

Sports

Seven-try Italy bulldoze Canada for biggest win at Rugby WCup

FUKUOKA: Italy ran amok against Canada to bag their second bonus-point win in as many games with a 48-7 Rugby World Cup victory yesterday and vowed to celebrate with an “old-school night”. It was not a perfect performance as Italy slipped at times from flair and finesse to sloppy, but they did enough to dominate seven tries to one in what was their biggest margin of victory at the World Cup.

With Italy seeking a first World Cup quarter-final berth, their maximum points from two matches sent a message to heavyweights South Africa not to underestimate them. The Springboks, who lost their opener against New Zealand, paid a high price when they were guilty of taking Japan lightly at the last World Cup and cannot afford to do the same again when they meet Italy in Shizuoka in eight days.

“We’ve earned a few drinks tonight probably,” said Italian captain Dean Budd. Coach Conor O’Shea revealed he had promised his team an “old-school night” after only a four-day turnaround between games, which he said was “tough for any team, mentally as well as physically”.

“You have to be pretty happy. I thought we started the game really well and that’s where we imposed ourselves,” said O’Shea. Italy, still with the All Blacks to play as well as South Africa, showed their depth by making 10 changes to the starting XV when they beat Namibia and were still too strong for

the Canadians.

A day after Uruguay’s shock win over Fiji, Canada started with hopes of achieving a similar upset. The mostly neutral crowd in Fukuoka also gave their support to the Canadians in the 22,000-seat stadium, but it was the vastly rearranged Italian side with the superior forward pack who controlled most of the game.

‘SHORT-RANGE CHARGE’

In a dominant opening spell, fly-half Tommaso Allan landed a penalty and converted tries by Braam Steyn and Dean Budd. Steyn sent Peter Nelson flying and barged between Nick Blevins and Jeff Hassler on a short-range charge at the line.

New Zealand-born second-rower Budd, filling in as captain with Sergio Parisse rested, galloped 30 metres through a non-existent defence for his try. Italy’s explosive start realised 17 points in 15 minutes.

Canada arrested the scoring spree for the remainder of the half, but their own scoring opportunities evaporated with missed tackles, a misfiring lineout, and wrong options. Replacement Matt Heaton dropped the ball when he had the line at his mercy after Tyler Ardrone busted his way through the Italian defence.

DTH Van der Merwe confronted Italian fullback Matteo Minozzi with a two-man overlap and fed Gordon McRorie on the outside who was hustled into touch. The second half was barely three minutes old

game.” Schmidt, who hinted that Sexton could return against Russia next week, predicted that Carty would rise to the occasion in only his second Test start. “He’s very calm and doesn’t get ruffled easily,” said the New Zealander.

“He doesn’t get distracted by an error he might make or distracted by people trying to put pressure on him. He stays in the zone incredibly well, so that gives us a lot of confidence.” Ireland, who have never progressed beyond the World Cup quarter-finals, will be firm favourites to beat the Japanese, who thrashed Russia 30-10 in the tournament opener.

But Schmidt insisted he would not underestimate the Brave Blossoms, who shocked the world of sport by toppling South Africa in their opening match four years ago on England’s south coast.

“I think they’re really well prepared,” he said. “They had between 180 and 200 days in camp this year and they’ve got guys who can change it up. “I don’t think they will be intimidated by the occasion — I think they will be motivated hugely by it.”

Schmidt welcomes back fullback Rob Kearney and winger Keith Earls into the starting line-up, meanwhile, after both passed fitness tests. Earls has scored eight World Cup tries, an Irish record, and trails only legendary centre Brian O’Driscoll in their all-time list for Test tries. —AFP



FUKUOKA: Italy's wing Mattia Bellini (C) evades Canada's centre Ben Lesage (down) and scores a try during the Japan 2019 Rugby World Cup Pool B match between Italy and Canada at the Fukuoka Hakatanomori Stadium in Fukuoka yesterday. —AFP

when Italy were on the board again with Sebastian Negri scoring their third try.

Canada went close again when Van der Merwe set up Hassler but the cover defence put the wing out in the corner. A penalty try for an illegal tackle by Heaton ensured the bonus point for Italy and reduced Canada to 14-men with Heaton in the sin bin.

Mattia Bellini stretched the lead to 36-0 before Andrew Coe scored in the right corner to get Canada on the board. But the Italian pack, who had an impressive night, responded immediately to drive over the line for Federico Zani to touch down, and the backline followed with a long-range attack that ended with a try to Minozzi. —AFP

Sexton to sit out Ireland's clash with Japan

IWATA: Ireland have decided not to risk talismanic fly-half Johnny Sexton for this weekend's Rugby World Cup Pool A clash against hosts Japan after he picked up a niggles against Scotland. Coach Joe Schmidt has stuck with 11 of the side who crushed their Celtic rivals 27-3 in their opening game, but confirmed Thursday that Sexton would be rested to give the World Player of the Year time to fully recover from a thigh strain. “Johnny is never happy about being left out,” said Schmidt, who has tapped Jack Carty to take over the playmaking duties against Japan in Shizuoka on Saturday. “(Sexton) got a little mileage against Scotland and we thought about bringing him off the bench, but it’s a case of being confident in the squad,” he added.

“He keeps himself in good condition and he’s a guy who can come back and hit the ground running.” Ireland skills coach Richie Murphy added: “When you get a bang in the quad as a kicker it can affect your kicking, so we’re obviously not going to risk him in that part of the

England thrash 14-man USA at Rugby WCup

KOBE: England made it two wins from two at the Rugby World Cup as they scored seven tries during a 45-7 rout of the United States in Kobe yesterday that saw the Eagles receive the first red card of the tournament.

First-half tries from stand-in captain George Ford, Billy Vunipola and Luke Cowan-Dickie gave England a 19-0 lead at the break before Joe Cokanasiga secured the bonus point early in the second half. Ruaridh McCloskey and Lewis Ludlam then scored their maiden Test tries before Eagles flanker John Quill was sent off 10 minutes from time for an illegal shoulder charge on replacement back Owen Farrell.

There was still time for Cokanasiga to grab his second try and England’s seventh before Bryce Campbell ensured the USA avoided the embarrassment of being ‘nilled’ with a try after 80 minutes were up. “Good win again. We had to work for it again. USA very physical, passionate team, so we had to earn that win. I thought we did that pretty well,” said Ford.

England, the 2003 world champions, made 10 changes to the side that beat Tonga 35-3

in their Pool C opener in Sapporo last weekend for what was the USA’s first match of this tournament. Under the closed roof of the Kobe Misaki Stadium, the Eagles suffered an early setback when, after the opening scrum, 19-year-old prop David Ainu’u limped off injured in the third minute.

And three minutes later England had their first try. Number eight Vunipola, making his 11th consecutive Test start, ran the ball from deep before Ford, leading England in place of the benched Farrell, spotted a gap in the poorly aligned defence and ran in a try between the posts which he converted.

England, however, again conceded several early penalties before the forwards provided their second try. Ford, declining a kickable penalty, booted the ball deep for an attacking line-out. The ensuing rolling maul saw Vunipola driven over in the 25th minute, with Ford converting.

England’s third try arrived in similar fashion eight minutes later, the Eagles again powerless to resist a rolling maul from a penalty line-out, with hooker Cowan-Dickie scoring his second try in two matches.

Ford’s conversion hit the post but England were still 19-0 in front. They could have had a bonus point on the stroke of half-time only for centre Jonathan Joseph to knock on in sight of the line. Early in the second half, Ford failed to set up another attacking line-out when he carelessly kicked a close-range penalty dead. —AFP