

# Black Stars: Appiah laments lack of progress, leadership



• Stephen Appiah —  
Worried about decline  
of Ghanaian football

Story: Maurice Quansah

**F**ORMER Black Stars Skipper, Stephen Appiah, has voiced his frustrations over the lack of progress in the Ghana national team, Black Stars, expressing concern that the team's performance has remained stagnant for years without any tangible improvement.

Appiah, who led the team to their first-ever FIFA World Cup appearance in 2006 and another outing in 2010, attributed the Black Stars' struggles to an evident lack of leadership within the squad. His comments are particularly significant given his illustrious career in Ghana, Italy and Turkey before his managerial role as Team Manager of the Black Stars in 2017.

Appearing before a parliamentary fact-finding committee on the state of football, the 43-year-old football icon highlighted the declining interest in the sport among Ghanaians. He attributed this to the national team's prolonged trophy drought, with the last Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) victory dating back to 1982.

"There's been a consistent decline in our performance. When you look at the past, we were competing at the highest



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## Voice of

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## Revamping Ghana football: Appiah's call to action deserves serious attention

*THE echoes of Stephen Appiah's impassioned plea for sweeping reforms within Ghana's football landscape should not go unheard. The former Black Stars captain, revered for his leadership on and off the pitch, did not mince words when he outlined the alarming stagnation and lack of vision that have crippled the national team and the local league.*

*Appearing before Parliament's fact-finding committee on the state of Ghanaian football, last week Appiah lamented that the Black Stars, once the pride of Africa, have regressed significantly. His testimony struck a nerve—highlighting the disconnection between the national team and the support base, declining*

*standards in the Ghanaian Premier League (GPL), and a failure to invest in youth development.*

*Appiah's concerns should be a wake-up call to the Ghana Football Association (GFA), the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and all stakeholders. The absence of clear leadership, he noted, has left the team in disarray. This void had seen captaincy change hands frequently, creating uncertainty and inconsistency. Appiah, who led Ghana to its maiden World Cup in 2006, pointed to this lack of leadership as a major factor behind the team's struggles to compete on the continent and the global stage.*

*More strikingly, his remarks about the poor state of the GPL should spur urgent action. He revealed shocking realities—players borrowing boots just to compete in matches—depicting a league starved of the resources required to nurture talent and promote professional standards. If players are not well-paid and provided with basic equipment, how can they focus on delivering quality performances on the pitch?*

*The former national skipper's recommendation for government intervention is spot on. The government must take a proactive role in providing financial support to revive traditional*

*clubs, many of which have lost their glory. Infrastructure development, adequate remuneration for players, and investment in youth academies are key ingredients for building a thriving football industry.*

*Appiah's plea for a structured youth development programme cannot be overemphasised. He calls for a 10-year development plan that nurtures young talent, offering them a clear pathway to transition seamlessly into the senior national team. Such a strategy is crucial if Ghana hopes to restore the Black Stars to their former glory. But the task cannot be left to the GFA alone. Parliament, as the voice of the people, must ensure that policy frameworks are established to support the sport's development. It's time to reconnect the national team with the communities they represent, rebuild the GPL, and provide young players with the opportunities they deserve.*

*The Graphic Sports backs Appiah's diagnosis and prescriptions. The question remains: will those with the power and influence listen and act, or will Ghanaian football continue to languish in mediocrity? The time for serious consideration and action is now!*

## Was the Joshua vs Dubois fight staged?

**D**ANIEL Dubois defeated Anthony Joshua (AJ) in a highly anticipated fight, but many people asked themselves questions afterwards.

Boxing pundit Bamidele Bakare raised his doubts about Joshua's performance, suggesting the fight may have been "staged".

Dubois was the strongest fighter in the ring, dominating the fight consistently. The 27-year-old fighter knocked Joshua down four times before a brutal K.O. punch in the fifth round, sending him down for good.

Dubois's strong performance leaves no doubt that he is the deserved champion. The IBF heavyweight titleholder defended his belt with a one-sided demolition of Joshua.

"Are you not entertained?", Dubois asked about the sold-out Wembley Stadium in London. The fight was very one-sided, contrary to all the pre-fight predictions.

The 27-year-old keeps his clean 22-2-0 ring record, making him a formidable heavy-weight opponent. Dubois entered the ring with a clear objective in mind: the knockout.

Joshua was knocked down after taking a powerful right hand to the face, where he received a standing eight count from the referee.

Boxing pundit, Bamidele Bakare criticized Joshua's technique, questioning whether the fight was fixed. AJ's defense was poor, and his overall performance seemed weak when compared to his usual self.

"It seemed like a fixed match, and Dubois didn't get the memo, so he boxed properly. AJ had a poor defense and no

attacks; he backed off throughout, grappled, etc," shared the boxing pundit in an analysis.

Bakare further criticized Joshua's half-guard and his inability to turn the tides throughout the fight. He further criticized Joshua for walking into Dubois' punches, according to the Kenyan publication Tuko.

The fight was taking in many bets, much like UFC fighter Israel Adesanya, who

placed \$10,000 on 'AJ' winning the fight between the 10th and 12th rounds, according to the fighter's social media.

Joshua's loss puts him in a tricky situation in the later stages of his career, as critics and pundits suggest the fight looked suspicious. An uncertain future for 'AJ', who takes on another major defeat.

—MSN



• Daniel Dubois (right) unleashes a powerful right to Anthony Joshua's body