

AUSTRALIAN CENTURION DETAILS

33. **Yiannis Kouros (13/02/1956)**
22:55:23
19-20 September 1998
George Knott Athletic Field, Clifton Hill, Vic

Yiannis Kouros, born 13th February 1956 in Tripolis, Greece, holds every men's world running record from 100 miles to 1,000 miles and from 24 hours to 10 days. Starting his extraordinary ultra marathon running career with a series of wins in the classic Greek Spartathlon in the early eighties, he has been virtually unbeatable for nearly 30 years.

But it is not his wonderful running with which this article is concerned. In 1990 he migrated to Australia and was soon dominating the local running scene, just as he had done previously in Europe. Settling in Melbourne, he ran in a number of local 24 Hour events in which walkers were competing and dominated the Westfield Sydney to Melbourne classic until it was eventually stopped. But it was still a surprise when he rang me in September 1998 to ask about walking in our annual Centurion qualifying event at the George Knott Athletic Field in Clifton Hill.

With 6 overseas walkers competing, there were many talking points but perhaps the main one was whether Yiannis could convert from running to walking. He had never walked before and did not even bother with any preliminaries (well, rumour has it that he did 10 laps walking the day before the race to prepare for it). Such was his overall fitness and such was his self belief that he simply turned up on the day and started walking.

As the race progressed, any doubts were soon laid to rest. Using a brisk street walking action, he ticked off the miles and, without any breaks, passed the 100 mile mark in the time of 22:55:23 before continuing on to complete a total distance of 168.406 km.

He was the third of 5 new centurions in that memorable race and now carries the title of Australian Centurion number 33.



*Left: Yiannis Kouros in rare walking mode as he becomes Australian Centurion number 33 in 1998
Right: The finishers in 1998 - Roger Le Moine, John Harris, Yiannis, Gerald Manderson, Sue Clements and Nrm Morriss*

He confided at the time that this was one of the toughest ultras he had done but his effortless qualification says otherwise. He has had little to do with the club since then as he has continued to pursue his running interests and how he resides mainly in Europe. We are proud that he thought enough of our organisation to want to qualify and we are proud to have him as one of our members.

Tim Erickson
9 August 2011

As an addendum to the above article, Australian ultra race organiser and former AURA president Ian Cornelius posted the following in early 2019 to mark the 63rd birthday of the great Kouros.

For those who don't know, Yiannis is likely the Greatest Ultra Runner of All Time.

- He holds the world records for 24 hours (303.306 kms, Adelaide 1997), 48 hours, (473.496 kms, Surgeres, 1996) 6 days (1036 kms, Colac 2005, 1000 kms (5:16:17 Colac, 2005) and 1000 miles, (10:10:30, New York 1998).
- Only 7 runners have bettered 275kms in 24 hours. The other 6 have only done it once each. Yiannis has bettered 275 kms on no fewer than 15 occasions.
- Only 10 runners have bettered 420 kms in 48 hours. The other nine have done it once only. Yiannis has beaten 420 kms on 12 occasions.
- The 6 day race has seen 6 runners better 1,000 kms. The other 5 have done it once only and Yiannis has achieved it on 4 occasions from 4 attempts.
- He ran 1000 miles in 10:10:30 in New York in 1988. Next best is 11:13:54, by Petr Silkinas, Nanango, 1998. This was Yiannis' only 1000 mile race.
- He holds the Spartathlon (Athens to Sparti, 245 kms) record of 20:25 (1984.) Yiannis contested four Spartathlons for four wins and his performances, all from 30 years ago, remain the 4 fastest times in the 36 year history of the event.
- Surprisingly, Yiannis' time at the top was quite long. He ran his first 1000 kms plus 6 day race in 1984, his last some 21 years later, in 2005.
- His 100 kms time of 6:46:46 (Shepparton, 1996) is none too shabby either, being the 2nd fastest time on Australian soil, behind Tim Sloan's Australian record of 6:29 achieved in 1995. Interestingly, there has been no sub 7 hours on Australian soil since that time.

Happy birthday Yiannis. You have nothing left to achieve in ultra running. Enjoy your new-found love of Greek history and music and rest easy in your retirement from ultra running after such a brilliant career. We salute you.