

Nuamah, man to watch

• Meteors coach praises star striker

Story: Maurice Quansah

BLACK Meteors head coach, Ibrahim Tanko, is looking forward to the upcoming Under-23 Africa Cup of Nations tournament with renewed hope after his side secured qualification in style with a 1-0 victory over Algeria in Kumasi last week to book a place at the continental competition

on a 2-1 aggregate.

Even though Portugal-based forward, Abdul-Fatawu Issahaku, scored both goals for Ghana over the two legs, including a jaw-dropping strike from his own half in the first leg fixture in Annaba, it was Demark-based, Ernest Nuamah, who was the toast of fans at the Baba Yara Stadium for his impressive performance and link play with Issahaku which produced the winning goal.

The Meteors coach said he was counting on Nuamah's exploits to help

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• Ernest Nuamah — Earns praise of coach and legends

Dogboe promises to bounce back

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• Isaac Dogboe (left) lost against Roberisy Ramirez

Olympic Games target for Meteors

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• Abdul-Fatawu Issahaku — Black Meteors



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What future for Ghana boxing?

GHANA has a rich history in boxing and has produced some of the greatest boxers in the world. Richard Commey and Isaac Dogboe are two of the latest boxers to come out of Ghana and make a name for themselves on the world stage. However, after their recent failed world title bids, there are questions about the future of boxing in Ghana.

Last week Richard Commey lost a world title eliminator to Jose Carlos Ramirez via knockout in what was seen as the last opportunity for Commey to get a shot at the world title again after losing his International Boxing Federation (IBF) lightweight crown to Teofimo Lopez in 2019. Similarly, Dogboe has reinvented himself under new trainers since losing his World Boxing Organisation (WBO) super bantamweight title to Emanuel Navarrete in 2018 and failed to regain it in a rematch in 2019.

Last Saturday's lopsided loss by Dogboe to

Robeisy Ramirez in Oklahoma may have extinguished the light in the 'Royal Storm' who had bounced back from successive losses to Navarrete, to win four straight fights as a featherweight which earned him a shot at the vacant WBO featherweight title last Saturday.

The recent setbacks of Commey and Dogboe have raised questions about the future of the sport, as there are hardly any credible Ghanaian boxers on the horizon with world title prospects.

Dogboe says he wants to fight on, and at 28, he still has a lot of fight in him to soldier on. But 36-year-old Commey may well be the gatekeeper in the lightweight division and does not look very attractive to promoters.

Talents is never in short supply in Ghana, but the conveyor belt support systems for producing credible boxers with real world title prospects are very weak and need a lot of attention. For Ghanaian boxing to truly thrive, more investment is needed in the sport. The Ghanaian government and private sector need to invest in facilities, training, and equipment to help develop the next generation of Ghanaian fighters. There also needs to be more opportunities for Ghanaian fighters to compete on the international stage and earn the recognition and pay they deserve.

One of the main challenges facing boxing in Ghana, is the lack of financial support. Many

talented fighters in Ghana struggle to make a decent living from boxing and are forced to retire early or pursue other careers. This is partly due to the lack of professional boxing events in Ghana, as well as the high costs associated with producing a world-class boxer.

To address this issue, the Ghana Boxing Authority has called for more investment in the sport with a proposal that the government to establish a national boxing fund to support the development of young fighters and provide financial assistance to professional boxers.

That is long overdue and needs to be put on the front burner again for urgent attention by the government and private sector.

With more investment at the grassroot level, the sport can be extended beyond the Greater Accra Region to other parts of the country to create a big pool of talents to be groomed in a structured amateur system. This will ensure that very credible boxers graduate into the professional ranks where good training and regular competitions such as the Professional Boxing League and other individual promotions will ensure the production lines of talented boxers at Bukom and other gyms continue to run and produce well tested boxers to be groomed into future world champions as Ghana has always been famed for.

Joshua needs further rehab before facing Fury again

THE talk was fast and Furious. The reality is likely to be pragmatic acceptance that AJ needs further rehab following the mind-numbing loss of his world titles before entertaining the Gypsy King.

Anthony Joshua's initial gut reaction to a steady Eddie comeback win over an American absentee from the business end of the alpha-belt rankings was to send a challenging invitation to Tyson Fury.

Such is a natural-born fighter's instinct. By the time they settled into the other side of midnight promoter Hearn and new trainer Derrick James were counselling even more caution than that their flagship heavyweight had displayed in the ring.

If it were left to Joshua's professional pride no doubt he would do his utmost to coax Fury into the Wembley Stadium summer-fest for which the British boxing public began clamouring years before Boris, Brexit, Corby, Covid, rampant knife crime and impoverishing inflation descended upon us.

Even as the conversation turned from Fury first to Dillian Whyte next — oh, don't doubt it — Joshua was preparing himself for a wind-up onslaught from Fury's personality. Which is as gigantic as his 6ft 9in stature.

"I would have to turn a deaf ear," said AJ as he held his mobile aloft in selfie-mode and impersonated one of Fury's blistering video rants "I couldn't hope to compete with him at trash-talking. I lived around the traveller community when I was young. That's the way they are. All you can do is try to shut out the noise."

"Boxing needs him and me to get it on. It would be an honour for me to fight him for his WBC title. But I would have to save all my energy for the fight. Whenever it comes."

There-in lies the rub. Having watched Joshua's wary progress through the 02 Hearn veered from recognising that in commercial terms now is finally the hour for Fury, to acknowledging that Joshua needs further re-cementing of confidence in the ring.

The underlying narrative is whether AJ can regain the mojo which evaporated during the two defeats by Oleksandr Usyk, which he admits 'took away' not only his cherished titles but 'my sense of invincibility.'

It was curious to sit in on a 33-year-old two-time world heavyweight champion, his promoter and his trainer discussing improvements he must make if he is to climb back to the top of the mountain.

Wasn't he at his peak before the first of his three defeats, that shock KO by the roly-poly Andy Ruiz Jr? Wasn't it unwise that instead of remembering that one-punch accidents happen at heavyweight he tried to take on the hi-tech Oleksandr Usyk at pure boxing?

Those two Ukrainian masterclasses sent him into a fog from which he emerged last Saturday night. Tentatively. Hearn billed this fight as 'The New Dawn. Joshua and coach James called it Back To Basics. Which it became. For the fundamental reason that Joshua could not afford to lose.

He came out behind that ramrod left jab which led him to his Olympic gold and world crown. And stayed behind it for most of the evening. When he did unleash the big right which had knocked out all his opponents before he started losing, he declined to risk following up for the kill.

Should we blame him? Not really. Not when he won every round in my book. Not when the official judges had him losing only one or two and they looked like consolation gestures to a game under-dog.

More importantly, not when Franklin punctured his exaggerated defences with enough right hooks of his own to suggest he is best advised to rediscover his style balance before taking on the big heavyweight hitters.

Deontay Wilder, the most monstrous puncher since Mike Tyson, has been mentioned as another possible opponent. No, no, a thousand times no. That would almost certainly wipe out any prospect of the Fury fight. Ask the Gypsy King himself,

who somehow climbed off the canvas three times after being semi-concussed by the Bronze Bomber.

It is not proving easy to recreate the AJ Aura. Tickets were slow to sell for his return to the arena he is wont to call his Lion's Den. The 02 ended up full enough. But while the crowd were enthusiastic when he came out they fell quiet as it went on. The most raucous roars came when he and Franklin kept punching after the final bell rang six seconds early and the brawl spilled onto ringside, where now-TV-analyst Tony Bellew attempted an unlicensed comeback of his own.

Now comes the even harder part. Cash out in glory with a Light Brigade Charge at Fury, who may well be tempted after watching this. Or take the off-chance of an ingnomious end against Whyte.

Blame him for one dull night? No. Feel for a fallen giant trying to re-find his feet.