



## Kudus shines at 48th Nguvu SWAG Awards

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## AFCON redemption:

# 5th African Cup remains key target —Ayew



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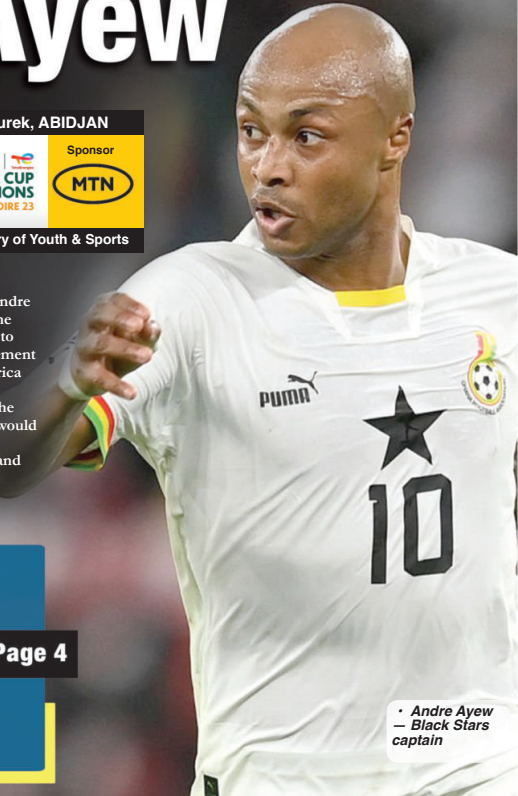


Courtesy: Ministry of Youth & Sports

**B**LACK Stars captain Andre Ayew has expressed the team's determination to end decades of underachievement and trophy drought at the Africa Cup of Nations, but acknowledges that winning the elusive fifth continental title would not be easy to achieve.

A 42-year trophy drought and echoes of

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• Andre Ayew  
— Black Stars  
captain

## Govt to support Kenpong Academy, Barca partnership

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## Voice of

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## Black Stars must work hard in pursuit of AFCON redemption

Ghana's footballing aspirations have been once again ignited as the Black Stars participate in the ongoing Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) in Côte d'Ivoire, fuelled by an unwavering determination to break free from years of underachievement and secure an elusive fifth continental title.

With Ghana making a losing start against Cape Verde yesterday, Ghanaians' confidence in the team has again been shaken about the team's potential to compete among the best, but team captain André Ayew says his valiant teammates are driven by a collective resolve to redefine their narrative on the AFCON stage.

Ayew, the seasoned veteran who made a record-

equalling eighth AFCON appearance yesterday, has spoken passionately about the team's mission to erase the disappointments of the past and usher in a new era of triumph. The 34-year-old midfielder acknowledges the positive momentum gained from the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar but remains grounded, steering clear of grand promises and instead focusing on a pragmatic, game-by-game approach.

Once considered the favourites, the Black Stars now embraces the underdog status with humility and determination. Ayew, embodying the spirit of a true leader, views this shift in perception as an opportunity to defy critics and sceptics, one match at a time. The team's commitment lies in the present moment, recognizing that success is built on incremental steps rather than getting lost in the magnitude of the ultimate goal.

In an era where individual achievements often take centre stage, Ayew echoes the collective spirit that would propel the team forward.

Learning from the scars of past setbacks, the team captain articulates the team's determination to rewrite their AFCON story with a focus on building momentum and seizing opportunities as they emerge, a testament to the team's growth and resilience in the face of adversity.

Wearing the Black Stars jersey is not merely a duty for Ayew; it is a lifelong dream intertwined with

Ghanaian identity and pride. Reflecting on his childhood aspirations inspired by the heroes of his father's generation, Ayew envisions a triumphant moment when the team lifts the AFCON trophy—a symbol of collective fulfillment for a nation that dreams in shades of green, yellow, and red.

In the pursuit of redemption and glory at AFCON 2023, the role of Coach Chris Hughton becomes pivotal. Success will hinge not only on individual talent but also on smart and bold tactics orchestrated by the coaching staff. Mental fortitude, hard work, and strategic thinking are essential elements in this quest to transform years of underachievement into a tale of triumph.

At the last AFCON in Cameroun two years ago, Ghana exited at the group phase with the team's worst record in the history of the competition. The ongoing tournament in Côte d'Ivoire, therefore provides an opportunity to make amends as Ghanaians hope that the team breaks a 42-year-old trophy drought at the continent's premier competition.

As the Black Stars embark on this challenging journey, the nation stands united, collectively yearning for a resurgence that will erase the shadows of the past.

## Fuelled by family ties, unforgettable moments:

# Ayews aim for AFCON glory

FOR thirteen years, the Ayew brothers have been alongside each other in the national team and will be participating in the 2023 TotalEnergies CAF Africa Cup of Nations in Côte d'Ivoire.

They are the pride of their family, the Ayews, heirs to their father Abedi Pelé, winner of the 1982 Africa Cup of Nations, the last one that the Black Stars won.

For the sixth time in their career, André and Jordan Ayew will together defend the colours of the Black Stars.

Arriving with great fanfare in Abidjan, the city where they will play their first match of the AFCON, the Ghanaians are settling in quietly.

André Ayew, the captain of the team, was the first to finish his lunch. He greeted us then made a call to his brother, to let him know that the c.com team was ready to interview them. Jordan immediately arrived in the hall, with a wide smile.

The two have special admiration for the tournament.

"We have to play it to understand our commitment. This trophy has something special".

Not even the series of disappointments these two faced in this tournament has deterred the unwavering ties that bind them to the largest sporting event on African soil.

Their journey in the Africa Cup of Nations began in 2012, in Franceville, Gabon. André, the eldest, was already a

• André Ayew (right) and his younger brother Jordan are back on AFCON duty for Ghana



senior member of the team.

The native of Seclin had a string of good results with his team, bronze medalist at the 2008 AFCON in Ghana, U-20 world champion in 2009, quarter-finalist at the 2010 World Cup.

And now, he hopes to win the AFCON alongside his brother Jordan.

"Of course when he arrived, it was my duty to take him under my wing as a team manager but also as a brother.

"I won't say that playing with Jordan

strengthened our relationship. We had always had a strong relationship since September 11, 1991 (Jordan's date of birth).

The first attempt at conquest will end with an elimination in the semi-final against Zambia 1-0, the eventual winner of the event.

"It was a learning experience. It was my first step with Ghana at the TotalEnergies CAF AFCON. Even though I didn't play a lot, I observed a lot and learned by observing.

I was nourished in a certain way by this competition, whether with my father or with my brother. They constantly spoke to me about this tournament and its particularities. I absolutely wanted to participate in it to have my own experience."

In 2015, Ghana once again qualified for the football competition. Jordan has since become a mainstay in the team.

"I arrived with full confidence for that AFCON in Equatorial Guinea. With André, we were revengeful because we had not taken part in the 2013 edition. We knew that we could do something big that year.

"It is no coincidence that my greatest memory of the Africa Cup of Nations is linked to that year, the match against Equatorial Guinea, I scored the first and André added the third.

"Both of us scoring in the same match, during a competition as prestigious as the AFCON, gave me the greatest emotion of my international career," Jordan said.

André, the Le Havre player added, "Together, we are stronger; we know each other very well".

The famous final lost to Côte d'Ivoire during an endless penalty shootout, and the image of an inconsolable André Ayew in the arms of his little brother has lingered.

"We came so close. We wanted it so much, but it came down to the details," said the elder Ayew.

At 34, the Black Stars captain is preparing to play his eighth AFCON in a country that is dear to him.

"My children have Ivorian blood flowing through their veins. I'm a bit in my second country. We will have support to get this title."

Nothing is stronger than family among the Ayews.