, clothing and other essentials donated by Americans who read of his victory.” – Sculpture’s Official Press Release

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