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Johnson - impressive win.

HARD WORK PAYS OFF FOR JOHNSON

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By David Martin, PA Sport

Benita Johnson could not hide her delight after storming to a convincing victory in the Bupa Great Edinburgh Run.

Australia's 2004 world cross country champion, who missed four months training during the winter with a knee injury, blew away the challenge of Kenya's Rose Cheruiyot by 13 seconds.

She completed the 10 kilometres in 32 minutes 20 seconds, with Aniko Kalovics of Hungary third in 33min 32sec.

Johnson waited until the halfway point of what was a very tough course before making a decisive break on a steep hill.

That saw her eventually pull a healthy distance clear of former Amsterdam marathon winner Cheruiyot.

She drove on relentlessly to open a 100m gap to become the event's second women's title holder, following in the footsteps of Jelena Prokopcuka, who dominated the first three stagings of the event.

"After my injury, I'm so happy to win here," said Johnson, who was forced to withdraw from last month's Flora London Marathon.

"I put in a lot of hard work before Edinburgh and, over what was a hard course, I'm 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 upon towards the Olympics.

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

Johnson, whose next race will be the defence of her New York Freihofer crown in a month's time, added: "There's always a doubt and 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."

Former international hockey player Johnson, 30 on Tuesday, has still to decide whether to contest the Olympic marathon or compete on the track in Beijing this summer.

She said: "I'm racing in Ostrava (June 12) where there's a fast women's 10,000 metres on the programme. Afterwards, I'll make up my mind."

Vicky Gill battled bravely over the testing terrain and was happy being first Brit home after finishing sixth in 35min 2sec.

In the men's race, Commonwealth 10,000m champion Boniface Kiprop lost a sprint for the line for the third time in the event after being outpaced by Bernard Kipyego.

The Ugandan, runner-up in 2005 and again 12 months ago, made a strong break just 200 metres from the line but Kipyego followed hot on his tail.

The 21-year-old Kenyan overtook him to win by three seconds in 28min 59sec, with El Hassan Lahsinni of France just a second behind Kiprop.

Kipyego said: "We decided we would run together before the race and the course was rather harder than I thought it would be."

A disappointed Kiprop said: "I tried to escape in the last 200m but it wasn't to be. One day, I will win this race."

Tomas Abyu, still sweating over Olympic marathon selection, was the first domestic finisher when seventh in 30min 44sec.

That was four seconds quicker and a place ahead of Commonwealth marathon bronze medallist Dan Robinson, who won the UK title ahead of Abyu at the London Marathon.

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