

Benita back on track for Beijing

Hampton-based Benita Johnson stormed to a convincing victory in Sunday's 10km BUPA Great Edinburgh Run.

The Aussie, world cross country champion in 2004, was ecstatic that, over a tough course, she blew away the challenge of Kenya's Rose Cheruiyot by 13 seconds to win in 32:20.

Johnson, who missed four months of winter training with a knee injury, made a decisive break on a very steep hill at the halfway point that saw her pull well clear.

She drove on relentlessly to open a 100m gap and gain a comfortable win.

"After my injury I am so happy to win here," said Johnson, who celebrated her 30th birthday yesterday.

"I put in a lot of hard work before Edinburgh and over what was a hard course and I am delighted to see the benefits of that.

"This is a great win for me and after being out injured for so long, when I got very frustrated.

"This tells me I now have a strong base to build on towards the Olympics.

"My performance clearly showed I have got strength and I am going forward after being out for so long."

Johnson, whose next race is the defence of her New York Freihofer crown next month, admitted: "You do question whether you can get back.

"But I always believed in myself and felt, because of all the hard work I have put in, I had the ability."

Injury forced Johnson to withdraw from last month's Flora London Marathon, but she had the satisfaction at the end of March leading Australia to their maiden World Cross Country team medals when they finished third in Edinburgh's nearby Holyrood Park.

The former Aussie international hockey player has still to decide whether to contest the Olympic marathon or compete on the track in Beijing.

"I am racing in Ostrava on June 12 where there is a fast women's 10,000m on the programme. I will make up my mind afterwards," she said.

Vicky Gill, who works at the Sweatshop in Teddington and lives in

Sunbury, battled bravely over the testing terrain.

Although she was weary at the end, Gill was happy at being first British runner home, finishing sixth (35:02).

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