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Now they know the rest of the story

■ **HART'S OLYMPIC PAST:** Budding track stars at the Community Youth Center in Concord might know that their instructor, Eddie Hart, was once a world-renowned sprinter, but they might not know the full story of the Olympic adversity he once faced. Page 7

Hart's well-timed again, working in local community

■ Former Olympic gold medal sprinter is focusing on area's youth

By Jay Heater

TIMES STAFF WRITER

CONCORD — Eleven-year-old Andrew Torres was getting ready to start his class on running and agility at the Community Youth Center when he was asked if he knew the history behind his instructor, Eddie Hart.

Torres turned toward a wall behind him and pointed with his index finger to a poster. "Yeah, I do," he said. "It's all right there."

The poster, advertising an upcoming clinic, correctly identified Hart as an Olympic gold medalist. As far as all the information being right there ... well, not by a long shot.

Hart, a 1967 Pittsburg High graduate, came walking up to Torres and told him to start running around the gym along with a group of about 15 youngsters. Flocks of gray dotted Hart's short, almost military style haircut. Although dressed in a sweat suit, Hart carried an air of distinction.

Hart, 57, is an expert in running and living. For a time in 1972, he was the world's fastest human, tying the world record for the 100 meters with a 9.9-second winning performance at the Olympic Trials in Eugene, Ore.

He also became an Olympic gold medalist that year when he anchored the United States' 400-meter relay team in Munich, Germany.

But Hart also received a crash course in adversity during those same Olympics when U.S. Olympic Team assistant coach Stan Wright had the wrong time for the trials and brought Hart and fellow U.S. sprinter Rey Robinson to the track after their quarterfinal events had been run.

"It's all vivid in my memory,"

said Dave Maggard, who as Cal's head track coach recruited Hart to Berkeley and 35 years ago accompanied him to Munich after taking the job as Cal's athletic director.

"Stan would pick up the sprinters and go to work out every day," Maggard said. "Eddie looked tremendous. I thought he had a good chance to win the gold medal."

That chance never came.

"I was sitting in the Olympic stadium the day of the trials," Maggard said. "The 100 meters trials was coming up and I didn't see Eddie. They started the event just as Eddie and the others came walking into the stadium. Pandemonium broke out."

Hart and Robinson were disqualified.

The media wanted someone to blame and Wright was offered as the culprit. Robinson voiced his displeasure with Wright. Hart said nothing against his coach, and returned to the Olympic Village.

"I loved Stan Wright," Hart said. "He was my friend. There have never been any ill feelings. I am my parents' son. The way I grew up, you don't point fingers. You pick up the pieces and move forward."

Hart had a lot of pieces to pick up during those Olympic games. He still had a shot to earn a gold medal in the 4x100 meter relay and had to refocus.

"It was something that just happened to me," Hart said. "I trained my whole life for something and then I slept through it. Things happen to everyone. It was just that this thing was in every newspaper in the world the next day."

"It was a strange thing to deal with. I know how to lose and I consider myself a gracious loser. I got back to my room, got in the shower and cried for an hour and a half. I either needed to commit suicide or move on."

Maggard came knocking on



DAN ROSEN/STRAIGHTYBONES

EDDIE HART'S students might know of Hart's sprinting career, but they might not be aware of the Olympic adversity that he endured.

HART BEAT

■ **WHO:** Eddie Hart

■ **LIVES:** Pittsburg

■ **GRADUATED:** 1967, Pittsburg High School

■ **HONORS:** 1972 Olympic gold medalist in the 400-meter relay; former world record holder at 9.9 in 100, Olympic Trials champion in 100, NCAA All-American

■ **DID YOU KNOW:** Hart's All In One Foundation hosts many local track clinics, such as the one July 14 at the Pittsburg High featuring John Carlos, Wyomia Tyus, Dick Fosbury and Billy Mills. For more information, see www.eddiehartbiol.org.

his door later that day.

"I just said, 'Let's you and I go to dinner,'" Maggard said. "What happened was devastating, but I wanted him to realize he still had a chance to win a gold medal."

Hart did come back to win a gold, even if it wasn't the individual medal he wanted so dearly. And he never did bad-mouth anyone for his disqualification.

"Imagine going through the rest of your life knowing you missed that kind of opportunity?"

said Maggard, now the University of Houston's athletic director. "Nobody could have handled it the way Eddie did. To this day, I get tears in my eyes thinking about it."

After an outstanding prep career at Pittsburg High, Hart attended Contra Costa College, where he blossomed as a runner. He was then recruited to Cal by Maggard, who was battling San Jose State, then known as Speed City for the number of sprinters the school produced.

"I told Eddie that I couldn't guarantee him anything, but that I would give him my heart and soul," Maggard said.

Maggard recognized Hart as a quality person, something not all the administrators and coaches from the U.S. Olympic team were in agreement with.

At the U.S. Olympic training camp in Oslo, Norway, Maggard finished his duties and started to head home when a group of officials confronted him. At the time, Hart wore a huge afro.

"I remember some of the coaches saying to me, 'Oh my gosh, what are we going to do now?' Maggard said. "I said, 'What do you mean?' They were saying, 'What are we going to do about Eddie Hart? He could be a

problem. He has that big afro.'"

"I told them that I didn't want to hear it. Eddie was one of the greatest people you could ever meet."

Hart remembers that not everyone wanted to get close to him.

"Some people like to focus on differences rather than similarities," he said. "If you are going to live in this world, you are going to be exposed to that kind of thing."

It's one of the lessons he passes along to his students.

CYC's Nick Schweickert convinced Hart to teach a running class in January of 2005.

"Eddie Hart was a hero of mine," said Schweickert, who grew up in Pittsburg. "When you grow up there, you hear about the legends of John Henry Johnson, Ken Simonton and Eddie Hart. Whenever I heard about Eddie, it was all good. He got a lot of respect because he wasn't a knucklehead. He has great values and he also has done a lot for his community."

Hart, who has coached track at Cal and on the community college level, teaches a CYC class that draws both serious and recreational runners.

"Half the kids in the class probably don't realize who he is,"

Schweickert said. "But he is a running guru and he also provides wisdom about life. We asked him to help our other coaches. He is a teacher of teachers."

It's not likely that any of the kids in Hart's CYC class will win an Olympic gold medal, or even a high school championship. Even so, he passes along his knowledge so they can improve their athletic endeavors.

"I can take any kid and improve his speed," Hart said. "In 90 percent of them, I can improve their speed after just looking at them. They do not have a coordinated effort. Their body lean is wrong."

"A 100-meter race is like a drama. Within that 10-second period of time, it is like a marathon. It's the same thing going to a symphony or a play. If you are watching Shakespeare, but you don't have the proper information, you won't understand it."

Hart understands that working in his community is his calling.

"It's not just about running," he said. "It's about molding young people. Most of these kids are good. But it's easy to make a wrong turn. It's a precarious road. I am very aware of it. That's why these kids are important to me."