

Sports

Scotland keep Rugby World Cup hopes alive with bonus-point Samoa win

Scotland next face outsiders Russia in Shizuoka on October 9

KOBE: Scotland revived their Rugby World Cup campaign with a decisive 34-0 win over Samoa in Kobe yesterday that saw the Pacific islanders finish a man down. The bonus point won for Gregor Townsend's men could prove vital in a tight Pool A that also involves Ireland and hosts Japan.

Victory was all but assured after a burst of 17 points in eight minutes late in the first half left Scotland 20-0 ahead at the interval. Scotland wing Sean Maitland and Greig Laidlaw scored tries, both converted by the fly-half who also kicked an early penalty, before fullback Stuart Hogg landed the Scots' first Test-match drop goal for more than five years with an audacious effort from just inside the halfway line.

Scotland secured the four-try bonus point with two penalty tries, Ed Fidow shown a pair of yellow cards that meant the Samoa wing saw red six minutes from time. "We're all delighted to get that bonus point. It means we're still in this World Cup," said Scotland coach Townsend.

"We've two games to go and if we play like we did tonight and improve a couple of aspects, we're very much in this World Cup." The Scots were in desperate need of a victory to have any hope of reaching the quarter-finals after starting this World Cup with a woeful 27-3 loss to Ireland — who were in turn the victims of a shock 19-12 defeat by hosts Japan that threw Pool A wide open.

The Ireland reverse led Townsend to make wholesale changes, including fielding an entirely new back-row against Samoa. The Pacific islanders were without centre Rey Lee-Lo and hooker Motu Matu'u after the pair received three-game bans for shoulder-led hits in a bruising 34-9 win over Russia.

It looked as if Laidlaw's ninth-minute penalty would be the lone score of a first half where both sides strug-

gled to hold on to the ball in humid conditions under the closed roof of the Kobe Misaki Stadium.

In the error-strewn early exchanges, the biggest cheers went to a spectator playing the bagpipes, a traditional Scottish instrument.

DARTING BREAK

But the character of the match changed on the half-hour mark when Scotland became the 20th — and last — team at this World Cup to score a try. Fly-half Finn Russell's superbly-judged cross-kick was caught by Maitland, who held off opposing wing Belgium Tuatagaloa for a try in the left corner.

Scotland had their second try just four minutes later. Russell made a darting break before finding the recalled Jamie Ritchie. The openside flanker's clever inside pass released Laidlaw, who fended off a poor challenge from Samoa fullback Tim Nanai-Williams before crossing by the posts for a try he converted.

Then, with nothing else on, Hogg dropped a goal from wide out on the left from just inside halfway, a distance of some 50 metres with the angle, to make it 20-0. It was Scotland's first drop goal in an international since Duncan Weir's match-winner against Italy in March 2014.

Scotland, who have now won all four of their World Cup matches against Samoa, went further ahead before the hour. Following a catch and drive off a close-range line-out, French referee Pascal Gauzere, after consulting the television match official, awarded a penalty try and sent Fidow to the sin-bin — Samoa's third yellow card in two matches — for collapsing the maul.

Samoa reserve scrum-half Pele Cowley then came off the bench to play against his cousin Maitland for the first time in a Test but could not inspire his lacklustre



KOBE: Scotland's fly-half Finn Russell (R) passes the ball during the Japan 2019 Rugby World Cup Pool A match between Scotland and Samoa at the Kobe Misaki Stadium in Kobe yesterday. —AFP

side. Instead Scotland had their second penalty try when Fidow went in knees first as Maitland tried to slide in at the left corner only to lose possession under the illegal challenge. Gauzere showed Fidow a second yellow card and then a red. Scotland next face out-

siders Russia in Shizuoka on October 9, with Samoa playing Ireland in Fukuoka three days later. Samoa coach Steve Jackson insisted his team were not out of the competition yet, with a tough game against Japan in only four days. —AFP

Patriots, Chiefs stay unbeaten with NFL road victories

NEW YORK: Reigning Super Bowl champion New England and the Kansas City Chiefs managed narrow road triumphs in battles between NFL unbeaten on Sunday to remain perfect through four games this season.

Tom Brady threw for only 150 yards but New England intercepted four passes, two by J.C. Jackson, and Matthew Slater returned a blocked punt 11 yards for a touchdown in a 16-10 Patriots victory at Buffalo.

"To go on the road and beat a team that's 3-0 is pretty good," Brady said. "We can certainly play better than we did. We've got to get in the red area (at or inside the opponent's 20-yard line). We missed some opportunities there. We'll go out and try and do a better job next week."

Patrick Mahomes drove the Chiefs 79 yards in 13 plays and Darrel Williams made his second 1-yard touchdown run of the fourth quarter with 20 seconds remaining to give Kansas City a 34-30 triumph at Detroit.

Mahomes completed 24-of-42 passes for 315 yards but went without a touchdown pass for only the fourth time in his career while Detroit's Matthew Stafford completed 21-of-34 passes for 291 yards and three touchdowns in a losing cause. "They found a way to take away some of the stuff we like to do," Mahomes said. "They hadn't lost a game for a reason." The Chiefs and Patriots became the first NFL teams to reach 4-0 while the Bills fell to 3-1 and Detroit slid to 2-1-1.

Bills coach Sean McDermott was upset over the brutal helmet-to-helmet hit delivered by New England's Jonathan Jones on Buffalo quarterback Josh Allen that knocked the signal caller out of the game in the fourth quarter and into the NFL's concussion protocol.



DETROIT: Byron Pringle #13 of the Kansas City Chiefs is tackled by Will Harris #25 of the Detroit Lions in the fourth quarter at Ford Field in Detroit, Michigan. —AFP

"There's no room in football for a play like the hit on Josh Allen," McDermott said.

A penalty against Jones was offset by another on the Bills, but Buffalo defender Micah Hyde said his unit would have gotten a harsher fate had one of them delivered such a hit to 42-year-old Brady, winner of a record six Super Bowl crowns.

"One of us did that to 12, we wouldn't have been in the game anymore," Hyde said. Buffalo running back Frank Gore, in his 15th NFL season, became the fourth player in league history to rush for 15,000 career yards, cracking the barrier on a 41-yard run.

Only record-holder Emmitt Smith (18,355 yards), Walter Payton (16,726) and Barry Sanders (15,269) have carried for more yards and Gore is on track to pass Sanders later this year. Gore, who ran 17 times for 109 yards in the loss to stand on 15,021 yards, has played for San Francisco, Miami and Indianapolis as well as the Bills.

Arizona receiver Larry Fitzgerald moved past Tony Gonzalez for second on the NFL's all-time receptions list with his 1,326th career

catch in a 27-10 home loss to Seattle. Fitzgerald, 36, trails only Jerry Rice's all-time record of 1,549 catches.

The Seahawks, who had a 27-yard interception return touchdown from Jadeveon Clowney, improved to 3-1, as did the Chicago Bears, who had three Eddie Pineiro field goals in a 16-6 home win over Minnesota.

Also falling from the unbeaten ranks were the Los Angeles Rams, who lost to visiting Tampa Bay 55-40, and the Dallas Cowboys, who lost 12-10 at New Orleans. Jameis Winston completed 28-of-41 passes for 385 yards and four touchdowns for the Buccaneers in the victory while the Rams' Jared Goff hit 45-of-68 throws for 517 yards and two touchdowns with three costly interceptions in the loss.

At New Orleans, Wil Lutz kicked four field goals, the last of them from 26 yards to put the hosts ahead for good, and the Saints won without scoring a touchdown for the first time in 21 years, dropping the Cowboys to 3-1. Lutz also kicked field goals of 19, 40 and 42 yards in the second quarter. —AFP

Barrett are the starting locks and Sam Whitelock provides impact off the bench.

Captain Kieran Read, who along with Whitelock and Williams played against Canada when the All Blacks won 79-15 at the 2011 World Cup, forms a loose trio with Matt Todd and Shannon Frizell. In the Canadian side, with six changes to the starting line up which lost their opening game to Italy, only wing DTH Van der Merwe and outside centre Conor Trainor remain from the 2011 fixture.

Long-serving van der Merwe, in his 60th Test, will equal the Canadian record of 14 World Cup appearances. Hooker and self-confessed All Blacks fan Andrew Quattrin, who said on the weekend he was excited by the prospect that "Kieran Read could be smashing me," has been named on the bench.

New Zealand (15-1)

Beauden Barrett; Jordie Barrett, Jack Goodhue, Sonny Bill Williams, Rieko Ioane; Richie Mo'unga, TJ Perenara; Kieran Read (capt), Matt Todd, Shannon Frizell; Scott Barrett, Patrick Tuipulotu; Angus Ta'avao, Liam Coltman, Atu Moli Replacements: Codie Taylor, Ofa Tu'ungafasi, Nepo Lulala, Sam Whitelock, Ardie Savea, Brad Weber, Ryan Crotty, Ben Smith. —AFP

France ring the changes for USA clash

TOKYO: Louis Picamoles will captain France for the first time tomorrow, leading out a much-changed French XV to play the United States in the Rugby World Cup's "group of death".

Coach Jacques Brunel has rotated his squad, making 12 changes to the team that pipped Argentina 23-21 as Les Bleus prepare for a potentially group-deciding "Le Crunch" against old enemies England on October 12 in Yokohama.

Only flanker Arthur Iturria, inside-centre Gael Fickou and winger Yoann Huget survive from the XV that beat the Pumas in the opening game, a win that put France in the Pool C box seat.

Ramping number 8 Picamoles will earn his 81st cap but has never captained the national side. He replaces Guilhem Guirado as leader of the team, the hooker dropping to the bench.

France have enjoyed a 10-day rest since their nail-biting win over Argentina but now play Tonga and England in quick succession as they seek to top Pool C, the winner of which will likely play Australia in the quarter-finals.

Kerevi eyes NRL switch after WCup loss to Wales

TOKYO: Hard-hitting Wallabies centre Samu Kerevi has threatened to switch to rugby league after being penalised for a stray elbow in Australia's 29-25 Rugby World Cup defeat by Wales. Wales were awarded a penalty after Kerevi caught fly-half Rhys Patchell with a forearm under the chin as he drove forward during the first half of Sunday's blockbuster Group D clash in Tokyo.

The decision proved pivotal as it halted Australia's momentum and led to Wales reeling off 10 unanswered points — it also left Wallabies coach Michael Cheika seething and prompted Kerevi to float the idea of switching codes.

"I've been playing like that for my whole career," he said, tongue planted firmly in cheek. "That's the first time I've heard that I can't lead with my arms and bump. I love my rugby league — the way rugby is going, I might as well join the NRL next, seeing how they police it."

Kerevi, who has signed a three-year deal to play with Suntory in Japan's Top League from next season, likened the World Cup to basketball, told reporters: "I guess I just have to change my technique and the way I run."

He added: "It's hard when you slow it down to one-tenth of a second. It looks like I'm going for his neck, but there's no malice in it. "With the force I'm com-

ing at, and if he's going backwards and I can't move forward, I might as well just stop."

Cheika was furious about the French referee Romain Poite's call and accused rugby's administrators of "spooking" match officials with their crackdown on high tackles. "I just don't know the rules anymore honestly," he growled. "As a rugby player, a former player, I'm embarrassed."

Camille Lopez, whose drop goal proved the difference between France and Argentina on the opening weekend, will start at fly-half, forming a half-back partnership with Maxime Machenaud.

Brunel said he had picked a team to play a United States team that were "athletic but less powerful than Tonga".

Selecting Picamoles as captain was the logical choice, added Brunel.

"He is the one with the most experience in this reshuffled team. And it's a position and a role that he knows well."

Meanwhile, USA coach Gary Gold made five changes to the side that lost 45-7 to England, many of them enforced by injury or suspension.

John Quill, who is suspended after suffering the ignominy of receiving the tournament's first red card, has been replaced by Hanco Gernishuy. Bryce Campbell and Mike Teo have been named to replace the injured pair of Paul Lasike and Will Hooley. And Eric Fry has been picked in place of David Ainu'u, who left the World Cup after sustaining a bad ankle injury.

"From the pack to a really dangerous backline, they have threats across the field," said captain Blaine Scully, contemplating the difficulties Les Bleus will pose. "If we stick to our process and stick to our structures and our game plan, we feel like we can compete with anybody in the world and that's what we're here to do." —AFP

All three Barretts to start for All Blacks against Canada

OITA: The three Barrett brothers — Beauden, Scott and Jordie — will become the first sibling trio to start a World Cup Test for the All Blacks when they line up against Canada in Oita tomorrow. Coach Steve Hansen has made sweeping changes to his side following their first win against South Africa, including starts for Sonny Bill Williams and Rieko Ioane.

The inclusion of all three Barretts, who last year became the first three brothers in a run-on side for the All Blacks, is only the second time three siblings have started a World Cup match together. In 1995, Fe'ao Unipola, the father of England players Mako and Billy, took the field for Tonga against Scotland with his brothers Elisi and Manu.

The Pisi brothers Tusi, Ken and George, all played for Samoa against South Africa in the 2015 World Cup but only Ken was in the starting line up. Hansen has opted to keep his twin playmakers Beauden Barrett and Richie Mo'unga together as they continue to gel their roles at 15 and 10 but opted for a new midfield pairing of Sonny Bill Williams and Jack Goodhue. Ioane, who boasts an impressive record of 23 tries from 26 tests, hasn't been seen since the All Blacks' heavy loss to Australia in Perth almost two months ago with the selectors saying he had hit "a flat patch".

Goodhue has also been out since Perth, although he was sidelined by a hamstring strain. "Our aim is to win the next two pool matches against Canada and Namibia, as well as continuing to grow our game and manage the workload across the group," Hansen said.

"With two games four days apart, it's obvious that we need to use our whole squad." Whilst there's a huge amount of energy and excitement amongst the whole team about what lies ahead, this week there has been a real focus on ourselves and our own standards."

The starting front row includes props Atu Moli and Angus Ta'avao with hooker Liam Coltman, while Patrick Tuipulotu and Scott

for frequent checks. —AFP