



## Search for top-class coach

# Be ready to pay big money

### • Ex-Black Stars boss

Story: Peter Sarbah

**A** FORMER Vice-President of the Ghana Football Association (GFA), Fred Pappoe, has said the search for a competent coach to revive the fortunes of the Black Stars must be weighed up carefully because the financial commitments involved in this crucial decision should not be underestimated or

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get Victor Osimhen Super Eagles credit: Mid TV

• Herve Renard — One of the big name coaches proposed to succeed Chris Hughton



• Rose Yeboah

## Ghanaian athletes off their marks

## Super Eagles soar into quarters

• Face Angola on Friday

## Voice of Graphic SPORTS

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### Charting a new course for Ghana football beyond usual quick fixes

*IN the aftermath of Ghana's group-stage exit at the ongoing Africa Cup of Nations, a collective voice is rising from prominent football personalities, urging a transformative shift in how the nation addresses the sport's challenges. The call emphasises the necessity for a comprehensive diagnosis of the root causes, steering away from quick fixes that have yielded little success in recent years.*

*The Ghana Football Association (GFA) acted swiftly two days after the Black Stars' disappointing exit, dismissing Coach Chris Hughton and dissolving the technical team. Subsequently, a five-man search committee was tasked with finding a new head coach with a proven track record of successes. However, critics argue that the high turnover of coaches in the last five years' points to deeper issues in Ghanaian football than coaching challenges*

alone.

*Critics insist that the post-AFCON approach demands more than a mere change in coaching staff in the wake of a pressing need for a thorough examination of the systemic issues affecting Ghanaian football. There is a general consensus and advocacy for deeper understanding of the problems and committing to practical, long-term solutions rather than perpetuating a cycle of short-lived fixes which have not yielded the desired results.*

*Former GFA vice president, Fred Pappoe, extends the critique beyond the Black Stars' recent failures to the youth football development system. He raises concerns about transparency and fairness in the selection process for juvenile national teams. The lack of progress in the national juvenile and youth teams, once dominant in competitions, prompts questions about meritocracy versus influence in player call-ups.*

*This scrutiny is crucial as it directly impacts Ghana's ability to nurture and harness its best young talents for future success. Errors at the juvenile level can have long-term consequences, considering the pivotal role young talents play as the feeder channel to the senior national team.*

*Instability and lack of a steady graduation plan to replace aging talents have plagued national teams in recent years. The statistics reveal a troubling pattern of coach rotations in age-group teams, hindering long-term success. The current FA administration's instability is*

*seen as a significant contributor to the decline in the sport's fortunes, hiring and firing five coaches in the last seven years.*

*Perceived influence by powerful personalities in the corridors of power, owning teams, or managing players, coupled with a lack of integrity and inconsistency in player selection criteria, have been identified as major challenges for the Black Stars and other national sides. The influence of external factors has compromised the merit-based approach to selecting players for national teams.*

*While the GFA has made strides in fixing some systematic issues, the performance of the Black Stars continues to serve as a barometer of success for any FA administration. The call for a comprehensive diagnosis of challenges aligns with the view that Ghana football is at a crossroads. Well-thought-out decisions, considering both immediate and long-term interests, are crucial to returning Ghana football to a path of success and sustainable growth.*

*The Graphic Sports believes the sport is at a crossroad and requires a comprehensive diagnosis of our challenges, considering both the immediate and long-term interests of the game's development, and taking well-thought-out decisions that addresses the root causes of the sport's decline and return it to a path of success and sustainable growth.*

# Ghana football in turmoil after another AFCON failure

By Simon Hughes and  
Carl Anka, The Athletic

**A**T around midday on Monday, it was difficult to know whether Ghana's footballers waiting in the team hotel were focused or utterly miserable.

This was before their key game with Mozambique, where a draw left them needing miracles from other results in the remaining group games to qualify for the round of 16.

Those miracles never came. Ghana were out and their head coach Chris Hughton was sacked.

Ghana had been sharing a base with Nigeria, who went through to the knock-out stage on the same evening after beating Guinea-Bissau.

Since their win against Cote d'Ivoire in their second game, there has been a notable uplift in the mood of the Nigerian players. This has been evident in the way they interact in public spaces, as well as the informal way they communicate with any guests who wish to speak with them.

Ghana? That's a very different story. Eight hours before kick-off, as they waited for lunch, they were barely talking among themselves, let alone allowing anyone else to

join the group.

There has been a quietness to Ghana over the last fortnight, as well as a slowness. In the Plateau's Pullman resort, where they were staying, there was not a sense of confidence, enthusiasm, togetherness or belonging.

The four-time AFCON champions' campaign was miserable. They have not won the trophy since 1982 and this was their second successive exit at the group stage.

Through conversations with sources (some of whom have been stationed at the team hotel) who would like to remain anonymous to protect their employment statuses, The Athletic has been told why things have unravelled in such a disappointing manner.

Some of the problems go back years, others are more recent and at the heart of it all are bubbling tensions between the team, the FA and the Ghanaian public.

Eight nations have been based in Abidjan during this tournament and when it comes to each of their fans, the Ghanaian supporters have been the most sceptical, critical and downbeat of the lot.

Even the ones who were paid to be here by the country's football association were disgruntled. It has been convention for these fans to be flown into tournaments to

create an atmosphere inside the stadiums through music and dance. Yet there's rarely much public clarity about this process regarding how they are treated and paid.

For this AFCON, 202 supporters were driven from Ghana to Ivory Coast. Normally, their transport and accommodation are taken care of and they have the option to be fed every day or given money to sort meals out themselves.

Three days into this trip, the money had not come through. This led a member of the supporters union to threaten to boycott the tournament. The person was acting alone, however, and when the union found out, it organised a press briefing where it stated that there was no collective boycott threat.

Instead, the members reaffirmed their commitment to the competition and said they would do their best to help the team.

It was then revealed that the supporters had been promised \$400 (£313) each for their 14 days in Abidjan. The reception to that information in Ghana has been bad. There are deep economic problems in the country and Ghanaians could not believe that fans were being paid so much money to essentially go on holiday for a fortnight when teachers and doctors were being paid less.



• Kurt Simeon-Okraku  
— GFA President

And to top it all off, as of Monday evening, the supporters were still waiting for their money.

The divisions over money increased on Wednesday when Sam Okudzeto Ablakwa, a former deputy minister for education, claimed that filed documents showed that almost 30million Ghanaian cedis (around \$2m; £1.6m) had been spent on salaries, travel and expenses in the months before the tournament, something he said did not sit right amid the backdrop of an economic crisis in the country.

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