

A photograph of James Dadzie, a Ghanaian sprinter, running on a track. He is wearing a white and blue singlet with 'WTC' and 'UNDER ARMOUR' logos, and blue shorts with the number '6'.

# Dadzie can break records

• **Coach says of sprints sensation**

**Story: Maurice Quansah**

Ghanaian athletics coach Elorm Amenakpor has predicted a bright future for sprints sensation, James Dadzie, saying the youngster has the potential to run even faster and break more records if he remained focused, disciplined, worked even harder and did not get carried away by his recent feats in US collegiate athletics.

Last week Dadzie ran a blistering 19.79 seconds over 200 metres at

the Crofoot Shootout in Lubbock, Texas, to set a new Ghana record as he obliterated the existing mark of 20.08 seconds set in 2019 by US-based Joseph Paul Amoah.

On that historic day, the athlete ran an amazing 9.89 seconds over 100m albeit under illegal wind conditions (+3.2), which means it was not recognised as a new national record but was still a personal best and a school record at Western Texas College where the Ghanaian is

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A photograph of Daniel Afriyie, captain of the Black Meteors football team, wearing a yellow and black striped jersey with the number '4'. He is pointing towards the left.

## Meteors get tough AFCON draw

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• **Daniel Afriyie — Black Meteors captain**

• **James Dadzie — Ghana's men's 200m record holder**

## Voice of

## Graphic SPORTS

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## Women's football needs more than expatriate coach

THE appointment in January of Swiss Coach Nora Häuptle as the head coach of Ghana's Black Queens marked a turning point for women's football in the country.

Even though she had played a role in the Black Princesses many months earlier, it was hardly envisaged that the FA would subscribe to the idea of hiring an expatriate to help turn around the fortunes of the senior women's team that had been handed by 15 different Ghanaian coaches over the last three decades.

While it's true that Häuptle's experience and qualifications make her an excellent choice, some argue that Ghanaian coaches should receive equal support to achieve success.

Just as the Black Stars had in charge an expatriate coach in Chris Hughton, Ghanaians could only watch amid high expectations that the experiment works with the Black Queens, who were once rated second best in Africa but had

been overtaken by Equatorial Guinea, Cameroun, South Africa and Morocco over the last decade.

Today, the Black Queens have not shown up at the Women's World Cup since 2007 and are even struggling to qualify for the Women's Africa Cup of Nations tournament; hence, the decision by the FA to take a radical decision to give the team a new direction.

As has always been the case over the years, expatriate coaches have enjoyed greater support from the FA and Häuptle's era has started quite well with screening exercises and training sessions, as well as three international friendly matches against Benin, Togo and Senegal.

For the first time in the history of the Black Queens, the FA took advantage of a FIFA international friendly schedule and at the request of the coach, the team hosted and defeated Senegal in two friendly matches in Accra. It is a very positive development as requests to get such international friendlies for the team in previous years were frustrated by a lack of commitment from the state and the football regulatory body.

It may be early days yet, but the improvement in the performance and the work ethics being seen in the team is very encouraging. It is hoped that the new wind of change would trickle down to other female national teams.

In contemporary times, success and good performance in football, as demonstrated by South Africa and Morocco, have been achieved through good talent development, high-performance

coaching, exposure through regular competitions, and the availability of support systems to ensure consistency and sustained success.

Ghana, there is no doubt that there are enough talents available and also the requisite technical competencies to develop the game. However, there is still a big gap in the investment in the women's game to ensure success at all levels despite the untiring efforts of the current GFA administration to bring in new partners and increase its financial and logistical support for the women's game.

Fortunately, recent efforts by the GFA suggest that the future of women's football in the country is bright. There is a competitive Malta Guinness Women's Premier League, Women's FA Cup, and logistical support from development partners such as Betway and Decathlon. The football body has also sponsored former Black Queens head coach Mercy Tagoe Quarcoo and four others to enhance their capacities at top Dutch clubs such as Ajax Amsterdam, PSV Eindhoven, PEC Zwolle and Feyenoord Rotterdam.

These efforts are necessary if women's football in Ghana is to rise again and they are more critical to sustain success than just appointing an expatriate coach. A solid football ecosystem with empowered technical handlers and appropriate investment in all sectors is intricately linked to the success of the national teams.

## Senegal's Cubs want to continue African dominance

**A**FTER the senior's victory at the Cup of Nations in Cameroon, the Beach Soccer team in 2022, the African Nations Championship (CHAN) conquest and the Under-20 victory early this year, the onus will be on the Under-17 team to continue the continental dominance by the West African nation.

The performances of these different teams have raised expectation among the Senegalese and they will hope to see their young boys lift a new trophy, which will be their first ever in this age category.

Senegal have been drawn in Group A alongside hosts Algeria, Congo and Somalia.

The Young Teranga Cubs are coached by Saliou Serigne Dia and he knows what the public expects of him ahead of the tournament.

The former international has cured his coaching niche having worked at local clubs like AS



Senegal's Lions Cubs are among the competition's favourites

Douanes and has also coached the national U-23 team.

He also led the Senegalese team to clinch the football title at the 2015 African Games in Brazzaville, Congo.

The former Aspire Academy trainer is often hailed for his humility and tactical acumen, but above all, is also astute in his work.

He led the juniors to the final of the UFOA qualification tournament and despite losing to

Mali, showed that his side had class and quality and he will be looking to show all that on the continental stage when the Senegalese land in Algeria.

Coach Dia says his young team are bracing for a tough contest as they aim to continue the country's dominance of African competitions.

"It's the finals so we don't expect small teams. We expect to meet very good teams. It's on us to continue the work we started

long time ago. We are up against Algeria that have been preparing for two years. South Sudan who are regional champions and regional vice champions Congo. We are up against rigorous opponents.

"We are trying to be more ambitious as it's the moment for Senegalese football. Be reminded that we are African champions and our home based team is in the CHAN final. So we have to prepare per these standards." **History in the competition**

This will be Senegal's third appearance at the tournament, having previously played in 2011 and 2019, and bowing out in the group phase in both.

Expectation is high for this new generation of young stars to turn the tide and see the Senegalese improve on previous performances.

**Players to watch:**

The team is hugely talented, but one to watch out for is forward Amara Diouf. Regularly playing in the Under-19 category, Diouf comes from the famed Generation Foot Academy which has borne some world class footballers like Sadio Mane.

He is a modern winger with powerful and punchy pace and knows how to create danger as well as having an eye for goal. He scored twice in the regional qualifiers against Cape Verde, goals that underlined his quality.

Apart from Diouf, Senegal can also count on Alpha Toure.

The young defender, who also plays for Generation Foot, carries the weight of skipping the team and has shown immense ability in winning duels and leading the team from the back. --cafonline