

Laura Kyte & Fabio Gonzalez
Cachi, Salta, Argentina
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Anniversary month! Fruit or flowers this year...

I was very happy to see some of you personally during a **visit** to the UK this Summer (winter in Argentina!). Although it was just me who made the trip across the pond, Fabio and I are both very **grateful and blessed** by the support and interest of so many people. I was pleased to have been able to spend more quality time with family, which was the main purpose of the trip, as well as catching up with various friends in Oxford and in the Midlands. Of course, there were a lot of people I didn't see, but next year the plan is to spend a few months in the UK, making the time to see as many of you as possible that are reading this update.

One of my extra highlights was meeting **Paralympian KA**, a wheelchair athlete and member of my parent's church (Renewal Christian Centre, Solihull). I was in contact with her over the course of this year, when it was hoped I would be going to the Games as a chaplain; we ended up meeting briefly at an athletics event in Coventry where we were both competing, although not in the same race! I was thrilled to meet this inspiring young lady who picked up a **clutch of medals**!

Fabio was keeping busy in Cachi coaching and preparing our young athletes for the final qualifying rounds of the "Evita Games". The provincial (think county or state) finals of these qualifiers, which determine which athletes go on to represent Salta province in the national final held annually in **Mar del Plata** (Argentina's favourite sea-side city), were held in **Salta** at the beginning of September.



The boys competed on a cool but sunny Wednesday...



...whilst the girls battled the heat on Friday

We are thrilled to have four automatic qualifiers for the national final, two male and two female race-walkers. We are also waiting for confirmation as to whether our other two female race walkers will travel, as the girls purposefully finished within less than a metre of each other in order to try and guarantee the qualification of all four. Our runner, **IL**, had one of her best performances ever but unfortunately it wasn't enough this year to put her in contention. Such can be the heart breaking nature of sport, when your best just isn't quite enough for where you want to be. She was inconsolable afterwards, and we did our best to lift her spirits. We hope that she will learn from the race and realise what a great performance it was; and that she still has more to give!

During my time away, our house was a bustle of activity, with several athletes coming and going, some new faces whilst others returning guests, such as **SL** from Mar del Plata. The **Olympic Games** provided a good opportunity to bring athletes together and although ironically on a different continent at such an important time in sport, I was in contact with those Argentine athletes known to me, particularly **BC** and

RG who had trained in Cachi in preparation for different competitions this year. As the Paralympics got underway, I was back on Argentine soil, still slightly disappointed not to be there, but trusting in God's timing. Again, making the most of technology, I was able to be in contact with several Christian South Americans whom I had met at the Parapan American Games in 2011 or 2015, including a couple of athletes that didn't qualify, particularly one Brazilian who had expected to be competing in her home Games. Whatever the level, the disappointment of "not making it" is very real.

I was also disappointed not to race better during my time in the UK, having been looking forward to competing on a British track for the first time in 9 years! I did five races and a couple were good, but the rest were under par. I seemed to struggle for motivation as time went on, and I am actually beginning to evaluate the extent to which I want to continue competing. I **love** running, and I will always do it; however, I feel that I have put a lot of effort into trying to step up a level over the last few years, and I am **disappointed** with my results. Perhaps I need a break (which I am currently taking, partly due to my health telling me to!); perhaps I need to work on the psychological aspect of competition and managing pressure; I am grateful to anyone who wishes to stand in prayer with me over the matter.



A lonely run at the Midland 10.000m Championships, the day before I left the UK.



Enjoying being part of the team



Still flying the flag!

Whilst in the UK, I re-joined my former club, **Bromsgrove and Redditch AC**, and I really enjoyed being back in a club environment. I think I realised that I do miss this as I train mostly on my own in Cachi. I recently found out that one of the ladies has moved to **Alvechurch**, the village where my parents are! I look forward to a longer visit next year where I can be more involved and return to living out the initial "**Pray Play Say**" vision which is where sports ministry began for me; being a **Christian presence in sport** by praying, caring for and sharing with team mates whilst worshipping God through the enjoyment and benefits of the sport He made you passionate about, transcending all ability levels.

In the meantime, here in Cachi, I endeavour to live this out, even if my team mates are occasional visitors and right now, things feel difficult. There are only a handful of athletes between September and November, but sometimes small groups might come in December, and then January and February are particularly busy times; in fact we already have our extension room booked for the month of February! Please pray that we would be a blessing to those who visit Cachi, as well as for on-going relationships with our young athletes, especially those who will now be preparing for the "**Evita Games**" in October. This is a time to get them physically, mentally and spiritually prepared!

Los Guayacanes 146, Salta, 4400, Argentina
00 54 9: 11 4157 3005/387 507 2079
laurakytedegonzalez86@gmail.com

www.veritesport.org
fabengo@hotmail.com

www.facebook.com/masquevencedorescachi
Skype: laura_kyte fabio.marchista