

South Africa ease past Scotland

Scotland suffered their first defeat of the Autumn Test Series, when they were outclassed by South Africa at Murrayfield earlier today. The Springboks certainly lived up to their position as the second seeds in world rugby, as they turned in an emphatic display and beat the Scots by 28 points to nil.

The game was all but over when the half-time whistle sounded, South Africa having scored three converted tries – and Scott Johnson's men struggling to get a foothold in the match. The second-half involved more attacking prowess displayed by the home side, who controlled possession and territory but failed to score a single point – a worrying statistic, leading up to next Saturday's encounter with Australia.

The Springboks enjoyed all the early pressure and possession inside the first three minutes, before Scotland were penalised for coming through the side. Fly-half, Pat Lambie, opted to kick for touch. From the resulting line-out, the South Africans drove over the line through the efforts of their flanker, Willem Alberts. Lambie slotted the conversion to give the visitors a 7-0 lead. When Scotland got chances to have some time on the ball, it was wasted. On ten minutes, a quick line out taken by Sean Lamont on the Boks' ten metre line, was fumbled by the Scots in their own half, before Duncan Taylor kicked the ball out on the full.

The Scottish line-out functioned very poorly in the first twenty minutes – having already lost four of their first six, the seventh was judged to be not straight and a penalty was later awarded. Lambie's 40-metre attempt fell wide, but his team were enjoying the lion's share of possession, with statistics emphasising that point (Scotland making 51 tackles

to their opponents 6, with only a quarter of the match played).

A catastrophic phase of play either side of the half-hour mark followed for the Scots. Their first attack on the South African 22-metre line, resulted in Ruaridh Jackson's poor pass being collected by opposition full-back Willie Le Roux, who ran over 60 metres to touch down under the posts and extend his side's lead to 12 points. Again, Lambie had no problem with the conversion and Scotland fell fourteen points behind. Straight from the kick-off, it was that man again Le Roux, who burst into the Scottish half before executing an exquisite kick over to the right wing for JP Pieterse to collect and dive over. With the conversion successful – the Boks raced over the twenty point mark (21-0).

At the start of the second half, Scotland enjoyed some promising possession and territory. Advantage was played by the referee after Alasdair Strokosch knocked the ball on and South Africa quickly launched a counter-attack. A kick from Bryan Habana brought the ball dangerously bouncing towards the Scottish try line, but a further 7 pointer was prevented, as Tommy Seymour raced back to kick the ball in to touch, just two metres from the line. From the line-out, a driving maul was established and substitute, Coenie Oosthuizen finished off the move. Lambie slotted the conversion – which proved to be the last points of the match in the 53rd minute.

On the hour mark was a very memorable occasion – second row, Richie Gray, made way for his younger brother Jonny, who at the age of 19 became Scotland's youngest forward in 62 years and the Grays became the 47th pair of brothers to play for the National side. The South African defence was really tested throughout the second half, as the Scot's enjoyed 70% of the possession – but still had nothing to show for it. Even when South Africa were reduced to fourteen men, following Marcelle Coetzee's sin bin – the defence proved to be solid. Despite a trip up to the Television Match Official, to evaluate the

possibility of a Scottish try – it was disallowed and the home side finished the match without a point to show for their efforts.

It was a completely different performance from the Scottish side who beat Japan by 42-17, just a week ago. There were too many knock-ons and handling errors – which you cannot get away with against some of the world's top players.

After the match, Scotland Head Coach, Scott Johnson, expressed his frustration on the match's outcome:- “We played a quality side today that took their chances – they had three chances in the first half and took every one of them. We probably had three in the second half and bombed every one. Quality sides will burn you when they get an opportunity, and they burnt us. We showed some resolve – we dug ourselves a hole and we filled it in a bit in the second half”.