

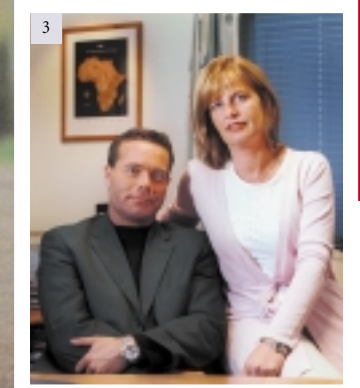
# 'Team Østergaard'

*Danish automotive company gives Kenyan runners an opportunity to compete in international races.*

**The bright-yellow fields of rape light up the horizon among lush green fields, hilltops and beeches and oaks that have just come into leaf. Blackbirds, house sparrows and swallows seek to out-sing each other and, a couple of times an hour, sleek silver IC3 trains zoom past.**

*In this Danish idyll, selected Kenyan runners of 'Team Østergaard' have, in less than a year, trained themselves into one of the very top teams in the world of European running. Under the guidance of their coach, Mads Stryhn, the runners of 'Team Østergaard' have tirelessly crisscrossed the area around the West Funen village of Ejby twice a day. And even if the Funen countryside is vastly different from the highlands of their home country, the intensive training seems to be bearing fruit. On 24 May 2001, the Kenyans triumphantly swept the board in this year's 'Adventure Run' in Odense, Denmark, with Simon Mbithuka, Emily Samoie and Kipruto Tanui capturing all of the first three places, in each of their races, ahead of a field of some 15,000 other runners. Simon Mbithuka had already foreshadowed such a triumph by winning the Bonn marathon in Germany. On 6 May, Samwel Kipcoech repeated the success, coming in first in the BT half marathon in Copenhagen. In the same race, Simon Mbithuka came in third, while Emily Samoie got off to a flying start on the team by finishing in second place.*

*The rapidly expanding 'Team Østergaard' is sponsored by the Danish automotive concern The Østergaard Group, which supplies 4WD vehicles, motorcycles and spare parts to major private companies (oil, construction, engineering, etc.) as well as a considerable number of relief agencies such as Danida, Danchurchaid, The Red Cross, The Danish Refugee Council, Care, Plan International, ActionAid, World Vision, CPAR, and embassies in various countries, primarily in Africa.*



Opposite page: 5km 'Adventure Run' in Odense won by Kipruto Tanui.

1. 10km 'Adventure Run' in Odense won by Simon Mbithuka.

2. Four runners from 'Team Østergaard' training in Ejby, Denmark.

3. Owners Helle & Kim Østergaard established the company in 1992.

The company has its administration and head office in Odense in Denmark (the birthplace of the writer Hans Christian Andersen), with local subsidiaries in Uganda, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Benin, Norway and Georgia. The Østergaard Group has developed a special affection for Honda motorcycles, now owning Honda Uganda, Honda Benin and Honda Georgia. Honda Mali will be added during 2001. The company, which was established in 1992, is still a family concern, with Kim and Helle Østergaard as the sole owners of what has now become a modern, international automotive group. After just a few years, The Østergaard Group began to expand considerably. The last two years, for example, have shown a growth rate of more than 100% per year, and in the course of 2001 further subsidiaries are expected to be established in Kazakhstan, Angola, Kenya and Mali.

'Our strong point is that we are able quickly to provide 4WD vehicles, motorcycles and spare parts to virtually all parts of the world,' says Kim Østergaard, who explains that this is only possible because The Østergaard Group has large central storage facilities at various places around the globe.

The Østergaard Group places great emphasis on being part of the local community where it has offices. The managers are always Danes, but the rest of the staff is taken from the local area. This is why it is perfectly natural for the company to be involved in such things as local sports activities as well as in entering into sponsoring agreements.

'A few years ago, we were requested to sponsor a children's football team in Uganda. We said yes, and today we also sponsor a children's basketball team in Uganda as well as a first division football team in Mozambique', Kim Østergaard states, adding that there is something similar in the pipeline in Malawi. The flagship, however, is the 'Team Østergaard' running team, which has existed since the autumn of 2000.

Coach Mads Stryhn, from Ejby on Funen, had been in contact for a couple of years with Kenyan runners who, out of his own pocket, he invited to come to Denmark, where they could train and live in with himself and his family as well as take part in any runs that were going. A meeting between Mads Stryhn and Kim Østergaard, organised by the race committee of the H.C. Andersen International Marathon Odense, resulted in The Østergaard Group assuming the role of main sponsor for the team, which includes, amongst others, paying for the runners' travelling expenses, accommodation and clothing.