

## Tempe native competes for Spain in Olympic decathlon

Monique Griego , KPNX 11:51 PM. MST August 18, 2016



(Photo: Cameron Spencer/Getty Images)

MESA, Ariz. - On the track of Mesa Community College is where Steve Jacobs first planted a seed that would grow into an Olympic dream.

"I said 'Hey, there's something you might want to think about -- decathlon,'" Jacobs said, "I really don't think he knew anything about it."

Jacobs, the head coach for MCC's track and field, was talking to Pau Tonnesen, a track athlete and Tempe native.

"He looked like he could be really good," Jacobs told 12 News.

Fast-forward four years and Tonnesen, a proud American, who went on to attend the University of Arizona, is at the Olympics in Rio representing his mother's home country of Spain.

Jacobs says Tonnesen, who has dual citizenship, felt it was his best chance to make an Olympic team.

"I think he made the right decision," Jacobs said. "He's a big deal over there."

Before attending MCC in 2012, Tonnesen was already a track star and champion triple-jumper. But after getting a taste of decathlon competition, he was hooked.

"The decathlon is very addicting because you'll never master it -- there's 10 events," said Jacobs, "you're always going to have a good day in some events and something that doesn't go so well."

Wednesday, Tonnesen took on Day 1 of Rio's two-day Decathlon event.

"I think it's incredible, it's super fun to watch someone you know go to the Olympics," said Catherine Bryant, a current MCC track and field athlete.

Bryant has known Tonnesen since they attended Tempe Preparatory Academy together for high school.

"Even watching him today he seems really focused and determined," she said.

Thursday, Tonnesen's years of hard work culminated on an international stage.

While he didn't medal, just being at contender is an accomplishment in itself.

Definitely a sight any coach would be proud of.

"I just like watching him compete," Jacob's said, "he's always amazed me and he can do anything he wants so it's fun because he never disappoints."

Tonnesen finished 17th overall.

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