



Isaac Kiprop en route to his third consecutive Bukwo road race victory (Daniel Senfuma)

Breakthrough victories for Isaac Kiprop, Chelangat in Bukwo

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Bukwo, Uganda - Eastern Africa and Ugandan cross country champion Isaac Kiprop and the upcoming Mercy Chelangat emerged as the champions of the third edition of the annual Bukwo Road Race on Sunday (21).

The race, sponsored by A Running Start Foundation, is held in the altitude areas of Eastern Uganda, about 400km away from the Ugandan capital Kampala. This is where the country's top athletes such as Boniface Kiprop, Moses Kipsiro and Dorcus Inzikuru train.

MEN - Aggressive tactics reap dividends for Kiprop

The young Kiprop looked focused even before the start of the race after his more favoured rivals Boniface Kiprop and Kipsiro, the winner of this year's Belfast IAAF Cross Country permit meeting a few weeks ago opted out. "I want to see more of my country-mates penetrating through to my ranks so I will not compete today, but I will be available for the national cross country next month," said Boniface Kiprop, the 2004 World junior champion at 10,000m.

After only 5km, Isaac Kiprop was ahead with rival Moses Aliwa, a 2004 World junior cross country team bronze medallist, just 100m behind. By the beginning of the last stretch, Aliwa was closing the gap but couldn't hang on as his efforts were dashed by Kiprop's teammate Stephen Kiprotich who overtook him in the last 200m.

Kiprop proved to be untouchable when he crossed the finish line in 30:54 to claim his third successive title at the Bukwo race.

The second place battle was won by Kiprotich who reached home five seconds later in 30:59 seconds while the tired Aliwa finished in the bronze position with 31:19.

"It was not an easy race although I emerged champion, the course was hilly and the competition was stiff. I hope to add on more wins when I compete at the national cross country championship," said Kiprop, another big prospect for Uganda's team at the World Cross Country Championships in Mombasa, Kenya, in March.

WOMEN - Surprise win for Chelangat

Little known and infamous Mercy Chelangat from Standard High surprised the fans when she crossed the finish line in 18:21 to claim the women's 5Km race.

Defending champion Jackline Cheruto, one of Dorcus Inzikuru's training partners in Bukwo, led for sometime before she suffered from a stitch to surrender the lead to Chelangat who finished the race without making any mistakes.

Cheruto was relegated to sixth position with 18:57 while Dorcus Chesang and Rebecca Chepsengai finished in second and third respectively in 18:28 and 18:41 respectively.

"I ran easily and suddenly saw myself in the lead till the finish," said an excited Chelangat.

The race further saw over 400 youngsters below the age of 12 participating and walking away with education fees.

The race sponsor Karl Keirstead, founder of A Running Start Foundation, was impressed with the ever-increasing number of participants and promised to return next year.

"I am impressed by the ever-increasing number of participants and I strongly believe that there are more Kiprops and Inzikurus in this remote area of Uganda," he said.

The Bukwo race is one of the build up races for Uganda as it prepares to name a team that will challenge for top honours in Mombasa.

The general secretary of Uganda Athletics Federation (UAF) Beatrice Ayikoru said that they will use the national cross country championships in Sironko next month to name the teams that will compete in Kenya.

World 3000m Steeplechase champion Dorcus Inzikuru, Commonwealth Games 10,000m champion Boniface Kiprop and Moses Kipsiro all attended the event though they didn't participate.

Daniel Senfuma for IAAF

Leading results -

Men (10Km):

1. Isaac Kiprop 30:54
2. Stephen Kiprotich 30:59
3. Moses Aliwa 31:19
4. James Kibet 31:24
5. Abraham Kiplimo 31:26
6. Isaac Ayeko 31:29

Women (5Km):

1. Mercy Chelangat 18:21
2. Dorcus Chesang 18:28
3. Rebecca Chepsengai 18:41
4. Phylis Cheplangat 18:45
5. Gladies Muhur 18:54
6. Jackline Cheruto 18:57