

World Cup 2010: Annan predicts an African champion

Former UN secretary general Kofi Annan believes that an African team will win the World Cup by the end of the decade.

Speaking to the BBC before the World Cup final, Annan, said it was evident that the Africans possessed great footballing talent.

"You saw the talent of the African players, they may not have gone all the way, but the talent is there.

"Properly trained, disciplined, with practice they can go all the way."

Annan had high praise for his Ghanaian compatriots of whom he was "very proud".

He described their controversial exit to Uruguay as a "cruel loss", but he backed them to come back stronger.

"I wrote a letter to them indicating they should relax, they've achieved a lot already and their performance in South Africa brought such unity where all of Africa was standing as one, supporting the games, cheering Ghana.

"I hope we can hold on to that unity and use it for our economic and social development."

Annan was also extremely impressed by South Africa's organisation of the tournament.

"South Africans should be proud of what they have produced. It's been an organisational and logistical feat, some doubted them but they've proven them wrong and it's also been good for the continent.

"I was in Berlin in 2006 and it was a happy event, extremely well organised, outsiders felt welcome.

"But this is the only World Cup that has brought a continent together, the only World Cup that has introduced Africa to the world and I hope some of the stereotypes have been shattered."

The 72-year-old said South Africa's investment in infrastructure will be the greatest legacy of the tournament, and he does not doubt that the continent can host other big sporting events like the Olympics.

"We have proven we can do it. We have proven we can organise, we have proven we can receive, welcome and make people feel at home. And I think people have also discovered there's another side of Africa.

"It's always the stories of Africa being the dark continent, full of conflicts, killing each other.

"When you stay here for a month and you're able to drive everywhere and you're welcomed with smiles, they realise there's another Africa and I think the Olympics could be organised on the continent. "