

Ampem Darkoa win Women's Premier League title — Back page



Can Queiroz tighten Black Stars' porous defence?

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• Carlos Queiroz — New Black Star Coach

Ghana will give England, Croatia, Panama 'nightmares'

Warns Semenyó

Story: Prince Dornu-Leiku

GHANA forward Antoine Semenyó has issued a defiant World Cup warning to the Black Stars' Group L rivals, insisting they are ready to torment defences and "cause nightmares" in the USA, Mexico and Canada.

while admitting the team's hopes could be rocked by the worrying injury struggles of talisman Mohammed Kudus, who has been ruled out of the global tournament.

At 26, Semenyó arrives at the 2026 FIFA World

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Voice of Graphic SPORTS

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Queiroz must fix broken Black Stars or Ghana's World Cup dream collapses

GHANA'S decision to hand the Black Stars to Carlos Queiroz on the eve of the 2026 FIFA World Cup is not merely bold — it is a high-risk, time-compressed gamble that leaves no margin for hesitation. This is not a rebuilding project. It is a rescue mission. And the overriding imperative is brutally clear: hit the ground running or fail.

With barely weeks between appointment and Ghana's opening fixture against Panama, Queiroz does not have the luxury of extended training camps, tactical experimentation or gradual cultural imprinting. The traditional rhythms of national team preparation have been replaced by urgency. Every decision — from squad selection to tactical structure — must be decisive, efficient and immediately translatable to performance.

The data underpinning his appointment is damning.

Ghana arrive at the tournament off a run of defensive collapse and attacking bluntness — 11 goals conceded in five matches, just two scored. This is not a team lacking talent; it is a team lacking structure, cohesion and clarity. Queiroz's mandate is therefore surgical: restore defensive organisation, impose tactical discipline and stabilise a fragile system before it unravels completely.

His first priority must be defensive integrity. Ghana's recent performances have exposed systemic weaknesses — poor positional awareness, slow defensive transitions and a lack of midfield shielding. Queiroz's career has been built on correcting precisely these deficiencies. His compact defensive blocks, controlled pressing triggers and structured midfields are designed to reduce chaos. That alone could make Ghana competitive again.

Second is clarity of roles. With limited preparation time, complexity is the enemy. Every player must understand their function both in and out of possession. Queiroz's systems thrive on collective discipline, with players knowing when to drop, when to press, when to hold shape. In a compressed timeline, simplicity executed perfectly will outperform ambition executed poorly.

Third is transition efficiency. With key attacking uncertainties, including injuries and inconsistent form, Ghana cannot rely on expansive attacking football. Instead, they must maximise moments: quick transitions, exploitation of wide areas, and ruthless use of second balls. This is where individual quality in Antoine Semenyo, Jordan Ayew and Thomas Partey must be channelled into a coherent attacking outlet.

However, the tactical dimension is only half the equation. The more decisive variable may lie in governance and stakeholder alignment. Queiroz's history is clear: he demands authority, structure and professionalism. Where those conditions are absent, conflict follows. Ghana cannot afford institutional friction at this stage.

The Ghana Football Association, government stakeholders and the playing body must operate with unusual cohesion. Administrative delays, selection interference or logistical inefficiencies will not just undermine preparation because they will sabotage the entire project. This is a short-term, high-stakes alignment exercise. Everyone must pull in one direction.

There is also a psychological reset required. Queiroz's "siege mentality" — us against the world — may be precisely what this team needs. In a hostile tournament environment, unity, discipline and emotional control often compensate for preparation deficits.

Ultimately, this is not about perfection. It is about competitiveness. Ghana do not need to dominate games; they need to survive them, control key moments and remain structurally intact long enough to exploit opportunities.

Time is the one resource Queiroz does not have. But clarity, discipline and alignment are still within reach. If those elements are delivered, quickly and without compromise, this 11th-hour experiment could yet transform from a desperate gamble into a calculated recovery.

If not, it will unravel just as quickly as it was assembled.

Kudus caught at the heart of Ghana, spurs meltdown

By Ed Dove, ESPN

THERE'S a cruel symmetry to two unravelling crises thousands of kilometres apart, where Accra and London are bound by instability, underachievement and despair.

In Ghana, the Black Stars are trying to drag themselves out of one of the bleakest spells in recent memory, while in England, Tottenham Hotspur are staring into a season that has veered from dysfunction to impending disaster.

Both have sacked their coaches -- two in Spurs' case; both have invested resources only to lurch from tactical confusion to emotional drift and back again, and both of these fabled institutions, these fallen giants, are clinging to the idea that a reset can save them.

For both, this rebooting will be taking place without the injured Mohammed Kudus.

Losing Kudus to a 'significant quad injury' stretches beyond the absence of one more name on the teamsheet. His loss will have a decisive, significant impact on both FIFA World Cup dreams and English Premier League survival hopes.

For Spurs, he proved -- at least on occasion under Thomas Frank -- that he was that rare attacker who could conjure chaos from nothing.

Without Dejan Kulusevski and James Maddison, both yet to feature this season, he was increasingly invaluable, with individual displays of excellence against Burnley and Leeds United in the first half of the campaign encouraging Tottenham fans to believe that they were primed for a push for Champions League qualification.

For Ghana, he's been the difference-maker,

a rare touch of quality in this demoralising cycle, where the four-time African champions have found themselves shorn of the individual excellence and strength in depth of squads gone by.

The parallels between these two decrepit edifices are striking.

Ghana's recent collapse has been marked, because of both the results and the fashion in which they've arrived. Qualification for the 2022 Qatar World Cup papered over the cracks that had been increasingly evident, while ultimate failure to qualify for the bloated 24-team 2025 Africa Cup of Nations was a national embarrassment.

Otto Addo's exit felt inevitable, but hasn't erased the damage of the previous spell. It arguably came too late, and surely has come too close to the World Cup for Carlos Queiroz to succeed to the best of his abilities.

Similarly, for Tottenham, Igor Tudor's dismissal felt inevitable, but the board's decision to cut with him has not solved the damage done during those miserable 44 days. Last year's Europa League success under Ange Postecoglou partly papered over the cracks of Spurs' structural decline, but there's been nowhere to hide this season.

Roberto De Zerbi's arrival has surely come too late, and surely too close to an increasingly inevitable relegation for the Italian to succeed to the best of his abilities.

Their appointments have reflected their

institutions' desire to recruit specialists in order to pull them out of the mire in which they find themselves.

Queiroz will offer Ghana the experience that was so often questioned under his predecessor Addo, even if his tournament record isn't particularly stellar, while De Zerbi is meant to bring boldness, a front-foot playing style and vitality back to Spurs.

Both men surely need time, however, to implement their visions and establish their standards, although given the impending World Cup and Spurs' plight, it's a luxury that neither possesses.

That's why the loss of Kudus becomes such an acute agony.

He's more than just a talented attacker, he's a talismanic figure of hope, with his flamboyance, his invention, his fine delivery from open play or set pieces, and his ability to receive possession while under pressure.

He can stretch the play, forge openings, trouble opponents with his tenacity and pace, change the tempo and dynamic of a match with his dribbling, and transform his side's fortunes with an effort

from range.

In various different modes of play, each of these teams would be markedly strong with Kudus present, whether it's in build-up, transition, taking chances... he's an irreplaceable loss, whether against weaker or stronger opponents.

On one hand, Spurs have stronger options - on paper - than Ghana, so could better absorb his loss, but by the same token, the Lilywhites have also been dealing with a devastating injury record this season, making Kudus's setback all the more painful.

Given the club's misery with injuries this term -- at times, over a dozen players have been sidelined -- one could forgive a certain suspicion on the part of the GFA that Spurs sought to rush back Kudus too quickly following the hamstring injury he suffered in the winter.

Given the incoming De Zerbi's desire to have him available, and Tottenham's crisis situation, a certain urgency on their part could have been forgiven, but given their medical team's catastrophic recent record, and the impending World Cup, it looks to have been a disastrous determination from Ghana's point of view.

Given the club's extensive investment in recovery science, risk prevention and load monitoring, given Spurs' facilities, there must be an enquiry into how another superstar has been lost for the run-in.

There are consequences for all parties.

Kudus is a man for moments. Spurs need as many of those match-defining moments as they can muster in their remaining six fixtures of the season. Without Kudus, it's hard to see where this magic comes from.

— Toe be continued

• **Mohammed Kusua was expected to be Ghana's talisman until injury knocked out the creative midfielder from the World Cup**

