

ASANTE KOTOKO EXPRESS

Vol. 3 No. 36 Tuesday May 15, - May 17, 2001

¢1500 • £0.50

Memorial service for stadium victims



President Kuffuor pays his last respects to the 126 departed souls



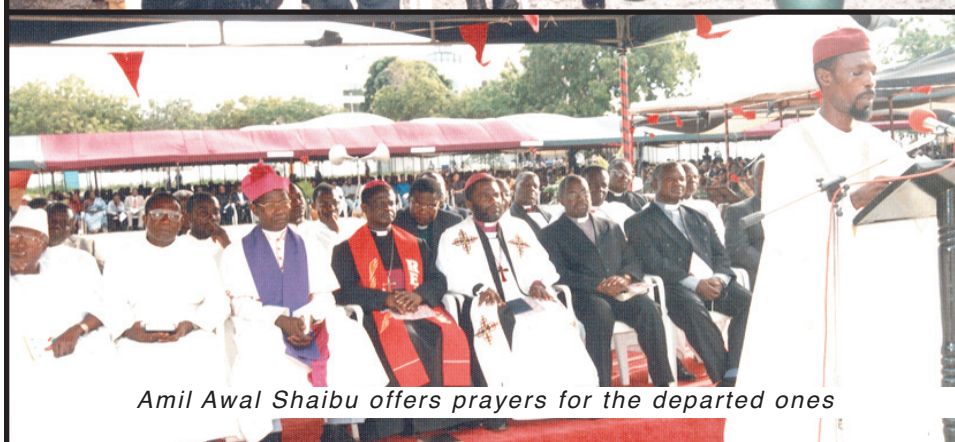
The Kotoko delegation arrive at the memorial service



Military officers and others pay their final respects



Chiefs and Queen mothers were also there to pay their respects



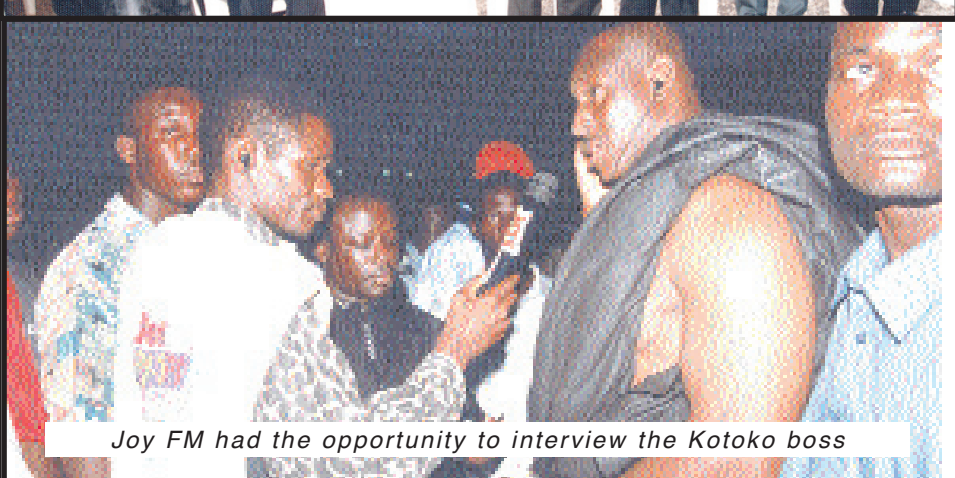
Amil Awal Shaibu offers prayers for the departed ones



Members of the diplomatic corp were well represented



Regional Minister Sheikh I.C. Quaye in a chat with Herbert Mensah



Joy FM had the opportunity to interview the Kotoko boss



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The only official mouthpiece

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Damirifa Due!



"No one can anticipate the time of disaster. Like fish caught in a cruel net or birds caught in a trap, so are humans caught at a time of calamity, when it suddenly falls upon them." [Ecclesiastes 9.17]

In remembrance!

Wednesday May 9th 2001

I will never ever forget this day. I still wake up at night and early in the morning and remember the afternoon rain, the match itself, the linesman's flag, the poor officiating, the tear gas, the images of people jumping from great heights to escape the tear gas, the confusion and the stampede, the injured and the dead, the club colours draped on the dead, the living and the hope. The hope came from one supporter alive but injured at the Military hospital. As I visited the wounded he called out to me and told me not to worry...he told me that but for the officiating things would have been different. He was concerned about the club and not his terrible injuries. He wanted to get out so that he could watch our next match. He believed the development and direction was right. I was astounded and could only keep my quiet!

Sunday May 13th 2001

Last Sunday afternoon I attended a special inter faith service on the forecourt of the state House. The service was organised by the Government to honour and remember the dead. The event was both poignant and emotional for me and when I had to give a brief speech I could hardly contain my feelings!

A brief summary of my speech is outlined as follows;

"I am truly humbled to be here today. In making this short speech I would like to start by quoting Ecclesiastics 9 verse17.

"No one can anticipate the time of disaster. Like a fish caught in a cruel net or birds caught in a trap, so are humans caught at a time of calamity when it suddenly falls upon them. [Ecclesiastics 9 verse17]

"This is not a personal tragedy for Hearts or Kotoko: it is a national disaster for all of us. That is why the nation mourns and that is why the global football community is grieving and that is why we as individuals can only weep more loudly.

"The death of 126 young men, women and children in circumstances, which could and should have been avoided, is particularly personal and painful for me and for all the country. It is an unimagined tragedy, unsurpassed at the international level. The trauma of having to save the dead from the crush will haunt me forever. I still wake in the morning haunted by the events of that fateful Wednesday night. I carried over twenty bodies and never for one moment considered whether they were Kotoko supporters or Hearts supporters. I only knew them to be Ghanaian football supporters who may well be alive. I knew I had to try my best to save them. We all did what we could in our own way on that fateful night. Sadly it was not enough! But that does not diminish the tragedy. Lessons will have to be learnt to prevent such a dreadful event from ever happening again.

"Our thoughts are particularly with the families and friends. Those young men, women and children, Hearts and Kotoko supporters alike, are in our hearts and in our minds. Just as we do not know how the breath comes to the bones in the mother's womb, so we do not know the work of God who makes everything and takes everything away.

"The 126 young people are gone, but they will never be forgotten!!

Saturday May 12th 2001

Whilst watching the English FA Cup between Arsenal and Liverpool I received a visit from a young Hearts of Oak supporter. He is a member of the famous/infamous Chapter O. He had been at the stadium the night of the tragedy and he had seen us all working hand in hand to try and save the living and removing the dead. I later saw him at the Military Hospital the same night. This young man restored a lot of my faith in soccer. Even though some people should know better but don't this young man clearly did know better. It was a revelation to hear this young Hearts of Oak supporter exhibiting the kind of objectivity that will ensure that we all get through this. He recognised the need (as we do) for us to come together to make things work. He appeared to have the foresight to also recognise the need for the two teams to be seen to be working together in certain specific areas which would be of mutual benefit! He comported himself with class! He surprised me by indicating that he saw me carrying closer to 30 bodies and that he had visited some of the people saved to tell them of how they were saved. He also pointed out that one lady in particular had later died!

I watched Arsenal lose to Liverpool in the FA Cup final. This is a match they had won and only chose to lose! They outplayed Liverpool throughout the match and missed when it would have been easier to score.

My telephone did not stop ringing throughout the day. The need to be in touch with as many affected families as possible was key!

Friday May 11th 2001

This was a sad day. It was a day when the Muslims amongst the dead were buried. They were buried as was their tradition and the afternoon service was attended by His Excellency President J.A. Kuffuor and His Excellency Vice President Aliu Mahama. Also in attendance amongst others was Sheikh I. C. Quaye. There had been threats of disturbance but this was not to be.

The violent rampage by some of the youth in Nima was truly unfortunate. It now appears that it was orchestrated and not representative of the people in Nima at large! Their pain was understandable but the resulting violence was not. The politicising of their feelings was also truly wrong!

It was suggested that E.T. Mensah had been detained at the BNI headquarters on charges of incitement. The alleged acts of incitement in this manner are heinous and potentially destabilising. If they are true then E.T. Mensah has serious questions to answer. Kotoko

and Hearts are the two biggest clubs in the country and irresponsible comments and acts could easily confuse some supporters to act against their fellow Ghanaian.

In the current dispensation such actions are totally out of place. Given that it also occurred around the time of the anniversary "Kume Preko" deaths I would hope that this would have reminded the Attorney-General of the need for that matter not to be forgotten!

The Police

With the recent attacks on the Police I think that the time has come for us to look at ways of mending the broken bridges. They have become the easy and obvious target for many and in many ways this is understandable. The IGP has made it very clear of the fact that there will be no cover-up. We must give him the opportunity to handle the matter as professionally as I am sure he will do! I am sure that those responsible will be exposed. We do need to move on and there is a need for leaders to start encouraging a situation where it can be understood that the actions of a few policemen does not represent the entire Ghana Police Force. Whilst I cannot and will not condone the actions of those officers at the stadium that evening I think it important to note that we now have an excellent relationship with our force in Kumasi. We have not had the use of tear gas at the Kumasi Sports Stadium during my tenure and I am sure that will be maintained. For our supporters I continue to ask for your patience and understanding in these trying times! We will need to work together as Ghanaians for our total good and the Police are a part of this!



From the Boardroom

Herbert Mensah

The Management of Sports in Ghana

I am so sad that this tragedy that we have now experienced may be the wake up call that is needed to put us on a programme to ensure that we move forward, never return to this situation and start achieving the targets that we as a nation are more than capable of achieving!

I fully sympathise with the Government's position although I have been a little concerned about the time it has taken to move forward. Clearly the legacy of E.T. Mensah has meant that it requires a great deal of strength and clarity of mind to take over this Ministry. The man has so violated this Ministry that it has to be fumigated to excess before we can truly move forward. It is not simply a question of replacing him as the Minister in charge. It goes further than this.

I believe that in the short term our sports should be handled in the following way. I believe there is a case for the establishment of a Sports Management Board that could be handled out of the Office of the President. This board would be tasked to manage, develop and run sports in Ghana. I believe that this board could be chaired from the office of the President and include a number of influential and knowledgeable people who would be tasked with a specific area of sports development. The members could be responsible for the following areas;

General policy, planning and finance, marketing and sponsorship, soccer, boxing and athletics, other sports, the youth, the development of facilities. I would include two lawyers and two accountants on this Board to be able to relook at matters left (like the various probes and monies spent on the feasibility plans into a stadium at Prampram etc!)

Although there are existing structures in place there is a need for them to be redirected from a different platform.

With respect to soccer the time has come for the Government to move. I believe that they should present a number of candidates (more than usual) to the Executive Council for consideration. Given the seriousness of our recent tragedy it is important that the back-

grounds of the people to be considered are taken into account. We shall all make our opinions known and would hope to be able to influence the final decision!

The Stadium Disaster Fund

On Sunday the Government launched a stadium disaster fund with the first monies being donated by Ghana Telecom. The Government also announced that all the families would be catered for by the Government and that their medical bills as well as the sum of €2.5m would be allocated to pay for the cost of funeral preparations!

Before the establishment of this fund we had been fully supportive of the Joy FM fund, which was set up immediately after the tragedy. Indeed we had asked a number of organisations who had come forward to donate directly to this fund. Collecting money for a worthy cause can sometimes be easy but the disbursement can be tricky! There is a need for major decisions to be made and these include the establishment of Trustees to ensure that whatever is agreed in terms of disbursement and management is carried out.

At this stage the Joy FM management will have to decide on what to do with their fund which apparently has raised close to €200,000,000 (two hundred million cedis). There may be a strong case for incorporating their fund into that of the government's. There may also be a case for the Government appointing someone from Joy FM onto their own team, which will determine how the monies will be disbursed!

I wish to thank all the companies who have made the contributions they did. It shows the unique qualities that we have as Ghanaians. I have taken note and I hope that all do the same and realise that this is our future...our ability to work together in times of distress. Our culture dictates that we care for every human being and this has been proven to be the case!

In the meantime...

Public announcements from a section of Hearts supporters from Nima that they were going to attack me were unfortunate. I was not worried but only saddened because they simply DO NOT represent the views or feelings of the majority of their supporters. I have received great support from a large number of them and I was touched when some of the people I saved at the stadium (Hearts supporters) came to congratulate me later.

The violence that arose afterwards and the threats against me, Kotoko supporters in Legon etc. must be contained and stopped. Alhaji Grunsah once said that if people do not take care we could have a civil war, which could start from or between Hearts and Kotoko. An attack on Kotoko or me would be reciprocated before commonsense could take centre stage and peace must therefore be maintained before we reach this stage!

I am bitterly disappointed by the irresponsible statements made by some Hearts officials. Their public attempts to apportion blame are both distasteful and irresponsible. If their actions and statements succeed in motivating a small section of their supporters to take to arms then the consequences of the actions must be on their conscience forever! We at Kotoko harbour personal feelings which I believe would be counter productive and inflammatory to make public at this point and it is for this reason that we have and are keeping fairly silent on the specific behaviour of individual supporters before, on and after that infamous night! Maybe if either of them had had to participate in the body carrying of supporters and had been subject to the IMMEDIATE suffering and sight of blood and dying supporters they would have tempered the statements they made on air!

I found the advertisements in one of the dailies at the weekend in which specific donations were being made only for the use of the victims from Hearts very distasteful! I believe that it is also very disrespectful and divisive to all of the dead! We have made sure that all the companies, which came to us prior to Sunday made their commitments directly to the Joy FM stadium disaster fund irrespective of who, the direct beneficiaries are! The fund is supportive and not a profit centre for the families and therefore all affected would presumably benefit equally!

It is now time for the FA to move ahead. All over the world where we have had stadium related disasters the league has quickly resumed. I believe that this must be done with haste and that we must observe all the protocols that go with the remembrance and respect to the dead and their families that is culturally and internationally accepted. I would also ask the FA to consider a formulae of fund raising that would ensure that specific monies could be raised and allocated from our matches. I would like to propose that the FA and its affiliates including the Sports Council take a 50% reduction in their match fees. The clubs to support an educational and rehabilitation programme could then apportion the monies from this specifically for supporters at base.

I understand that whilst in BNI custody E.T. Mensah said that he was going on hunger strike! He should be very careful because his keepers might just take him seriously and stop sending him any food. Mr Mensah must understand that there are those who blame him for a number of things and who have very little sympathy for him. From the Kume Preko deaths and including the mismanagement of Sports in Ghana, he has been blamed for most things! The fact that the stadium reports and the Gbadegbe reports were not acted on during his tenure also confirms for most people his responsibility for the sad state in which Ghana finds itself. His sacking of Coach Dossena when he had set us on course to qualify for the World Cup and his manipulation of players into believing that if they did not play for his club they would not be invited into the national team, is totally unforgivable. Indeed some of his assigns such as Afranie endorsed a programme which as Minister he could have stopped but didn't but which led to the current situation in which overaged players are used to win competitions etc! E.T. Mensah's legacy is what we are living with today!

Fabulous – the greatest

International news agencies storm Accra

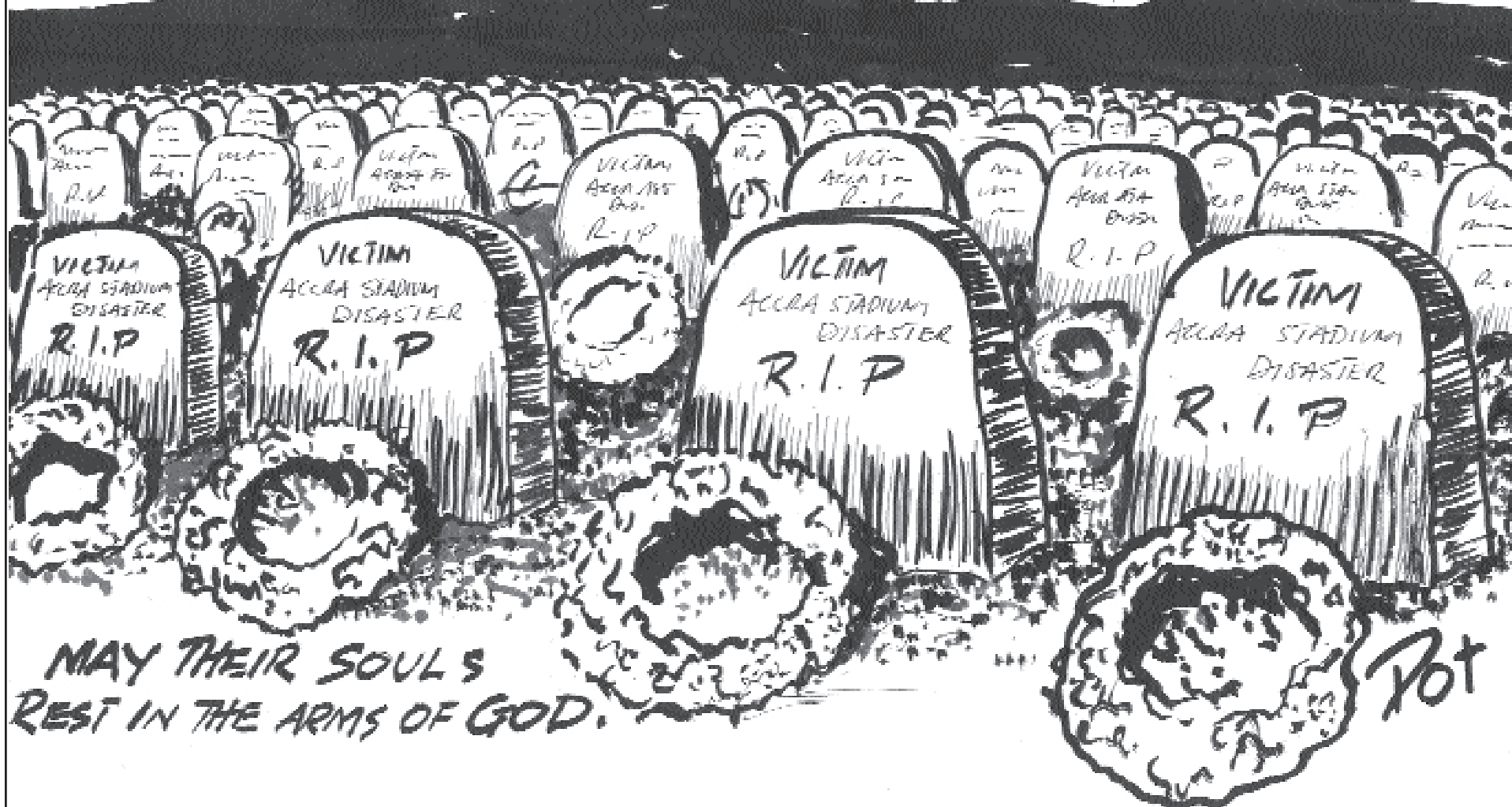
David Ampofo interviews Herbert Mensah for Carte Blanche

David Ampofo interviews Herbert Mensah for Carte Blanche

LAMENTATIONS!

CURA STADIUM DISASTER.....

15! WE ARE COMPELLED NOT ONLY TO BLAME
THE POLICE, BUT AN ENTRENCHED SOCCER MAFIA
WITH DIABOLICAL INTENSIONS WITHIN OUR SPORTS
MINISTRY, PLB, G.F.A AND REFEREES ASSOCIATION....
WE MUST NOT PRETEND THEY DO NOT EXIST!



MAY THEIR SOULS
REST IN THE ARMS OF GOD.



Your Letters

Kotoko must win the league

Dear Editor,
I would like to congratulate coach Ernst Middendorp and the entire playing body for their splendid performances in the off-season matches played a couple of months ago most of which they won.

Now that there is positive change in the country, I strongly believe that it will affect my darling club and people will see the emergence of a new Asante Kotoko and they will be greatly marvelled.

The head coach has identified the shortcomings of the players and is working tirelessly to minimise them if not see to their total eradication. The efforts of the coach in this direction had led to the encouraging performances put up by the playing body. Let us not forget that the coach took the team half way through the first round of last season's league when the team's performances were nothing to really write home about, yet at the end of the season, Kotoko managed a respectable fourth position despite some decisions taken against the club. Coach Middendorp's knowledge of how the system operates here in Ghana coupled with the reasonably quality players he has at his disposal will serve as the ingredients to take Kotoko to the top as far as this season is concerned.

I would like to assure all Kotoko fans and the various Circles that the club will definitely win the league so they must throw their support heavily behind the club. They should try and witness every match of the

Dear Editor,
Club financing has been an issue on my mind for quite sometime now. I have almost always bogged myself down on this issue because it is central to the development of our game.

My concern is more about my darling club, Kumasi Asante Kotoko. Since we are the pacesetters it is important that we develop our game so that the other

club at the Kumasi Sports Stadium.

Hope lives in me like a fortified building that my noble club will win this year's league and win convincingly.



Joe Sam

ly.

FABU-THE BEST!

Ceejay Murphy

Circle 98

Pankrono-Kumasi.

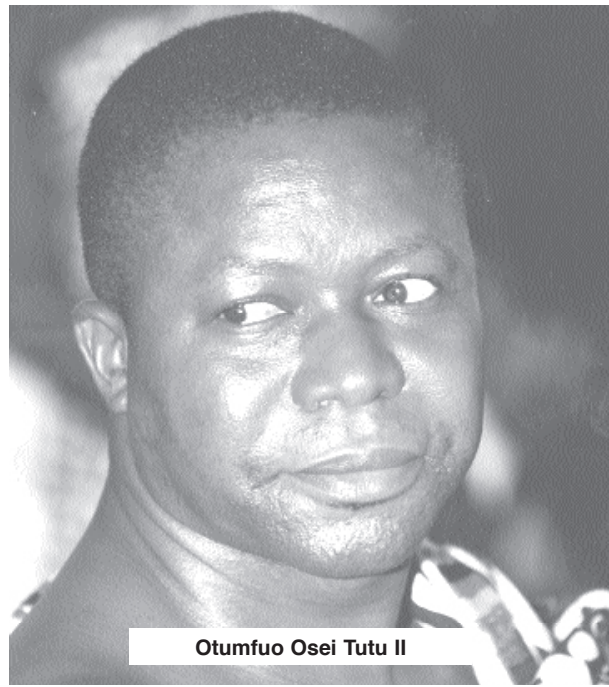
clubs can learn from us. We must all know that the responsibility for success is ours as supporters. We pride ourselves with the success of the club. The success of the club is a source of great pride to all of us. Do we not have a divine mandate to help ourselves in the things that give us satisfaction? We have a part to play in this. Whatever we do to help our dear club is done for ourselves i.e. success for our satisfaction.

DEVELOPING THE STRUCTURES

Rebuilding should move on all fronts. Almost all the structures being put in place are not mutually exclusive. They should all move side by side. We do not necessarily need to win the league before we develop a web site.

I do not blame those who think that 13 year olds are developing web sites in Germany and therefore Management should not drum it home as an achievement. Management needs commendation for all this because the world has become a global village and Asante Kotoko needs to be represented on the web. Management has been proactive in this direction. I can only hope the people who make these ugly noises do so out of envy. I will urge management to get back to the basics because it is what we need for success. The vital ingredients which form the basics are: Good leadership, Good Technical direction, Enthusiasm of supporters, Publicity and openness, Development plans and Suitable financing. Is the present management not displaying all these?

The detractors should focus on issues. The enthusiasm as it is today is different from how it was three years ago. Supporters of the club



Otumfuo Osei Tutu II

had deserted our matches and the club was slowly dying.

Leadership has done everything necessary about all the basic things listed above. The seventh which to me is the most important requires the response of **SUPPORTERS**. We have to respond in order to balance the equation. What I mean is that we should respond to the call by management. We are always acclaimed to have the greatest supporters in the world. Demonstrably so, we should go on and REGISTER. The contributions of our supporters are the most sustainable source of financing for our CLUB. I hope somebody comes out to prove me wrong but until that time when I am proved wrong I will hold very dear the idea that **SUPPORTER FINANCING** is the most suitable source of financing for our dear club now.

Supporters of teams like Manchester United provided finance for the club. The basics are in place for the

club and therefore they can attract and retain the best players in the world. Why should we not provide the finance so that we can position our club the way Manchester United fans have done for their club?

I am confident that it was enthusiasm and love that compelled supporters of Man 'U' to buy the shares of the club when it was initially floated. Why should we not learn from the Man U experience? I am confident that our club can register at least one million supporters. I urge all supporters to rise and be counted.

ASSETS

We may ask ourselves the question, who owns the stadium at Old Trafford? I think it is the property of Man U. It's a pity that a club of Asante Kotoko's stature cannot point to a park which the club can call its' own. I am grateful to Otumfuo Osei Tutu II for donating land for the Kotoko City Project. This is one project

which all supporters should hold very dear to their hearts.

I am confident that we will see a City which we can call ours, i.e., with everything therein if we can organise one million supporters. With this massive support-base, we should not wait to be tagged HIPC. I call on all and sundry to get involved in the registration exercise. We should belong to the G 7 of football clubs and not HIPC. Let us contribute to develop the club. Several jobs will be created when the Kotoko City Project takes off.

Leadership has provided the vision for us and we need to respond positively. A positive response means registering in our numbers. Let us all help to make ourselves happy.

I will rest my case here by urging all supporters of the club to heed to the clarion call by either joining a CIRCLE, REGISTERING BY MAIL or PAYING into

KOTOKO FC SPECIAL MEMBERSHIP ACCOUNT
A/C No. 213556045
SSB BANK LTD.
KCB-KUMASI.

Greetings to Kwadwo Otchere-Duah and all other supporters of the fabulous club.

In the mean time...

I recall that about two to three years ago, Mr. Kwame Gyasi (School of Administration) appeared on talking point with Alhaji Jawula. Mr. Gyasi who happened to be my lecturer said the "GFA should rid itself of the old guards who know so many skeletons in the cupboard of each other such that efficiency and effectiveness are impaired". I will fully support his statement now. Strong leadership devoid of the antics of the past is what we require.

Kwasi Owusu-Bonsu (11271)
Diamond Circle
Akwatia.

Keep up the spirit

Dear Editor,
When the league was about starting, many were those who were hunted by last season's initial horrible outings. In view of that though very confident of our team making great impact in this year's league, I was extremely meticulous coming out with any conclusive predictions to unduly inflate hopes only to inflate uncontrollable passion of supporters.

Of course, my expectations of good things to come actually drained away like water upon realising that our first league match was against RTU at the grassless Kaladan Park. Obviously, that venue has

been Kotoko's Waterloo for sometime now and to play the first match at a place where we hardly win or draw was enough to send mild shocks through the spines of the numerous Kotoko supporters.

Nevertheless, our players managed to put up a vintage performance to secure a point from Kaladan Park. A point which brought quite excessive joy that brightened the faces of all Kotoko supporters. That only went a long way to expose the extent to which the fever of the match had gripped everybody. The draw was in fact, very crucial to our marching forward. A loss would have indeed demoralised the playing body, the

supporters, our indefatigable management team and it would have perhaps, given credence to the 'off-season champion' tag on us.

After this, Obuasi Goldfields F/C also came to exhibit the stuff they were made of but could not withstand the wrath of the Porcupine Warriors. They went back home empty handed.

However, I am not the least enthused about the performance of Goldfields at all. I should be concerned because the team is in the Ashanti Region and their continued stay in the league will always brighten the fortunes of Kotoko. It would not be proper to see Goldfields relegated. Let's

all say a word of prayer for them.

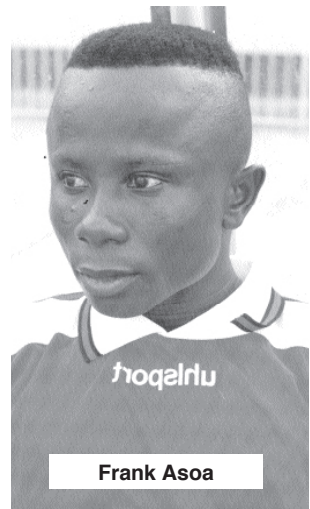
The match against Tano Bofokwa was slightly marred by the heavy downpour taking away the beauty of the game. But all the same, we were on target four times with one of the goals amazingly and incredibly disallowed.

Our players seem to have rekindled the spirit of old. They have so far put up spectacular performances that have seen them gather seven points. It is not surprising at all that we jumped onto the top spot of the league table.

It is my fervent hope that the trend we have set will be maintained. I hope the playing body will not in any-

way quench the spirit. They should keep up the spirit.

Amoah Addae Michael
Tarkwa Maakro.



Frank Asoa

Ejisu Circle 89 of Kumasi meet on Thursday




Some members of Circle 89 of Ejisu

All members of Circle 89 in EJISU are reminded of their usual meeting on Thursdays 6.00 p.m. at Opanin Yaw Agyarko house, formerly Yaa Asantewaa Nite Club.

All old and new members are welcome. For further information contact can be made with the chairman King Jomo or the secretary Joe Amoateng. Tel. numbers 051-20198/20181.

Bawku Circle 27 to meet

Kotoko supporters in and around Bawku, Garu, Pusiga, Misiga, Zebilla, Pulimakom, Mogonosi, Kukungugu, Worikambo and Binduri will meet at their usual place and time to hold discussions on the well being of the team and the circle. The interim executive members of the group are inviting new members to be at this week's meeting to help make the group one of the best in the Northern sector of the country. All are cordially invited.



Circles Corner
...with Ken Klevor

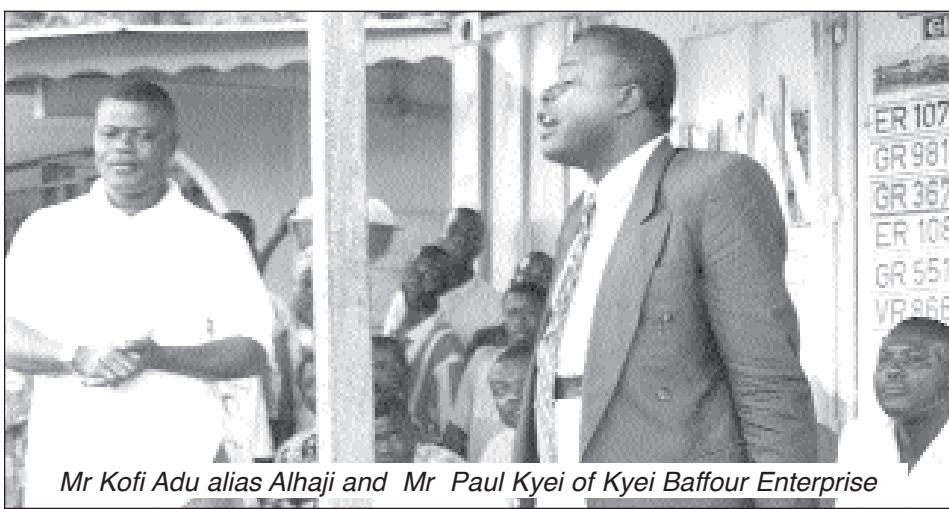
**A COLUMN FOR YOU
TO SPEAK ALOUD**

Circle 24 of Nkawkaw meet aon Thursday

The following members of Circle 24 of Nkawkaw, Mr. Emmanuel Boateng Mumuni Mohammed, Mr. Osei Tutu, Mr. Kwame Boamah and Hajiya are inviting all Kotoko supporters living in and around Nkawkaw to an emergency meeting this Thursday. All members are kindly requested to come to Thursday's meeting. The venue for the meeting is the Ebenezer Preparatory School behind the Ghana Commercial Bank. The time for the meeting is 4:00pm. The meeting day is always Thursday. The main aim of the meeting is to encourage the members to rejuvenate their commitment towards meetings to make the circle one of the strongest in the Eastern Region.

The Licensing Office Group meets tomorrow

The Licensing Office Group appeals to all its members to be present at their usual meeting tomorrow. The meeting that will still take place at Paul Kyei Enterprise near the Great African Insurance Company Limited will start at 3:30 prompt and end at 4:30 prompt.



Mr Kofi Adu alias Alhaji and Mr Paul Kyei of Kyei Baffour Enterprise

Some of the executive members still in charge include Paul Kyei, Kofi Adu (Alhaji) and Francis. Any body who longs for further information can get in touch with Francis on 760952 or contact any of the executives. All members are hereby informed to be at the meeting for a very important message from their Executives.

Circle 98 of Pankrono calling

Members of Circle 98 are being reminded of the circle's meeting that takes place every Thursday at the R/C Primary School at exactly 6:00pm. A variety of issues will be discussed so all members of the circle are expected to be present in their numbers. Any of the following people can be contacted for further information. They are: Mr. Emmanuel Buckman chairman, Kwabena Nyarko (Nfanni Agro) vice chairman, Mike Dentwi- General Secretary, Owusu Boateng Eric (Ceejay) Welfare Secretary on 051-70994, Oliver Acquah- Organising Secretary and Ofori Tony Desmond-024-361794.

Invincible Circle 80 of Ahwiaa, Kumasi to meet

The executive members of Circle 80 of Ahwiaa wish to remind all its members and all Kotoko supporters within the area of their meeting that will come off today at 4:45pm at the R/C Primary School. Members are to make it a point to attend and be well prepared when coming. Issues to be discussed at the meting include the proposed trip to Cape Coast, donation to the Otumfuo Education Fund, Registration of new members as well as payment of dues. The Circle wishes to use this medium to congratulate our army of players for their splendid performance in the league so far. To coach Middendorp, we say 'ayekoo'. For any further information on the circle, the chairman, Brenya Vasco, Godfred Boateng vice chairman and PRO as well as Kwabena Sarkodie-treasurer can be contacted on 051-70097. New members are always welcomed.

Odorkor Asante Kotoko fan club to meet

All supporters of Asante Kotoko in and around Odorkor are being reminded that the formation of the fan club is on course. Every supporter who wants to be part of the noble idea should call personally at H/ No. B152A/11 at Odorkor waterworks just behind Macroni house and ask of Adade (Moro Judas, formerly of I.M.S.)

Atonsus supporters to meet on Saturday

The Executive members of the Atonsus supporters union wish to inform all Kotoko supporters in and around Atonsus to attend their general meeting tomorrow at Groovy Spot S-Line junction, Atonsus. There will be discussions on the welfare of each member of the group and also how they can register all the members to be Kotoko card-holders. A general appeal goes to all supporters to be at the meeting ground and anybody with any information or want information can contact the following numbers 051 30675 or 051 30676.

Opinion

Kumasi laments stadium disaster



Justice Addo

The beautiful game of football is meant to bring unity and friendliness among people through FAIR PLAY. But the unity and friendliness that was to be derived from the game rather brought pain and sorrow to the entire country as a result of police over-zealousness.

Some members of the public in Kumasi have reacted at the national disaster, which is now referred to as Black Wednesday.

JUSTICE ADDO (TAILOR, ASH-TOWN) - It is good that the President has advised us not to pass judgment at the moment but I had long ago anticipated something of this nature, though not to such alarming proportions, because of the way our referees have in most cases handled some matches with bizarre decisions. Violence should never be endorsed in anyway but I think there is a level of patience of human beings. The issue of referees' appointment must be seriously looked at.

With the police I think they simply take delight in firing teargas. They acted rather callously. Their penchant for firing teargas is quite on the high. As the President has promised, offenders must be dealt with after the Presidential enquiry. To our people who are bereaved I would want to take this opportunity to express my profound condolences. I pray for quick recovery for the



Akosua Frempomaa

injured and to the departed, may the good Lord grant them a peaceful rest.

AKOSUA FREMPOMAA - It is very sad for Ghana to lose as many as 126 human lives because of football. It is terrible but I hope that the culprits would be brought to book after the Commission of Enquiry set up by the President has finished with their work and would hope again that they be dealt with according to the dictates of the law.

The arrival of the new administration has witnessed a number of shake-ups in the various sectors of the country but not in sports. I think there is a lot of rot in the sports sector, which I believe government should take a critical look at. We voted for them because we needed "positive change" and we are eager to see the change!

To the police, they better be up and doing. I wish the



Henry Adubofour

injured well and console the bereaved.

HENRY ADUBOFOUR - So far I know one person called Sani who lives at Bantama who is reported dead. Apart from him I do not know any other person who died.

I attribute the disaster to poor officiating. If what people who watched the match are saying is anything to go by, then obviously the blame should go to the referee and his assistants.

They showed open bias against Kotoko to the extent that even before the kick off fans foresaw the calamity that was imminent since he had proved his bias against Kotoko on previous occasions.

Virtually all the infringements were against Kotoko and this was enough to prove to all and sundry that they were to make sure that Hearts beat Kotoko at all costs. Had it not been poor officiating I don't think such a nasty incident would have occurred in the first place since it was at the same venue last year that Kotoko lost 0-4 to Hearts. No nasty incident was recorded then because no one had qualms with the level of officiating.



Cecilia Anane

ating.

Something seriously has to be done about the manner and quality of referees appointed to handle such matches. Sometimes it looks as if the appointments committee has no regard for the level of passion involved in matches between these two sides. Well, this is the time for them to review their practices.

MADAM CECILIA ANANE - I will squarely put the blame on the referee. If it was true that the Assistant Referee's flag was up and the referee ignored it and allowed Hearts to score then I have no doubt in my mind that it was the referee who sparked off that nasty incident at the stadium.

I will also blame inconsistency on the part of the football authorities as another cause of the disaster because they allowed the clubs to hold them to ransom by rejecting one referee after the other. Such inconsistency is unprofessional.

Naturally since Kotoko had previously rejected the one who was eventually selected there was no way he could have favoured the visiting team.

Even though it is not right for a supporter to visit his anger about poor officiating on state property, considering the behaviour of spectators worldwide, there was nothing anyone could do to prevent such spontaneity.

After all the plastic chairs are not more valuable than



Anthony Boadi

human life and it is here that the role the police played comes into focus.

If they knew that teargas canisters were used to disperse crowds they should not have used it in an enclosed area like the stands at the stadium. The police are there to protect life and property and if they have failed to do so then they should be punished for their irresponsible action.

As a member of the GFA when we meet what I will put across is that the police should be well educated about the role they should play in such situations. They should also be re-trained in crowd violence situations so that there will be no repetition of the Accra stadium disaster.

I am urging the bereaved families to take heart and commit all that happened to the Almighty God and for the injured I wish them speedy recovery.

ANTHONY BOADI MOORE - I wish to express my sorrow and shock at the tragedy. It is really painful for human lives to be substituted for plastic chairs. It is quite incomprehensible but adhering to the advice of the President we will not pass judgment.

However I believe we must get to the drawing board and re-assess the architectural design of the stadium. I believe that if we had had a lot more exits the situation would not have been that disastrous.

On the issue of the police I think their inability to assert themselves for over 20 years has accounted for their lack of potency in the handling of such situations.

I suggest that the government apportion some of the budgetary allocation for arms and ammunition to safety and disaster management equipment.

To the injured I pray for their quick recovery. I console the bereaved families.

ALHAJI YAHAYA - Right from the word go the referee did not hide his intention of favouring Hearts. He interacted freely with the Hearts side but the same could not be said of the Kotoko side and this heightened supporters' apprehension that they would not be treated fairly.

For the "Positive Change" message to be realized there should be a major shake-up at the GFA leadership. Agra, Ampem Darko and Laryea, the man who has been appointing referees should all go since their positions have been compromised.

Virtually all the top sports gurus are Hearts sympathizers and they have chosen not to be neutral and objective.

For the victims of the disaster

all that I can say is that they died as martyrs especially for Kotoko and I can assure them that Kotoko will capture the league trophy to honour them.

JOSEPH E. SAMPSON - The scale of the disaster is too great to recount. It has never happened in the annals of the country's political history. May the dead rest in perfect peace.

I blame poor and bias officiating as the root cause of the disaster.

In such tension-packed matches between two sides any indiscretion on the part of the referee was bound to spark off trouble and possible mayhem.

For some time now Hearts has been beating Kotoko and that jinx had to be broken at all cost thus the tension was high. The referee marred the beauty of the game when he ignored the assistant referee's flag and set the stage



Joseph Sampson

for spectator agitation.

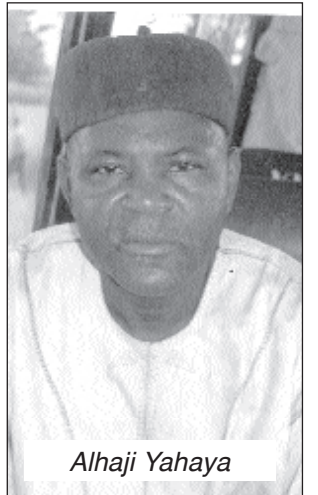
The way and manner the police on duty at the time reacted to the spectators' behaviour is something not to be glossed over since they are not well trained and equipped to contain such situations.

A typical example was the teargas incident during the Hearts-Esperance match in Accra last December, which forced CAF to sanction Ghana, but it appears we did not learn from the incident.

If one watches other international matches it is clear that truncheons are used to contain crowd violence.

The police should use teargas canisters sparingly so that they can save lives. Police personnel who will be detailed to provide security at league centres should be adequately trained and this will go a long way to forestall such unfortunate situations.

I will like to stress that pent-up feelings amongst soccer fans will always be expressed irrespective of the consequences and no one can suppress it, so long as referees continue to behave irresponsibly on the field of play.



Alhaji Yahaya

OSEI KOFI - I put the blame on the police, the Sports Council and the referee who handled the match since in my opinion none of them played their role or roles effectively. I think if any one of them had behaved responsibly in the execution of their jobs the incident would not have occurred in the first place.

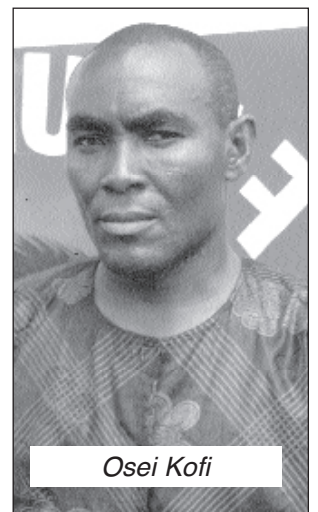
The reason why I am saying this is very simple. If the referee had played his role well the crowd would not have responded violently. If the police had also realized that they were there to protect lives they would not have fired the teargas.

There is no doubt that matches between the two sides are always characterized by tension, therefore the moment fans of one side realize that their team is being given a raw deal, they begin to react negatively.

On the other hand if the two sides realize that everything is fair, everybody accepts the outcome.

I know Hearts had beaten Kotoko several times in the past but I see this defeat as a result of poor officiating so I am really disappointed by the outcome.

For the dead, all that I can say is they should rest in peace. To the bereaved families they should also accept my condolences and to the injured I wish them speedy recovery.



Osei Kofi