

## Sports

## Ireland overpower Scotland in emphatic Rugby World Cup win

## Bonus-point win puts Ireland level with hosts Japan in Pool A

YOKOHAMA: Ireland powered past Six Nations rivals Scotland 27-3 to put themselves in the box seat to reach the quarter-finals at the Rugby World Cup yesterday. Three push-over tries in the first half did the damage before wing Andrew Conway grabbed a fourth after the break to secure a bonus-point win, with games to come against Japan, Russia and Samoa in Pool A.

"We started really well — we were positive, we wanted to attack," said Ireland captain Rory Best. "Obviously with the conditions in the second half it became a bit more of an arm-wrestle but we know how good a team they are and we're delighted with that win."

With a sea of green-clad Ireland supporters dominating the stands at a packed but wet International Stadium Yokohama, Ireland were in no mood to be nice to their Six Nations rivals. In a brutally physical game, in which the medics were rushed off their feet, Ireland bossed the breakdown and held a commanding 19-3 lead at half-time.

As the rain's intensity increased in the second half it was Ireland who relished the deteriorating weather most with a further eight points. Conor Murray was given a dream ride behind a rampant forward pack, directing traffic with aplomb, particularly with an on-target kicking game, and pre-match concerns about Ireland's injury-hit backline quickly evaporated.

Scotland, meanwhile, did not help themselves with a weak defensive effort while being unable to penetrate the green wall in front of them. The bonus-point win put Ireland level with hosts Japan with their first-round victories in Pool A, and the two go head-to-head next weekend.

James Ryan, Rory Best, Tadhg Furlong and Conway scored for Ireland with Johnny Sexton and Murray landing a conversion each and Jack Carty kicked a penalty. For Scotland, Greig Laidlaw's first-half penalty was their only score.

## EARLY ONSLAUGHT

There was concern in the Scotland camp about Hamish Watson who was stretchered off just before half-time with a knee injury. The outstanding flanker had made 14 tackles up to that point in the face of a constant wave of green attacks.

Bundee Aki and Josh van der Flier required blood-bin treatment with Aki failing a head knock assessment. Peter O'Mahony also required a head injury assessment and Murray took over Ireland's kicking duties when Sexton was being treated for a knock.

Scotland attacked hard at the start but once Ireland weathered the initial onslaught, Iain Henderson thundered upfield to set up fellow lock Ryan for the opening try.

Best scored the second for Ireland from a lineout drive and Scotland found themselves 12 points down before a Laidlaw penalty put them on the board.

But it was short-lived joy for Scotland as when they returned to Ireland territory from the restart, a wayward pass went to ground and was fly-kicked more than half the length of the field, where Stuart Hogg was caught in possession over the line.

From the resulting scrum, CJ Stander stormed forward to pave the way for Furlong to touch down and Ireland had their third try from their third foray into Scotland's 22.

Scotland were then 16 points in arrears, and the highest deficit ever overturned in a World Cup match is 15 by Romania against Canada in 2015. The Scots tried to claw their way back in the opening exchanges of the second half, no doubt inspired by their 31-point recovery to draw with England earlier this year.

But a 15-minute period of control went unrewarded and when Ireland regrouped, Conway scored the bonus-point fourth try and Carty sealed the game with a penalty. —AFP



YOKOHAMA: Ireland's wing Jacob Stockdale (2nd R) runs with the ball during the Japan 2019 Rugby World Cup Pool A match between Ireland and Scotland at the International Stadium Yokohama in Yokohama yesterday. —AFP

## Samoa draft eight World Cup newbies for Russia game

TOKYO: Samoa coach Steve Jackson has selected eight Rugby World Cup debutants for his side's first game of the tournament against Russia on Tuesday.

The New Zealander yesterday called up 10 of the starting line-up from their final warm-up game, a 34-15 defeat by Australia, for the Pool A clash in Kumagaya, north of Tokyo. Logovii Mulipola, Motu Matuu, captain Chris Vui, Dwayne Polataivao, and Ah See Tuala are those who come in from the Pacific islanders, who reached the World Cup quarter-finals in 1991 and 1995.

"The players that have been selected deserve their selection," said Jackson. "Some players really put their hands up and that was what it was all about really. We want to keep consistency within the group and especially the starting fifteen and I think we've done that."

Jackson's opposite number Lyn Jones has named an unchanged side to the one beaten 30-10 by hosts Japan in the tournament curtain raiser last Friday with flyhalf Yury Kushnarev poised to win a record-extending 11th cap.

"Everybody deserves an opportunity against Samoa," said the Welshman, hoping to lead Russia to a first World Cup victory in their second appearance in the tournament. "Samoa will be different in attack and defence than Japan. They are a very dangerous team. We will have to be at our best to get a positive result."

Kushnarev, one of Russia's standout players against the Japanese, starts alongside captain Vasily Artemyev as the

Bears look to bounce back against the hard-hitting Samoans. Artemyev, who has scored a record 29 test tries for his country, will demand greater support from his team mates against Samoa, particularly in defence after the Russians ran out of steam against the Brave Blossoms.

Meanwhile, at 37, mercurial flyhalf Tusi Pisi is set to become the oldest player to represent Samoa at the World Cup in a country he knows well after spells in Japan, notably with the Tokyo-based Sunwolves in Super Rugby. Tim Nanai-Williams, cousin of All Blacks superstar Sonny Bill, plays full-back for the Samoans, who are ranked four places higher than Russia at 16 and will expect to get off to a winning start, though neither side is given any serious chance of advancing from a group also containing Ireland and Scotland.

## Samoa team (15-1)

Tim Nanai-Williams; Ah See Tuala,

Alapati Leiua, Rey Lee-Lo; Ed Fidow, Tusi Pisi; Dwayne Polataivao, Afaesetili Amosa, TJ Ioane; Chris Vui (captain), Kane Le'aupepe; Teofilo Paulo, Michael Alaaloa, Motu Matuu, Logovii Mulipola.

Replacements: Ray Niua, Paul Alo-Emile, Jordan Lay, Senio Toalefoa, Josh Tyrell, Melani Mataavao, AJ Alatumu, Henry Taefu

## Russia

Vasily Artemyev (captain); German Davydov, Vladimir Ostroshko, Dmitry Gerasimov, Kirill Golosnitskiy; Yury Kushnarev, Vasily Dorofeev; Nikita Vavilin, Tagir Gadzhiev, Vitaly Zhivatov; Bogdan Fedotko, Andrey Ostrikov; Kirill Gotovtsev, Stanislav Selskii, Valery Morozov.

Replacements: Evgeny Matveev, Andrei Polivalov, Azamat Bitiev, Andrey Garbuzov, Anton Sychev, Dmitry Perov, Ramil Gaisin, Vladislav Sozonov. —AFP

## Low-key England beat Tonga at Rugby World Cup

SAPPORO: Manu Tuilagi scored two tries as England launched their bid for a second Rugby World Cup title with a comfortable but error-strewn 35-3 bonus-point win over Tonga yesterday. The Samoa-born centre crossed twice under the Sapporo Dome roof in a first half that ended with England well ahead at 18-3.

And second-half scores from hooker Jamie George and replacement Luke Cowan-Dickie saw England secure a bonus point for scoring four tries, a result that could be crucial in a tight Pool C. In addition England, playing within themselves, also appeared to avoid any injuries to key players.

"We had to toil hard today and I was particularly pleased at the end of the game when we were under the pump a bit, we defended really well," said England coach Eddie Jones. "We'd like to be sharper with the ball and that will come. But I was really pleased with the efforts of my players. They worked hard and what a great effort by Tonga."

England captain Owen Farrell, who kicked 15 points, added: "To come away with a bonus-point win is always a good start to a World Cup. There are still some mistakes that we can look at and

that's the exciting thing. We've still got a lot more in us."

Tonga, who've lost more than 20 players to other World Cup nations, were vastly improved from the side that suffered a 92-7 warm-up thrashing by world champions New Zealand in Hamilton this month. "We didn't play well against the All Blacks and we caught them on a bloody good day," said Tonga coach Toutai Kefu. "Today's effort was a much improved effort. England are a good team, they squeezed us for territory in the first half and we couldn't get into their 30 (metre area) to throw any punches," added Kefu, who played under Jones for Australia.

England, whose humiliating first-round exit on home soil at the 2015 World Cup led to Jones's appointment, took an 11th-minute lead when inside centre Farrell landed a penalty. Tonga scrum-half Sonatane Takulua equalised three minutes later after a thumping hit by flanker Zane Kapeli on England number eight Billy Vunipola, whose father and uncle both played in the Tonga side thrashed 101-10 by England at the 1999 World Cup.

England thought they had scored the opening try when flanker Sam Underhill charged over after fullback Elliot Daly ran a loose kick back. But with the grounding unclear to the television match official, the score was disallowed.

From the resulting five-metre scrum, however, Tuilagi bundled over for a 24th-minute try which the TMO did award. Farrell missed the conversion but England led 8-3. England lock Maro Itoje then gave away a penalty to the obvious



SAPPORO: England's lock Maro Itoje (C) runs to evade Tonga's scrum-half Sonatane Takulua (L) and Tonga's fly-half James Faiva (R) during the Japan 2019 Rugby World Cup Pool C match between England and Tonga at the Sapporo Dome in Sapporo yesterday. —AFP

fury of Jones, in charge of his native Australia when England beat the Wallabies in the 2003 World Cup final in Sydney. But Takulua missed, an error made worse for Tonga when Tuilagi scored his second try. Daly released Jonny May before the wing's inside pass to Tuilagi allowed the midfielder to charge in in the 31st minute. Farrell converted and England led 15-3.

England almost had another try before half-time but had to settle for a Farrell penalty that gave them a comfortable 15-point advantage at half-time. Farrell made it 21-3 early in the second half with a 39-

metre penalty. England scored their third try when a thunderous rolling maul saw hooker Jamie George power over in the 57th minute.

But England lost momentum as Jones rang the changes, although their fourth try arrived three minutes from time when wing Anthony Watson's surging run and pass released Cowan-Dickie.

England now have a quick turnaround before their next Pool C match against the United States in Kobe on Thursday, with Tonga playing Argentina, looking to bounce back from an agonising loss to France, on Saturday. —AFP

## No deja vu as France spy a turn in fortunes

TOKYO: France prop Rabah Slimani thinks Les Bleus might have let their World Cup opener against Argentina slip away had it been played a few months ago and is hoping Saturday's dramatic win will signal a change in fortunes.

The French led Wales 16-0 at halftime in the Six Nations earlier this year only to lose 24-19, while last November South Africa overhauled a 23-9 deficit to beat them 29-26 with a last-minute Bongi Mbonambi try at Stade de France.

It looked like deja vu on Saturday at Tokyo Stadium when, after building a 20-3 lead at the break on the back of some brilliant attacking rugby, the French trailed 21-20 with 11 minutes to go.

This time, though, replacement flyhalf Camille Lopez eased their nerves with a coolly taken drop goal which ultimately secured a 23-21 victory to send France top of Pool C.

"Not so long ago, we would have lost this match. But we kept our heads to win this opening game and make a good start to the tournament," Slimani said.

"It reminded me of a lot of matches. I thought about the game against South Africa at Stade de France, when we lost in the last seconds. For the first time in a while, today it went in our favour. It's not over, but, hey, at least it's turning in our favour." While most of the plaudits for France's purple patch in the first half on Saturday were handed to the backs - most notably dynamic winger Damian Penaud - Slimani and his fellow forwards also played their part, particularly just before halftime.

Argentina had been camped on the France line for a long period when they elected to take a scrum penalty. The French scrum got a huge shove going through Slimani's tighthead side, though, forcing Argentina loosehead prop Nahuel Tetaz Chaparro to stand up and securing a penalty that allowed them to break the siege.

The three-times World Cup finalists next face the United States in Fukuoka on Oct. 2 followed four days later by what will be another physical contest against Tonga in Kumamoto.

Their final opening-round match will be on Oct. 12 in Yokohama against arch rivals England, a contest which is now likely to decide which team tops Pool C.

"We cannot allow ourselves to relax ... we must win the next two games," fullback Max Medard said.

"England is an ogre for us. They are several levels above us. We can't overthink things and play one match ahead. It's a bit of a cliché, but it's the truth." —Reuters

## Tampering doubts over Russian doping samples

PARIS: The World Anti-Doping Agency doubts the authenticity of files and samples

retrieved from Moscow's disgraced former drug-testing laboratory, a source close to the matter has told AFP.

The Compliance Review Committee (CRC) is preparing to recommend sanctions and is readying a report to present to WADA at a meeting in Tokyo on Monday, the source said Saturday.

This source confirms a tweet from journalist Hajo Seppelt from German TV station ARD saying Russia is "suspected of having tampered with the samples from the Moscow lab". Contacted by AFP, a

spokesman for WADA confirmed the results of the CRC report would be made public after the meeting today but said it was too early to discuss them.

Providing full WADA access to the Moscow lab's test files was a key condition of Russia's controversial reinstatement last September following a major state-sponsored doping scandal. If a fraud was revealed, this could possibly lead to sanctions like banning Russia from future competitions such as the Tokyo Olympic Games.

Russia has been suspended from all international athletics competitions since 2015, although many of its athletes are given special dispensation to compete under a neutral banner. But the International Association of Athletics Federations is due to reexamine the case for reintegrating Russian athletes ahead of the World Athletics Championships that start in Doha September 27.

WADA said in July they had started assessing the evidence provided "with a view to identifying those cases to take

forward as anti-doping rule violations". It added that, even if federations did not bring forward a case, WADA could.

WADA also said it aimed to analyse all the priority cases by the end of the year. In July, it said that it was "compiling strong evidence" of doping with 298 athletes in the immediate line of fire from files and samples retrieved from Moscow's disgraced former drug-testing laboratory. Those athletes represent 578 of the 2,262 total samples retrieved in Moscow. —AFP