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THE MARATHON

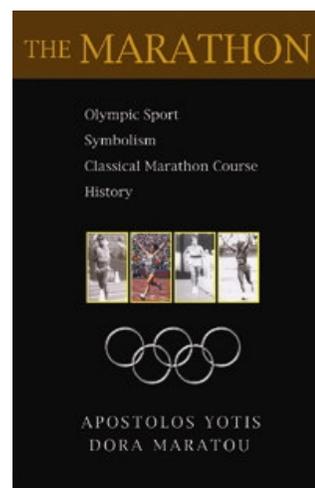
BY APOSTOLOS YOTIS AND DORA MARATOU

The Marathon was introduced at the first modern Olympic Games in Athens in 1896. One of the most grueling sports, it constitutes a continuation of the history of the endurance race that was run at the ancient Olympic Games. The name of the event was chosen as a reminder not only of the moral values and heroic moments of Hellenism at the battle of Marathon in 490 BC, but also the feat of the messenger runner who unknowingly laid out the first Marathon course when he brought the joyous news of the Greek victory to the Athenians.

Since becoming established as an Olympic event, this modern sport with ancient roots has become so popular that Marathon races are now held in more than 50 countries all over the world, with the massive participation of athletes and spectators.

This book focuses on the establishment, symbolism and ideological aspect of the Marathon, with references to events of historical and sporting interest which characterized the 25 Olympic Marathons of the modern era. Particular attention is devoted to the Classical Marathon Course, which runners will follow at the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, and which is virtually the same as the route taken by the ancient messenger runner in full armor. In addition, brief descriptions are provided of the battle of Marathon and its importance in the context of historical events of the time, while information is also presented about the ancient settlement of Marathon and nearby archeological sites.

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