

Otto Addo will lead Ghana at World Cup — GFA boss declares



• Vote of confidence: Otto Addo and GFA boss, Kurt Simeon-Okraku (right)

Story: Maurice Quansah

GHANA Football Association (GFA) President, Kurt Simeon-Okraku, has emphatically quashed speculation about the future of Black Stars coach Otto Addo, declaring that the 50-year-old tactician will lead Ghana to the 2026 FIFA World Cup after masterminding another successful qualification campaign.

In a bold statement that left no room for doubt, Mr Simeon-Okraku said it was preposterous to even question the future of a coach who

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GFA's vote of confidence ends needless debate about Otto Addo's future

AT last, a firm declaration has ended months of needless speculation. Ghana Football Association (GFA) President, Kurt Simeon-Okraku, has drawn a clear line under debates about Otto Addo's future, confirming that the 50-year-old coach will lead the Black Stars to the 2026 FIFA World Cup. It is the kind of decisive backing that brings stability to a technical setup and clarity of focus to a team preparing for football's biggest global stage. In recent months, discussions about Otto Addo's job security had persisted despite his near-flawless qualifying record. Under his watch,

Ghana won seven and drew one of eight World Cup qualifying matches, finishing top of Group I to seal their fifth appearance at the tournament. Yet, some voices continued to question whether he was the right man for the job — a debate that now seems both misplaced and unfair.

The FA chief's response was emphatic: He [Otto Addo] is going nowhere. His words are not merely a public endorsement; they are a much-needed declaration of direction. For a team rebuilding their identity after missing the Africa Cup of Nations for the first time in two decades, this affirmation ends uncertainty and allows the technical team to plan long-term, free from unnecessary distractions.

The faith shown in Otto Addo is richly earned.

The same coach who endured heavy criticism after a failed 2025 AFCON qualifying campaign has turned adversity into triumph, restoring confidence, unity and purpose to a side once adrift. His unbeaten run of eight competitive matches signals not just recovery, but also renewal — a team playing with conviction, structure and spirit. His ability to identify emerging talents, inject discipline, and bring tactical flexibility has given Ghanaian football a new sense of hope.

Otto Addo has been gracious in acknowledging the GFA's unwavering support since day one, including standing by him even in bad times. It

is this trust, he noted, that fuelled the team's turnaround, more than any drastic tactical overhaul. His approach now blends calm authority with quiet determination, leadership qualities forged through turbulence.

As Ghana prepares for another shot at the World Cup, Otto Addo's philosophy of continuity and longevity must take centre stage. Building a competitive national team demands patience and consistency, not knee-jerk reactions after every setback. The GFA President's declaration, therefore, represents more than loyalty to a coach; it is an investment in a vision, one that prizes long-term growth, stability and measured progress over short-term appeasement.

Otto Addo has his eyes firmly set on the next frontier, leading Ghana beyond the group stage and reviving the spirit of the 2006 and 2010 World Cups, where Ghana stood toe-to-toe with the world's best.

The *Graphic Sports* beliefs foundation has been laid, and the momentum must not be lost. Now that the noise has been silenced, the nation must rally behind the coach and his men. Ghana's journey to North America 2026 begins with clarity, confidence, and collective belief.

Gvardiol: I nearly quit football for basketball

JOSKO Gvardiol's £77m move to Manchester City from RB Leipzig in August 2023 made him the second-most expensive defender of all time.

But the 23-year-old Croatia international revealed he nearly quit his "dream" career in football when playing for Dinamo Zagreb.

"I was thinking about quitting because I like basketball as well," the centre-back told *BBC Sport's* Betty Glover.

Aged 16 and struggling to get game time for Zagreb's youth team, Gvardiol considered avenues away from football.

"I wasn't sure in football any more because when you get to the training ground you don't feel happy any more, you know?"

"I was just trying to find other solutions and to feel happier than I felt before because all of my friends were playing basketball."

Gvardiol bided his time and broke into the senior team, winning back-to-back titles with Zagreb and signing off with a league and cup double before sealing his move to the Bundesliga for £16m — a record fee for a Croatian teenager.

He impressed in his two seasons in Germany and after 87 appearances for RB Leipzig, Gvardiol signed a five-year deal at Manchester City in 2023.

Harry Maguire is the only defender in world football to have moved for more money, joining Manchester United from Leicester City for £80m in 2019.

"My dream obviously was to become a professional football player, but I didn't know that I was going to go that far," Gvardiol added.

"If you go five years back and ask me, do you see yourself at Manchester City in 2023, '24, '25? I would say no chance, like really impossible."

Gone are the days where Gvardiol struggles for minutes.

He has become a key component of Guardiola's system, with no defender having scored more goals in the Premier League since his arrival.

"In my head last season I was like, 'no matter what, how I feel, no matter if I am fit or not, I just want to play. I just want to compete to help the team,'" Gvardiol said.

"I could feel it on my body, especially in the summer. I had a [knee] injury but now it's finally good after six months."

Last season, he clocked up playing time of more than 6,000 minutes for club and country, featuring in 55 of City's 61 matches and missing only 140 Premier League minutes in the campaign.

In a recent Fifapro report, Gvardiol ranked eighth among the top 10 players by matchday squad inclusions for 2024-25 worldwide.

"We cannot forget last season he was one of the most important players, in terms of he played and played," Guardiola said.

"He's so young, physically he is outstanding, can play in two roles perfectly. He's incredible, coach-able, listens a lot, wants to improve and that will help him to be a better player."

Guardiola favoured playing Gvardiol at left-back for the majority of last season,



• Josko Gvardiol

including in a period when the defending champions managed only one win in 13 games.

It was their first trophy-less season since 2016-17 and Gvardiol said of their poor form: "Once it started, it was quite difficult to get out of."

"We spoke about it a lot of times and we were trying to find a solution. At the end we

managed to be in the Champions League again and be in the FA Cup final."

This term Guardiola's City seem to have put last season's woes behind them, helped by their summer signings.

After losing two of their first three Premier League games, City are unbeaten in five, with Gvardiol returning to his familiar role at left-sided centre-back.

"I'm happy to be back to my position," he said. "Just play simple, protect the goal, defend the goal."

"Obviously we have new goals this season and we want to aim high. But I like to say that it's quite early to talk about our goals, the season is long so let's go game by game."

Former England and Manchester City forward Ellen White said Gvardiol's return to centre-back has helped improve City's defence this season.

"He was all right at left-back and scored a lot of goals," she told BBC Sport.

"The stats speak for themselves - they are now conceding less goals, and shots faced as well."

"The partnership he has built with Ruben Dias, and having Rodri in front and Gianluigi Donnarumma behind, they are building the connections and relationships that they didn't have last season."--BBC