

MARATHON

Get ready for the Summer Olympic Games with our series and learn about different Olympic and Paralympic sports.



What do you know about one of the most famous events in the Olympics?

Questions and answers

Isn't there an ancient Greek legend about Pheidippides and the marathon? Was he a Greek god of speed or victory?

No, that was Nike. The legend says Pheidippides was the Greek messenger who ran all the way from Marathon to Athens to tell people that Athens had defeated the great Persian army.

Did he get a reward?

No, actually he dropped dead as soon as he delivered the news. It was a distance of 26 miles (41 km), after all...

Lesson No. 21



... so that's the distance of the modern marathon!

Err, no. No, it's 42.195 km or 26 miles and 385 yards.

Why the difference?

Well, one story is that, in the 1908 London Olympics, the Royal Box – where the King sat – couldn't be opposite the finishing line. So they extended the race a bit.

That's not fair – it's already long enough!

Exactly. The winner, Dorando Pietri from Italy, was so exhausted that people helped him across the finishing line.

Isn't that illegal?

It is, and he was disqualified, with Johnny Hayes (US) being made the winner. But you can see why some people might want some help.

Activity

Decide if the following statements about the text are true or false.

- 1. 'Marathon' was the name of a Greek god.
- 2. Pheidippides died after his long run.
- 3. The Royal Box was moved so the King could watch the end of the race.
- 4. The 1908 marathon was

the first one to be 26 miles 385 yards long.

- 5. The winner of the 1908 marathon was American.
- 6. Gold medallist Thomas Hicks crossed the winning line second.
- 7. The organisers gave Fred Lorz the gold medal.
- 8. Zatopek took three gold medals home in 1952.

Help?

Yes, in 1900, American Fred Lorz used a car for part of the race, ran for the last part and crossed the winning line first. The organisers found out and made another American, Thomas Hicks, the winner.

Who is the best Olympic marathon runner, then?

Difficult to say, but perhaps the most amazing was Emil Zatopek from Czechoslovakia. In 1952 he won the 10,000 m gold in a new Olympic record time,

then won the 5,000 m in another Olympic record time. Then he ran his first ever marathon...

... and he won that too, in a new Olympic record time

Yes! How did you know?

Luck guess.

Answers

- 1. False; 2. True; 3. False; 4. True; 5. True; 6. True; 7. False; 8. True

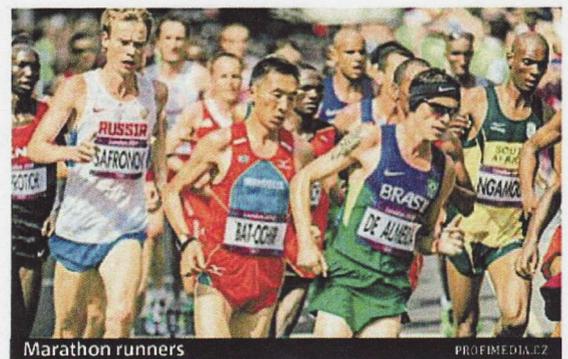
Rules for Marathon

- The marathon is a road race over 26 miles and 385 yards or 42.195 km. The course must be quite flat, with a maximum of one metre up or down per kilometre.
- Before the Olympics, there are many 'trials' qualifying events, where runners must meet standards before they can enter the Olympic marathon.
- After a five minute warning, the race starts.
- Runners have a transponder or 'chip' in their shoe which means that the exact time between the runner crossing the starting and finishing lines is measured electronically.
- The race normally finishes in the Olympic stadium, but often starts outside.
- On the route there are signs telling the runners how far they have run.
- Every 5 km there are official refreshment stations where the runners can eat or drink. In between the refreshment stations there are drinking or sponging stations, where they can get water or a wet sponge.
- If somebody helps a runner, or if a runner leaves the course without permission, the runner is out of the race. They must also leave the race if one of the official medical team tells them to.

Wordsearch

Q	U	A	L	I	F	Y	I	N	G
S	W	Y	Z	C	U	Y	H	A	N
T	P	U	H	P	Y	O	X	N	S
F	R	O	T	U	N	V	W	D	T
U	H	I	N	M	I	L	E	S	A
I	V	R	A	G	E	C	C	C	T
X	M	X	K	L	E	K	Q	H	I
F	L	A	T	A	S	N	G	I	O
B	C	O	K	D	M	Z	P	P	N
U	V	S	T	A	D	I	U	M	S

Find these words in the grid: miles, flat, trials, chip, stadium, stations, sponge, qualifying



Marathon runners

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