

RUNS TO SCHEDULE

As for smoking, they should leave that strictly alone, but a glass of beer will not do them any harm, providing they drink only in moderation. Spirits also, should be left alone.

In every big race in which he runs Kyriakides always wears a wrist watch and tries to run to a schedule. He advises everyone who is going in for distance running to do the same thing. If you know what time you normally do for a certain distance and you know your normal time is good enough to enable you to hold your own against the other runners, it is best to keep your eye on a watch, and check your time for each mile. In this way it does not matter what kind of a pace is set, you can still run your normal race. Consequently, you will never find the pace killing because you are running your normal race.

On Thursday morning last week, Kyriakides left the Athens airport for America, where he will again compete in the Boston Marathon on April 19. I asked him whether he was going to win. He replied evasively that he would be quite satisfied if he clocked under 2 hours 31 minutes, and added smilingly that there are very few of his countrymen who think he can make it this year.

I found it hard to believe that the Greeks had no confidence in their hero, and upon leaving this phenomenal little champion I walked into a nearby cafe and questioned several Greeks on the matter. "No, no" they replied sadly, "he cannot do it again. He is too old."

I'll back Kyriakides to give them a surprise.

Gradually the field thinned out and the race developed into a battle between America's number one, Kelly, who had won the race the previous year, and Kyriakides. Mile succeeded mile with Kelly in the lead and the Greek hanging grimly on behind. And then with two miles to go Kyriakides drew alongside the American and increasing pace rapidly started to draw away with every stride. He ran the last two miles in the fantastic time of under 10 minutes, to finish the course in 2 hours 29 minutes 27 seconds.

On his return to Greece he was acclaimed by the Greek people as a national hero and probably the greatest Greek sportsman of all time, and a furnished house was presented to him to commemorate his Boston victory.

This, I thought, was a fine gesture on the part of the people of Greece. Especially when you remember how many great British sportsmen die in obscurity and poverty, after bringing honour to their country.

I asked Kyriakides about the prospects of young runners and what training he thought they should do. He emphasised the fact that many promising youngsters are spoiled before their athletic career starts. They should not take the sport up seriously before they are at least 23 years old, he said. I have seen many fine young fellows win one good race as a youngster and after that they have faded hopelessly and never do very well.