



# MacCanDo Tenderloin Youth Track Club

by Brian Murphy

IF PRESSED TO EXPLAIN THE ESSENCE OF THE MACCANDO TENDERLOIN YOUTH TRACK CLUB, founder and coach Robert McDaniels need go no farther than the story of Enrique, an eighth grader who struggled to avoid finishing last in every sport he tried.

From an at-risk family like all the kids in McDaniels' track program, Enrique came to his coach one day and said: "Coach, I want to try the hurdles."

McDaniels, himself a conference champion hurdler at San Francisco State in 1984-85, had a simple response.

"Who am I to say you can't?" said McDaniels.

As McDaniels tells it, Enrique was the "littles thing on the field" and yet learned his craft through hard work to the point where he qualified to represent San Francisco's Tenderloin neighborhood in the Junior Olympics. Before the race, McDaniels described himself, "like a parent . . . I was shaking . . . I just kept reminding him: Enrique, you can't take three steps between hurdles, take the five steps . . ."

And when the gun sounded and Enrique started like a house on fire, he led the race. Unfortunately, he fell. But, in what McDaniels saw as the very fiber of his mission, Enrique got up and finished the race.

McDaniels surged with pride when Enrique came immediately over and told his coach: "I know exactly what happened, and why I fell and

now I know what to do next time."

And now, Enrique wants to even try pole vaulting, too.

The Olympic Club Foundation's grant to MacCanDo makes stories like these and so many others possible. As the recipient of a grant for the 2014 track season, MacCanDo Tenderloin Youth Track Club will now send more at-risk kids to the Junior Olympics, with travel costs and entry fees greatly aided by the grant.

"We have more positive energy coming in," McDaniels said of the Club's Foundation grant. "That right there, that grant, that allows parents and kids to be constantly motivated all year round.

"Because once they get structure all year round, the other negative entities don't have a chance to slip in and set their seeds."

McDaniels speaks with the enthusiasm of a man in his first year on the job, but he founded MacCanDo in 2004 based on a few key premises he believes in to this day. One, he wanted to use sports to give kids a better life than he had growing up in the hardscrabble neighborhood of Jersey City, N.J. Two, he wants kids to find their self-expression and self-belief through sports. And three, he thinks track and field can open the doors for so many at-risk kids who don't have many other options.

"The basics of sports is track and field," McDaniels said. "The basics of life is running;

Great Job Rob !!

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