

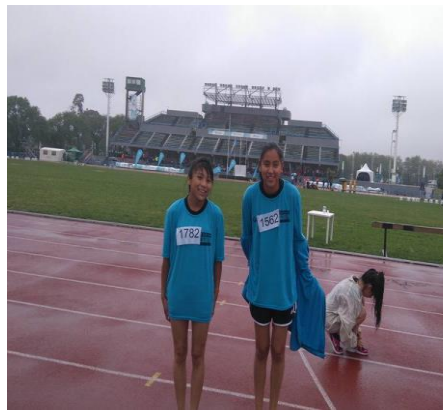
Laura Kyte & Fabio Gonzalez
Cachi, Salta, Argentina
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As 2016 draws to a close, we have reached the peak of the athletics season in Argentina and our little Conquerors have been in action, bringing home a clutch of medals and personal best performances. Towards the end of October, I accompanied the six finalists of the annual “**Evita Games**” to **Salta**, where the following day they set off on a very long coach journey to **Mar del Plata**- that’s well over 1000 miles, plus the return trip from Cachi to Salta. A few days later, **Fabio** caught up with his athletes in **Mar del Plata**, making a short round trip in order to be present during their races. Although **Fabio** had six race-walkers in these **Games**, he was not included as an accompanying coach, however, we decided that it was important for him to be there especially for those who had never travelled to a big competition. We are grateful for the provision which enabled us to do this, and to **EF**, a club runner from **Mar del Plata**, who hosted **Fabio** during his four days there.



Sun’s out in Mar del Plata...



But not for long! Day 4 and time for a soaking...



Hat trick gold for AR

It was in fact better for **Fabio** to make a short trip under his own steam because the weekend after **Mar del Plata**, there was another National competition for under 14’s, thankfully just down the mountain in **Salta**! A consistent group had begun to form which included some tall, strong teens interested in the throwing events. The **u14 Champs** consisted of three-event combinations, so the challenge was to match each athlete with their strongest events within the different combos, although as many of them were new, joining just a couple of weeks before the competition, it was not easy to discern which was best for each one! We took ten boys and recent **Mar del Plata** debutante, **NC**, to take part in this competition, a first-time experience for most of the group (see photo top of letter). As you can imagine, keeping control of ten teenage boys is not without its challenges, but despite a couple of hiccups, the group bonded well and the best part is that they have continued to train over the last couple of weeks. We **pray** that their enthusiasm would last into and beyond the long Summer, and that there would be **opportunities to share** life, sport and faith with them.

During **Fabio**’s time in **Mar del Plata**, I remained in **Salta** to have some physiotherapy my foot, having developed *plantar fasciitis* and a heel spur a couple of months ago, which require rest, exercises, stretching, massage...and lots of patience! It is a frustrating condition because recovery is long, slow and tedious; and even when back running competitively, I will need to keep on top of it. I had been trying to

hold things together in order to represent my club in the National Clubs Championships at the end of October, but I know it was right to ease off and make a proper recovery.

However, it was a good week to be in **Salta**, with **San Andrés church** busy preparing an alternative Halloween celebration called the “**Festival of Light**”, and I even managed to sneak on their church retreat beforehand! As northern Argentina has many traditions associated with honouring the dead between the days of October 31st and November 2nd, the church aims to use the commercialism around Halloween to **share the contrasting message** of Jesus Christ as light, life and love, as oppose to darkness, death and fear. As well as the alternative celebration, we were busy handing out **flyers** with this short message outside local schools and in the main square of Salta. I even managed to hand out a couple to other patients having physio, which opened up a door to explain a bit more about the Christian faith!

I was also pleased to be able to follow up two Christian ladies from **Salta** involved in sport, and there is the possibility of attending a conference organised by “**Atletas de Cristo**” in **Buenos Aires** in December. I pray that a door would open for **EVS, CG** and **EV** from **Salta**, as well as **FM, EB, YO** and **LO** in **Buenos Aires**, in order for them to make contact with a wider network of People working in sports ministry, and to affirm or discover a call that the Lord may have for them in their respective sports.

Back in **Cachi**, there has been a steady flow of visiting athletes over the last couple of months. We had **NP** staying in our home and I spent time with **NE** and **LS** (from **Uruguay**), although unfortunately not training! We were delighted and encouraged to meet **AE** from **Paraguay**, a fellow believer, having him over for dinner and taking him to church in **Cachi**.



After talking with CG



We have also had **meetings** with our young athletes and some parents in order to sort out logistics of the various competitions. We have presented our more consistent members with some **kit** donated via **Verité Sport**, through which we aim to reward commitment and encourage continuity. We have also been overjoyed that our most dedicated athlete, **PG**, has had a fantastic year of results, culminating in selection to represent Argentina in the **South American Youth Championships** held at “home”

in the province of **Entre Ríos**. On a couple of occasions, we have invited **PG** over to chat about how he feels pre or post competition, and on one occasion we **prayed** with him. As with all of our young athletes, we pray that they would have the opportunity to experience **relationship with God** and not just religion or tradition, to **know their Creator** through the gift of sport. Fabio and I value your prayers as the sun sets on 2016; we are evaluating our next steps with some potential changes on the horizon, however, we want to be **wise, trusting in the Lord and not in on our own understanding** (Proverbs 3.5-6). “Muchas gracias” to all and just in case...**merry Christmas!!**

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