

## **REPORT ON MY TABLE TENNIS TRAINING IN THE UNITED STATES**

My name is Derek Abrefa, 28 years old. I'm a professional table tennis player — 12-time national champion and six-time Sports Writers Association of Ghana (SWAG) award winner.

It is my dream to be among the world's elite players and to represent Ghana in the Olympics. I am working tirelessly to achieve this dream.

As a player who is trying to qualify for this year's Summer Olympics in Tokyo, I decided to embark on a few months' training in the United States, in order to prepare for the African Qualifications taking place in Tunisia on 27-29 February.

I chose the Westchester Table Tennis Center, near New York City, as the place to prepare, because of the high quality of their facility. They have 19 tables, a high ceiling, excellent lighting, athletic flooring, and almost 200 members of all ages and skill levels. They welcome all races and ethnicities. I'm told that members were born in more than 30 countries, making the club a sort of United Nations of sport. It is a place where you feel at home as well as get the necessary attention to improve your game.

Coming to Westchester I must say has given me more confidence to pursue my dreams. During my stay here I got the opportunity to practise with world-class players such as Kai Zhang, ranked no. 3 in the U.S. and no. 191 globally; and three-time Caribbean champion Robert Roberts, who is the manager of the Westchester TTC.

One of my amazing moments here was the January 2020 Westchester Open, where I participated in two events — the open (unlimited rating) and Under 2500. The U2500 was really tough for me, but I reached the final and then won the ultimate prize. The joy from this victory has really inspired me to push even harder.

In the open event I lost in the quarterfinals, but I gained a lot of experience by competing against top players from around the world.

My stay in the U.S. has taught me a lot of things. Having met great personalities, I have learnt to be more humble. I also learnt to value and respect other people's views. Above all, I have learnt to love everyone irrespective of their race and colour.

My training visit was made possible by the effort of many who believed in my dreams and vision.

I express my profound gratitude to Stanbic Bank Ghana Moneywallet for believing in my dreams and sponsoring me on this trip. I also thank the Westchester Table Tennis Center, especially the owner, Will Shortz, who opened his home to me at no cost. And I thank all the coaches at the WTTC for their help and support.

To the Ghana Immigration Service, the Ghana Table Tennis Federation, and all my fans out there who supported me in diverse ways both spiritually and physically, I say ... may God richly bless you.

My plan is to secure a permanent club abroad to exhibit what I know and can do.

To that end, I plan on embarking on another training trip in the future. I again appeal to all the Ghanaian stakeholders and corporations for their sponsorship and support.

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