

Two Olympic Sprinters and Ten Other Defendants Acquitted Of Perjury Related To Alleged Fake Motorcycle Accident

Olympic sprinters Costas Kenteris and Katerina Thanou, and ten other defendants have been acquitted by a Greek appeals court of perjury related to the sprinters alleged faking of a motorcycle accident the day before the start of the 2004 Olympics in Athens, Greece.

Kenteris won the gold medal in the 200 meters at the 2000 Sydney Olympics and Thanou, his training partner, was the silver medalist in the 100 meters at Sydney. They were among the most well-known athletes in Greece, and there were high expectations for them to win gold medals at the Athens Olympic games.

Kenteris, 31, and Thanou, 29, missed a mandatory drug test at the Olympic Village on August 12, 2004, and their whereabouts were not known until it was reported they were at Athens' KAT hospital being treated for injuries suffered in a motorcycle accident that occurred hours after they missed the drug tests.

The hospital issued a statement that Kenteris suffered from a lesion to the head and Thanou had bruises on her abdomen, right thigh, and the adductors of her right leg.

Olympic officials were not sympathetic and put pressure on them to withdraw from the Games because it was the third drug test in a month they had missed.

Kenteris and Thanou publicly denounced accusations that they had staged the accident as an excuse for missing their drug tests that they said they had not been notified about. However, six days later and before competition for their events had begun, Kenteris and Thanou announced [their withdrawal](#) from the Olympics "in the interests of the country" after a hearing before the Disciplinary Commission of the IOC. They also announced they were ending their coaching relationship with Christos Tzekos. It was reported at the time that the IOC gave them the choice of voluntarily withdrawing or being expelled.

After a preliminary police report raised questions about the motorcycle accident, Greek prosecutors initiated a full-scale investigation of the accident, and obtained

search warrants for Kenteris and Thanou's medical records and their homes, and for Tzekos' business.

On August 26 a witness who told police he saw the accident and that Kenteris and Thanou were thrown from their motorcycle, was arrested on suspicion of making a false statement.

In November 2004 perjury charges were filed against Kenteris, Thanou, Tzekos, seven state hospital doctors, and two people who said they witnessed the accident. The prosecutors alleged that Kenteris, Thanou, and Tzekos faked the motorcycle accident and lied about it to the police, that the doctors lied about treating Kenteris and Thanou for their injuries, and that the two witnesses lied about witnessing the accident.

All twelve co-defendants were scheduled to go on trial in January 2007 but it was delayed.



Costas Kenteris

Thanou qualified [in July 2008](#) as a member of Greece's 2008 Olympic squad in the 100 meters. However, on August 9, 2008 the executive board of the IOC voted to bar her from competing under rule 23.2.1 that allows preventing an athlete from competing who is thought to be guilty of improper conduct or bringing the games into disrepute.

In December 2009 the [IOC announced](#) that Thanou wouldn't be awarded the gold medal stripped from Marion Jones for her admission to using steroids during the 2000 Olympics, even though there were no allegations that Thanou cheated during the Sydney Olympic Games.

The trial finally began on January 21, 2011. The [prosecution's case](#) was based on their claim that "there is no evidence that there was an accident."

Although the defendants introduced ex-rays and blood records during the trial that showed Kenteris and Thanou were treated for injuries, all twelve were convicted of perjury on May 10, 2011. Tzekos was also convicted of importing, possessing and trading banned sports substances.

Kenteris and Thanou's 31 month prison sentences were conditionally suspended,



Katerina Thanou
(www.thanou.gr)

the doctors and witnesses were given sentences ranging from 6 to 15 months in prison that were conditionally suspended, and Tzekos' 33 month prison sentence was conditionally suspended.

The defendants appealed, and on September 6, 2011 a [Greek appeals court](#) acquitted all 12 co-defendants of perjury. The appeals court ruled there was insufficient evidence to determine beyond a reasonable doubt that the crash had not taken place, and hence that any of the 12 defendants had not told the truth.

Tzekos other convictions were affirmed, but his sentenced was reduced to 12 months in prison suspended for 3 years.

During the 1999 World Championships in Seville, Spain, Thanou set the Greek national 100 meter record that still stands: 10.83 seconds. Thanou's website is, http://www.thanou.gr/profile_en.htm

During the 2002 European Championships in Munich, Germany, Kenteris set the Greek national 200 meter record that still stands: 19.85 seconds.

Thanou and Kenteris never failed a drug test, and since they were legally cleared of faking the motorcycle accident, they could possibly sue Greek national and international sporting organizations for the destruction of their careers.

Sources:

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