



**PRESS RELEASE**  
For 23 April 2018

## **Thirty years since the longest human-powered flight in history**

Lausanne, Switzerland, 19 April 2018 – **It is exactly 30 years on 23 April 2018 since Kanellos Kanellopoulos, a Greek cyclist who competed in the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles, functioned as human engine for the 1988 MIT Daedalus project, completing a 115.11km flight between the Greek islands of Crete and Santorini.**

His record-breaking flight – the longest human-powered flight in history – took 3 hours, 54 minutes, and began at 7am on 23 April 1988.

The super-fit cyclist used the power in his legs to fly Daedalus over 115km of open sea and set two FAI world records that still stand today.

Those records are for straight distance at 115.11km; and duration at 3hr 54m 59s.

### The MIT Daedalus Project

Daedalus was a unique, human-powered aircraft designed and flown by a team at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1988.

Powered by a 3m propeller and weighing just 31kg, Daedalus required an extreme fit pilot, as the propeller was turned by leg-power alone.

The team's aim was to echo the flight of Daedalus from Ancient Greek mythology and fly between the islands of Crete and Santorini – a distance of more than 100km.

In the myth of Daedalus, Daedalus and his son Icarus are held captive on the island of Crete. To escape, Daedalus builds wings, and together they fly across the Mediterranean.

Overcome with the beauty of flight, Icarus flies too close to the sun, melting the wax that holds his wings together and plunging into the sea. Daedalus, on the other hand, maintains steady progress and reaches Sicily and freedom.

### Kanellopoulos' historic 1988 flight

Kanellopoulos was one of five top-level cyclists who were part of the 40-strong MIT team, and was "on shift" when the perfect weather needed for the flight appeared.

He spent four hours powering the ultra-lightweight human-powered plane through the air – the "energy equivalent" of cycling for six hours at 37km/h (23mph).

Flying low, he was accompanied by a flotilla of boats, including a patrol boat from the Greek Navy, two coastguard cutters, two media boats, a command boat and three inflatables.

The flight of the Daedalus was a remarkable and historic event in aviation history.

Ahead of its time, it used cutting-edge materials, some of the finest engineering brains of the time, and the fittest cyclists, to prove that human-powered flight was possible.

A plaque commemorating the record-breaking flight was unveiled on Friday 10 June 2016 on the Greek Air Force base in Heraklion, on the northern coast of Crete, Greece's largest island.

It marks the spot where the plane took off on its record-setting journey.

### **Editor's Notes**

Duration record file: [www.fai.org/record/kanellos-kanellopoulos-gre-384](http://www.fai.org/record/kanellos-kanellopoulos-gre-384)

Straight distance record file: [www.fai.org/record/kanellos-kanellopoulos-gre-385](http://www.fai.org/record/kanellos-kanellopoulos-gre-385)

Pictures: [bit.ly/kanellopoulos](http://bit.ly/kanellopoulos)

### **About FAI**

The [Fédération Aéronautique Internationale \(FAI\)](http://www.fai.org), also known as the World Air Sports Federation, is the world governing body for air sports and for certifying world aviation and space records. The FAI was founded in 1905 and is a non-governmental and non-profit-making organisation recognised by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

FAI activities include Aerobatics, Aeromodelling, Airships, Amateur-Built and Experimental Aircraft, Balloons, Drones, Gliding, Hang Gliding, Helicopters, Manpowered Flying, Microlights, Parachuting, Paragliding, Paramotors, Power Flying and all other Aeronautic and Astronautic sporting activities.

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