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Johnson to defend title at Freihofer's 5km



Benita Johnson wins Freihofer's Run for Women 5K (c)

Albany, New York, USA - Spearheading the charge on Saturday 31 May at the 30th annual Freihofer's Run for Women will be Australia's Benita Johnson, the two-time defending champion.

When Johnson first made the trip to Albany in 2006, she recorded 15:27 for the 5km race to turn back the

challenges of Natalya Berkut from Ukraine and the much favoured Lornah Kiplagat from the Netherlands, who has since twice won the World Road Running Championship.

In 2007 Johnson ran even faster, recording a time of 15:22 to defeat former champion, Asmae Leghzaoui from Morocco, by 10 seconds.

At last month's IAAF World Cross Country Championships in Edinburgh, Scotland (30 March), Johnson, 29, placed 11th overall in the 8 km race, leading the Aussie team to a bronze medal finish, indicating she is in form for yet another defence in New York.

"I'm so excited to be returning for my third year in a row. Let's hope it is third time lucky for me!" said Johnson, whose past two Freihofer's wins were her only victories on US soil. "I love this event and to run it in an Olympic year means it's vital for my preparation for Beijing. I can't wait to hear the crowd as I run towards the finish. It's truly magic in Albany with those fans screaming!"

The Freihofer's Run for Women is among a select group of road races around the world to have earned the prestigious "Silver Label" designation from the IAAF Road Running Commission.

"We're honoured to have received this designation," said Freihofer's Run for Women Event Director George Regan. "It speaks volumes about the quality of our event and what we've been able to accomplish over the past 29 years. We join some amazing company, including the Tokyo Marathon, MDS Nordion 10K, ING Brussels Marathon, Athens 10 KM and the Tokyo International Women's Marathon to name but a few."

Held in downtown Albany, N.Y., the Freihofer's Run for Women offers \$27,000 in prize money, with the winner being awarded \$10,000. This year's 30th edition will also include the USATF National Race Walk 10K Open and Junior Championships featuring some of the nation's top race walkers, several of whom will be Olympic team contenders.

Edward Parham for the IAAF

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