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• Rose Amoaniwaa Yeboah
— Owed money for her
African Games exploits

• Joseph Paul
Amoah — Captain
Ghana's athletics
team in Paris

**Ahead of Olympics
campaign:**

Athletes demand allowances

Story: Rosalind K. Amoh

GHANA'S top track and field stars are raising their voices, urging the Ministry of Youth and Sports to clear their outstanding allowances ahead of

the upcoming Olympic Games.

These athletes, who have represented Ghana at international events, insist their allowances be paid in the currency promised

to avoid financial losses.

As the Ghanaian athletes prepare for the Olympics at their training base in the French city of Strasbourg, they maintain

• Continued on back page

• Mohammed
Kudus — Key
player in new-look
Black Star



Wimbledon final
**Alcaraz
dominates
Djokovic** < Page 7



**Ayew
confident
in new
Black Stars**
Page 5

Voice of Graphic SPORTS

MONDAY, JULY 15 — 21 2024

Ghana's Olympians deserve fair treatment

AS Ghana's premier track and field athletes prepare for the upcoming Olympics, their urgent call to the Ministry of Youth and Sports for the settlement of outstanding allowances must be heeded. This issue transcends financial fairness, impacting trust and motivation. These athletes, who have consistently represented Ghana on the international stage, demand that their allowances be paid in the promised currency to avoid unnecessary financial losses.

Athletes are still awaiting unpaid allowances from the World Athletics Relay Championships in the Bahamas and the African Athletics Championships in Douala, Cameroon, despite their medal-winning performances. This problem is becoming increasingly widespread. While per diem payments were made during the African Games last June, no allowances have been provided for the African Athletics

Championships. This leaves athletes, especially those based abroad, returning home with bills to pay.

Receiving payments in Ghanaian cedis instead of dollars creates significant hurdles for overseas-based athletes. Without cedi bank accounts, athletes must authorise family members to handle the cheques, convert the money, and send it to them. This process results in substantial financial losses due to transfer fees and bank charges, posing a major disincentive. Undue delays in paying bonuses and other promised incentives erode trust and demotivate athletes. When these athletes give their all for the nation, the least they expect is for the state to honour its promises. It is particularly disheartening when the state spares no expense in supporting national football teams, especially the Black Stars, who, despite significant investment, often fail to bring comparable honours to the nation. Such disparities in treatment make athletes feel undervalued and question their commitment to representing Ghana.

The men's 4x100m relay team, who qualified for the Olympics in the Bahamas last May, and the athletics team in Douala, who won two gold medals and a silver, still await their rewards. This situation starkly underscores the need for prompt and fair treatment of our athletes, whose dedication brings glory to the nation.

Fuseini Bawa, President of Ghana Athletics, has

acknowledged the delay in payments and the inconvenience caused by issuing cheques in cedis. The Ministry of Youth and Sports has promised to resolve the issue promptly. The Ministry has been urged to treat bonuses for medals at the African Athletics Championships like those at AFCON and to push for the requested bonuses in the African Athletics Championships budget.

Graphic Sports maintains that addressing the currency issue is also critical to preventing reluctance among athletes to compete for Ghana. Most of our talented athletes are based abroad, and their welfare must be managed to ensure mutual benefit—honours for the state and fair rewards for the athletes.

Ghana's track and field stars are making a compelling case for the timely and convenient payment of their allowances. As they prepare for the Olympics, resolving these financial issues is crucial to maintaining their motivation and commitment to representing the nation on the world stage. This is a call to action for the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the government at large: honour your commitment to our athletes. Their trust and dedication hinge on the assurance that their efforts will be fairly rewarded. Let us not falter in supporting those who strive to bring honour to our nation.

Is referee Zwayer most controversial in Euros history?

UEFA created a mess for themselves by appointing a convicted match-fixer as the referee for one of the two Euro 2024 semi-finals. By all accounts, Felix Zwayer is a solid referee, but to put him front and centre for one of the three biggest games in UEFA's flagship tournament has, unsurprisingly, created a furore.

Zwayer will forever be tarnished by his involvement in a match-fixing scheme in 2005 which led to a fine and six-month ban he hasn't done his reputation any favours (at least in the Netherlands) with a series of decisions he made in the England v the Netherlands semi-final.

Discourse on this incident may continue well beyond Sunday's final, with England seemingly gifted a penalty following an attempted block on a Harry Kane shot by Denzel Dumfries. Most

media figures have slammed the decision, with Gary Neville calling it "disgraceful," on ITV.

Former Dutch international Pierre van Hooijdonk told Dutch TV, "The referee and the VAR should be blacklisted, terrible!"

Maybe cancel that trip to Amsterdam, Felix.

Some eagle-eyed viewers also claimed Zwayer and the VAR missed an obvious handball in the build-up to the penalty, with the ball seemingly hitting Bukayo Saka's hand en route to Harry Kane.

Dutch captain Virgil Van Dijk was booked for his protests to the awarded penalty, with the Liverpool defender demanding referees are made to, "come here and explain themselves, like we have to do when we do



• Holland captain Virgil van Dijk challenging a decision by the referee

something wrong," per BeIN Sports.

Felix Zwayer has refereed three other matches during Euro 2024, Italy vs Albania, Portugal vs Turkey, and Romania vs Netherlands in the round of 16. Never shy of handing out bookings, the German official has given out at least 2 yellows to both sides in every game he has officiated, per WhoScored.

The Dutch faced Romania in the round of 16 and prevailed 3-0 with goals from Cody Gakpo and Donnyell

Malen proving the difference, for want of throwing fuel on the fire, Zwayer's previous controversies and refereeing abilities didn't become the focus of Dutch hatred following that game for whatever reason...

Whether you believe it was a penalty or not, UEFA putting a referee with a match-fixing conviction in charge of such an important game puts them and him in an awkward position. It is avoidable and only creates headlines all involved would rather not see.--MSN

• Referee Felix Zwayer