

# Tribune Chronicle

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## It's not yet hammer time

EUGENE, Oregon – Although most track and field athletes reach their prime in their 20s, hammer throwers are known to peak in their 30s. That's what McDonald High School graduate Matthias Tayala is counting on.

Coming into the U.S. Olympic Track and Field Trials on Wednesday, he was seeded 12th. He surpassed expectations by placing sixth, but he now has his sights set on the 2020 trials.

Tayala threw 232 feet, 6 inches in the qualifying round of the hammer throw, advancing to the final. There he improved his mark to 237-11 to place sixth overall. Cornell's Rudy Winkler won with a mark of 251-10. Winkler did not meet the Olympic qualifying standard of 77 meters and has to wait to see if he receives a trip to Rio.

Tayala knows his wait is longer, but that's not distorting his vision.

"I definitely know what I need to work on, and the future can only go up from here," Tayala said.

Kibwe Johnson, a 2012 Olympian who placed second at Wednesday's trials with a mark of 246-5, can corroborate Tayala's theory. Johnson, 34, is a four-time national champion and won his first national title just four years ago.

"I think at his age, he's throwing farther than I did," Johnson said. "The biggest key to success in the hammer is patience and time, right – it's not something that you can just do and then make it go far."

Since he graduated from Kent State in 2015, Tayala has been coaching himself, for the most part. It wasn't until the last month and a half that he has been commuting back to Kent State to be coached there. Over the next few months, Tayala is going to recover, look for a coach and figure out a training facility to begin preparation for the next trials.

"I'm only 23 – there's a lot of younger guys that are throwing well, but they tend not to throw their peaks," Tayala said. "The world record holder was 32, maybe, when he hit the world record and most people throw their best in their late 20s, early 30s. I'll definitely be back for 2020."

Johnson won't be surprised.

"It's unconventional for an American to start hammer at an early age – most of us don't ever see it until college, and I was one of those kind of kids," he said. "So it's really exciting to see his progression from being a junior athlete and now being a senior athlete. So I think he's right there, you know."

With his fiance "on the edge of her seat" and "biting her nails" from the stands, Tayala competed in his first Olympic trials. His performance was not as good as he had hoped, but he has a long career ahead of him.

"All the guys have been telling me, 'The first year out is the hardest year,' " he said. "If you can get past that, it's pretty much smooth sailing from there, and I got through it. It wasn't that pretty, but I'm excited for the future now."