



• Mohammed Salisu

• Mohammed Kudus

• Coach  
Chris  
Hughton

# Angola test starts Hughton's era

the media at a ceremony at the Semenhya Golden Mall at Ayigya.

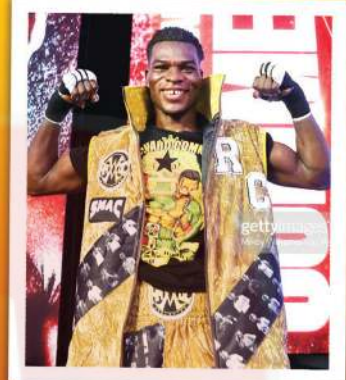
However, all eyes will be on Ghana's 2024 Africa Cup of Nations qualifier against Angola at the Baba Yara Stadium on Thursday with the coach leading the team for the first time.

Ghanaians have high expectations of the 64-year-old coach to turn the team's

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By Peter Sarbah

COACH Chris Hughton will begin his era as the head coach of the Black Stars today when he leads the team's training today in Kumasi after being unveiled to



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## Voice of Graphic SPORTS

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# Hughton's must be filled with hope, success

*ON Thursday, newly-appointed Black Stars head coach, Chris Hughton, will begin the task of rebuilding the national team as he leads the team to play against Angola in the first of back-to-back Africa Cup of Nations qualifiers at the Baba Yara Stadium in Kumasi.*

*Even before leading his players through training today in preparation for his first assignment, expectations are high among Ghanaians who believe the national team is in competent hands and, therefore, see a bright future ahead.*

*In fact, Hughton's rich experience and clout as a former coach of top English sides, Tottenham Hotspur, Newcastle United, Brighton & Hove Albion, Nottingham Forest, Norwich City and Birmingham City, have*

*given many people the confidence that Ghana's glory days could be rediscovered during the reign of the coach who has Irish and Ghanaian heritage*

*However, the huge confidence in the coach and the goodwill he is already enjoying must be complemented with a transformation of the team evidenced by good results.*

*The reverence for Hughton was demonstrated by an overwhelming acceptance of his 25-man squad for the Angola assignment, as Ghanaians believe it was a fair reflection of Ghana's best talents available and was without external influences. They hope that as an elite coach, he would remain tough and not succumb to pressure from his employers and other personal interest that could undermine his work.*

*Since Ghana last won the AFCON trophy in 1982, almost 30 coaches of different nationalities have taken charge of the Black Stars but failed to land the long-awaited fifth continental trophy. The closest Ghana have come to clinching a fifth AFCON title were in 1992, 2010 and 2015 when the Black Stars finished as runners-up — incidentally under expatriate coaches.*

*Fortunately, Ghana has qualified for every AFCON competition since 2004 and picking another slot in next year's tournament is seen as a matter of course. For Ghanaians, Hughton's success will largely be measured by Ghana's performance at the 2024 AFCON in Cote d'Ivoire and qualification for the 2026 FIFA World Cup.*

*So, as Ghanaians look forward to a successful era under the coach, it is the expectation of all that Hughton would be his own man and take tough decisions that would inure to the benefit of the team and not for personal gains or interests.*

*Already, the Graphic Sports understands the coach has made proposals to the Ghana Football Association for the appointment of some trusted members of his backroom staff to help him execute his tasks successfully. Having worked with the team and some members of the technical team, he has first-hand knowledge about their competences and shortcomings, so making proposals to beef up the technical team should not be a big deal so long as the state can take care of the additional costs.*

*As he builds a solid team, it is also our expectation that he would be firm in addressing issues about player egos and perceived personality clashes in camp that have undermined team unity and effort, as strong team spirit is always the driving force behind successful sides.*

*The Graphic Sports is ready to offer the new coach all the needed support to succeed and it is our expectation that he leads the team to greener pastures beginning 'with Thursday's assignment against the Palancas Negras of Angola.*

*We wish Hughton a successful tenure as national team coach.*

# Conte blames Spurs players but he is part of problems

**T**HE credits may be rolling on Antonio Conte's time as Tottenham Hotspur manager but it is clear the Italian will be going down swinging and taking a few others with him.

Conte's incendiary post-match inquest after Spurs cast aside a 3-1 lead to draw at struggling Southampton saw all the frustrations and discontent that have been simmering beneath the surface explode in public.

He delivered a scathing assessment of his players and the culture inside the club — warning that even if he is sacked, unless that changes the years without success will continue for Spurs.

In what looks increasingly like a loveless marriage between

club and manager, Conte branded his players "selfish" and even referenced the Spurs owners as he threw verbal bombs in all directions.

Conte delivered his theory on why Spurs fall short when he said: "Because they are used to it here. They are used to it. They don't play for something important. They don't want to play under pressure. They don't want to play under stress. It is easy in this way. Tottenham's story is this. Twenty years the owner is here and they never won something, but why?"

For the purposes of accuracy, Spurs did win the League Cup in 2008 but the wider context of Conte's point is clear.

Quite how chairman Daniel Levy felt about Conte's verbal

laceration of his squad and the club may only be revealed in time, but the more immediate question is how a group of players respond to being lambasted in such a fashion by their manager with four place still very much to play for.

Does Levy address the issue immediately, with all that will entail with the season at such a crucial stage, or will he just sit it out until Conte's contract finishes at the end of the campaign to offer up a natural separation point?

Conte dropped responsibility for Spurs' indifferent season at the feet of his players, but must also accept his share and there is a growing feeling that he is acting like he is doing Spurs a favour by managing them.

In an increasingly animated

10-minute speech, he said: "The problem is that for another time we showed we are not a team.

We are 11 players that go on to the pitch. I see selfish players, I see players that don't want to help each other and don't put their heart."

Conte may be right, but it is also his job to address this situation and he cannot escape his portion of the blame for performances as insipid as the goalless draw that saw Spurs crash out of the Champions League at home to AC Milan, or the concession of a comfortable position at St Mary's.

It is not as though he is powerless to control events or his players. Spurs have problems and he is part of them.

He accused those attempting to factor in his own contract

situation, or lack of, into the equation as searching for an "alibi" for the Spurs players. If this was an attempt to cajole a response out of those same players with ten games go and Spurs still in fourth place, it is a strategy laced with risk.

It can go one of two ways. The Spurs players can go out of their way to prove Conte wrong, or could revolt against a manager who has made such a public spectacle of them.

The apparent absence of any desire on Conte's part to extend his relationship with Spurs - and vice versa — is hardly helping.

Conte's deal is up at the end of the season and the question lingering in the air after his blistering words at Southampton was whether he will actually make it through to the conclusion of his contract, not whether he will extend it.

And to add to the intrigue, Spurs chairman Daniel Levy has an upcoming international break to think about it.

— BBC