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August 9, 2012 - Miami, Florida, United States...Libna Stevens/IAD

Tracy Joseph has had a passion for running since she was very young. She participated in any sport she could. At 13 while, enrolled at the Adventist School in Limon, Costa Rica, she heard of the city's 200-meter race and went with friends to see if she could participate. Without any formal training, she entered the race and beat the favorite. From there she went on to represent the Limon Province in a national competition.

Today, at age 24, Joseph has collected many medals national and international events, from Costa Rica, Central America, and South America to as far away as Finland. Recently, with her eyes set on this year's summer Olympic games in London, England, she flew to Colombia in June to compete in two final international events. She completed the first race in Cali, but hours before traveling to Bogota for the second she got some unexpected news.

She had been training to improve her personal best 200-meter dash time from 23.78 seconds to 23.30 seconds, which would qualify her to compete in the Olympic games. With that goal in mind, she was preparing to leave for Bogota when she was informed that the final race there was re-scheduled from a Sunday to a Saturday.

Upon hearing that, Joseph packed her bags and headed home.

It's not a decision that haunts her, as she is strongly convicted about keeping the Sabbath. But she admits that, coming so close to a shot at the Olympic games, she had wrestled with her thoughts.

"I struggled that night in my hotel, but I understood that my victories should be hand in hand with Jesus and if I would have gone ahead with the race, I would have gone against His will," says Joseph, who also explained that it was too late to appeal or enter another qualifying race.

Weeks later, she has no regrets about her decision. She is enjoying the summer Olympics on TV in her home.

"That decision has taught me to change more things in my life for the better and has been a blessing to others as well," explains Joseph, who grew up in an Adventist home and was baptized at age 9.

She had to put her running on hold once before while completing her business degree at the university in San Jose, Costa Rica. She says adjusting from what she loves to do to what she must do is always a process.

"I love, love running, I can't even express the rush I feel," she says. "Besides competing, I get to know my body more and it motivates me to do things better each day, learning not to give up easily and always give of my best in everything I do, always putting God in first place."

While training, Joseph enjoys visiting her parents and going to her home church, Limon Central Adventist. She travels to district churches and gives seminars on health and nutrition. She
participates in AY programs and Master Guide and Pathfinder Camporees.

Pastor Miguel Adonia, who pastors the Limon Central Adventist and three other churches in the city, has known Joseph for more than two years. He says he is not surprised by her decision to forgo the Olympics.

"It's clear to see that she has a personal relationship with God and does not hide it," says Pastor Adonia. "She lives her life with conviction because she knows what she believes in and testifies with her shining example."

For now Joseph is taking a few weeks off from competitions and is evaluating which future path to take: continue with her athletic career or pursue a degree in occupational safety and health engineering.

Joseph is not worried for she knows God will continue to run the race of life by her side. She shares with Adventist young people "that even though the world offers many things, what's more important is to watch and pray and study the Scriptures, to be faithful and make the right decisions."

She has her eyes set on doing what God has in store for her.

"It's all about making God number one and letting Him run the race with you," says Joseph.

image by Courtesy of Tracy Joseph

Twenty-four-year-old Tracy Joseph poses with her registration by the Association of Athletes to represent her home country of Costa Rica before heading to her final competitions for a chance at the Olympic Games. She was absent from her last competition a...