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Kudus seeks specialist treatment in Amsterdam

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• Hearts of Oak's Mawuli Wayo (left) fends off a challenge from his Kotoko marker. Photo: Reality Images

Hearts silence Kotoko, fire warning shot

Story: Prince Dornu-Leiku

ACCRA Hearts of Oak delivered a statement victory in Kumasi yesterday, grinding out a stirring 1-0 win over bitter rivals Asante Kotoko. With 10 men for more than an hour, the Phobians reignited their title ambitions and exact revenge for their first-round defeat.

Defender Baba Adamu's 14th-minute header from a free-kick proved decisive in a Super Clash that had everything, including a red card, relentless pressure, heroic goalkeeping and a deafening Baba Yara Stadium stunned into silence except for the cheering Phoboans after referee Daniel Laryea's final whistle.

The victory — Hearts' first over Kotoko since the 2020/21 season — lifts the Phobians to second in the table, five points behind leaders Medeama (44), who were held to a 1-1 draw by Aduana. Defending champions Gold Stars remain third, level on 39 points with Hearts, as the title race intensifies with 12 matches remaining.

For Kotoko, the pain cut deep. The defeat leaves them fifth, with just one win in their last seven league outings — and it was their first home loss of the season.

Hearts began with purpose. In the fifth

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Saminu blasts to 60m record

• Ghana's sprinters ignite Jarvis Scott Invitational

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Voice of

Graphic SPORTS

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 16 — FEBRUARY 22, 2026

It's time media led revolution in women's sport

There are moments in sport when the challenge is not about medals, trophies or league tables — but about mindset. The recent charge delivered by the Secretary-General of the Sports Writers Association of Ghana (SWAG), Charles Osei Asibey, at the AIPS Africa Congress in Banjul was one such moment. His message was blunt, overdue and impossible to ignore: the marginalisation of women's sport in African media is not accidental. It is systemic. And the press must own its role in correcting it. Speaking at the Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara International Conference Centre, Mr Osei Asibey did not hide behind platitudes. He called for a decisive shift — not incremental tinkering — in how women's sport is treated, packaged and prioritised. In essence, he issued a call to action to a profession that shapes public perception, commercial value and ultimately, opportunity. He is right. Visibility is currency in modern sport. Where cameras

go, sponsors follow. Where column inches expand, credibility grows. Where narratives are crafted with seriousness and depth, respect follows. The persistent underrepresentation of female athletes in mainstream coverage does not simply reflect public disinterest; it reinforces it. If the press sidelines women's sport, the market will do the same.

SWAG's own internal reforms offer a blueprint for change. Three women now sit on the association's executive body — a symbolic but significant statement. With women currently comprising just 15 per cent of its membership, SWAG's commitment to structured inclusion cannot be cosmetic; it is strategic.

He said SWAG's objective was to build a structure where women's voices were not just present, but also powerful enough to shape how sports stories are told in Ghana and across Africa.

That is more than a slogan. It is a paradigm shift.

For too long, the sports media landscape has been male-dominated — in authorship, editorial gatekeeping and narrative framing. In such environments, unconscious bias thrives. Women's sport is often relegated to soft features, sentimental angles or token coverage, while men's competitions receive analytical depth, tactical breakdown and sustained visibility.

This imbalance stunts growth.

Mr Osei Asibey was equally candid about the cultural barriers that compound the problem. In parts of Africa, entrenched religious and traditional norms discourage women from public-facing roles or immersion in sporting culture. These invisible ceilings keep many talented women out of press boxes, newsrooms

and decision-making tables. But culture cannot be an excuse for inertia. Crucially, he identified confidence as a central battleground. In male-heavy newsrooms, aspiring female journalists can find their self-belief quietly eroded — particularly in high-pressure arenas such as major tournaments or elite interviews. Without deliberate institutional support, the cycle of exclusion simply regenerates.

The answer is not symbolic inclusion; it is sustained empowerment.

Female sports journalists must not only be present — they must lead. And they must take ownership of women's sport with the same rigour, analysis and ambition applied to men's competitions. Quality, consistent coverage by women themselves could become the catalytic force that transforms perception and commercial value.

The growth of women's sport across the globe — from football to athletics — proves that when visibility rises, audiences respond. Africa cannot afford to lag behind.

This is not about tokenism. It is about talent. About fairness. About unlocking half of the continent's sporting potential.

The sports media holds immense power: to shape narratives, to influence sponsors, to inspire participation and to unearth the next generation of stars.

SWAG's challenge is clear. The question now is whether newsrooms across Africa are prepared to rise to it — and finally give women's sport the prominence it has long deserved.

Trafford's Man City nightmare

WHEN James Trafford arrived back at Manchester City in June for a fee of about £30m, he would have been hoping to emerge as the club's number-one goalkeeper.

And he started this season in that role, featuring in City's first three Premier League games of the campaign.

But Gianluigi Donnarumma's arrival ripped up the pecking order.

City seized their chance to bring in one of the world's best keepers when the Italian became surplus to requirements at Paris St-Germain on summer deadline day.

Donnarumma has played 30 matches for City since then, with Trafford having had to settle for domestic cup games - plus one Champions League appearance.

After keeping a clean sheet in the FA Cup fourth-round win over Salford City last Saturday, Trafford admitted the current situation is not what he had imagined.

When asked about being City's cup goalkeeper, Trafford told the BBC: "It wasn't what I expected coming into the season..."

"It's the reality and I have to give it my best shot. It's the situation I'm in. We train every day but

making saves, it's good fun."

Trafford played 45 games last season as Burnley won promotion to the Premier League, conceding just 16 goals in the Championship in the process.

The 23-year-old then decided it was time to tackle unfinished business at City, who he had left in 2023 in search of regular playing time.

But the arrival of Champions League winner Donnarumma, who is only 26, has dented Trafford's hopes of making a mark this time around.

With Ederson regressing last season, City boss Pep Guardiola had clearly plotted to overhaul his goalkeeping department.

Re-signing Trafford from Burnley in June seemed the sensible option - a keeper with plenty of experience for his age who had spent six years in the club's academy and impressed for England's Under-21s.

Trafford had also been picked as part of England's initial 33-man squad for Euro 2024 - although he did not make the final cut - and a role as City's number one could have bolstered his senior international prospects.

But he has not featured in a

Three Lions squad since November and a spot at this summer's World Cup now appears to be unlikely amid his lack of game time.

"I feel sorry for Trafford," former City goalkeeper Nicky Weaver told BBC Radio Manchester in December. "When

he signed, he probably thought he was going to be number one.

"We don't exactly know what he was told, but when you get the opportunity to bring someone in of Donnarumma's quality and at his age as well, for a relatively moderate fee, you have to take that opportunity. I feel for Trafford, I

really like him.

"It's the life of a goalkeeper. I've been number one, number two and three. It's really difficult. You don't see a way into the team for him.

"He just has to stick in there, he can learn a lot off Donnarumma but I'm sure he would learn if he was playing every week." — BBC



• James Trafford