

CHANGING EVENTS? ASK DANNY!



For those contemplating a change of events, there's no better Jamaican case study than the story of Danny McFarlane. The 2000 Olympic 400 metres finalist made a successful switch from the 400 metres to the 400 metre hurdles. The change made him one of the world's best in his new event and earned him an Olympic silver medal.

During an interview on NATIONWIDE RADIO's SportsNation Live programme on August 29, Danny explained the rationale behind the switch. "I was running the 400 and I was like, okay, I want to maximize my talent", the 2001 World Indoor Championships 400 metres bronze medallist revealed. "So when I start to look around", he notioned, "I'm like, okay, the 4 hurdles is easiest for me to switch to. So when I look at the guys running 4 hurdles, I realize that, listen, I'm faster than a lot of them. The only thing I have to do is figure out how to hurdle and a lot of people said, no, you can't do it but in my head, I'm like, hey, I'm going to figure out how to hurdle."

It wasn't easy to immediately convert his 44.90 400 metres speed to the event known as the 'mankiller'. "For the first few times when I tried the hurdles, it was kinda rough, okay, there's an issue right here, but then I start to figure it out so I just looked at the guys competing and what they were doing and just feel like at that point, I was better than them as a flat 400 metres runner, and if I can figure out how to go over these sticks, I'm going to give them problems", he recalled.

He was right. Continued hard work and study put McFarlane in the 2003 World Championship final. He performed well and nabbed 4th place with a personal best time of 48.30 seconds.

That put him in position to challenge for a medal in the 2004 Olympics in Athens, Greece. "I knew I was ready going in because I was running on the circuit and beating a lot of those guys but I knew that the way track and field run, you got to produce at the big meet to make people take you serious", he outlined.

His last pre-Olympic training session boosted his confidence. The University of Oklahoma graduate went to the training track with Maurice Westney who coached him at the GC Foster College for Physical Education and Sports to do a full speed workout over 5 hurdles. "I wanted to come through in 21.3, 21.4 for me, I mean touch down after the fifth hurdle", Danny told the listeners.

"The first one I touched down in 20.9. So Mr. Westney showed it to me and I'm like, 'Nah, you sure?' He said, 'yes'. I'm like, 'Ok' and I take my five minutes rest and I did a next one, I was supposed to do three, and I touch down at 20.9", he said with a touch of satisfaction in his voice. There was no need to do a third. "I looked at Mr. Westney and I said, I'm not doing the next one. I'm ready", he resolved.

He destroyed his personal best in the semi-final and moved him up to number 2 on the Jamaican all-time list with a run clocked in 48.00 seconds. A measured run in the final secured the silver in 48.11 behind Felix Sanchez of the Dominican Republic.

Though he was in his thirties by then, his self -designed training programme kept him going fast. The five time World Championships 4x400 metres relay silver medallist placed fourth in the 2008 Olympic 400 hurdles final as well. That put him in elite company as the only other Jamaica to compete in two men's finals is 1992 runner-up Winthrop Graham.

Danny also finished 5th and 6th in the 2007 and 2009 World Championship 400 metre hurdles finals respectively.

Altogether, his portfolio is proof positive that change can be good.