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Gold Stars
win GHALCA
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No automatic 3rd term for Kurt

— **Oduro Sarfo**

Story: Prince Dornu-Leiku

GHANA Football Association (GFA) Executive Council stalwart, Nana Oduro Sarfo has mounted a staunch defence of the decision to extend the presidential term limit from two to three, insisting the change was about constitutional alignment rather than entrenching Kurt Edwin Simeon-Okraku's reign as FA chief.

At the 31st GFA Congress at the Ghanaman Soccer Centre of Excellence on August 12, delegates voted 114-6 in favour of the amendment, which has generated

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GFA must prioritise unity and fairness after term-limit storm

THE Ghana Football Association (GFA) Congress has spoken. By an overwhelming 114–6 majority, delegates voted to extend the presidential term limit from two to three. What should have been a straightforward exercise in constitutional alignment has, however, generated heated debate across football circles. At the heart of the storm lies a familiar question: was the amendment crafted to

strengthen Ghana football, or to smooth the path for one man?

Executive Council member Nana Oduro Sarfo has moved quickly to defend the decision, stressing that it was about consistency, not incumbency. His point is not without merit: it was indeed unusual that Executive Council members could serve three terms while the president was restricted to two. Aligning both roles may tidy up an inconsistency introduced by the Normalisation Committee.

But perception matters. The timing of the decision, with GFA President Kurt Simeon-Okraku midway through his second term, inevitably fuels suspicion that the amendment was designed to benefit the man in charge. Many now believe the door has been left ajar for him to extend his reign until 2031. That belief — whether true or false — risks deepening divisions in our football fraternity at a time when unity is badly needed.

This is why the onus now lies squarely on the leadership of the GFA. They must go beyond legalistic justifications and work to prove that Ghana football remains a level playing field for all. Every suitably qualified candidate must feel they can mount a credible challenge for the top job, free from manipulation or favouritism. Only then will the amendment be seen as a measure for the good of the game, rather than a calculated manoeuvre to entrench one

administration.

It is also important that stakeholders — from clubs and regional associations to player bodies and supporters — seize this moment to close ranks. Too often, our football is paralysed by mistrust and factional battles. Yet the true test of leadership is not only in constitutional amendments but in creating an atmosphere where everyone feels included, respected, and assured that their voice matters.

Ghana football faces challenges on and off the pitch. The Black Stars' painful failure to qualify for the next Africa Cup of Nations is still raw, while our domestic leagues grapple with dwindling attendance and financial strain. On the brighter side, the FA has made gains: improved financial support for clubs, investment in youth and women's football, and plans for nationwide U-15 girls' leagues. These are laudable, but they must not be overshadowed by suspicion of power entrenchment.

The new term-limit framework is now law. What the football public demands is simple: that it does not become a vehicle for division, but a platform for inclusivity, accountability, and genuine progress. The GFA must ensure that Ghana football emerges stronger, more united, and better prepared for the future.

From rivals to teammates, now tactical opponents

• McCarthy, Sektioui's journeys to CHAN

THE story of Benni McCarthy and Tarik Sektioui is one that African football lovers still recall with a mix of nostalgia and intrigue, as it started as just teenagers with dreams.

What started as a bitter memory soon blossomed into a friendship that would stretch across decades.

It began in Rabat, 1997, during the African Youth Championship (now TotalEnergies U-20 AFCON), where Morocco and South Africa marched all the way to the final.

McCarthy was the tournament's sensation, scoring spectacular goals against Senegal and Zambia and propelling South Africa to their first youth final.

But a famous and ill-timed goal celebration — climbing the fence to salute fans after scoring — earned him a suspension for the final against hosts Morocco.

As fate would have it, Morocco seized their chance. With McCarthy helplessly watching from the sidelines, Tarik Sektioui shone brightly, orchestrating Morocco's attacks and leading them to a 1–0 victory.

Sektioui's dazzling performances throughout the tournament saw him crowned Player of the Tournament, a title that confirmed his arrival on the African stage.

"I believe if I had played, the outcome could have been different," McCarthy once reflected, still rueful of that yellow-card accumulation.

Yet, while that night etched pain for him, it forged the foundation of a friendship with the Moroccan star who stood on the opposite podium.

Team-mates at Porto

Nine years later, their paths converged again at FC Porto, one of Europe's most storied clubs. McCarthy, fresh off a UEFA Champions League triumph under José Mourinho, was already an icon in Portugal.

Sektioui, after a successful spell in the Netherlands, joined the Dragons in 2006.

"We struck up a quick friendship because we were two African kids eager to succeed in Europe," McCarthy said, recalling their pre-season days together.

Though their overlap at Porto was brief—McCarthy was on his way to England—those weeks forged a bond built on mutual respect.

Sektioui remembers McCarthy fondly: "I have very good memories of him as a player, having had the chance to play with him. Seeing him now doing well as a coach makes me happy".

Two careers, two paths

Their playing careers followed different arcs. McCarthy became South Africa's all-time top scorer, starring at AFCON 1998 and the 2002 World Cup, and enjoyed spells in England with Blackburn and West Ham, later moving into coaching roles including with Manchester United as forwards coach.

Sektioui carved a quieter but no less admirable career in Europe, winning the



• **Benni McCarthy and Tarik Sektioui (right) were teammates during FC Porto's golden years**

Portuguese title with Porto and shining in Morocco's domestic game.

As a coach, he quickly made his mark, guiding RS Berkane to a TotalEnergies CAF Confederation Cup title in 2020 and later managing Morocco's U-23 side.

Now, fate has once again drawn them together — not as players, but as head coaches at the TotalEnergies African Nations Championship (CHAN) 2024.

McCarthy leads co-hosts Kenya, who stunned Morocco in Group A with a gritty 1–0 victory despite playing half the match with ten men.

Sektioui, in charge of the Atlas Lions, carries the weight of history as Morocco chase a third CHAN crown after triumphs in 2018 and 2020.

"It will really be great meeting again as coaches," McCarthy admitted before their clash. "Not a score to settle, but a great reunion of two young coaches eager to do well".

Clash of philosophies

Their coaching philosophies mirror their playing styles. McCarthy, a ruthless striker in his prime, demands efficiency, resilience, and discipline from his Harambee Stars. Against Morocco, his side defended with steel, surviving waves of pressure to clinch a famous win.

Sektioui, once a daring winger, has instilled attacking adventure into his Moroccan team. "He sets his team up in the same way he played—adventurous, attacking,

always going forward," McCarthy observed.

The tactical duel is one of contrasts: defensive compactness and counter-attacks versus fluid attacking football.

Beyond the tactics, this story resonates because it encapsulates the spirit of African football. Two men who once competed for youth glory now stand on the touchline shaping futures for the next generation.

For McCarthy, victory over Morocco was more than just three points — it was about belief, uniting Kenya in their debut CHAN campaign. For Sektioui, it was a reminder that football's beauty lies in its unpredictability and that even giants can stumble.