



## Stelios Kyriakides 1910 – 1987

A name of legend, an unequalled personality, the athlete who has honoured, as no one else, his homeland Cyprus and Hellenism as a whole in the 1930s and 1940s.

Statos village (Pafos), his birthplace, starting point of his athletic career and, later on, Lemesos and G.S.O (athletic club) as preparatory station (1916 – 1930), are known as the **two milestones** marking the pre-Athens period of his athletic history.

Invited to join the Greek national athletic team, Stelios dominated the long distance events from 1500m to the marathon run by winning nearly all national games, many of the Balkan games and several international games from 1931 to 1940, just before the burst of the 2nd World War.

The War and the German occupation of Greece from 1941 to 1944 deprived him of any chance for regular training. With only a minimum training Stelios sustained only a reasonably low level of physical condition which, however, allowed a new start soon after the end of the War.

Instigated by the misery, the calamities, the poverty and bad health which had stricken the people and the Country, and inspired by his humane instinct, Stelios conceived in 1945 an oracle, seemingly unrealizable which aimed at running the most famous Boston marathon, winning the run first and then building on his victory a tour of the American cities to raise money and collect food, clothing, medicines from the American people for the destitute Greeks. To do this he embarked on a strict training programme and having secured the support and encouragement of the Greek community of Boston, sailed for USA, **on money obtained from the sale of family household**, where he arrived 15 days before the marathon day (20 April 1946).

There the support and encouragement of the Greek community offered him not only a moral push up but also better food, better training conditions and medical care. Stelios employed his full bodily strength and mental and psychic stamina on which he based his strategy for a full distance running style, and managed to win. His further duty of collecting assistance for his country ended up with an amount of 250.000 dollars and two shipfuls of food, clothing and medicines which was named by the Americans "KYRIAKIDES PACKAGE" with the inscription "**running for humanity**". Both are still on the face of a building hosting in Boston a permanent exhibition on Kyriakides undertaking in 1946.

What Stelios managed to do in Boston was a labour beyond the capacity of a man of 36, not properly trained and not properly fed for more than three years. The humanitarian aspect of his success, anyway, was given wide publicity and the media around the globe reproduced the news disseminated by the News Agencies and added their own comments. Kyriakides was greeted as a hero and his success was described as a unique occasion in the history of athletics, an example of a man who paved the way for athletics and sports to be called in and used for the benefit of society.

### Statements made after the end of the run

The story of Stelios is of tremendous dimensions and no one, either orally or in writing, will ever get through to and grasp the exact meaning and describe its full sense and value. His performance and achievement was as important and magnificent as was the cause behind his venture.

**G. Pager**  
Sports Reporter

Very seldom the effort of an athlete bears in it the hidden spirit of such a dramatic story and, most probably, there has been no other man to have sensed the same strong feeling as to surpass himself in order to achieve something for the others.

**Bill Canningham**  
Boston Herald newspaper

I did my best for Greece and what I managed to do to day is far better than I had expected myself to do. The run is over but my purpose calls for more work from me. I need to travel across the country to fulfill my other objective which is the collection of as much money, food, clothing, medicine as possible for my suffering country. Fortunately I have won the run and now I am comfortably ready to carry it out.

**Stelios Kyriakides**