



Ouattara dodges title talk despite fine form

• Ask me in June, he says

Story: Peter Sarbah

ACCRA Hearts of Oak head coach Aboubakar Ouattara is refusing to be drawn into title speculation despite his side's remarkable resurgence in the Ghana Premier League. The Phobians are now just a point off the summit, trailing joint leaders Asante Kotoko and Bibiani Gold Stars who are locked on 37 points but separated by goal difference.

Hearts continued their resurgence with

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Voice of Graphic SPORTS

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Boxing hooliganism must be stopped before it's too late

Boxing in Ghana has long been a source of national pride, producing world-class champions and electrifying fight nights that captivate fans. However, a disturbing trend of violent disruptions at local boxing events is threatening to taint the sport's image, drive away sponsors, and ultimately hinder its growth. The latest disgraceful scenes at the Bukom Boxing Arena during Faisal Abubakari's WBO Africa junior welterweight title defence are yet another wake-up call for urgent action. What should have been a night of celebration — a showcase of elite talent on Ghana's Independence Day — descended into chaos due to the reckless behaviour of a few unruly supporters. The appalling scenes, which saw referee Shadrack Acquaye abandon the highly anticipated showdown between Henry Malm and Derrick Quaye after being struck by a

missile from the crowd, were nothing short of embarrassing. Worse still, a section of fans allegedly hurled objects filled with urine at Malm's corner, triggering an all-out melee that forced judges and officials to flee.

This is not an isolated incident. It is the third time in recent months that fan violence has marred a major boxing event, following similar disturbances at fight nights organised by Ayitey Powers Promotions. The Ghana Boxing Authority (GBA), the sport's regulatory body, must no longer turn a blind eye to this growing menace. If these security breaches persist, boxing risks losing its appeal to fans, investors, corporate sponsors, and even broadcasters — key stakeholders whose support is essential for the sport's survival. At the heart of these violent incidents is a glaring lack of security planning and enforcement at fight venues. The presence of police officers at the Bukom Boxing Arena was evidently inadequate, as it took a group of military personnel — who were attending in their private capacity — to storm the ring and restore order. Even then, the instigators of the chaos were not arrested, exposing the sheer inefficiency of security arrangements. There is also a growing suspicion that the venue is dangerously overcrowded. Reports indicate that some supporters had no designated seating and were forced into restricted areas, including the media stand, leading to damage to journalists' equipment. This raises critical questions: Did the organisers oversell

tickets? Is the Trust Sports Emporium, which manages the venue, exercising proper oversight when renting out the arena? If these issues are not addressed, it is only a matter of time before tragedy occurs.

The Ghana Boxing Authority must act swiftly before these ugly incidents spiral into a full-blown crisis. First, the GBA must implement strict security protocols at all sanctioned boxing events. This includes a thorough screening of fans before entry, deploying trained security personnel inside the arena, and ensuring that anyone caught throwing objects or inciting violence faces immediate prosecution.

Additionally, there must be stringent enforcement of venue capacity regulations to prevent overcrowding, as well as better coordination between promoters, venue managers, and security agencies. The GBA must also take a firm stance on event organisers, imposing fines or suspensions on those who fail to meet security and crowd control standards.

Boxing is a sport built on discipline and respect. If the Ghanaian boxing authorities fail to take decisive action, the sport will suffer—losing fans, sponsorship, and credibility on the international stage. The time for lip service is over; the GBA must act now to restore order and protect the future of Ghanaian boxing.

How good can Liverpool's season be?

"THE first of three finals" is how Arne Slot described Liverpool's 3-1 comeback win over Southampton to go 16 points clear in the English Premier League.

The Reds now face a Champions League tie with Paris St-Germain and the Carabao Cup final with Newcastle before they are in league action again.

Liverpool's dream of achieving the Treble of Champions League, Premier League and FA Cup was ended last month by Plymouth — but they remain firmly in the hunt for three trophies.

"It's a sign of a good team that you can win in different ways," Slot told the BBC Match of the Day after the latest victory.

"It was a poor performance first half — not only because of the way we played but also because of the energy we brought."

He added in his post-match news conference: "This was the most important game of the week. The first of three finals. I hope in the next finals we play a bit better than the first one."

Mohamed Salah netted two penalties at Anfield, with Darwin Nunez scoring the other goal as the hosts came back from 1-0 down.

A mix-up between Virgil van Dijk and Alisson had allowed Will Smallbone to give the Premier League's bottom side a half-time lead.

Slot's side have had to fight for two wins in a week as he bids for a trophy-

laden first season since replacing club icon Jurgen Klopp.

"I don't think we played good today," said Salah, who has 32 goals in all competitions.

Salah has been involved in 44 Premier League goals this season (27 goals, 17 assists), the joint-most by a player in a 38-game season.

"If you want to win the Champions League or Premier League you have to win these games like that," Salah added.

On Tuesday the Reds host Paris St-Germain in the Champions League last 16 second leg, leading 1-0 from their smash and grab at the Parc des Princes.

"The only good thing in the first 45 minutes was that they saved their energy [for PSG] and didn't run at all," quipped Slot.

"It was maybe the first time this season I saw this tempo.

"We have to go one step up in terms of intensity against PSG. Compared to the game today we have to go three, four, five, six, seven times up in terms of intensity if we want to have any chance of reaching the next round."

Next Sunday, Liverpool will meet Newcastle at Wembley in the Carabao Cup final — with a chance to win a first trophy under their Dutch manager.

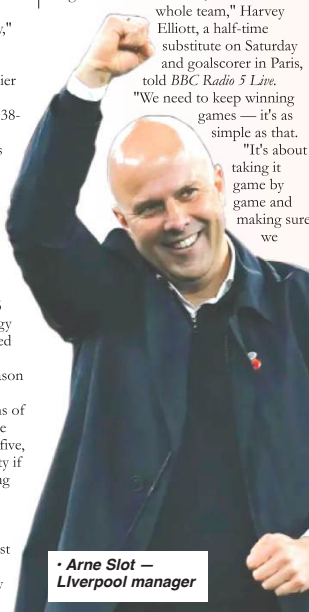
"The last two games have been very

tough — it is not about me, it's about the

whole team," Harvey Elliott, a half-time substitute on Saturday and goalscorer in Paris,

told BBC Radio 5 Live. "We need to keep winning games — it's as simple as that."

"It's about taking it game by game and making sure we



• Arne Slot — Liverpool manager

apply ourselves in the best possible way."

How rare is winning three trophies?

Only five English teams — well, three clubs — have won three regular trophies in a season before.

That is not counting those you have to qualify for such as the Community Shield, UEFA Super Cup or Club World Cup.

Two have completed the recognised Treble of European Cup, league title and FA Cup — Manchester United in 1998-99 and Manchester City in 2022-23.

Liverpool have managed to win three in a season twice before.

In 1983-84, they won the three they could manage this season — the old First Division title, League Cup and European Cup.

A good omen? They lost to a second-tier club in the FA Cup fourth round that season too — Brighton.

The Reds also won a hat-trick of cups in 2000-01 — the FA Cup, League Cup and UEFA Cup.

One team have won the domestic treble — Manchester City in 2018-19 when they won the league, FA Cup and League Cup.

Plenty of teams have managed to win two trophies in one season.

Because most countries do not have a league cup, Celtic are the only team to win a quadruple of the European Cup plus three domestic trophies in 1966-67.—BBC