



The first marathon

Story

In 490 B.C. there was a big war between the Persians and the Greeks.

Persia was a huge empire, much bigger than Greece. It wanted to capture Athens.

The Greek soldiers waited on top of the hill while the Persian army waited on the plain of Marathon below. There were 48 000 Persian soldiers and only 10 000 Greek soldiers.

The Greeks sent a messenger, Pheidippides, to Sparta to get help. He ran for two days over the mountains to ask the Spartans.

But the Spartans would not fight until there was a full moon. Pheidippides returned to Marathon alone.

The Greeks could not wait and attacked the Persian army. The Greeks ran towards the enemy. Persian arrows flew through the air.

The Greeks won. 6 400 Persians were killed but only 192 Greeks died.

The Persians ran to their ships and tried to escape. They tried to go to Athens to capture the Greek women, children and old people waiting there.

Pheidippides now had another job. He ran 40 kilometres to Athens to tell the Greeks that they had won and to tell them that the Persians were coming.

He arrived at the city gates very tired. "Rejoice, we conquer!" he shouted. Then he died.

From this great event the first marathon race of the modern Olympics Games was run in 1896. It was won by a Greek runner, Spiridon Louis.

And, like Pheidippides a long time before, he also carried messages. He was a postman.



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