

Inaki needs new role in Black Stars

• **Ahinful advocates**

Story: Peter Sarbah

FORMER Black Stars striker, Augustine Ahinful, has advised the technical handlers of the national team to

reconsider the role of Inaki Williams in the team to get the best out of him.

The Atletico Bilbao player's goal drought for the Ghana national team has

• Continued on Back page



• Inaki Williams — Struggling to score for the Black Stars



**Kudus, Nuamah
key to Ghana's
AFCON success**
— Polo — Page 5



**GBF official justifies
MacBones' selection
for Olympic slot** — Page 4

Voice of Graphic SPORTS

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 18 — 24, 2023

Investing in boxing: Ghana's golden opportunity to revitalise sport

In the realm of sporting disciplines, few can lay claim to being the "hen that lays the golden eggs" quite like boxing in Ghana. It is the sport that has won more laurels for Ghana at international competitions than any other discipline and given birth to 10 world champions, including the iconic Azumah Nelson, a member of the exclusive International Boxing Hall of Fame.

If there was any doubt about boxing's potential, the last Olympic Games in Tokyo was a reminder of the sport's importance, as Samuel Takyi won a bronze medal to end a 29-year medal drought for Ghana.

Hence, the recent call by Bernard Quartey, President of the Ghana Boxing Federation (GBF), for bold investment in this beloved sport is not just a suggestion; it's an imperative that can redefine our nation's place on the global sporting stage.

His plea is an urgent one. He emphasises that the

revitalisation of amateur boxing in Ghana depends on a deliberate and consistent infusion of funds. This financial support should span across various crucial aspects, from regular training for our budding pugilists to stipends for boxers and dedicated trainers.

Moreover, access to physiotherapy and psychological support is essential to ensure that our boxers are in peak physical and mental condition.

Crucially, the boxing administrator emphasises that the state must provide state-of-the-art equipment and create a conducive environment for training and practicing the sport. Without modern facilities and tools of the trade, our boxers will find it arduous to compete at the highest levels.

The recent setback at the African Olympic qualifiers in Dakar, Senegal, should serve as a sobering reminder of the consequences of inadequate investment. None of the 12 boxers from Ghana secured a spot at the 2024 Olympic Games. Mr Quartey attributes this disappointment to a lack of exposure and insufficient financial backing. He rightly points out the glaring disparity between Ghana's minimal international exposure and the extensive tournament experience of our competitors from countries like Cameroon and Morocco. It's a deficiency that leaves our boxers at a significant disadvantage.

The initial euphoria surrounding the Black Bombers and the Black Hitters, the female team, was palpable. However, it was short-lived, as our fighters faced one defeat after another. The failure to secure Olympic tickets is a painful blow to the hopes of a nation that had pinned its aspirations on these athletes.

The GBF chief's concerns extend to the issue of biased officiating, which he believes could be addressed by sponsoring Ghanaian boxing officials to attend officiating courses by AIBA, the sport's world governing body. Ensuring that Ghanaian officials participate alongside their international counterparts can promote fairness and respect for our boxers.

But at the core of his message is a resounding call for investment. He underscores the plight of our boxers, who often struggle to meet their basic needs and support their families. It's a struggle that can severely impede their training and performance. Investing in the welfare of our boxers and the sport itself is not a luxury; it's a necessity.

While there is still hope for our fighters to qualify for the Olympics in Italy in February, this hinges on prompt investments and funding from the government. The GBF plans to select boxers with the brightest prospects for success, but this can only happen if the necessary financial support is provided.

The *Graphic Sports* maintains that, investing in boxing is not just about supporting a sport; it's about nurturing future champions, instilling national pride, and securing medals on the international stage. The federation's call for bold investment deserves our full attention and action. It's time to invest in the "hen that lays the golden eggs" and watch our boxers soar to new heights of success.

Who's Premier League's best finisher?

GREAT goalscorers consistently get good chances through their movement, anticipation and all-round ability, but great finishers also make the most of what they get.

By looking at how well the Premier League's top attackers have matched up against their expected goals (xG) numbers since the start of last season - excluding penalties - we can see who has scored goals because they had abundant high-quality chances and who has actually been the most clinical.

Expected goals is a metric that measures the quality of a chance by calculating the likelihood that it will be scored, using information from similar shots in the past.

Nearly one million shots from Opta's historical database are used to measure xG on a scale between zero and one, where zero represents a chance that is impossible to score, and one represents a chance that a player would be expected to score every time.

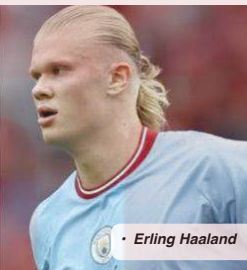
Penalties are not included in the calculations because they are significantly easier to score than the average chance, only one player per



• Son Heung Min



• Mohamed Salah



• Erling Haaland

team usually gets to take penalties and winning penalties isn't just down to the penalty taker but tricky team-mates and clumsy defenders.

Top attackers since start of last season

Liverpool forward Roberto Firmino departed the Premier League in a blaze of glorious finishing, scoring twice as many goals as expected as a squad player in his swansong season (11 goals from an xG of 5.5, which means the number of goals a player is expected to score).

Taiwo Awoniyi's blisteringly hot form in front of goal currently puts him among the league's best finishers, although the Nottingham Forest striker has only played around 18

full games' worth of minutes so far since the start of last season.

Erling Haaland is not only getting excellent chances but has arguably been the best finisher since joining the Premier League last summer. While Firmino and Awoniyi have outperformed their xG more, Manchester City's Golden Boot winner has maintained his excellent finishing over far more minutes of football.

Harry Kane had one of the most clinical seasons of his Premier League career before leaving Tottenham for Bayern Munich, scoring 50% more goals than expected last season (25 non-penalty goals from an xG of 16.6).

Evan Ferguson's numbers are already up there with the

best, although it's still early days as the 18-year-old Brighton striker has only played just over 1000 minutes in the Premier League.

At the other end, the all-round ability of Arsenal strikers Gabriel Jesus and Eddie Nketiah and their supporting cast has seen both get a lot of quality chances, but neither have been particularly sharp in front of goal.

Liverpool's number nine Darwin Nunez is also getting an elite level of chances but has not yet been clinical at taking them, outside of his recent laser-focused finishing at Newcastle.

However, going back to just the start of last season isn't enough time to know if a player is actually a top-tier

finisher or just on a hot run of form.

Top attackers since the start of the 2020-21 season

If we go further back and see how the Premier League's top attackers have done in the competition since September 2020, we get a far more accurate and confident look at their finishing ability.

Results in this chart are far less spread out than in the more recent study as it tends to hold true that the longer time goes on, the closer a player's goal numbers will match their xG.

While the longer-term evidence shows Firmino's farewell finishing streak last season was a one-off, Gabriel Jesus has not been

as clinical as many other goalscorers even going back to his time at Manchester City.

The likes of Awoniyi, Ferguson, Nketiah and Nunez are too early into their Premier League careers to appear on this graphic - we have set a minimum requirement of 2700 minutes of action - so it is still too early for us to really know how accomplished they are as finishers at this level.

While Haaland's numbers are obviously the same since he only joined last summer, he has already played enough football to show that he is a statistical freak and anomaly, outscoring his already-outstanding xG numbers by 8 goals so far (34 non-penalty goals from an xG of 26.1).

Outside of the recent arrival of Haaland, Tottenham's Son Heung-min has arguably been the best finisher in the Premier League over the last few seasons.

As both the chart and the table here show, Son has scored at around the rate of Harry Kane and Mohamed Salah despite getting far fewer chances, netting 15 more goals than expected since the start of 2020-21 - beating all other players in that regard. — BBC