

GREECE PREPARES FOR THE OLYMPICS

GREECE is in full preparation selecting a national team to compete in the Olympic Games to be held in London this year.

Under the watchful eye of their Hungarian coach, Otto Szymiczek, athletes from all walks of life meet for training at the historic Olympic Stadium in Athens. Most of them are working during the day, and when their business is done: lawyer and labourer train side by side, whilst the coach, known to everyone as "Uncle," goes from one group to another giving advice or demonstrating how it should be done.

The most colourful competitor is the veteran Marathon runner

Stellias Kyriakidis, who at 38, is returning some of his best times in practice runs. The highlight of his many achievements was when in 1946 he won the Boston Marathon in 2 hours 29 minutes 27 seconds. This victory was all the more remarkable after a long period out of training with indifferent feeding during the war years. Kyriakidis, who still has all the enthusiasm of youth, persuaded Mr. Kemp, the manager of the Electric Light Company where he works, to put up the money for his passage to America and the Greek athletic world was overjoyed when he won the race in the face of a strong challenge by some of the world's best long

distance runners.

This will probably be his last season and he wants to make it a grand finale to a great career.

Another seasoned Marathon runner is 32-years-old Athanassios Ragasos, one of three brothers, all well known for their athletic prowess. He is on top of his form and in a short Marathon in Stockholm he recorded 2 hours 32 minutes. Ragasos, a quiet, likeable fellow with hair going iron grey, works at the Bank of Athens as a reception clerk.

Veterans And Hopefuls

Both Kyriakidis and Ragasos will be prominent challengers for Olympic Marathon honours and opinion is divided as to which of them will put up the best performance.

Olympics are no new experience to Nichos Syllas, the discus thrower who was sixth in the 1936 Berlin Olympics. At 34 he is still in his prime and has thrown 51 metres (166 ft) in training. Unlike most discus throwers, he is a shortish stocky man, and the power for his throws comes from a highly developed sense of balance, together with great muscular co-ordination.

An up and coming pole vaulter is Theodossios Balafas, now a Corporal in the Greek Military Police. At 23 he has a great future and at the moment he is clearing 13 feet with every prospect of improvement.

Jumping Secretary

Like all Greek athletes who are in the Services there is difficulty both in training and diet, but fortunately he is stationed in Athens and can train regularly.

George Marinikis, the secretary to the Minister of Press is a prominent long jumper and a very strong Olympic probable. He also does very well in the hop, skip and jump.

A former lawyer now serving in the Army, husky, bespectacled Yataganos, puts the shot 14.81 metres (over 48 feet) and he hopes to improve this by the time the Olympics are contested.

If Greece doesn't make her mark in the International Meeting in August, it will not be the fault of her ardent and enthusiastic athletes.



Pacing the track are Athanassios Ragasos and Stellias Kyriakidis (right), both prominent challengers for Olympic Marathon honours. Both men are in their 30's, and suffered loss of physique during the occupation, but with enthusiastic training — after their ordinary day's work — they hope to catch up on the lost years. Kyriakidis will probably make this his last season and wants it to be the grand finale to a gallant career.



A former lawyer, now serving in the Army, Yataganos hopes to put up a good show by Olympics time.