



Against the clock

Unprepared Ghanaians hoping for a quick fix after changing manager just two months before the World Cup

In the end, Otto Addo's sacking was as brutal as it was predictable. Just hours after March's 2-1 friendly defeat to Germany in Stuttgart, Addo was informed that he wouldn't be returning to Ghana as the Black Stars' head coach.

Three days earlier, Ghana had lost 5-1 to Ralf Rangnick's Austria, marking the West African nation's worst defeat since 2007 when they were beaten 5-0 by Saudi Arabia. The Germany defeat – Ghana's fourth straight loss under Addo – was the final straw in a litany of nadirs that defined his second spell in charge.

First, there was the defeat to arch-rivals Nigeria on his second debut, a result that condemned Ghana to their first loss against the Super Eagles in 18 years. Then the Black Stars lost their 24-year invincibility at the Baba Yara Stadium in Kumasi when they were beaten by Angola in a qualifier for the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations.

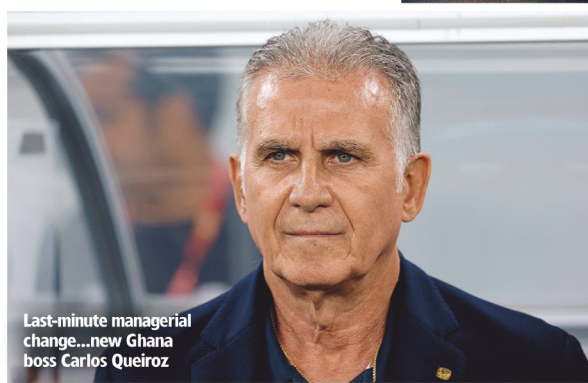
There soon followed another unwanted record, as Ghana lost to 111th-ranked Niger at the Accra Sports Stadium – their first defeat at the ground since 2008. Even worse, they failed to qualify for the 2025 AFCON – the first time they missed out on the tournament since 2004 – after a disappointing winless run in the qualifiers.

By the time the March international break was over – and in spite of Addo responding to the AFCON qualification

The Black Stars risk going into the World Cup underprepared and with little time for Carlos Queiroz to implement his own ideas

debacle by overseeing an unbeaten run in the eight World Cup qualifying games he handled – it was clear that the Ghana FA's gamble on him had backfired.

Addo has since been replaced by Carlos Queiroz, who has taken charge of several national teams over the years including Oman, Qatar, Egypt, Colombia, South Africa, the UAE and his native Portugal, plus Iran – leading the latter at the last three World Cups. But with the 73-year-old's appointment coming just two months before the big kick-off, the Black Stars now risk going into the finals underprepared and with little time



Last-minute managerial change...new Ghana boss Carlos Queiroz

for Queiroz to implement his own ideas.

More worrying is the fact that it's been a while since Ghana lived up to their reputation as a tournament team. The side that reached six consecutive AFCON semi-finals and back-to-back World Cup knockout rounds, including an impressive quarter-final berth in 2010, has long transposed into a fragile team lacking identity and character, and has become frustratingly used to losing.

That, coupled with the fact that Ghana could be without some of their key stars at the World Cup, including Tottenham Hotspur attacker Mohammed Kudus and Monaco defender Mohammed Salisu, hints at the enormity of the job at hand.

Queiroz comes in as an experienced manager, who has a good body of work behind him as a national team coach and as Sir Alex Ferguson's long-time assistant at Manchester United, but he's no magician. A quick fix seems very unlikely, especially for a national team that clearly needs open surgery.

Emmanuel Ayamga

CARLOS QUEIROZ



How proud are you to be named Ghana head coach ahead of the World Cup?

It is with a deep sense of responsibility, humility and gratitude to the GFA [Ghana Football Association] that I embrace this new chapter with the national football team of Ghana. Football has given me a lifetime of challenges, lessons and unforgettable journeys all over the world. Today, I accept this mission with the same passion and commitment that have guided me throughout my career.

What are your expectations?

Ghana is a nation of talent, pride and footballing soul. I arrive with respect for its history and belief in its future. Together, with unity, discipline and ambition, we will work to honour the expectations of a great football nation.

Are you ready for the challenge?

This is not just another job – it is a mission. And I am ready to give everything of my experience and knowledge once again, in service of the game and the happiness of the people.

Emmanuel Ayamga



GROUP L ▶ GHANA

In form...can Antoine Semenyo translate his impressive club form to the international stage?



▼ TACTICS

A midfield puzzle

For a country that used to parade players like Michael Essien, Stephen Appiah, Sulley Muntari and Kwadwo Asamoah in the middle of the park, Ghana's midfield has been very thin in recent years.

The biggest puzzle for new coach Carlos Queiroz is which player best complements Thomas Partey. Kwasi Sibo – a good ball-winner but with question marks over what he does with it – enjoyed that honour under Otto Addo, but the latter's departure means that Queiroz could favour a different profile.

The problem is, the Black Stars have limited options. Two candidates, Atalanta's Ibrahim Sulemana and Auxerre's Elisha Owusu, haven't had the best of seasons at club level. That, plus the managerial change, could be good news for Caleb Yirenkyi, who many have tipped to shine. The 20-year-old Nordsjaelland star is an all-action central midfielder but was strangely used at right-back by Addo.

There is another conundrum in goal. Lawrence Ati-Zigi, who was No.1 for the last World Cup, has been usurped by Benjamin Asare, but there are many who believe that the former is still Ghana's best goalkeeper. Asare has had a decent record since being given the nod, and it remains to be seen how Queiroz plays this one going into the World Cup.



All-action midfielder... Caleb Yirenkyi



Battle for the No.1 spot...will Benjamin Asare keep his place under Queiroz?

SCHEDULE

PRE-WORLD CUP

May 22
v Mexico
(Puebla)

June 2
v Wales
(Cardiff)

GROUP GAMES

June 17
v Panama
(Toronto)

June 23
v England
(Boston)

June 27
v Croatia
(Philadelphia)



▼ THE VIEW FROM GHANA



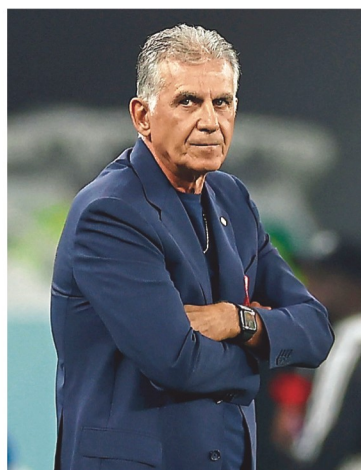
"This will be a tough World Cup for the Black Stars because a lot of the team's important players will either not be 100% in terms of fitness and form or be absent due to injury. I expect the new Ghana coach to show how tactically good he is, especially against England and Croatia."

*Nathan Quao, SportyFM
Ghana chief editor*



"Ghana's threadbare squad struggles to compete at the elite level. Antoine Semenyio remains the solitary bright spark. They could nick a result v Panama, England or Croatia, but limited squad depth and tactical naivety may see them bow out in the round of 32."

*Kelvin Owusu Ansah, SportyFM
Ghana senior journalist*



▼ COACH

Carlos QUEIROZ (Por)

Age 73 (01.03.53)

Appointed April 2026

"This is not just another job – it is a mission." These were the words of Queiroz in his first message to Ghanaian fans after being appointed Ghana head coach. The Portuguese has had a decent career at club level, winning silverware with Real Madrid and Sporting, but he's yet to fully distinguish himself at international level.

Whether at South Africa, Portugal, Iran, Colombia, Egypt, Oman, the UAE or Qatar, his career as a national team coach has been more of what could've been. Stepping into this new role as Ghana coach grants Queiroz a unique opportunity to write his own script and finally silence his doubters.

THE SQUAD

● = Caps, goals, clubs and ages correct as of 15.05.26

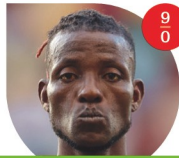


1
0

Joseph ANANG

St Patrick's Athletic (Irl)

Age 25 (08.06.00)
Despite only having one cap, his consistency at club level means he should comfortably maintain his place as third-choice keeper.



9
0

Benjamin ASARE

Hearts of Oak

Age 33 (13.07.92)
With five clean sheets from his nine caps so far – and avoiding the disastrous 5-1 Austria drubbing – Asare looks set to go into the World Cup as Ghana's first-choice goalkeeper.



28
0

Lawrence ATI-ZIGI

St Gallen (Sui)

Age 29 (29.11.96)
A key figure for a strong St Gallen side, who will feel hard done by playing second fiddle. Could get his chance in the pre-finals friendlies, where Queiroz might reassess his options.



9
0

Jonas ADJETEY

Wolfsburg (Ger)

Age 22 (13.12.03)
A January move from Basel to the Bundesliga was a big step-up, and the young centre-back hasn't played much for his new club. Brings calm to the backline.



38
4

Alexander DJIKU

Spartak Moscow (Rus)

Age 31 (09.08.94)
Ghana's most experienced defender and a reliable leader at the back. He'll be without his usual centre-back partner Mohammed Salisu, who's set to miss the World Cup with an ACL injury.



3
0

Derrick KOHN

Union Berlin (Ger)

Age 27 (04.02.99)
A new face in the team and a regular in the Bundesliga, Kohn will rival Mensah for the left-back spot. Offers pace and the ability to whip in fantastic crosses, as shown in the friendly v Germany.

GOALKEEPERS

DEFENDERS



11
0

Tariq LAMPTEY

Fiorentina (Ita)

Age 25 (30.09.00)
The national team's best right-back when fit. The London-born ex-Brighton and Chelsea speedster won two England Under-21 caps. Started in Ghana's only win at Qatar 2022.



39
0

Gideon MENSAH

Auxerre (Fra)

Age 27 (18.07.98)
Ghana's long-time first-choice left-back – a squad member at the AFCONs in 2022 and 2024 – but out of form recently. Should make the party, but a starting berth is no longer guaranteed.



10
1

Jerome OPOKU

Istanbul Basaksehir (Tur)

Age 27 (14.10.98)
Another London-born star, Opoku is rivaling Adjetey and Pehrah Oppong to partner Djiku in Salisu's absence. However, a lack of aggression sometimes puts others ahead of him.



4
0

Kojo PEPPRAH OPPONG

Nice (Fra)

Age 21 (04.06.04)
Initially earmarked as one for the future, but may end up being fast tracked into the starting XI. Worked his way into the squad and has been a mainstay since his first invite last October.



23
1

Aliidu SEIDU

Rennes (Fra)

Age 25 (04.06.00)
Seidu's ability to play anywhere across the backline makes him a valuable squad option. At his best on the right of a back three. Played twice at the 2022 World Cup.



22
0

Salis ABDUL SAMED

Nice (Fra)

Age 26 (26.03.00)
His career hasn't gone according to plan but he's back playing regularly at Nice. Partnered Partey in Qatar and provides energy in the middle of the park.

MIDFIELDERS

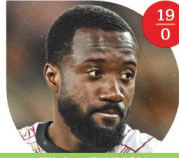


12
0

Majeed ASHIMERU

La Louviere (Bel)

Age 28 (10.10.97)
Injuries have denied him a consistent run in the team, but one of Ghana's most talented midfielders. Joined La Louviere on loan from Anderlecht in January in search of regular action.



19
0

Elisha OWUSU

Auxerre (Fra)

Age 28 (07.11.97)
In and out of the team but made an impact in the friendly against Germany and would do a job off the bench when the game is stretched. A reliable member of the squad.



56
16

Thomas PARTEY

Villarreal (Spa)

Age 32 (13.06.93)
Vice-captain and the only constant in Ghana's midfield. Lacks game time at Villarreal but a top-class midfielder operator on his day. Club CV includes Arsenal and Atletico Madrid.



7
0

Kwasi SIBO

Real Oviedo (Spa)

Age 27 (24.06.98)
Impressive since coming into the team. A combative presence, more limited when in possession, who will come into the coach's thoughts when a more cautious approach is needed.



7
0

Ibrahim SULEMANA

Cagliari (Ita)

Age 22 (22.05.03)
Has the talent to start, which would allow Partey to play higher up the pitch. Spent his entire career in Italy with Hellas Verona, Bologna, Atalanta and now on loan at Cagliari.



10
0

Caleb YIRENKYI

Nordsjaelland (Den)

Age 20 (15.01.06)
Largely played right-back since making his international debut but, with Ghana thin in the middle of the park, may partner Partey in midfield. Could be his breakout tournament.



4
0

Prince Kwabena ADU

Viktoria Plzen (Cze)

Age 22 (23.09.03)
New in the team but has taken his chances pretty well after starring in the friendlies against South Korea, Austria and Germany. An option for the No.9 role.



117
33

Jordan AYEWE

Leicester City (Eng)

Age 34 (11.09.91)
Having an underwhelming season at Leicester but a beast in Ghana colours – their top goalscorer in World Cup qualifying. Younger brother of Andre and son of Abedi Pele.



27
3

Abdul FATAWU

Leicester City (Eng)

Age 22 (08.03.04)
Presents a potent option on the right wing, with his ability to cut in and shoot with his stronger left foot. Has impressed in two EFL Championship campaigns. Previously at Sporting.



46
13

Mohammed KUDUS

Tottenham Hotspur (Eng)

Age 25 (02.08.00)
Currently injured and a big doubt for the tournament but, if fit, remains Ghana's talisman who carries a lot of expectation on his shoulders. The Black Stars' top scorer at the last World Cup.



34
3

Antoine SEMENYO

Manchester City (Eng)

Age 26 (07.01.00)
Ghana's most in-form player, hoping to transfer his stunning Premier League form to the national team, which so far he's struggled to do. Explosive and brilliantly two-footed.



27
1

Kamaldeen SULEMANA

Atalanta (Ita)

Age 24 (15.02.02)
Can frustrate with his lack of end product but did his part in qualifying with a goal against the Central African Republic. Clocks the fastest speed of any player at Qatar 2022.

FORWARDS



7
1

Brandon THOMAS-ASANTE

Coventry City (Eng)

Age 27 (29.12.98)
The only out-and-out centre-forward profile in the squad who can play with his back to goal. Has played all across the EFL for the likes of West Brom, Salford and MK Dons.



25
2

Inaki WILLIAMS

Athletic Club (Spa)

Age 31 (15.06.94)
Yet to impress in a Ghana shirt but set to start in attack, with Semenyio and Ayew – who drifts out wide from his No.9 role – in support. Bilbao-born, his brother Nico represents Spain.

ALSO IN CONTENTION

GOALKEEPERS

Solomon AGBASI (Hearts of Oak), Abdul MANAF NURUDEEN (Eupen, Bel), Rome-Jayden OWUSU-ODURO (AZ, Ned) – *pending in the event of a switch of nationality*

DEFENDERS

Ebenezer ANNAN (Saint-Etienne, Fra), Derrick LUCKASSEN (Pafos, Cyp), Patric PFEIFFER (Darmstadt, Ger), Mohammed SALISU (Monaco, Fra) – *injured*, Marvin SENAYA (Auxerre, Fra), Razak SIMPSON (Nations FC)

MIDFIELDERS

Francis ABU (Toulouse, Fra) – *injured*, Baba IDDRISU (Almeria, Spa), Daniel-Kofi KYEREH (Freiburg, Ger), Prince OWUSU (Medeama SC)

FORWARDS

Dan AGYEI (Kocaelispor, Tur), Andre AYEWE (NAC Breda, Ned), Christopher BONSU BAAH (Al Qadsiah, KSA), Callum HUDSON-ODDI (Nottingham Forest, Eng) – *pending in the event of a switch of nationality*, Ransford-Yeboah KONIGSDORFFER (Hamburg, Ger), Eddie NKETIAH (Crystal Palace, Eng) – *pending in the event of a switch of nationality*, Ernest NUAMAH (Lyon, Fra) – *injured*, Joseph PAINTSIL (LA Galaxy, USA)

GROUP L ▶ GHANA