



## **We're on the (Ghana) Bus!**

"We're going to kill Serbia!" shouts Ghanaian midfielder Kevin-Prince Boateng. "We're going to kill Australia! We're going to kill Germany!" There may be no Michael Essien in the Black Stars squad since he announced his withdrawal from the World Cup due to injury but confidence on the team bus is nevertheless skyscraper high.

Boateng has only been with the squad five days but he already seems at home among his team-mates. And he has good reason to. The Ghana squad will be cut from 30 to 23 in the coming days and based on the Portsmouth man's performance in today's crunch training game he could well be in with a shout to replace the Chelsea man in the first XI that faces Serbia on June 13.

Despite the brave faces, the news that Essien has had to withdraw from the squad due to injury is a hard to take. On hearing the announcement, Bayer Leverkusen full-back Hans Sarpei dourly admits: "It's a blow". But he like the rest of the Black Stars believes Ghana still have the right mix of experience and youth to cope. Young stars like Dominic Adiyiah and Kwadwo Asamoah have already helped themselves to the U-20 World Championships in 2009 and then took Ghana to the final of the Cup of Nations in January.

Team morale is helped by the fact that some of Ghana's big names are looking fresh and ready to make the first World Cup in Africa a tournament to remember. Captain Stephen Appiah, who has been out of action with injuries for two years, is back in the squad and enjoying his football again. Star striker Asamoah Gyan looks like he plan to pick up in South Africa where he left off in Angola by scoring two terrific goals in training. Meanwhile, Sulley Muntari, who has just won the treble with Jose Mourinho's Inter Milan becoming only the fourth Ghanaian ever to win the Champions League, has just rocked up to the training camp in a super cool black Lamborghini with a great big smile on his face.

Of course, there are some fringe players who won't make the final 23 when the final decision is made by Serbian coach Milovan Rajevac in just a few days time. They work extra hard in training and fly hard into tackles hoping to impress the boss. On one occasion, a young defender slides into Asamoah Gyan in a bid to win the ball. He misses and almost wipes out the Black Stars top goal scorer in the process. The entire coaching staff gasped in horror before collectively holding their breath before the big man gets up. To everyone's relief he's not injured. Ghana cannot afford to lose another star.

Fortunately there's always laughter around the corner to break the tension. Goalkeeper Richard Kingson's attempts to make a cup of hot tea while the team bus bounces along a bumpy road provide some much appreciated comic relief. His team-mates howl with laughter at the slapstick unfolding before them but miraculously the keeper manages to stay upright and keeps from spilling a drop of drink. The keeper clearly has a safe pair of hands - he better hope the coach was watching.