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Ghana face ultimate German test

Story: Prince Dornu-Leiku

GHANA'S Black Stars face a defining moment tonight in Stuttgart as they come up against four-time world champions Germany in a high-profile international friendly that carries far greater significance than a routine pre-World Cup test.

With just 79 days to the start of the 2026 FIFA World Cup, this is a match loaded with pressure, expectation and urgency -- a referendum on team readiness, credibility and belief. This is no routine warm-up — it is a referendum on readiness, credibility and belief. And for Otto Addo's men, the assignment goes beyond the outcome of today's

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Voice of

Graphic SPORTS

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German test demands immediate reset from Black Stars to restore hope

The excuses have run out; enough of soft landings for Coach Otto Addo and his players. After their humiliation in Vienna, the Black Stars walk into Stuttgart tonight with their credibility on the line against a well-drilled German side in the second of pre-World Cup preparation games.

The 5-1 capitulation suffered against Austria was not an anomaly; it was an exposure of deep cracks and a wake-up call to the stark reality about Ghana's level of preparedness for the World Cup. The team looked tactically naïve, physically second-best and mentally passive. The midfield was overrun, the defence disorganised, and the attack blunt. It was a performance that raised serious questions about whether Otto Addo's team, in their current state, are ready for the demands of a World Cup, despite their previous experience.

Now comes Germany, a team that punishes weakness without hesitation. This is the real danger. Germany are not experimenting; they are peaking. Six straight victories, 20 goals scored, and a system running with precision under Julian Nagelsmann make them a different calibre of opponent altogether. With Florian Wirtz pulling the strings and a forward line of Kai Havertz, Serge Gnabry and Leroy Sané, they create their own openings, finish them clinically and dismantle weak sides. And Ghana, right now, look vulnerable, but must respond to restore hope and build confidence. Augustine Ahinful, a former Ghana international and onetime playmate of Otto Addo in the national team, has said what many are thinking, and his warning should not be dismissed. Ghana cannot afford another passive display. If they approach this match with the same hesitation and lack of structure shown against Austria, the outcome will not just be defeat; it will be another dismantling. Otto Addo must act decisively and immediately. The Austria display suggested a team still in trial mode with too many changes, too little cohesion, and no identifiable structure. That is unacceptable at this stage. With the World Cup fast approaching, the job is no longer to experiment; it is to define. The Graphic Sports agrees with Ahinful that the team needs a tactical reset from defence to attack. Tactically, the reset must be ruthless. The defensive structure has to be rebuilt — compact, disciplined and aggressive in duels.

The gaps between midfield and defence that Austria exploited cannot be allowed to reappear. Against Germany's movement and positional intelligence, even the smallest lapse will be punished. In midfield, this must be a fight. Germany thrive on rhythm; disrupt it or get drowned in it. Ghana need authority, not passengers — players who can win duels, control tempo and impose presence. In attack, intent must replace hesitation. There is no value in sterile possession or hopeful play. Ghana must be direct, efficient and purposeful, especially in transition. Every opportunity must carry threat. But tactics alone will not be enough. This is a test of mentality. Too often, friendlies are approached with caution, even comfort. That approach must be buried. This is a live audition, and every player should feel the pressure. Because the truth is simple: places are not guaranteed, and reputations mean nothing without performance. The wider stakes are just as significant. Public confidence is fragile. Another heavy defeat will deepen scepticism and cast doubt over the team's readiness for the World Cup. A strong, disciplined showing — even in defeat — can begin to restore belief. History offers a warning Ghana cannot ignore. They have never beaten Germany, and past encounters have exposed the gap when preparation and organisation fall short. That gap still exists — and right now, it looks wider. Tonight is not about hope. It is about a strong response.

What now for Woods after latest arrest?

By Iain Carter, BBC

Would he play or wouldn't he? Any golf fan thinking of Tiger Woods in the past week or so was probably wondering if we would see him compete at next month's Masters.

Now the questions are much more sinister.

It was known that this all-time great golfer was in a race to recover from a ruptured Achilles tendon and two back surgeries in time to take on the undulating demands of Augusta National.

It seemed a race he was losing. But Woods, a 15-times major champion and one of the most dominant figures the sporting world has ever seen, was refusing to give up on the dream.

"I keep trying," the 50-year-old said last Tuesday. "I want to play. I love the tournament."

In one dramatic incident, his priority has switched to dealing with the latest hit to his reputation - arrest, eight hours in jail, another bleary-eyed mugshot dominating news outlets and charges including driving under the influence.

He has been here before - trying to recover from injuries that would have ended most athletic careers, as well as driving incidents that have crushed his reputation.

In the 2009 crash that

precipitated his initial downfall, Woods was found to have sleeping pills in his system. Eight years later he was discovered asleep in a haphazardly parked car 15 miles from his Florida home.

There was damage to the driver's side of the Mercedes. He later explained he had suffered a reaction to medications prescribed in the wake of four back surgeries, including a spinal fusion.

Woods pleaded guilty to reckless driving and entered a programme for first-time DUI offenders. It was also reported that he checked into a treatment clinic.

The incident led to the publication of a first dishevelled mugshot, a savage contrast to thousands of glorious pictures that had celebrated his status as an all-conquering champion.

And those were the images that returned with his improbable fifth Masters victory in 2019, fused back and all, achieved at the age of 43. Again Woods had shown himself to be a genuinely extraordinary sporting hero.

Within two years, though, his fortunes plummeted once more. Woods' high-speed single vehicle crash near Los Angeles nearly cost the former world number one his right leg.

California police were criticised for not testing for impairment. Many observers found it surprising that officers felt there was no

evidence to suggest they needed to carry out such tests.

It was a horrific crash. Woods' leg needed surgical rebuilding and there were plenty who doubted his golfing future. But, remarkably, he hobbled his way back.

Too often, though, the pain was evident to the watching galleries. Then followed the ruptured Achilles 13 months ago and two further back surgeries.

We have not seen him play competitive golf outdoors since the Open Championship of July 2024, his only action a nine-shot cameo in this week's TGL indoor simulator finals.

Of late, Woods' primary influence has been off the course, chairing the PGA Tour's Future Competitions Committee.

It is a relatively recent appointment, but for the best part of five years he has been at the forefront of shaping the tour's response to the arrival of the breakaway LIV Golf circuit.

He was too busy to take America's Ryder Cup captaincy last year and is currently weighing up whether to accept the job for the 2027 match at Adare Manor in Ireland.

But such roles, returning to action (he has registered for June's US Senior Open) and indeed any public-facing activities have been upended in the way his Range Rover flipped on to its side on

Friday afternoon.

Police officers are analysing skid marks on Jupiter Island's 30mph South Beach Road to gauge the speed of the 82-time tour winner's car while attempting his ill-fated overtake manoeuvre.

Prosecutors are looking to build their case on three charges: driving under influence (despite passing a breathalyser test for alcohol), refusing to give a urine sample and damage to property.

Regardless of whether he is able to play at the Masters, Woods was expected to be in Georgia for the unveiling of 'The Patch' - a revamped public golf course he has worked on with the Augusta National club. He was also looking forward to Rory McIlroy's champion's dinner on the Tuesday night.

Instead, talk shows across America and beyond are into overdrive on a far less wholesome agenda, speculating about the turbulent life of this elite sportsman - someone who has enjoyed and endured more extreme highs and lows than pretty much any other.

Trying to play the Masters, trying to hit a ball 300 yards, escaping from the sand, holing a delicate three-footer or trying to mastermind the future of men's professional golf or captaining his country all pale in significance now.

Tiger Woods' priorities must lie elsewhere. He is in a bunker of a different kind. Recurring road incidents had already shown a deeply troubled side to this supreme champion.

And it has happened again.



• Tiger Woods —
Fall from grace