



Arsenal to extend Partey's contract

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• Winfried Schäfer (right) and Desmond Ofei are the new additions to the Black Stars' technical team

I'll help secure World Cup spot for Black Stars — Assures Schäfer

GFA Technical Director Winfried Schäfer has assured Ghanaians of his full commitment to working alongside Black Stars head coach Otto Addo to secure qualification for the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

Schäfer, who arrived in Ghana last week ahead of the crucial World Cup qualifiers, took to Facebook to outline his ambitions. But while securing a spot at the tournament remains a priority, the veteran German coach stressed

that his vision extended beyond immediate success to the broader development of football in the country.

"But I want to assure you

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League bounces back after tragic break

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Voice of Graphic SPORTS

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Transparency in football a necessity, not an option

President John Dramani Mahama's directive for the Ghana Football Association (GFA) to disclose the full budget of the Black Stars marks a critical step towards accountability in Ghanaian football. Delivered during his State of the Nation Address, his call for transparency in all government spending on national teams comes amid growing concerns about financial mismanagement and declining performances. The recent failure of the Black Stars to qualify for the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) has deepened frustrations, making financial openness more urgent than ever.

For years, the secrecy surrounding the GFA's financial dealings has eroded public trust. Allegations of misappropriated FIFA

funds and unaccounted-for government allocations have sparked demands for reform. President Mahama's intervention is not mere rhetoric—it is an urgent mandate for the GFA and the Ministry of Sports and Recreation to operate with integrity. Public disclosure of budgets will not only prevent mismanagement but also assure taxpayers that funds meant for football development are used appropriately.

Football is a national passion, but when financial decisions are shrouded in secrecy, it alienates the very fans who invest their emotions and resources in the game. Transparency is a key pillar of good governance, and the GFA must recognise that openness will strengthen, not weaken, its authority. By making national team budgets public, the association can rebuild trust and demonstrate responsible stewardship.

As Ghana prepares for the 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifiers, the Ministry of Sports and Recreation has been tasked with ensuring that the GFA is held accountable. With crucial matches against Chad and Madagascar approaching, Ghanaians will be closely watching both on-field performances and how football funds are managed.

Beyond financial transparency, the President also underscored the need to revitalise grassroots sports

development. His plan to invest in community recreational facilities and establish a School Sports Authority to oversee structured inter-school competitions is commendable. The Black Stars' struggles on the international stage reflect broader issues within Ghana's football development structure, and a renewed focus on grassroots football is essential for long-term success. The GFA has responded positively, pledging support for the President's directive and outlining steps to strengthen the Black Stars' technical team. However, actions must follow words.

Transparency should not be a one-time event but an ingrained practice. The GFA and the ministry must commit to full disclosure of budgets and expenditures, ensuring that the public remains informed and engaged.

The Graphic Sports believes that football in Ghana stands at a crossroads. This is an opportunity to restore credibility and chart a new course based on accountability and efficiency. The government, the GFA, and all stakeholders must embrace transparency, not just to satisfy a directive but to uphold the trust of the millions who support the game. The time for secrecy is over—openness and integrity must define the future of Ghanaian football.

Leicester are still in the fight

BEFORE Leicester City won the Premier League title in 2016, they pulled off one of the greatest of great escapes to avoid relegation to the Championship.

A repeat of that looks very unlikely this time - even though their current situation is not as precarious.

Back in 2014-15 they were rooted to the foot of the table for much of the season, only climbing off it in April as a run of seven wins from their final nine games took them to unexpected safety.

But this Leicester team look barely capable of winning one game, let alone going on a run of victories, as Thursday's 2-0 loss to West Ham left them five points adrift of

safety.

"We are going to get up again," vowed boss Ruid van Nistelrooy after the game.

"We are still in this fight, mathematically we are there and we keep fighting as long as we can.

"It must be clear that the fight was only one half today and that is not enough."

'Not even close to climbing' - Leicester's concerning statistics

Leicester sacked Steve Cooper on November 24 with the club 16th after 12 league games, but the change has not had anywhere near the impact the Foxes would have

hoped - and the statistics make for concerning reading:

The Foxes have lost 11 of their past 12 Premier League games (won one).

In his 14 games in charge, Van Nistelrooy has picked up just seven points, three fewer than previous boss Cooper managed this season (10 in 12 games).

No side has conceded more own-goals in the Premier League this season than Leicester (three, level with West Ham and Wolves).

Leicester have also failed to score in each of their past four Premier League games, last doing so in February 2017 (a run of six).

On Leicester's struggles to score, Van Nistelrooy added: "If you play like this in the first half you are not going to score. We were not even close to scoring.

"In the second half we were much closer to score. At least you give yourself an opportunity."

'I think they are gone' - but can Leicester escape?

In Leicester's favour, however, is time. A five-point deficit is not insurmountable and they have 11 league games left - that's 33 points to play for.

But their upcoming run of fixtures looks tough with their next four games being trips to Chelsea and Manchester

City and home matches against Manchester United and Newcastle.

Leicester defender Nwaeiye says the players still believe they can stay up.

"Of course, there has to be belief," the Belgian said.

"Weekend after weekend the games count down. I don't think we have to think too much about going forward.

"We just have to think game by game and we have to start winning very soon because the games are counting down."

Those who have watched some of their recent games, however, are not so optimistic.

Former Leicester midfielder Neil Lennon said on TNT Sports: "I hate to say it about any group of players but it is really hard to make a case for them on what we have seen.

"West Ham didn't have to be anywhere near their best to win the game comfortably. There was zero quality, zero belief and the game just seemed to pass them by."

"I think they are gone," added former Chelsea forward Joe Cole. "I think them and Southampton are gone.

"How do you get these players to show some kind of spark from now to the end of the season?" — BBC



• Ruid van Nistelrooy — Leicester City manager