

Scotland team announced for opening Guinness Men's Six Nations match against Italy

Gregor Townsend has named his starting XV for Scotland's opening Guinness Men's Six Nations match against Italy on Saturday.

Glasgow Warrior Stafford McDowall who captained the side against Portugal in The Famous Grouse Nations Series, will partner the experienced Huw Jones in the centre.

The familiar duo of Ben White and Finn Russell, who is named as co-captain, start as half-backs.

The players selected in the back three have amassed nearly 150 caps combined, with Darcy Graham starting alongside Duhan van der Merwe on the wings, and Toulouse's Blair Kinghorn at full-back.

Matt Fagerson, who won a 50th cap for Scotland in The Famous Grouse Nations Series match against Australia in November, is named at the back of the scrum, with flankers Rory Darge, also co-captain, and Jamie Ritchie completing the back row.

At the front of the scrum, loosehead prop Pierre Schoeman lines up alongside returning hooker Dave Cherry who plays his first Scotland game since the 2023 Rugby World Cup, with Zander Fagerson at tighthead. Bordeaux's Jonny Gray, who is in line for a first cap in nearly two years, joins Edinburgh's Grant Gilchrist in the second row to complete the pack.

Providing cover for the starting XV, in the forwards, are Ewan Ashman, Rory Sutherland and Will Hurd in the front row, with Gregor Brown and Jack Dempsey also selected.

George Horne, Tom Jordan and Kyle Rowe round off Scotland's first squad of the tournament.

The line up is as follows. Caps in Brackets.

15. Blair Kinghorn – Toulouse (55)
14. Darcy Graham – Edinburgh Rugby (42)
13. Huw Jones – Glasgow Warriors (53)
12. Stafford McDowall – Glasgow Warriors (8)
11. Duhan van der Merwe – Edinburgh Rugby (44)
10. Finn Russell – Bath Rugby (82) CO-CAPTAIN
9. Ben White – Toulon (24)

1. Pierre Schoeman – Edinburgh Rugby (37)
2. Dave Cherry – Edinburgh Rugby (11)
3. Zander Fagerson – Glasgow Warriors (70)
4. Jonny Gray – Bordeaux Bègles (77)
5. Grant Gilchrist – Edinburgh Rugby (75)
6. Jamie Ritchie – Edinburgh Rugby (54)
7. Rory Darge – Glasgow Warriors (25) CO-CAPTAIN
8. Matt Fagerson – Glasgow Warriors (50)

Replacement

16. Ewan Ashman – Edinburgh Rugby (22)
17. Rory Sutherland – Glasgow Warriors (37)
18. Will Hurd – Leicester Tigers (4)
19. Gregor Brown – Glasgow Warriors (4)
20. Jack Dempsey – Glasgow Warriors (22)
21. George Horne – Glasgow Warriors (34)
22. Tom Jordan – Glasgow Warriors (3)
23. Kyle Rowe – Glasgow Warriors (9)