

## Nigeria is fast becoming Africa's table tennis hub - Abrefa



### Derek Abrefa will lead Ghana's team to Nigeria Open

The staging of the annual ITTF Challenge Nigeria Open coupled with the rating of its players among the best in the world, Nigeria is fast becoming the hub of table tennis in Africa, says Ghana's Derek Abrefa.

Abrefa, who was voted the 2016 Ghana's Table Tennis Star of the Year, believes hosting of the Nigeria Open has given more African players the chance to make it to the world ranking as well as improve their global rating.

The 25-year-old University of Cape Coast undergraduate said: "I must say Nigeria is becoming the home of table tennis in Africa. But I must also say Ghana is also on the verge of becoming one of the top African countries that will first be mentioned when we talk of table tennis. The Nigeria Open gives Africans the opportunity to meet world top table tennis players as well as give and expose African table tennis players on what the game is all about. Since most African countries are developing countries, most sports athletes don't get the opportunity to be exposed outside the continental level to meet higher and experienced players due to inadequate support from the government. And since Nigeria Open is a recognised ITTF tournament, it enables others who are battling with sponsorship issue to be able to participate and secure a good ranking in the world."

The Ghanaian star is also not giving up on his team chances in Lagos, saying, "Ghanaians have prepared for this competition and I must say our efforts will pay us off well. Our target is to come and return back to Ghana with a medal. We stand a chance of winning a medal.

For his expectations in Lagos, he said: "My expectation for this tournament is to be able to move a step ahead of where I was in my last participation. I have prepared so well for this competition and all I hope and pray is that draw favours me also because in every competition, one needs to get a good place in the draw. I am expecting myself to put up a better performance."

On African players' chance, the Ghanaian number one said: "I am expecting Africans to fight for the ultimate prize since Europeans always defend every trophy that falls within their continent. We can make it and we must make sure we keep the trophy in Africa."