

Rugby – South Africa v Scotland, 2015 Rugby World Cup-Pool B

South Africa Hammer the Scots in Newcastle




Still smarting from their defeat to Japan – we spoke with some South African photographers – South Africa came out with all guns blazing in a brutal encounter at Newcastle's St. James' Park. Scotland, for their part, were rumoured to have marked this match out as one they could afford to lose, so a slightly under strength team took to the field to face the World's fifth best team.

And bruising it proved to be. The opening 10 minutes of the match were mostly played deep in Scotland's half, and, more often than not, deep inside their 22.

The breakthrough came in the 12th minute when quick recycle ball from a ruck under the posts was bundled over the line by Jannie and Bismarck du Plessis. With the bodies piled up, referee, Nigel Owens, went to the TMO – briefly delayed by a bit of fisticuffs – before being able to award the try. Handre Pollard chipped the conversion over and the early 12-0 lead went to the African side.

Scotland enjoyed a brief moment of possession inside the South African half, but, what was to be, the first of many turnovers soon had the 'natural order' restored and another penalty on 17 minutes gave Pollard the chance to stretch the lead to 10-0.

Once again, Scotland penetrated the opposition half, but, once again, the opposition stole the ball and cleared upfield. Playing in their own half, the Scots retained possession for a while, but another penalty on 26 minutes gave Pollard another kick at goal to increase the lead to  13-0.

In the lead up to half time, South Africa had contained the Scottish attack with relative ease and had probed into the opponents half, but were held out but some stout defence. A 29th minute penalty from Greg Laidlaw, following an earlier miss, put Scotland on the board with three points for a 13-3 score line.

Pressure told, however, and just as the clock was ticking toward the 40 minute mark, the African side were, once again, inside Scotland's 5-metre line. Rucking from lineout ball, scrum half, Fourie du Preez came round the back and into the yawning gap between Duncan Weir and the ruck. Weir was pulled across, but du Preez released the ball to JP Pieterse who fended off the attentions of the chasing Laidlaw to touch down for their second try. Pollard slotted home the conversion and the teams went into the break at 20-3 to South Africa.

The second half started, more or less, where the first had ended with Scotland gallantly defending against relentless South African pressure, – although Laidlaw saw a penalty over the increase the Scots' tally to 6. It was gallantry which paid off as, with ten minutes played, Weir intercepted a loose pass inside his own 22 and raced off up the pitch. It wasn't a straightforward run and he avoided a couple of near things on his way to the other end and into the opposition 22. He was finally brought to ground by Pieterse 20 metres out, but Tim Visser was on hand to scoop the ball up and carry on. He was quickly tackled by Brian Habana and Willie Le Roux, but the huge Scots/Dutch winger offloaded over their heads to the supporting Tommy Seymour. South Africa now had more players back, but, with less than 10 metres to go, Seymour took both opposing centres with him over the line to score the try of the match. Laidlaw then scored the conversion to make the score a much more respectable 20-13.



Pollard then silenced the Scots' support as he pulled three points back with a drop goal from outside Scotland's, and then, with Scotland inside the opponents half, Habana broke free only to be pulled down off the ball by Laidlaw which saw Scotland's captain carded by Owen's

A swift penalty exchange around the hour mark brought about a 26-16 score line, but South Africa were now well in command and another Pollard penalty stretched this to 29-16.

✘ Scotland had another go at the South African defence, but made little progress and then, easily turning defence into attack, with seven minutes to play, Habana received the ball out wide and launched himself the five metres to the try line to score his side's third of the day. Pollard missed his only kick of the match with the conversion, but South Africa were out of sight to take the match 34-16 and end a hard day at the coal face for the Scotland team.

With Japan easily overcoming the Samoans in their Group B match, Scotland really must win next week's encounter with the South Sea Islanders as, with Japan playing out of their skins, a win for them over the USA is a distinct probability.

In an aside, referee Nigel Owens' other 'job' is a Welsh language TV presenter and it's a skill he brought to the match as he admonished a dive from Stuart Hogg with the remark that 'If I see you doing that again, you'll be back here playing soccer in a fortnight'

And, as an addendum, when we were leaving the stadium we were treated to a hugely emotional rendition of South Africa's National Anthem 'Nkosi Sikelel iAfrika', delivered by several hundred of their supporters. Shivery spine, wee bit dust in the eye... Wow....

Images from the match will appear [here](#) over the next few days.