

Greek sprinter Gousis denies doping charges

A Greek sprinter who failed a dope test days before the Beijing Olympics told a prosecutor on Tuesday he was not aware he was being given performance-enhancing drugs.

Tassos Gousis, 29, said he and disgraced 2004 Olympic champion Fani Halkia had presented a case against unknown individuals for putting their life in danger by administering the drugs without their knowledge, court officials said.

"Gousis said he didn't know anything about the supplements he was taking and that no athlete would put his career at risk days before the Olympics," a court official, who declined to be named, told Reuters.

Gousis had been due to compete in the 200 metres at last month's Games but failed a test conducted by the Greek anti-doping agency and had to return from

a pre-Olympic training camp in Japan.

Halkia, who won the 400-metres hurdles at the Athens Olympics, tested positive in Beijing for the steroid methyltrienolone (M3) in the highest-profile setback for the Greek team.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has presented a lawsuit against Halkia's coach, George Panagiotopoulos, who appeared before the prosecutor last week and said she had never deliberately taken performance-enhancing steroids.

Greece has launched an investigation of Greek anti-doping law violations after 19 of its athletes tested positive in the run-up to the Beijing Games.

It had more athletes banned than medals won -- two silvers and two bronze.

The prosecutor is expected to call Halkia and her coach to testify later this week, after their lawyer asked for an extension.



Trial on Alex Continues

The hearing on Alex trial continues for the four day Tuesday. The two children's mother of Greek descent concluded her testimony in the morning and then the Romanian minor's mother began testifying. Only of three of the five accused were present at the Thessaloniki minors' court were present, as after the minor from northern Epirus the Albanian minor also abstains from the trial, as he argues he had been threatened by the friends of the accused. Alex's mother Natela concluded her testimony Monday and is now attending the hearing.



Greek government teeters after aide's firing

ATHENS: The Greek government teetered on the brink of collapse Tuesday after the beleaguered conservative prime minister, Kostas Karamanlis, dismissed one of his deputies for criticizing the administration's handling of a string of scandals.

The move, intended to rein in dissent within the New Democracy Party ranks, left the conservatives with a one-seat majority in the 300-seat Parliament.

Karamanlis expelled the lawmaker, Stavros Dailakis, hours after he had lambasted some of the prime minister's closest aides, including the chief of staff and government spokesman, for their role



in the scandals.

Since winning re-election last year, New Democracy has had a mere 2-seat majority in Parliament. That majority shrank to one on Tuesday when Dailakis refused to relinquish his seat in Parliament and declared himself an independent lawmaker.

"I asked him to honor his stated intentions of resigning his seat, but he refused," said Manolis Tragakis, secretary general

of New Democracy, shortly after meeting with Dailakis.

Had the renegade lawmaker agreed to resign, his seat would have been filled by another New Democracy member, and the party would have retained its 152 seats in Parliament.

The events Tuesday were the latest embarrassment for the government, which has seen its popularity plummet amid scandals ranging from questionable

real estate deals between the state and a monastery, to the conviction of a senior government aide for attempting to harbor a criminal in a major drug-dealing case.

Last week, Karamanlis moved to stamp out dissent within his ranks by publicly challenging critics to either topple his government or fall silent.

Dailakis defied the call, telling a televised news program late Monday that the prime minister should sack his chief of staff, Yannis Angelou, and the government spokesman, Theodore Roussopoulos.

"Karamanlis is like a first-class race horse, only his stable-masters aren't allowing him to run as he wants," Dailakis told the private Extra channel in Athens, charging that the prime minister is dominated by his aides.

Dailakis reiterated his stinging review Tuesday, apologizing also to the Greek voters for the government's "failure in solving serious issues."

Recent opinion polls have shown the opposition Socialist party, PASOK, taking the lead in voter preference for the first time in eight years, feeding speculation of a government reshuffle or a snap election as early as next year.

Fashion forward

Designers and fashion aficionados will be converging in Athens on October 7 and 12 to partake in the 8th Athens Collection Fashion week. As the event has continued to grow in scope and importance, organizers for the first time will hold the event at Technopolis --sponsored by Vodafone. The whole event is under the aegis of the City of Athens. Some of the Greek designers that will be present showcasing their Spring/Summer 2009 collections include: Angelos Bratis, Andria, Aslanis, Christoforos Kotentos, Daphne Valente, Dimitris Dassios, Filep Motwary, Frida Karadima, Katerina Alexandraki, Katerina Karoussos, Kathy Heyndels, Maria Mastori, Mi-Ro, Nikos-Takis, Parthenis, Vassilis Zoulias, Victoria Kyriakides, Vrettos Vrettakos, Yiannos Xenis and Yiorgos Eleftheriades.

There will be a number of international designers present as well. If in Athens, be sure to check out the Night Boutique that will be part of the Fashion week, which will include items for sale by local designers.