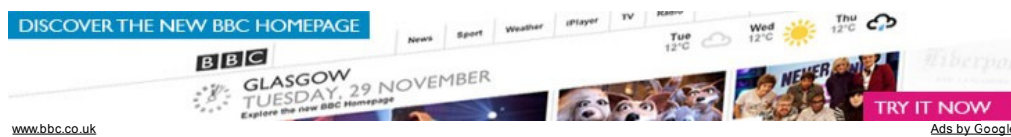


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ATHLETICS

# Chepkirui wins Shoe4Africa

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Joyce Chepkirui withstood the harsh morning weather to clinch the top position in record time during the sixth edition of the Shoe4Africa five-kilometre women's road race on Saturday.

The budding athlete, who went home \$1,500 (Sh124,500) richer, clocked 16 minutes 17.07 seconds to break the record that stood at 16:33.40 amid cheers from the enthusiastic crowd as she crossed the finishing line.

She was followed by Kapsabet-based Caroline Jepkoech in 16: 41.4 while Africa 3,000 metres steeplechase champion Hyvin Kiyeng (16:47.02) came third.

The 9.28am race, which saw the runners wade through a dusty path before connecting to the main Eldoret-Iten road, was staged at the Kenyan-born Dutchwoman Lornah Kiplagat's High Altitude Training Camp in Iten.

It attracted 1,100 participants, ranging from globe-trotting elite athletes to local children who have an interest in athletics.

Last year, Rose Kosgei, the 1997 World junior cross country champion, trounced Alice Timbilil to bag the top prize in 16: 34.16 but missed the course record.

The annual event, witnessed by Shoe4Africa founder Toby Tanser, former 800m champion Janeth Jepkosgei, was aimed at promoting HIV/Aids awareness and the message on the athletes' vests was quite clear on that.

Chepkirui, who has this year won the Standard Chartered 10km marathon in Nairobi, the 12km Kass Marathon and the Baringo Half Marathon, admitted that the race was not for the faint-hearted.

## Not for the faint-hearted

"It was a difficult race. The weather was hot. I am nevertheless happy that I have not only emerged the winner but also broken the race record," said Chepkirui, who is eyeing next year's Olympic Games in London.

Chepkirui added that last weekend she was in Australia for the 10,000m race in a concerted bid to achieve the right time for the forthcoming Games.

"They want a record of 31:48 and I qualified for the race in 31:26. I am optimistic that, with regular practice, I will do this country proud when my time comes for the Olympics."

Besides cash rewards to the top 12 finishers, other lucky participants benefited from free sports shoes in a raffle.

Tanser acknowledged the importance of identifying and nurturing talent early, adding that he had been forced to rethink his plans of spreading the programme to Morocco and Tanzania and instead concentrate on Kenya.

"We have done something in the two countries but as the sole organiser of the events, I felt it's prudent to narrow down to Kenya, which is the home of running," he said.

Jepkosgei challenged the participants to keep practising, saying the country's unrivalled performance in athletics has given it international recognition as well as investment opportunities.

## Top 12 finishers

1.Joyce Chepkirui 16:17.07, 2.Caroline Jepkoech 16: 41.4, 3.Hyvin Kiyeng 16:47.02, 4.Winnie Jepkemoi 16:47.2, 5.Hellah Kiprop 16:54.5, 6.Edith Chelimo 16:58.5, 7.Diana Chepkemoi 17:01.3, 8.Florence Chepsoi 17:06.3, 9.Cynthia Kosgei 17:12.9, 10.Valentine Jepngetich 17:13.8, 11.Beatrice Chepchumba 17:15.2, 12.Josephine Chepkoech 17:17.0

