

BLUE BERET

In the footsteps of Pheidippides: UNFICYP peacekeeper takes on Athens marathon

Being prepared and fit is a requirement if you are a soldier, so everyday exercise is a part of military life. For many soldiers, this comes in the form of running, and many of our own peacekeepers take advantage of the year-round pleasant weather in Cyprus to run as a way to keep fit and clear the mind.

For some, running has become more than just a way to keep fit, it has become a passion. This is the case for Slovak peacekeeper MSgt Rastislav Skuben, a member of the mission's elite Mobile Force Reserve unit. His passion for running has led him to run competitively, participating in five marathons before joining UNFICYP. When he decided to serve in Cyprus, he thought that it would be a good chance to fulfill his dream to run the classic marathon in Athens, following in the footsteps of the legendary Greek soldier Pheidippides, a messenger who ran from Marathon to Athens to deliver news of a military victory against the Persians at the Battle of Marathon.

On 13th November 2016, MSgt Skuben's dream came true when, together with more than 18,000 other runners, he ran the 42km marathon. Despite the tough profile of the race, which actually surprised him a little bit, he managed to reach the finish line in the Panathenaic Stadium, located at the site of an ancient stadium that for many centuries hosted games in which male athletes competed. He was delighted with his results, finishing in 472nd place overall and 104th in his age group with a final time of 03:18:14. Although he didn't beat his personal best, he was very satisfied with the result and thoroughly enjoyed participating in the event.

We congratulate MSgt Skuben on his success, and look forward to hearing more about his future athletic exploits. If you share the same passion for running, let's join him in the following upcoming event: Paphos half marathon, 27th November 2016 or Limassol marathon, 19 March 2017.

So, when Persia was dust, all cried, "To Acropolis!
Run, Pheidippides, one race more! The meed is thy due!
Athens is saved, thank Pan, go shout!" He flung down his shield
Ran like fire once more: and the space 'twixt the fennel-field
And Athens was stubble again, a field which a fire runs through,
Till in he broke: "Rejoice, we conquer!" Like wine through clay,
Joy in his blood bursting his heart, - the bliss!
An extract of the poem Pheidippides by Robert Browning



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