

Laura Kyte & Fabio Gonzalez
Cachi, Salta, Argentina
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There was no hiding the joy in Rosario...

I write this coming down from a big high, having completed my “first” **half marathon** in the city of **Rosario**...I say “first”, as some will know that I have ran a couple of half marathons before, but not with the same preparation and dedication, always preferring to keep things short and painful on the track! Last year Fabio and I had planned to make Rosario my debut over the distance, as I am expected to go to the event with my club FC Max, as I have done almost every year since 2011, but always to run the shorter, complimentary 5km distance. This will definitely go down as one of my **most memorable races**, firstly in terms of what we overcame just to get me onto the start line: a long drawn out injury and a patch of heavy instability about the future. As for the race itself, it was one of those days where I ran smartly, timing the pace to perfection, I felt good, the weather was on my side and Fabio was even able to ride a bike at a safe distance to watch the race and cheer me on inconspicuously. With all this in favour, I ran a time much quicker than I was expecting and managed to move from about 7th to **2nd female** over the course of the 21km circuit; the only one that got away on the day was Rio Olympian and my Pan American “training partner” **RG** (who has just arrived in Cachi so please be praying for her)! To make the podium in such an important opened doors for various **interviews, photos and messages** on social media, great opportunities to **testify** about who God is and what He has done in our lives.



Fabio & Team ARG before leaving for Peru

On the same weekend, our 17 year old race walker from Cachi, **PG**, took part in the **Pan American Race Walking Cup** in **Lima, Peru**, travelling with a group of seven other athletes and doing himself proud as he clocked another personal best. Fabio had gone with him to Buenos Aires from Cachi where they both stayed in the **CeNARD**, Argentina’s centre of sporting excellence. It was also encouraging that three of the **race walkers** are Christians! *More people on the radar to support in prayer and encourage.* It was also the **national track and field championships** all on the same weekend, an opportunity to

be in **communication** with various athletes, wishing them well, congratulating and praying for them.

Another highlight of the last couple of months has been my increased involvement with “**Atletas de Cristo**”. There has been good communication with charity director **HM**, who asked for my input during the on-going process of re-shaping the current mission statement. I was also asked to promote a prayer event on May 25th, “**día de la patria**” (Argentina day) and an important bank holiday, where in **Buenos Aires** the aim is to get people praying in the central square (Plaza de Mayo) from 4pm onwards. “**Atletas de Cristo**” asked various sports people to encourage churches and other Christian sports people to attend or to follow the lead across the country and organise similar events in their towns and cities, to get a whole nation praying for the country on its own particular day. Fabio and I will be in **Cachi** helping with the **annual biathlon** in the morning, and I have suggested gathering in the square at 4pm to **Pastor MM**; we very much hope that other small congregations will see the need for **unity and prayer** and join us.

As we are now well into the competitive year, there are less athletes coming and going in **Cachi**, however, a small number of individuals were training in April, of which we **hosted** three, and at the end of May, a select group of the national team will prepare for the **South American Championships** at altitude, as well as a group

of three runners from Rosario preparing for the city's full marathon, who will stay in our guest room. We were particularly pleased to spend time with **RP**, formerly one of the best distance runners in Argentina, who, after a very long spell of injury, is now returning to competition on her own terms. As well as coffee together, I wrote an **Easter card** I had from the UK with a message about faith accompanied by a couple of resources. Amid those coming to **Cachi** soon are regular visitors **BC** (Mar del Plata) and **MC** plus coach/husband **GA** from Paraguay, as well as **RG** who I mentioned above. We pray for opportunities to follow up previous conversations, to start new ones and to **love and serve** our sporting colleagues in **practical and profound** ways.



With Roxy and her partner Mauro

I continue to organise my time in **Cachi and Salta** to coincide with such visits, as well as to see how our **More than Conquerors** are doing under Fabio's capable hand. Soon the first rounds of the annual **Evita Games** will be under way, and there may well be trips to **Salta** for those who show commitment to training and an interest in competing. There is even a possibility of competing in neighbouring province of **Jujuy** on the first weekend of June; I am hoping to finally take part in the **10km** after never being able to for illness, injury and absence (in that order) in previous years. Cachi has been present every year except 2015 and we hope to take a select number from our group, which can be a great **opportunity** to get alongside the young people. We pray for logistics around this, as getting organised can be challenge in this part of the world...! Finally, we are excited about a new recruit, **HR**, who shows great potential for middle distance running in his early training sessions. Hector also attended a couple of gatherings at **Pastor MM's** church last year with his Mum and brother, so we pray that we may also be able to **encourage** him to walk- even run!- with Christ more consistently.

In the light of our trip to the UK later this year, Fabio is preparing two trainee P.E. teachers in Cachi, **KF and CG**, the latter one of our former athletes. They are being shown the ropes in order to **cover** Fabio's absence between them from September onwards, although Fabio will of course be in regular contact with them thanks to technology! We pray that this might be a **positive experience** for both **Kelo and Claudia**, an opportunity for personal and professional growth as well as to understand more about the **principles** and the **God** behind our project.



Plenty of Pleny to be going on with!

One final piece of good news was that whilst in **Buenos Aires**, before heading to **Rosario**, amid the handful of people we were able to catch up with were the cereal bar company "**Pleny**", with whom I have had sporadic contact with and support from over the last three and a half years. I asked if they would be interested in meeting to touch base. They were keen and the two managing directors, **MS and RF**, renewed their support and interest not only towards me as an athlete but also for our work with the young people in **Cachi** and furthermore, with visiting athletes. As the ethos of the company is based on **Christian values** (linked with the Seventh Day Adventist Church), they are highly enthusiastic about promoting how **faith and sport** can go together, and looking out for the **spiritual needs** of elite athletes. It seems the perfect partnership and we continue to pray for a **good working relationship** across the miles.

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