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# Irvette Grand Prix champ again

A determined Irvette van Zyl (Nedbank) led from start to finish in the Johannesburg SPAR Women's 10km Challenge at the Wanderers Sporting Club to win in 34.58 minutes.

At the same time she made sure of winning the 2016 SPAR Grand Prix for the third time.

Mapaseka Makhanya (Olifantsfontein) came from nowhere to claim second place in 35.46 minutes, ahead of Rutendo Nyahora (Nedbank), who finished in 36 minutes.

Van Zyl, who had to withdraw from the Olympic Marathon in Rio in August because of a stress fracture in her foot, set the pace from the start and opened up a 40 second gap before the first kilometre mark.

Van Zyl won the first three races, in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and Durban, but was unable to run in Pretoria because of her injury.

"I knew what I had to do to win the Grand Prix. I got into the lead on the first uphill and decided that I was going to run my own race.

"If the others wanted to catch me, it was up to them," said an elated Van Zyl.

Van Zyl said she was happy with the win and glad it was over.

"I have had nightmares about this race for

about four weeks. I really wanted to win, to make up for my Olympic Games disappointment.

Van Zyl had planned to use the Olympic Games to compensate for her previous Olympic disappointment, when she had to drop out of the race in London.

"So I really needed something good to happen.

"I think possibly I went out too fast and I forgot about one or two hills, so I struggled a bit in the last two kilometre's, but I kept thinking about my little boy and my husband LJ, and was so happy when I got to the finish line and they were waiting for me," said the local star.

With Van Zyl was in command throughout the race, the real battle was for second place.

Nyahora and last year's winner Lebogang Phalula ran together for the first seven kilometres, with the lead changing frequently, before Makhanya surged ahead to claim second spot.

"I have been battling with injury for some time, and it was good to be running pain free," said Makhanya.

Nyahora said she was very happy to be on the podium and delighted to see her teammate Irvette van Zyl back in form.



After her disappointment in the Olympic Games earlier this year Irvette van Zyl ensured on Sunday in Johannesburg that she at least could write the title as the 2016 SPAR Grand Prix champion behind her name.

Photo: Reg Caldecott