



PHEIDIPPIDIES SUMMARY

The story is set during the Persian Wars.

After hearing that the Persians were invading the Athenians wanted to ask the Spartans for help. The weather was not good for sailing and the mountain road too stony for horses so it was decided that a runner would deliver the message.

A champion runner called Pheidippides was summoned from the gymnasium, where he was training for the Olympic Games, to deliver the message. Pheidippides took a bag of coins and a wool cloak and ran through the mountains and along the coast. Pheidippides kept running rarely stopping to sleep or drink.

After running for so long Pheidippides grew weary and he began to believe that he may die there on the mountain side and be eaten by vultures and wolves. Pheidippides prayed to the gods. Pheidippides became aware that someone was running alongside him keeping pace. He could hear trotting hoofs and saw a horn. Pheidippides had prayed to the god Pan and he had appeared to encourage him to carry on.

Pheidippides came down the mountain passing a goat on the way. Finally he reached the city after running 150 miles in two days. An ancient law however prevented the Spartans from performing any new business before the full moon. The full moon was another five days away and it would take the Spartans a further five days to travel. The Persians could be in Athens within a day and Pheidippides' running would have been for nothing.

The Spartans refused to change their customs, and, with heavy heart Pheidippides thought of home and his struggle to relay the message. Pheidippides now knew that he would never run at Olympia and be remembered as a victorious athlete. However the famous historian Herodotus recorded his run and his meeting with Pan in the mountains. Pheidippides ran back to fight in the battle of Marathon. He then ran back to Athens to give news of the victory. This is why a long run is called a Marathon even today.

