

USA Points Neighbors Falter in Bowl, Shield

Written by RUGBYMag Staff
Sunday, 10 February 2013 13:58



The Kenyan fans have been uncharacteristically quiet this weekend, but their team has given them little to celebrate. This morning's Shield semifinal added to the disappointment, as Kenya dropped a big 38-7 loss to Australia, which now heads to the final against Uruguay.

The Kenyans looked flat, disorganized and uninspired, and the scoreboard reflected as much. Australia's Lewis Holland caused the most trouble, running in two of his three tries during the first half, while Cameron Clark initiated his 13-point game with a try and the first of his four conversions. Sean McMahon also contributed five-pointer in the first seven minutes for the 24-point lead at half.

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Frustrated, the Kenyan players resorted to individualistic play, which resulted in unrealized overloads out wide and lots of contact. But Kenya did manage to get on the board about a minute into the second half, using a penalty and some dancing on the sideline to send Oscar Ayodi into the try zone. Fabian Olando slotted the conversion for Kenya's lone points.

But Australia regained the momentum and put Con Foley and Holland into the try zone for the 38-7 win and berth to the title game.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, Uruguay had to rally for their 7-5 semifinal win over Portugal. All of the scoring was sequestered to a minute-and-a-half of play. Duarte Moreira's try put Portugal up 5-0, and Uruguay answered shortly after with an Ian Schmidt try. The difference came in the grounding, and where Portugal's Diogo Miranda could convert on his team's try, Felipe Berchesi was in comfortable range for Uruguay's extras, which made all of the difference.

Both teams played stellar, desperate defense, and Uruguay pulled out the win. Opening their day with that kind of intensity will only help Uruguay in the final against Australia, who wasn't challenged nearly as much against Kenya.

Regardless of the outcome, the USA will benefit from Portugal's poor showing in Las Vegas, and with the Eagles playing in the Plate competition, the Americans will leap frog over Portugal.

Argentina also did the Americans a favor in the first Bowl Semifinal by taking down Spain 21-7. The Argentines led the entire match, but Spain was resilient in the second half and outscored Argentina 12-7. The result helps Team USA by putting a little more separation between the Eagles and the Spanish in the overall points standings. They were tied going into the weekend.

France then put England to the sword in the second Bowl Semifinal with a 40-7 win, their biggest over England in World Series history. England kicked away the first possession and the French made them pay with a try. England promptly gave away its next possession in a ruck deep in its own end. Julien Candelon scored this one. The conversion was missed, making it 12-0 to France.

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Cadelon extended France's lead to 19-0 with his second try of the game, this one converted, when he shiftily darted through the center of England's defense. Seconds later, Dan Norton took the ball into contact and lost it, and France put in its fourth try of the first half.

The poor result was just the latest in a long line of them for England this season. England has made just one Cup Quarterfinal this season, which could see coach Ben Ryan on the hot seat soon.