

## Kingston: Ghana needs local coach

• Ready for Black Stars job

Story: Peter Sarbah

**L**ARYEA Kingston, a former Black Stars midfielder and current Assistant Coach of the Black Starlets, is advocating the appointment of a Ghanaian coach for the Black Stars, stressing the need to move away from an overreliance on expatriates for the top coaching position.

Following the dismissal of Coach Chris Hughton after Ghana's poor performance in the ongoing Africa Cup of Nations, the Ghana Football Association (GFA) began a search

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• Laryea Kingston - Wants the Black Stars job

Hasten  
slowly at  
clamour  
for **Mainoo**

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• Kobbie Mainoo



• Victor Osimhen (right) is expected to lead Nigeria's attack

**AFCON semis:**

**Nigeria coach demands  
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## Voice of Graphic SPORTS

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### GFA must return to foundational team-building policy

**AMIDST** the growing enthusiasm for Manchester United midfielder Kobbie Mainoo's inclusion in the Black Stars squad, former player Laryea Kingston advises caution and patience with the growing appetite for talents of Ghanaian heritage.

While acknowledging Mainoo's undeniable potential, Kingston underscores the importance of a meticulous integration process to ensure the young talent and others like him align seamlessly with the national team's culture and philosophy.

Like many well-meaning football fans, Kingston not only applauds the youngster's potential but also advocates for a shift in Ghana's invitation policy, stressing the need to prioritize outstanding players with genuine motivation and passion for representing the

nation.

In an interview with the Graphic Sports (see page 1), Kingston acknowledges the starlet's technical prowess and attributes but highlights the necessity for the Ghana Football Association (GFA) to engage with the young talent and create a welcoming environment before considering a national team call-up.

Drawing on personal experience, the retired national star and now assistant coach of the Black Starlets stresses the significance of player integration, especially for those with Ghanaian heritage but lacking a deep connection to the country. Successful examples, such as former Black Stars players, Junior Agogo and Quincy Owusu-Abeyie, highlight the role of current players in fostering a sense of belonging for newcomers.

He cited the example of Inaki Williams, who has struggled in the senior national team despite excelling at his Spanish club due to insufficient integration.

Critics of Ghana's recent policy of scouting Europe for players of Ghanaian heritage express concerns about building the national team around players lacking genuine passion and commitment. The scepticism is exemplified by players like Kevin-Prince Boateng, who represented Ghana at the FIFA World Cup but showed less enthusiasm for less glamorous competitions. England-born Callum Hudson-Odoi, despite overtures from the Ghana FA, has also delayed committing his international future to

Ghana.

Kingston's advice reinforces the importance of a selective approach, ensuring that invitations are extended to those who are not just opportunists but possess the genuine desire to contribute to Ghana's football success.

Aligning Mainoo's style of play with the national team's strategy and philosophy is crucial, Kingston insists, urging a thorough assessment beyond club performances. Drawing parallels with the Spanish national team, which prioritises players whose style seamlessly fits their tactical approach, Kingston advocates a thoughtful and thorough approach to Mainoo's potential inclusion.

The Graphic Sports aligns with the calls for the GFA to exercise patience in the recent clamour talented players of Ghanaian heritage in the European leagues. Instead, it is important for the football-governing body to revisit the fundamentals of a time-honoured team-building strategy — constructing the national team around players who have grown together from age-group teams, ascending through the ranks, emphasising continuity, camaraderie, and a strong commitment to the Black Stars.

Integrating promising talent is crucial, but it must align with a well-established team-building policy that prioritises continuity, camaraderie, and a steadfast commitment to

## How surfing is challenging tradition in a Ghanaian town

**A**PPPEARING in *Surfer*, an article was titled 'Africa — Home of Surfing?' and illustrated with a heavy-handed caricature of a tribesman dragging a board out of the surf.

Written in the 1960s and forwarded to Ben Lalande by colleague Sarah Hughson over Instagram nearly 60 years later, it set the filmmakers thinking.

A few months later in Busua, a small Ghanaian fishing town, they focused their camera on some surfers bobbing in the Atlantic and the blue morning light.

As the article had explained, it is a centuries-old scene. But there was also something new in the images they were capturing. This group of surfers was all girls. And in Ghana that difference is making a difference.

"One day I went surfing and my mother beat me with a pan," says Vanessa Turkson with a smile as she swings side-saddle in a low-slung hammock.

"She was saying 'I don't want to lose you.'"

One of her friends tells how her own parents would inspect her feet for grains of sand, ready to punish her if they discovered any.

It wasn't without reason. The sea is a force to be feared. The Gulf of Guinea swirls with dangerous currents off Ghana's coast and, until 20 years ago, swimming skills were scarce, external in the town.

The water is where livelihoods are earned -

tuna fishing is especially important to Busua's economy - but also where lives are lost.

Every few months another body would wash up on the beach.

Parents feared for their daughters with reason, but also with discrimination.

While they have prevented their girls from enjoying the beach, their boys have learned to harness the local waves, with Busua becoming one of several surf hotspots in Ghana.

Justice Kwofie is at the heart of Busua's scene, running a surf school alongside his six brothers.

Kwofie saw the division that kept girls at home after school, cooking food, helping their parents and working the land, and was determined to break it down.

"I lost both my parents when I was young and grew up with my grandmother," he says.

"When she passed, another woman took care of me and now my surf shop is supported by a woman.

"I realised that in Africa the women do all the hard work. It shouldn't be only the men on the beach and then you go home and your sisters cook for you. We need to do something to make the girls part of us."

Five years ago Kwofie and his brothers started a programme called Black Girls Surf to teach female surfers to first swim and then catch waves.

Turkson, once chased around the kitchen



• Children practising surfing in Busua

by her pan-wielding mother, was one of those to win her parents round and sign up. She learned to surf, but she didn't only learn to surf.

"I feel happy because I am with my friends sitting in the water, chatting and things," she says with a smile.

"Then, whenever I am standing on a board, it makes me feel like I am flying.

"It makes me comfortable, like I am not stressing. Everyone can do surfing; it is like dancing.

"Surfing has taught me that in the olden days they say that girls cannot surf, only boys. Now I know that whatever a man can do, a woman can do better!"

Kwofie says the teenage pregnancy rate in Busua has declined since Obibini club — Ghana's only female surf club — was set up to give young women a place to play, learn and socialise.

The club is part of a scene that has sprung up after decades of lying dormant in some

areas of Africa.

Since the *Surfer* article was published, the evidence that surfing developed independently in Africa many years ago — rather than being imported from Polynesia, California or elsewhere — has only increased.

One key account comes from a Scottish soldier. While stationed 150 miles up the coast from Busua at Accra in 1834, James Alexander recorded a curious activity, external that was previously unknown to him.

"From the beach, meanwhile, might be seen boys swimming into the sea, with light boards under their stomachs," he wrote in his diary.

"They waited for a surf; and came rolling like a cloud on top of it."

Busua's modern chapter, empowered and better equipped, has fascinated filmmakers and photographers and been commercialised by brands. —BBC