



Summary :

Club Apollo was established in Smyrna in 1891 by members of Club Orpheus. It started as a philharmonic club. The athletic section was established in 1893 and finally prevailed, thus giving the club an athletic character. In the early 20th century the club started to hold games in Smyrna with the participation of athletes of Smyrna and other Greek and foreign clubs. The turning point in the history of the club was the establishment of the football section in 1910, which introduced the particular sport to the city. In 1922 the club was transferred to Athens.

Date

1891 - today

Geographical Location

Smyrna, Athens

1. Establishment

Apollo (Greek: Απόλλων) was established in Smyrna. It was formed by members of the Club Orpheus (Greek: Ορφεύς) of [Smyrna](#), established in 1890, whose main purpose was to develop musical education and promote physical education.¹

The abovementioned members withdrew from Orpheus and established a philharmonic club called Apollo in 1891. Among the original members are two eminent figures of the local society, Emmanuil Samios and [metropolitan Chrysostomos](#).

At first, the members of the new club held concerts, poetic evenings and, in general, philological events with the participation of important Greek scholars of Smyrna.

The athletic section of the club was established in the late 1893. The original members of the club decided that the uniforms of the athletes of the newly established Apollo would be white and light blue (the colours of the national flag of the Greek state), thus emphasising the connection with the Greek element of the city.

The new athletes of the club participated in the first games of Smyrna in 1894 held by English sports fans of [Burnova](#). The performances and distinctions they achieved in the games extremely impressed the spectators. The most famous athlete of Apollo at the time was the subsequent Olympic champion Theologos Anastasoglou. The particular games were held uninterruptedly until 1903 with the continuous participation of Apollo's athletes.

The board of the Apollo Sporting Club of Smyrna was elected in 1894, as reported in the Articles of the club, which were undersigned by metropolitan Chrysostomos. The board consisted of the president Matthaios Provatopoulos and the members T. Vatidis, I. Koulambidis, G. Sofianopoulos, G. Oikonomidis, A. Koulambidis and T. Papadimitriou.

The three runners became the emblem of the club in the same year, while an excursion section was established. The members of this section organised excursions to archaeological sites and other cities of Asia Minor with the



participation of several inhabitants of Smyrna and foreign scholars and travellers being in the city at the time.²

2. Premises

A major development took place when the privately owned court of the club was constructed in 1894. Although at first the particular place was used by the athletes of the club, in the course of time games were held with the participation of athletes of other clubs of the area.

The first attempts to create essentially equipped athletic facilities in the city of Smyrna are of particular interest.

Around 1880 Ioannis Damvergis, Apostolos Psaltos, Stefanos Papamichail and I. Makroulidis, all students at the [Evangelical School](#) (Evangeliki Scholi) at the time, created a small and rudimentary gymnasium in an open-air space in the area of Bella Vista. They called this temporary gymnasium 'the ground of love.' They used their hands to dig ditches and enclosed it with plain ropes as they had no money for sturdy constructions. After a long time and following a period of careful use of money, the gymnasium was equipped with its first horizontal bar and later with other gymnastics apparatuses. It became the training place for the young of Smyrna, who paid a very small amount of money as fee. I. Makroulidis was appointed as the treasurer and administrator of the money. The main aim was the collection of the largest possible amount of money for the purchase of gymnastics apparatuses that would cover the needs of the increasing number of young from the area, who went to the particular gymnasium to train. Many famous athletes of the club, who later did particularly well in both local and foreign athletic meetings, first trained at this gymnasium of Apollo. Therefore, there is good reason why the protagonist of the activities that led to the creation of this place, Ioannis Damvergis, was called 'the grandfather of Apollo' by the members of the club.

In the following years Apollo Sporting Club of Smyrna moved to an area opposite the Greek Orphanage, while later a bigger and more modern gymnasium was built in the neighbourhood of St. Tryphon, quite near the famous theatre "Terpsithea".³

3. Hosting and Participating in Games

In 1901 Apollo of Smyrna hosted the first boat races of Smyrna with the participation of the other important club of the city, [Panionios Sporting Club](#). Some years later (1906), another club, Pelopas, started to participate in these games. It was a club based at Melantia (Karataş) and established by Omiros Onasis, uncle of Aristotelis Onassis. Omiros Onasis was one of those who promoted boxing in Smyrna.

In 1904 the club took over from the English the task of hosting the athletic games of Burnova. In order to cover the needs of the games, the stadium of Burnova was restored by the architect B. Littis. The restoration included the construction of a 400-metre race-course to host the races as well as terraces for 6,000 spectators.

On 6 and 8 May 1904 the first Apollonian Games were held at the stadium of Burnova. They included several events, mainly classical athletics. The club attempted to hold games similar to the Panionian games, which was the reason for an unofficial conflict between Apollo and Panionios. What is more, the opening of the new athletic meeting was accompanied by the withdrawal of Apollo from the Panionian Games.

Apart from the athletes of Apollo, the Apollonian Games were held with the participation of athletes of the Burnova Sporting Club and the Athletic Union of Smyrna. The members of the club managed the games to be held under the auspices of the prefect of Smyrna Kâmil Paşa. This move was made so that the contribution of the particular games to the development of the local athletic activities could be emphasised and the club could become more important to local athletic activities.

The games committee consisted of eminent figures of local society, such as S. Solomonidis, Ch. Athanasoulas, X. Dimas and K. Kotzias. The jury included the president of the club Nikos Stavridis.



On the opening day of the first Apollonian Games all athletes marched accompanied by the band of Apollo, which was conducted by I. Manglis. The events included classical sports (races, jumps and throws) as well as bag races – a sport that proved very popular. When the games ended, the athletes and lots of fans, always accompanied by the band of the club, went to the railway station of Burnova and got on a special train to Smyrna. There was also a torchlight procession from Basmahane Station to the offices of the club at Bella Vista.

The Apollonian Games continued to be held in the following ten years. They were held with the participation of famous athletes of Smyrna as well as athletes of Greek and foreign clubs from other cities.⁴

4. The Conflict between Panionios and Apollo

The conflict between the two clubs, which worsened when Apollo withdrew from the Panionian Games, resulted from the controversy over the precedence in the athletic matters of Smyrna.

The conflict was provoked when the members of Apollo challenged the seniority of Panionios. In particular, they claimed that Panionios, from the day it was established under the name Orpheus (1890) and for many subsequent years, was actually an artistic club, while only after its union with the Gymnasium (1898) it became a sporting club. In contrast, they claimed, Apollo was a sporting club since it was established and, as a result, it was older than Panionios.

On the strength of the above arguments, the board of Apollo claimed that the Panionian Games should be organised by both clubs, which was not accepted by the board of Panionios.

However, the two clubs had a similar history and common problems until the events of 1922 and after their forced transfer to Greece.

In 1904 the athletes of Apollo and Panionios represented the city of Smyrna in the Panhellenic Games held in Athens. A lot of athletes of both clubs achieved good performances in various events.

The two clubs of Smyrna participated in the games held two years later in an attempt to strengthen their relations. The members of Apollo tried to replace the Apollonian and the Panionian Games of Smyrna with a new meeting, the Games of all Asia Minor. However, the attempt was fruitless.

The same year (1906) some athletes of the club participated in the so-called interim Olympic Games of Athens. A historic moment in the history of the club was when two of its athletes, Theologos Anastasoglou and Matthaïos Despotopoulos won the pentathlon at the Olympic Games.

5. The Football Section

1910 was a momentous year in the history of Apollo: the football section of the club was established that year.

The operation of this section made football popular as a sport among several young people of the city and the wider region. From then on and until the events of the 1920s the football team played lots of matches against other teams of the region (Panionios, Railway Union and the Armenian Club) as well as against the crews of the ships anchored in the harbour of Smyrna.

The last title of the local champion of Smyrna was won by the football team of Apollo in 1922 (the team of Apollo won the local championship from 1917 to 1922), shortly before the tragic events of that year. Two of the football players of that team, G. Marselos and P. Chrysoulis, were captured during the events. The members of the board, A. and G. Kyrou, as well as the athletics coach K. Persis, suffered the same fate.

As for the matches against foreign crews, they were considered international meetings and were very important for the football of that



period. It is worth mentioning the victories of Apollo against the crews of the Austrian battleship Viridus in 1911 and the English Messenger in 1918.

Finally, at the 1920 Olympic Games in Antwerp the Greek national football team included several players of the club, which indicated the efficient operation of the football section.⁵

6. Apollo in Greece

After the events of 1922 several members of the club, whether they were in the board or not, and lots of athletes found refuge in Greece. The first place used for the needs of the refugee club was the area around the columns of Olympian Zeus. However, not before long, in 1923, Apollo was accommodated in facilities in the area of Rouf, where it was reestablished.⁶

On the initiative of the then president D. Marselos, emphasis was given on the development of the football section, which was achieved because the club had made its presence felt in Greek football things already from the 1920s. The emblem of the club was the swastika, the ancient symbol later identified with Nazi Germany, when it was adopted as a symbol of the Third Reich.

In the same period some members of Apollo proposed the union with the two other refugee clubs, Panionios and Pelopas. According to them, the three united clubs could form a powerful sporting club that would represent the Greek element of Asia Minor. The name proposed for this club was Athletic Smyrna Union. Finally, neither the members of Panionios nor those of Pelopas accepted the proposal.⁷

From 1948 on the activities of the club have been taking place at the stadium of Rizoupoli, which is the home of the football team. The head of Apollo, the ancient Greek god, is the emblem of the club. What is more, the club, whose name had been Apollo of Athens for the previous decades, was again named Apollo of Smyrna some years ago.

The operation of the football section of Apollo at a professional level has not inhibited the remarkable attempt of the club to create amateur sporting sections, which contribute to the development and promotion of sports.

1. About the history of Orpheus, see Σολομωνίδης, Χ. - Λωρέντης, Ν., *Πανιώνιος Γυμναστικός Σύλλογος* (Athens 1967), pp. 19-27.

2. About the establishment of the club, see Σολομωνίδης, Χ., *Της Σμύρνης* (Athens 1957), p. 168.

3. Σολομωνίδης, Χ., *Της Σμύρνης* (Athens 1957), pp. 170, 178.

4. Σολομωνίδης, Χ., *Της Σμύρνης* (Athens 1957), p. 172.

5. Κουσούνελος, Γ., *Η ιστορία του Απόλλωνα Σμύρνης* (in electronic format), see webliography.

6. About the arrival in Athens, see Λινάρδος, Π., "Σεπτέμβρης 1922: Όταν η αθλητική φλόγα της Σμύρνης μεταλαμπαδεύεται στην Αθήνα" newspaper *Απολλωνιστής*, issue 8 (July – September 2001), pp. 4-5.

7. Σολομωνίδης, Χ., *Της Σμύρνης* (Athens 1957), p. 181.



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	Σολομωνίδης Χ., <i>Της Σμύρνης</i> , Αθήνα 1957

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