

Liverpool Olympic Torch Bearer



Greece's Scouse swim star
Carries torch for Liverpool



Spyros won Gold in the 10Km & Silver in the 5Km at the
2011 FINA World Open Water Championships at the
Jinshan City Beach in Shanghai, China.

MERSEY MISSION: Gianniotis is desperate to win gold for Greece - and Liverpool

THE first person to carry the Olympic torch as it starts its journey from Greece to London this week is a Greek swimmer who has shared with Inside Sport his dream of winning gold for his birthplace - Merseyside.

Spyros Gianniotis, 32, is currently the world's best open water swimmer and will almost certainly start as favourite for the 10km Olympic race on Friday, August 10, in the Serpentine in Hyde Park.

While any medal he wins will count as one for Greece, where he has spent most of his life, Liverpool can also claim reflected glory.

Gianniotis's mother, Brenda, is from Anfield. He himself was born in Liverpool and spent his first four years there. His grandmother, Olive, still lives on the edge of Stanley Park, 500 yards from Liverpool's ground. She is a huge Liverpool fan, as is Gianniotis since early boyhood. 'I grew up in Greece and I'm Greek, but I'm half-English and I have always loved Liverpool,' he told me this week, speaking with a Greek accent and a Scouse twang.

'I am proud to be Greek, and proud that my mum is British. I believe I can make the podium in London, and to reach the podium in the country of my birth and in my mother's country, at the close of my career, would be an amazing moment.'

'The Olympic flame was lit on Thursday 10th May in, the home of the ancient Games, and Gianniotis will carry the torch for the first part of its trip across Greece to Athens, from where Games organisers will bring it to Britain.

His mother met his Greek dad, Denis, on holiday. They married and lived in Liverpool for years, then settled in Corfu. 'From the day my dad took me to Liverpool's trophy room when I was about four, I've been a Red,' says Gianniotis.

'We've always been regular visitors to Liverpool. I love the atmosphere, the people and the history of the football club. You should hear me talking to my Nan, then my Scouse accent really comes out.'

The City of Liverpool SC has links with the Gianniotis family as the younger brother trained with the City Squad Program whilst he was on holiday in Liverpool and visiting family for a number of years. Ben trained with the Age Group 1 Squad at the IM Marsh College Pool.

The City of Liverpool is also proud of 4 of its current swimmers who will be carrying the torch on its way to London in different parts of the country.