

Mt Olympus to the second phase of the New 7 Wonders of Nature campaign

Mt Olympus, the mountain of the 12 Gods of ancient Greek mythology, is the only Greek "monument of nature" that made it to the second phase of the New7Wonders of Nature online campaign, being among the 261 national and multinational nominations that qualified and are now competing

for a place among the top 77.

The Greek nominees included the Meteora Rock Mountains, the island of Santorini and the Petrified Forest on the island of Lesbos.

In the first phase of the campaign roughly 100 million people voted worldwide. Larissa Prefecture, in cen-

tral Greece, on the occasion of the second vote that will last until July 7, 2009 called on all the people of Larissa and its expatriates to mobilize and support the Mt Olympus nomination.

The top-voted nominees will be considered by the New 7 Wonders Panel of Experts. A shortlist of 21 selected

candidates will be announced in July 2009 and will go forward to the next stage of voting. Voting for the New 7 Wonders of Nature as chosen by popular vote from the 21 finalist candidates will continue throughout 2010 and into 2011 when the official New 7 Wonders of Nature will be declared.

Baghdatis on road to rediscovery

THE only clue to this being the same player who thrilled Melbourne on previous visits was the self-deprecating charm and infectious laugh.

Based on tennis, or even physical appearance, there was no evidence. Gone is the long hair, and seemingly the game that had young Cypriot Marcos Baghdatis adopted by Melbourne — and more particularly, the local Greek community — three years ago when he made the final, and then last year's epic loss to Lleyton Hewitt in the early hours of the morning.

At the AAMI Classic at Kooyong yesterday Baghdatis could only impose upon Swiss opponent Stan Wawrinka for a humble four games in the straight-sets loss. He played, well, terribly. A week after being crunched in the first round in Brisbane, he was wiped at Kooyong.

"What can I say? I didn't play very good, that's all I can say. I wasn't here today — I don't know where I was — and that's all. Stan played a great match. He was serving pretty good, he was making winners whenever he needed to, so that's all I can say. I can't say anything more."

Baghdatis is coming off a wretched year when injuries meant he only played in 12 tournaments and his ranking slipped to 100. He battled with a stress fracture of his wrist and then had severe back problems that forced him to retire from three different matches.

He almost expected to be injured each time he



walked on court. Even last week in Brisbane, it was a thigh injury that hampered him.

"Physically I feel OK. I'll have another hit this afternoon. It's a bit disappointing, you know, coming here playing a match like that, not only for me but for the crowd too, and for Stan too, but that's the way it is. I'm sorry, and I hope I can win after tomorrow and play better and have some time on court," he said.

One of Baghdatis' rationales for playing Kooyong was that he would be guaranteed at least two solid matches against quality opponents. It seems a wise decision.

"Every time now I wake up and I feel some pain I'm scared, you know, so I need to get some confidence in me, in my game, in my body, and I think it can take time. So I'm trying now not to put pressure on me. I'm trying to just go out there and have some fun like today — no, I'm joking, not like today — and just get some confidence in my body and my mind.

"I have been working on physical, I have been working a lot on my body last month-and-a-half, basically, and then the serve and some strokes."

His past results in Melbourne give him confidence that he can find his rhythm here and establish the momentum his season will need to be able to get his ranking back into the top 10 (he spent 13 weeks at No. 8 in 2006).

"It gives me confidence. Not only the final in Melbourne but my whole career I have had great results here, and that's why I want to play tennis. I don't accept being 97 in the world or 100. I want to be back in the top 10, and that's what I think every day, and that's why I am doubting in myself, which is good to do sometimes, to have doubts in yourself. So I'm just looking to find a way to come back in the top 10. Like I said before, it will take time. I don't know how much time it will take, but I am ready to do anything to get back."

Wawrinka, the world No. 16, was clinical in his dismissal of Baghdatis yesterday, deliberate and powerful. He has a strong serve and forceful ground strokes, particularly on his backhand.

Greece expects Russian gas today

Greece expects Russian gas supplies by the end of the week, with the shortfall until then covered from other sources, the chief executive of natural gas operator DEPA told Reuters. Russia started pumping gas destined for Europe earlier on Tuesday for the first time in nearly a week after a contract dispute between Kiev and Moscow left Europeans struggling for gas supplies as winter set in.

Gas accounts for about 20 percent of Greece's energy needs.

"Russian authorities have informed us that gas started flowing to the Balkans at 10 am (0800 GMT) this morning, but it has not arrived yet," DEPA CEO Makis Papageorgiou told Reuters. "We expect it to get here in about three days, but not before Friday."

"Tomorrow we will be updated on the situation and will have a better idea of when it will arrive in

Greece," Papageorgiou said. "It certainly won't be a full delivery as the transit pipeline has emptied, so the arrival will be gradual."

He said households and industries did not face problems with supply, adding that Greece could cover domestic demand until the end of January from programmed purchases of liquefied natural gas (LNG) which is transported by sea. "We would be happy even if they give us half the amount we usually get for the time being. But even if not, we don't foresee any problems because of already scheduled purchases of LNG from Algeria and elsewhere," Papageorgiou said. Greece usually needs about 9 million cubic metres of gas daily for customers. It imports about 5-6 million cubic metres a day from Russia, via Ukraine, Moldova, Romania and Bulgaria.

It also imports gas from Turkey

after an agreement between DEPA and Turkey's BOTAS, which gets its gas from Azerbaijan, as well as from an LNG plant in Greece.

On Tuesday Greek Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis spoke with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin on the issue.

"Karamanlis expressed the hope that Putin will do everything possible to find a solution on the issue and secure Russian supplies to Europe in general and Greece in particular," government spokesman Evangelos Antonaros told reporters.

Earlier on Tuesday Bulgaria's state gas monopoly Bulgargaz said it was informed by Gazprom's Balkan distribution unit that no Russian gas was flowing via Ukraine to southeast Europe and accused Ukraine of siphoning off the gas for its own use.

Ukraine blamed a lack of coordination for hampering the flow.

SYROS TRAGEDY

Baby drowns when migrant boat capsizes off Dodecanese island

An 18-month-old baby drowned off the island of Syros yesterday when a boat carrying 19 illegal immigrants capsized, said the Merchant Marine Ministry. A coast guard patrol boat had spotted the smaller vessel shortly before it capsized. Coast guard officers were able to rescue 13 men, two women, two children and a Turkish man suspected of being a human trafficker. The baby was also pulled out from the water but was pronounced dead at a local health center.