



• *Antoine Semenyo has hit the ground running since joining Man City*

Unbelievable!

Guardiola lauds Semenyo's impact at Man City

MANCHESTER City's new star, Antoine Semenyo has earned the praise of his manager Pep Guardiola for his impact since joining his record transfer from Bournemouth this month, saying that the Ghanaian and the club's newest signing Marc Guéhi will be key to

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• *Albert Amoah scored on his Kotoko return*

Amoah must earn place

— **Coach Zito**

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Mane's AFCON legacy

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Voice of

Graphic SPORTS

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Athletes must be heard; Ghana's sports can no longer sideline them

THE revival of the Ghana Olympic Athletes' Commission (GOAC) is a welcome, long-overdue step for our nation's sports. For years, athletes—the very lifeblood of sport—have been sidelined in decisions that affect their careers, welfare, and opportunities. Ghanaian sports cannot thrive while those who compete, sacrifice, and inspire remain voiceless.

The GOAC's 2026 Forum, held last Saturday in Accra on the theme "Strengthening Athletes' Representation and Welfare in Ghanaian Sports," brought this issue to the forefront. Athletes from across disciplines convened to chart a course for meaningful engagement. The forum, attended by GOC President Richard Akpokavie and former Olympic leader Prof. Francis Dadoo, sent a clear

message that athletes must have a seat at the table if Ghana's sporting ecosystem is to mature.

Modelled on the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Athletes' Commission, the GOAC was first established in 2016 but was rendered ineffective after the previous administration denied it voting rights. Today, under Mr Akpokavie, a former national hockey player, the commission has not only been restored but granted formal representation on the GOC board. This is a decisive move that signals a new era of athlete-centred governance.

The newly elected eight-member executive, led by former Olympian John Ampomah, brings both credibility and experience. With athletes like swimmer Abeku Jackson, sprinter Gemma Acheampong, and boxing medallist Abdul Wahid Omar on board, the commission is well-positioned to demand that federations establish their own Athletes' Commissions. This is not a matter of courtesy—it is essential for accountability, access to funding, career transition support, and informed decision-making.

As Ampomah rightly stated, federations must involve athletes in decisions affecting training, resources, and international

competition. Similarly, Prof. Dadoo challenged athletes to hold their federation leadership accountable, stressing that the responsibility for funding and management lies with the federations themselves—not the GOC. Meanwhile, Mr Akpokavie urged athletes to leverage the Ghana Sports Fund and approach requests collectively, reinforcing the principle that a united athlete voice carries weight.

Ghana must learn from leading sporting nations that athletes are not ancillary stakeholders; they are central to progress.

The Graphic Sports maintains that empowering athletes improves governance, drives performance, and fosters sustainability. Placing athletes at the heart of decision-making, as the IOC and other top sports nations do, is no longer optional; it is imperative.

The GOAC's revival is more than a procedural milestone. It is a call to action. National federations must stop paying lip service to athlete welfare. They must institutionalise representation, listen to athletes, and act on their insights. Only then can Ghanaian sports truly progress.

Athletes have earned the right to be heard. It is time our sports listened.

Why £67m Eze has been battling for Arsenal minutes

EBERECHI Eze enjoyed one of the standout moments of Arsenal's season when he scored a hat-trick in a 4-1 Premier League win over neighbours Tottenham in November. But now he is struggling to make the starting line-up.

In the Gunners' past six league games, Eze has played a total of 23 minutes. He was an unused substitute in four of those matches.

The England international was signed from Crystal Palace in August for £67m to add creativity to Arsenal's attack — he shoots freely, while his ability to open a defence in a flash means he adds an element of flair to the forward line that not many others in the squad have.

That makes the fact that he played just over 10 minutes in each of the recent 0-0 draws with Nottingham Forest and Liverpool, when Arsenal did not allow either of those teams to have a shot on target, even stranger.

If Eze is not allowed to showcase his ability when Arsenal need a breakthrough, the questions about where he fits into Mikel Arteta's team will keep coming.

Odegaard's return impacts Eze

Eze has five goals and four assists in 26 games for Arsenal this season but has not scored since

that hat-trick against Spurs.

The 27-year-old's only starts since the turn of the year have been in the FA Cup win at Portsmouth on January 11 and the Champions League victory against Inter Milan last Tuesday.

Eze played 64 minutes at San Siro and had a big involvement in the Gunners' opener in a 3-1 win but it was still not a vintage performance from the England forward.

One of the biggest reasons why Eze has found it difficult to break back into the starting XI is the return of Martin Odegaard.

The Arsenal captain returned to fitness at the end of November and has started eight of the 10 Premier League games since then.

Odegaard and Eze play in similar positions and if Arteta was to start both of them, as he did against West Ham in October, it would mean one of Declan Rice or Martin Zubimendi would have to drop to the bench — and that is unlikely given how important those two are to Arsenal.

Eze can also play from the left wing, with his best performances for his former club Crystal Palace coming from that side, albeit from a narrower number 10 position.

But his route into the team there has been restricted by the impressive form of Leandro Trossard, who has been one of Arsenal's best players this season.

It is something that Arteta has

previously acknowledged, but that does not mean Eze cannot excel from elsewhere on the pitch — having also been used on the right side of Arsenal's middle three.

"He is that intelligent, and that good as a footballer, that he can occupy any space. I am more driven to decide where he plays in relation to the players around him than his position," Arteta said before the 0-0 draw with Liverpool.

Eze has had limited starts from the left wing and the last time Arteta played him there, at Aston Villa on December 6, he was at fault for their opening goal in a 2-1 defeat after failing to track right-

back Matty Cash.

Arteta has said that during his period out of the team, Eze has been exceptional, and that his desire has gone "even higher".

At the turn of the year, the manager said Eze had played more football than he had at the same stage of any previous season.

That is true in terms of his Premier League career — by January, he had appeared in five more games and clocked up 75 more minutes than he did last term at Palace, though he had twice played more by that stage for QPR in the Championship in 2019-20.

The Gunners are having an

excellent season, seven points clear in the Premier League and with a 100% record in the Champions League.

They also have a 3-2 lead over Chelsea from the first leg of their Carabao Cup semi-final and are in the fourth round of the FA Cup.

Eze is still getting game time, albeit not regularly in the Premier League.

A big favourite of manager Thomas Tuchel, he will hope to make England's World Cup squad — but the Three Lions boss has previously said it is not enough to just be a good team-mate.

That will be playing on Eze's mind. — **BBC**



• Eberechi Eze