

Sports

England 'not our fiercest rivals': All Blacks coach Steve Hansen

'History is history — it's about creating new history'

TOKYO: All Blacks coach Steve Hansen is predicting a "mighty clash" in this weekend's heavyweight World Cup semi-final with England, but insisted they were not New Zealand's biggest rugby rivals.

The treble-chasing All Blacks have won their last six meetings against England dating back to 2013 and 15 of their last 16. Eddie Jones's side are riding high after smashing Australia 40-16 in the last eight, but Hansen attempted to play down New Zealand's rivalry with the English.

"It will be a mighty clash, but I think South Africa will always be our biggest rival — because of the history that comes with it," Hansen said yesterday following the 46-14 rout of Ireland at the weekend.

"And the fact we play each other so regularly. We've played England once in the last (five) years so it's hard to build a rivalry when you don't play each other." Hansen added: "If we could get the Six Nations to come on board with a global season then we might be able to do that. Once they do that, they're starting to think about the game, rather than themselves — there's a headline for you."

Despite New Zealand's traditional dominance, Hansen feels that history will count for nothing against England in Yokohama. "History is history — it's about creating new history," he said. "You're playing in the semi-final of the Rugby World Cup, so there will be pressure on both sides," he added.

"The key thing will be how to manage it — you crack that nut then you give yourself a great opportunity," Hansen admitted that England had "come a long

way" since their horror 2015 World Cup when they became the first tournament hosts to crash out in the pool stage under Stuart Lancaster.

On England's quarter-final thrashing of the Wallabies, Hansen said: "They took all their opportunities. Some were given to them but you've still got to take them. They're a good side."

SOWING SEEDS OF DOUBT

Jones has described New Zealand as "the greatest team there's ever been in sport" in the build-up and the cricket-mad Aussie likened the task of toppling the All Blacks to bowling out Australia's star batsman Steve Smith. Hansen, though, is too wise to get sucked into any mind games by his wily, old foe. "That's a really nice statement," he grinned, ever mindful Jones has a reputation as something of a wind-up merchant.

"I'm sure Eddie believes that but he's also being quite kind. "It's a real thing," Hansen replied when asked about the kidology that goes on before big games. "But sometimes you're better not to go there. Eddie is a smart man — he knows me well, I know him."

New Zealand beat England 16-15 when the teams squared off at Twickenham last November and Hansen expects another nail-biter this weekend. "It's our job to put doubt into their heads," he said.

"That's part of what rugby is about — how quickly you can learn and adapt on the park in the heat of the moment." Both New Zealand and England had their final pool games washed out by a violent typhoon two weeks ago, but Hansen believes his team are coming to



TOKYO: File photo shows New Zealand's full back Beauden Barrett collects an All Blacks flag from the crowd beside his father Kevin (2nd R) after winning the Japan 2019 Rugby World Cup quarter-final match between New Zealand and Ireland at the Tokyo Stadium in Tokyo. — AFP

the boil nicely. "You don't get performances like the ones we and England had (in the quarter-finals) without emptying

the tank," he said. "Now it's about being smart, getting clarity around the game and dealing with the stuff on Saturday really humming." — AFP

Malaysia bags first gold in bowling championship

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Malaysia's Shalin Zulkifli snatched the first gold medal of the 25th Asian Ten Pin Bowling Championships 2019 being held in Kuwait under the patronage of HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, as she ended first in the women's individual category.

Shalin Zulkifli collected 1,498 points, ahead of Indonesia's Nadia Pramanik who took the silver medal with 1,492 points while Malaysia's Sin li Jane was satisfied with the bronze medal collecting 1,471 points. The first competition of the championship with the participation of 228 players representing 27 countries was very strong and competitive as the scores show.

Meanwhile, medals will continue to be awarded through the men's individuals and the women's doubles to be held today in the fourth day of competition. The men's individuals will start at 9:10 am and will conclude at 12:40 pm. The women's doubles will start at 2:20 pm, and will conclude at 5:50 pm.

The first round which was held yesterday saw Kuwaiti men: Khaled Al-Dubayyan, Basel Al-Enezi, Asel Al-Roumi and Mustafa Al-Mousawi, who competed hard with the Malaysians, South Koreans and Japanese. It is known that Malaysia's Timmy Tan won the men's individual's gold in the previous championship which was held in Hong Kong 2016, followed by Thailand's Anop Arremsaranon and Hong Kong's Michael Mak.

Meanwhile, Deputy Chairman of the

Board of Public Authority for Sport Asad Taqi lauded the opening ceremony of the championship and stressed that the outstanding organization and the large continental gathering shows high professionalism said President of International and Asian Bowling Federations, Chairman of Kuwait Bowling Club Sheikh Talal Al-Mohammad and board members. Taqi said "the opening ceremony presented our country in the best way for the continent of Asia, and such championships will remain in the memory for years to come", as he wished success to those all involved.

Qatar's Bowling Federation President Abdelsalam Abdallah said his federation is participating with six players in the men's category as it is being held in Kuwait, although the best players are away because they are busy with their university studies.

Abdallah said the chances of Gulf players are good despite the presence of world champions from South Korea, Japan and others, but we saw some Gulf players on the awarding podiums in previous championships. Saudi player Mohammad bin Sultan Al Saud said he as well as the rest of Saudi squad are proud to participate in the event being held in Kuwait, and lauded the organization, hospitality and reception by the higher organizing committee.



Qatar Airways launches amazing offers and packages for FIFA Club World Cup Qatar 2019

DOHA: Qatar Airways yesterday launched an exciting promotion to Doha as the Official Airline Partner of the FIFA Club World Cup Qatar 2019.

The award-winning airline has announced incredible flight offers on Economy and Business Class tickets as well as packages from the world to Doha. Qatar Airways invites its customers to book flights and receive match tickets to see the stars of world football in action at the FIFA Club World Cup Qatar 2019 between December 11 and 21.

Passengers who already booked their travel journey are invited to extend their holiday with a stopover in Doha and receive match tickets to experience world-class football and the cultural delights of Qatar.

Qatar Airways will launch a global TV campaign to support this extraordinary travel offer entitled 'Make Qatar Your Goal'. The TV campaign will be broadcast in over 160 countries worldwide and is available to view at: <https://youtu.be/a42r16Doafk>.



Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, His Excellency Akbar Al Baker, said: "We are delighted to offer fans these amazing deals to visit Qatar and be part of the FIFA Club World Cup Qatar 2019. We are committed to inspiring our passengers to come and discover what Qatar has to offer, on and off the football pitch.

"As an airline, we firmly believe in the power of sport to unite people, and we look forward to bringing thousands of passionate fans together in Qatar to enjoy world-class football alongside five-star hospitality and organisation. The FIFA Club World Cup Qatar 2019 will serve as an exciting preview to the biggest event in

world football, the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, in just over three years' time."

Featuring the six continental club champions from around the world along with Qatar Stars League champions Al Sadd Club, the FIFA Club World Cup Qatar 2019TM action will start on 11 December, culminating in the final on 21 December. Reigning European Champions Liverpool FC open their campaign on 18 December, marking the inauguration of Education City Stadium, the latest FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022TM stadium to be completed over three years ahead of the world cup finals. For more information on individual match ticket sales, please visit www.fifa.com/tickets.

Messi, Ronaldo wouldn't do what rugby players do, says coach Jones

Tokyo: England coach Eddie Jones contrasted what he said was rugby's down to earth attitude with that of football superstars Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi as he lauded All Blacks boss Steve Hansen ahead of Saturday's blockbuster World Cup semi-final.

Jones and Hansen are two of the most successful coaches in the modern game, with the New Zealander looking to guide the All Blacks to a third straight World Cup title at Japan 2019 and fourth in total. But if he is to do that his side must first beat a resurgent England in Yokohama this weekend.

The coach of his native Australia when they lost the 2003 World Cup final to England and the mastermind behind Japan's shock victory over South Africa in England four years ago, Jones is no stranger to pre-match "mind games".

But there has been little in the way of verbal fireworks from former Brumbies boss Jones at this tournament, with the England coach delivering a glowing assessment of Hansen's record. "To start with, Steve's a good bloke," said Jones. "That's number one. Secondly, he's got a great record."

"Super Rugby with the Crusaders when we first started coaching against each other, followed by Wales, followed by New Zealand. You don't get a better record than that. Jones said it was rugby's culture of "respectful relationships" that set it apart from other codes.

"You just have to see this tournament to know what it's done because the things that have happened don't happen in other sports. "You've got the Canadian and Namibian blokes cleaning up the ground (after their pool match in Kamaishi was cancelled because of Typhoon Hagibis).

"Could you imagine Ronaldo or Messi doing that if Barcelona or Real Madrid gets a wash?" Hansen was equally complimentary about Jones's work in transforming an England side who suffered an embarrassing first-round exit on home soil at the 2015 World Cup into genuine title contenders four years later.

"Eddie's done a fantastic job with England — they've got a harder edge about them now," Hansen said. "Eddie's been part of a winning World Cup team with South Africa (2007), he's had the disappointment of losing to England when he was coaching Australia (2003) but to get to the final is being successful anyway."

Hansen, in a reference to the stroke Jones suffered six years ago when in charge of Japan, added: "I respect his passion for the game — he loves the game."

"He's got a work ethic second to none. He put himself in hospital, he'd worked that hard. He just loves the game and anyone who loves the game gets my support."

Hansen said the verbal sparring that went on between opposing coaches should not be taken too seriously. "It's a game of footy, it's not life or death. It's like when you play against your brother or sister. It's important, but it's not life threatening."

"It's definitely closer than you guys (the media) perceive. You see some of the banter which is really only to help promote the game as being 'cor, these guys don't like each other', which couldn't be further from the truth," he added. "Rugby's a special game and those of us who have been around for long enough understand that the game is bigger than everybody else." — AFP