

Buenos Aires votes for mayor

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BUENOS AIRES, Argentina --

Argentines in the nation's capital voted Sunday for a new mayor, with pre-election polls suggesting most would swing right and elect the president of Argentina's most popular soccer team.

President Nestor Kirchner campaigned for the candidate of his center-left coalition, Daniel Filmus, but the former education minister had much less name recognition than Mauricio Macri, a 48-year-old businessman who saluted his team before millions on television this week after Boca Juniors won Latin America's prestigious Copa Libertadores championship.

With October's presidential elections looming, Kirchner cast Macri as the second coming of former President Carlos Menem, whose close alliance with the United States and adherence to Washington's policies are blamed by many Argentines for the 2002 economic crisis that robbed many of two-thirds of their savings overnight.

Macri "represents the interests of the neoliberal model. That's the truth," Kirchner said, alluding to Macri family businesses that flourished in the Menem era, from the soccer franchise to export ventures and a lucrative private postal service contract.

Analysts say a Macri win could position him well for a 2011 presidential run, but Macri focused on crime, traffic, crumbling schools, budget overruns and garbage collection in appeals to the 2.5 million registered voters.

"Tell Kirchner ... I'm not a candidate for president," Macri said. "We aren't going to get into a debate about national political models."