

Black Stars to outshine Wild Beasts

Story: Peter Sarbah

The Black Stars' pursuit of maximum points in their double-header 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifiers gained momentum following their victory over Mali last Thursday. This win has renewed optimism under Coach Otto Addo as they face the Wild Beasts of the Central African Republic (CAR) at the Baba Yara Stadium today. Last Thursday, the Black Stars showed remarkable

resilience, coming from behind to defeat Mali 2-1 in Bamako. This crucial victory significantly boosted their chances of qualifying for the World Cup for the fifth time. The Group I standings are now highly

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• Jordan Ayew is expected to play a pivotal role in today's match as he makes his 104th appearance for Ghana

• Alexander Djiku — Ghana's defensive rock

Yeboah, Saminu join Olympic train

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Foreign coach needed to revive Bombers — Lartey

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Voice of Graphic SPORTS

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Mali victory must spark hope for Black Stars' redemption

GHANA'S Black Stars have been given a lifeline, and it comes in the form of a stirring victory against Mali. Otto Addo, the Head Coach, orchestrated a comeback that not only salvaged three crucial points but also reignited hopes for the World Cup qualifiers. This triumph, marked by Otto Addo's tactical acumen and the players' unwavering resolve, must serve as a beacon of inspiration as they gear up to face the Central African Republic.

The win against Mali wasn't just a result; it was a statement of intent. Otto Addo's decision to trust in youth paid dividends, as the team displayed resilience and tactical flexibility on the pitch. From adjusting

formations to making impactful substitutions, Otto Addo's astute decisions guided the Black Stars to victory. Now, as they prepare to face the Central African Republic today, this same boldness and tactical prowess must be employed.

The road ahead in the World Cup qualifiers is fraught with challenges, but Ghana have shown they are capable of overcoming adversity. With Otto Addo at the helm, there is a sense of renewed optimism because he is back at a familiar terrain. His ability to instil a fighting spirit in the team, coupled with his tactical nous, bodes well for their campaign.

However, the win against Mali should not be seen as an endpoint but rather as a stepping stone. There's still work to be done and improvements to be made. Addo must ensure that the momentum gained from this victory is sustained, building on the positives while addressing any areas of weakness.

Facing the Central African Republic will require the Black Stars to be at their best. It is a chance for them to further solidify their position in the qualifiers and inch closer to their World Cup dreams. But it will take more than just talent; it will require determination, grit and smart decision-making on the part of both the players and the coaching staff.

For the Ghana coach, this is an opportunity to prove himself on the international stage. His vision for the team, coupled with his ability to make bold and tactically astute decisions, will be put to the test. Success in the qualifiers will hinge on his leadership and the collective effort of the team.

As Ghana embark on this journey, they must draw inspiration from their recent triumph. The win against Mali was not just another victory; it was a glimpse of what this players are capable of achieving to a common purpose.

Now, it is time to build on that foundation, to continue striving for greatness, one match at a time. And with Otto Addo at the helm, guiding them with his tactical acumen and unwavering belief, the future looks promising for the senior national team after recent setbacks.

With a new wave of optimism around the team, Graphic Sports is calling on Ghanaians to storm the Baba Yara Stadium to rally behind the Black Stars to defeat their Central African Republic opponents to enhance their chances in the qualifiers.

Bellingham: From boy wonder to Champions League winner (2)

By Harry Thomas-Humphreys, Metro.co.uk

GROWING in influence as the season went on, Bellingham's campaign culminated with a start in the DFB-Pokal final against RB Leipzig, which Dortmund won 4-1 to hand Bellingham his first trophy.

Finishing his debut season in Germany with four goals in 46 appearances in all competitions, Bellingham was voted Newcomer of the Season by his teammates and was the runner-up to Barcelona star Pedri in the 2021 Kopa Trophy.

Underlining his stature in the team, Bellingham was handed the armband for a Champions League group stage fixture against Sevilla in October 2022, becoming the third youngest player ever to do so.

Bellingham finished his second season with the German giants with six goals and 14 assists as the club finished eighth points behind champions Bayern Munich.

Dortmund agonisingly missed out on the title to Bayern on the final day of the 2022/23 season after drawing at home to Mainz – a game which Bellingham was an unused substitute owing to a knee injury.

Despite missing out on team silverware,

Bellingham's performances, which saw him register 14 goals and seven assists, earn him the Bundesliga Player of the Season award.

Global superstardom at Real Madrid Bellingham snubbed interest from the likes of Liverpool, Manchester United and Manchester City to sign for Real Madrid in June 2023.

Los Blancos paid an initial £88.4m for Bellingham, which could rise to as much as £115m with add-ons.

He is currently the third most expensive English player of all-time, behind international colleagues Declan Rice and Jack

Grealish, although he could rise to the top of the list if the add-ons are met.

Bellingham's Madrid career got off to a dream start with a goal on his debut against

Athletic Club, which was followed by a brace in his second game against Almeria and then late winners against Celta Vigo and Getafe.

His exploits in front of goal saw him become just the third player to score in each of his first four games for the club.

Arguably the finest moment of his

Real Madrid career to date was when he scored two goals, one of which was a 92nd minute winner, in the 2-1 El Clasico win over Barcelona in October.

Bellingham, who is the first Madrid player to score on his La Liga, Champions League and El Clasico debut, broke the record for the most goals scored in a player's first 15 games for the club when his 14th strike arrived against Cadiz in November.

Just weeks after winning the Kopa Trophy, Bellingham was announced as the winner of the Golden Boy award for 2023, which is awarded to the best U21 footballer playing in one of the top five divisions in Europe.

The second trophy of Bellingham's career was claimed with a 4-1 win over Barcelona in the Spanish Super Cup final in January.

The silverware has kept coming, with Bellingham's form helping Real secure the La Liga title with another crucial goal in the 3-2 win over Barcelona in April helping get his side over the line. Los Blancos added another trophy with their 15th Champions League triumph in London.

He closed out the season with 23 goals and 13 assists in 42 appearances. England fans will be hopeful there is plenty more to come this summer.



• Jude Bellingham