

# AIMS Honours Michel Bréal as Marathon's Founder Emeritus, Launches Global 'Marathon Day'

*"AIMS has funded the full restoration of Michel Bréal's grave and named him Founder Emeritus, launching September 15 as an annual global 'Marathon Day.'"*

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, September 8, 2026  
/EINPresswire.com/ -- September 15 the anniversary of the 1894 letter that created the modern marathon — becomes an annual global observance

The Association of International Marathons and Distance Races (AIMS) has funded the complete restoration of the grave of Michel Bréal at Montparnasse Cemetery in Paris, including a new memorial stone, ahead of a ceremony marking the work on Tuesday, 15 September 2026, from 14:00 to 15:00. The restoration was jointly organised by AIMS, ARTMARATHON, and the Michel Bréal Society. The date marks the anniversary of the letter Bréal wrote to Pierre de Coubertin proposing what became the marathon for the 1896 revival of the ancient Olympic Games — and, in the years since, the world's most widely run race distance.



Michel Bréal - Marathon Founder Emeritus

Bréal, a professor at the Collège de France and one of the leading classical philologists of his era, was not a runner or a sports official. He sat at Coubertin's right at the closing banquet of the Sorbonne Congress on June 23, 1894, where the modern Olympic Games were formally founded after nearly fifteen centuries of dormancy. On 15 September of that year, writing from a hotel room in Glion, Switzerland, he wrote to Coubertin:

"If you go to Athens, you might try to see if a race cannot be organised from Marathon to the Pnyx. That would have an antique flavour... As for me, I request the honour of donating the 'Marathon Cup.'"

— Michel Bréal, letter to Pierre de Coubertin, 15 September 1894

Coubertin embraced the idea. The 1896 Athens programme listed a “running event called ‘Marathon,’” and Bréal personally commissioned and funded the winner’s silver trophy from a Paris jeweler. It was awarded to Spyridon Louis, a Greek substitute runner who became the first Greek Olympic champion. The trophy remained in the Louis family for over a century before selling at Christie’s in London on April 18, 2012, for £541,250, and was acquired by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation to remain on public display in Greece.

Bréal died in 1915 and was buried at Montparnasse Cemetery. His grave had fallen into disrepair, prompting the Michel Bréal Society, formed to preserve his legacy, to seek support from the international athletics community in collaboration with ARTMARATHON. AIMS had previously contributed to routine maintenance of the grave in 2012; this year’s commitment is significantly larger in scope, funding a full restoration and new memorial stone rather than upkeep alone. In recognition of his singular role in creating the event, AIMS is conferring on Bréal the honorary designation of “Founder Emeritus” — the first time this title has been awarded.



1896 Cup won by Spyridon Louis in the inaugural Olympic Marathon

“

AIMS honours the historical origins of the marathon and works to ensure Michel Bréal's legacy is permanently acknowledged, celebrated every year through a global 'Marathon Day' on September 15th.”

*Paco Borao, President, AIMS*

“AIMS honours the historical origins of the marathon and works to ensure that Michel Bréal's legacy is permanently acknowledged. Therefore, it is our intention to celebrate a global ‘Marathon Day’ every year on September 15th.”  
— Paco Borao, President, AIMS

With this year’s ceremony, AIMS intends to establish 15 September as an annual global “Marathon Day” going forward. The programme includes welcome remarks from Paco Borao; Prof. Heinz-Helmut Lüger, President of the Michel Bréal Society; and a representative from the Office of the Mayor of Paris. Henrietta Parsons, Bréal’s great-

great-granddaughter, will deliver a family tribute. Keynote remarks follow from Alexander Kitroeff, Professor Emeritus of History at Haverford College, on the marathon’s significance to modern Greece, and from Horst Milde, founder of the Berlin Marathon, on Bréal’s influence on that race. The ceremony will be moderated by Benedikt Morandi, ARTMARATHON president, and Hans W. Giessen, deputy chairman of the Michel Bréal Society, followed by a press conference

and a viewing of the restored tomb.

AIMS, which represents 470 of the world's leading marathons and distance races across over 120 countries, has long championed recognition of the sport's history. Michel Bréal's contribution — inventing an event without ever competing in one — remains one of the most distinctive founding stories in modern sport.

### About AIMS

The Association of International Marathons and Distance Races (AIMS) is a global association of the world's leading marathons and distance races, dedicated to promoting distance running and the friendship among peoples that it fosters. Founded in 1982, AIMS now includes members in over 120 countries. In recognition of his singular contribution to the sport, Michel Bréal is being honored by AIMS with the designation of "Founder Emeritus." Learn more at [aims-worldrunning.org](https://aims-worldrunning.org).

### Note to Editors

This ceremony follows Landau, Germany — Bréal's birthplace — launching its own annual Bréal-Marathon in October 2024, driven by the Michel Bréal Society. A press conference will follow the Paris ceremony from 3:00–3:30 PM, with access to the restored tomb for photos and video. High-resolution images and archival material on Michel Bréal are available upon request. A French-language version of this release is available for distribution to French media.

Jon Boka

One Global Mile

+1 917-520-8953

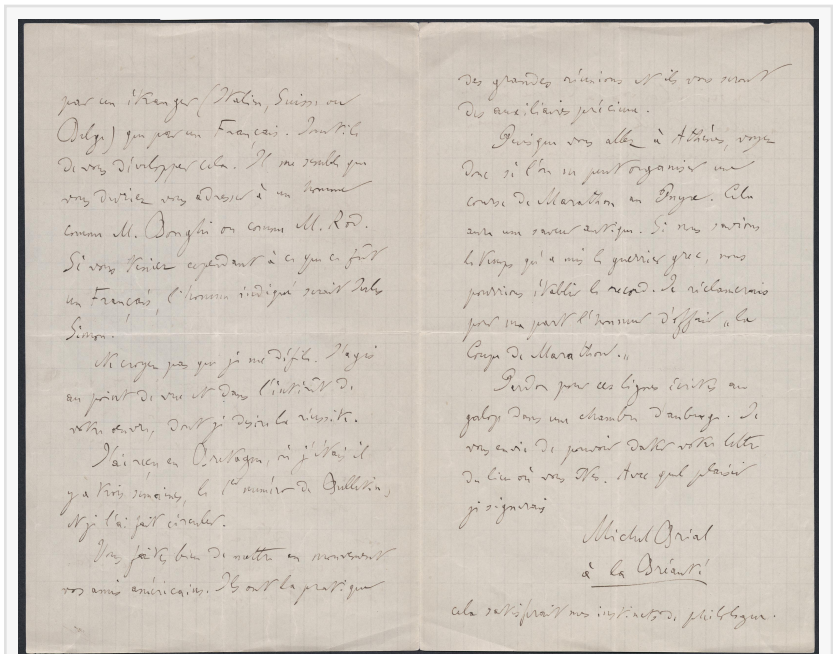
[email us here](#)

Visit us on social media:

[LinkedIn](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Other](#)



Letter from Michel Bréal proposing the marathon race, 15 September 1894. Courtesy of the Olympic Museum Lausanne.

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/937056121>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something

we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2026 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.