

Tyson Fury beaten again in rematch

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Amoah the showstopper!

• Kotoko coach tips youngster for greatness



Story: Prince Dornu-Leiku

KUMASI Asante Kotoko head coach, Prosper Narteh Ogum, has expressed immense pride in the meteoric rise of his star striker, Albert

Amoah, tipping him for stardom. Amoah has been a revelation in the ongoing Ghana Premier League and the toast of Osceikrom since joining the Porcupine

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• Albert Amoah



• Mohammed Kudus (left) is joined by a teammate to celebrate his equalising goal for West Ham last Saturday

• Antoine Semenyo celebrating his goal against Manchester United yesterday

Semenyo, Kudus on fire in England

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Voice of Graphic SPORTS

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Gertrude Banini, a symbol of inspiration

GHANA has long been a nation of achievers, and Gertrude Banini's triumph at the 45th World Chess Olympiad in Budapest, Hungary, is a shining testament to that tradition. The nation's professional chess champion has earned the prestigious Woman Candidate Master (WCM) title on her Olympiad debut, a remarkable feat that has placed Ghana firmly on the global chess map. Yet, what makes Gertrude's story truly special is her desire to use her success as a platform to mentor the next generation of chess stars.

In a sport often perceived as male-dominated, Gertrude's rise is both inspiring and groundbreaking. Her

performance at the Olympiad, where she competed against 180 seasoned players and achieved the WCM title by winning over 50 per cent of her matches, speaks volumes of her skill and tenacity. Reflecting on her journey, Gertrude described the experience as a dream come true, yet she remains focused on a larger mission: breaking barriers for women in chess and proving their equal potential.

Gertrude's vision for chess in Ghana is bold and inclusive. She aspires to create regional chess clubs, ensuring that the sport reaches young people across the country, particularly girls who may never have considered chess a viable pursuit. By identifying and nurturing grassroots talent, she aims to lay the foundation for Ghana's future dominance in the game. This initiative holds immense potential to change lives, offering opportunities for intellectual growth, strategic thinking, and even international recognition.

As a former student of the University of Professional Studies, Accra (UPSA), Gertrude embodies the spirit of perseverance and ambition. Her drive to achieve the Woman FIDE Master title demonstrates her commitment to personal growth, but it is her passion for inspiring others that sets her apart. Her determination to challenge

stereotypes and create opportunities for women in chess is a commendable step toward bridging the gender gap in this intellectually demanding sport.

Ghana's chess community and society at large must rally behind Gertrude's efforts. Her success is not just a personal milestone but a national achievement. It has the potential to galvanise a new generation of players and position Ghana as a competitive force on the global chess stage.

To support her initiative, stakeholders in education, sports, and corporate Ghana must collaborate to provide resources for chess programmes, tournaments, and training facilities. Investment in such infrastructure will not only elevate the sport but also contribute to the intellectual development of young Ghanaians, fostering critical thinking and strategic skills.

Gertrude Banini's journey reminds us that champions are not just defined by their victories but by their ability to inspire others. Her vision for Ghanaian chess deserves our collective support. Let us embrace her dream and help build a legacy that will inspire generations to come while putting Ghana on the map as a true chess powerhouse.

Ademola Lookman: From 'failure' to Africa's best

By Rob Stevens, BBC

ADEMOLA Lookman's journey to being voted the men's African footballer of the year has been full of ups and downs, yet the Nigeria international knows his recent success provides inspiration.

After failing to impose himself following a big-money move to the Premier League as a teenager, the forward had several loan spells before his rebirth in Italy since joining Atalanta in August 2022.

"Four years ago my career felt down but now I'm here as the best player in Africa," Lookman, 27, said on stage when collecting his award in Marrakesh on Monday.

"Don't let your failures stop your dreams."

Wearing a traditional Nigerian robe, he even had a special message in Yoruba for fans back in West Africa.

BBC Sport Africa examines Lookman's unconventional route to becoming the sixth Nigerian man to be named the continent's top player, joining stellar names Rashidi Yekini, Victor Ikpeba, Emmanuel Amunke, Nwankwo Kanu and Victor Osimhen.

Early breakthroughs

Born in south London to Nigerian parents, Lookman's passion for the game was evident at an early age.

He signed for Charlton Athletic, then playing in England's second tier, in 2014 - but rates passing his school exams aged 16 as a bigger achievement.

Lookman made his senior debut for Charlton in November 2015, scored his first senior goal on his fifth appearance and eventually caught the eye of top-flight clubs with his performances for a struggling side.

Lookman scored 12 goals in 49 appearances for Charlton before sealing a transfer to Premier League team Everton

When Everton snapped up a 19-year-old Lookman for a fee of £11m (\$14m) in January 2017, he was hailed by then-Toffees boss Ronald Koeman as "a player for the future".

"We expect a lot from the boy," the Dutchman added. "I think he is one who can reach a high level if he develops well and improves."

Lookman scored on his debut as a late substitute in a 4-0 win over Manchester City but rarely hit those heights again during his time at Goodison Park.

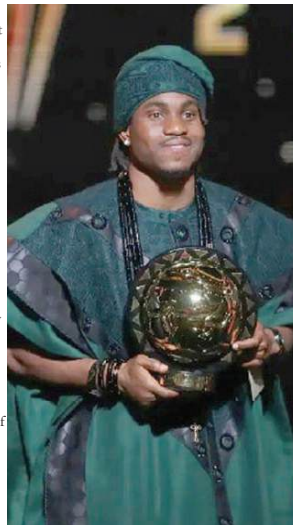
Some of that could be down to churn in the managerial dugout, given he appeared under six different managers (including caretakers) over the course of two and a half years at the club.

New beginnings

Away from Merseyside, Lookman played a major role in England's Under-20 World Cup triumph in June 2017, scoring three times at the tournament in South Korea.

He enjoyed a successful loan spell with RB Leipzig in the first half of 2018 and moved permanently to Germany in July 2019 for a fee of £22.5m (\$28.6m).

However, his first full season with Leipzig



was a disappointment as he made just one Bundesliga start during a campaign disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic.

He spent two seasons back on loan in the Premier League, first with Fulham and then Leicester City.

Brendan Rodgers, who was Foxes coach at the time, said Lookman's dedication showed in training, even if he again struggled to hold down a starting place.

"He would be out with a bag of balls, doing shooting exercises long after other ones had gone in, working on his right foot, left foot," Rodgers said.

"He's so balanced. Everything is geared towards being the best he could."

A player transformed

Nigeria had been keen on Lookman since his early days at Everton, but it was not until late 2021 that he switched international allegiance.

He experienced deep disappointment on just his second outing when the West Africans were beaten on away goals in a play-off for the 2022 World Cup by fierce rivals Ghana.

Then came Atalanta, and a move to what Lookman describes as the "chilled" city of Bergamo.

Life in Lombardy itself might be relaxed, but Lookman has provided fireworks on the pitch for a side dedicated to an attacking style.

His 97 appearances for the club have brought 43 goals and 23 assists — by far the most productive spell in his career.

Three of those goals came in May's Europa League final as Lookman helped to deliver Atalanta's first continental trophy while also becoming the first man to score a hat-trick in a European club final in 49 years. — BBC