

Sudden, tragic death for Ariel!

GeneralHeadline — 17 May 2011 — by Stacey Kelly



In a tragic turn of events, one of Belize's most famous ex-cyclists has been killed in a traffic accident, while his friend, himself of cycling fame, has been charged with his death.

Former Junior Cross Country champion, Ariel Rosado, 28, a father of a 4-year-old girl and an attorney at Courtenay Coye LLP law firm, died after he suffered fatal head and body injuries as a result of a car crash this weekend.

Rosado's close friend and accomplished cyclist himself, Marlon Castillo, 23, a cyclist for the Sugar City cycling team, was the driver of the car, according to police, and he has since been formally charged. Rosado was seated in the front passenger seat and the vehicle was travelling towards Belize City on the Northern Highway when the accident occurred.

At approximately 10:45 p.m. on Saturday night, as the vehicle was going around the roundabout at Mile 2 ½, Castillo lost control and the vehicle slammed into a cement wall.

People who allegedly saw the accident say that the vehicle was racing with another vehicle around the roundabout — that in fact, there were three vehicles that were

speeding, but Rosado's best friend, Winston Swift, who was in another vehicle behind Rosado's vehicle, stated that such accounts are untrue.

In any case, it appears that Rosado's vehicle was navigating the roundabout much too fast for the driver to be able to control it.

Castillo appeared in the Magistrate's Court in Belize City today, where he was charged with manslaughter by negligence, causing death by careless conduct, driving without due care and attention, driving under the influence of alcohol above the prescribed limit, and driving an unlicensed vehicle.

Because of the indictable charges, Castillo was not allowed to make a plea, but was offered bail of \$5,000. He is to reappear in court on July 15, 2011.

Amandala visited the scene on Sunday and spoke with an eyewitness, who told us that he could predict the outcome from the moment he saw Castillo's white truck approaching the median.

"From the time I saw them coming, I already said to myself, 'look how they will hit that wall'," said the eyewitness.

Another resident told us that the fence is a very solid fence, made with thick steel to withstand the impact of such crashes, which have happened more than once at that particular junction.

Swift told us that they had been socializing at a house on Saturday, as is the custom on weekends, when they decided to head down to the city to pick up another friend and return to the house to continue their partying.

"They [Castillo and Rosado] came together, so they left together and me and another friend that was there left before them, so we were ahead of them coming down the highway. Passing Friendship [Restaurant], I saw Marlon's vehicle coming with speed, so I told my friend to pull on the side because those guys will hit the roundabout, and he pulled on the side, and Marlon's truck just went ahead straight and hit the cement wall. I feel that Marlon pulled on his brakes, but the brakes didn't work, and the vehicle kept going after the collision and hit the median directly in front of the Smart Headquarters on the Northern Highway and stayed right on there."

Rosado's face was crushed due to the impact of the car's collision against the cement wall, and he suffered a fractured skull. When the vehicle came to a stop, the top portion of Rosado's body was slumped over toward the back seat.

"I told my friend to pull up to the vehicle, and when I looked inside the vehicle I saw only Marlon sitting up straight," said Swift. He further recounted, *"Marlon was saying, 'Swift, the aggs stick, the aggs stick.' I told him okay, man, and he was shouting 'Ariel, Ariel,' and I went over and got him out and sent him to the hospital."*

The passenger side of the Tacoma was badly damaged, but there was no damage to the driver's side. The inside of the truck, however, was spattered with blood, and pieces of human tissue were visible on the floor of the back seat.

The two airbags were deployed on both sides. Castillo, we were told by a friend, in contrast, suffered only minor bruises to his face and legs.

The other friend who was driving Swift took Marlon and Ariel to the hospital.

Swift told us that the sight of his friend was so unbearable that he had to walk away before returning to retrieve him from the truck. Since there was not enough space inside the other vehicle, Swift stayed behind at the scene, while the other three rushed Rosado to the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital for medical attention.

Ariel's father, Dr. Alvaro Rosado, told us that when he learnt of the accident, he had rushed to the hospital, but was told by the doctor who attended to Ariel that there was nothing they could do to save him.

Dr. Rosado explained that the doctor had been pumping air into Ariel's lungs, but he made the heart-breaking decision to shut down the air pumps because he was advised by the doctor that Ariel would not be able to breathe on his own, and furthermore, that even if he were to survive — the chances of which were almost nil, he would not be the same person he once was.

Rosado died at about 11:53 that night.

Swift, after being asked how the tragedy had impacted him, said, *"Well me, I took a hard blow just him being my friend, but to actually being on the scene, I think that was an extra blow for me. I don't want to be the one to question God, so, I just see it as it was his time."*

He also commented on his friend Marlon's predicament: *"I know Marlon take it hard, because putting myself in Marlon's shoes, I would take it hard too, because Marlon is my friend, too, and my good friend, so I will be here for him, too."*

When asked about the alcohol intake of both Castillo and Rosado, Swift said *"Well, to me, I don't think the guys were drunk or anything like that. We were socializing — like I said, they came about half hour before we left; they didn't seem.... drunk before that."*

Amandala tried getting an interview from Rosado's place of work, but we were told that they wished not to comment.

An excerpt from Rosado's eulogy, written by his father, Dr. Alvaro Rosado, says this about his son: *"At age 13 Ariel expressed an interest in cycling and he got the full encouragement and support of his parents in this endeavor."*

"At age 14, it was evident that Ariel had a natural talent for cycling and as with all his other undertakings, Ariel gave cycling his all. He had guidance from his mentors on the Smiling and Santino's cycling teams, and one important lesson that he learnt was that 'you have to put in your miles.' This was a lesson that Ariel carried with him throughout his life, and in all his endeavors."

"...In 2000, at the age of 16, Ariel made it into the Belize cycling history book when he won the KREM New Year's Classic, beating out a field of 51 senior riders, including foreigners and Belize's top cyclists."

"As a US citizen by birth, Ariel was able to ride in the US National Junior Championships in Pennsylvania in 2000, where he competed against 152 of the best junior cyclists in the USA. He gave a good account of himself in those races, placing 23rd in the 32-mile Criterium, 24th in the 74-mile road race, and 60th in the 12.5-mile individual time trial."

Swift, for his part, told us, *"What I will remember most about Ariel, he had major plans for the future. His plans were always around his friends, like he had a role for everyone to play, even the smallest person he let have a role. He was just that type of guy."*

"Some people call it cocky, a cocky persona, but he had reasons to be — he was just the guy."

Amandala offers sincere condolences to Ariel Rosado's family on his untimely death.