

Canada Comes Back Over Russia

Written by RUGBYMag Staff
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Ian Muir photos



The Canadian senior men's team has had to put in the hard yards to get out of trouble against a

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determined Russian Bears outfit.

Chasing a three-point deficit in their final Churchill Cup pool game at Esher RFC on Wednesday, Canada played patient, tough rugby in the second half to tally 19 unanswered points and emerge 34-18 victors and earn a berth in the tournament final.

In an impressive back-to-back showing by flanker Chauncey O'Toole, the New Brunswick player was again named man of the match and said his team knew from the outset they would have to work hard for the victory.

"[Advancing to the final] feels pretty good, it was our goal coming in and we're happy to achieve that," O'Toole said. "It was a tough game. We knew they would come out hard and we would have to weather the storm. We knew it was going to take the full 80 minutes to crack these guys and that's what it took."

Canada got off to a shaky start, trying to move the ball inside their own 22-metre line off the first kickoff and gifting Russia a scrum from a knock on.

Fortunately for the Canadians, Russia dispersed their own threat with a knock on by Aleksey Makovetskiy.

Then it was Canada's chance to strike and, in a familiar sight, O'Toole forced a turnover and broke down the field.

O'Toole was caught with an ankle tap agonizingly close to the Russian try line and managed to offload to Matt Evans who set up Canada's next phase.

The first try came seconds later when Monro found fullback James Pritchard on a cutout pass who quickly sent the ball to Justin Mensah-Coker on an inside line to score.

Pritchard added the extra points and Canada led 7-0 after 13 minutes.

Russia hit back three minutes later with a successful penalty goal kicked by Yury Kushnarev after obstruction was called against Canada.

Simple errors from the Bears led to a successful penalty goal by Pritchard to give Canada a 10-3 lead 17 minutes into the contest

But the Bears were right back in the thick of it, tying the game at the 20-minute mark when a mistake from Canada saw Bears' fullback Igor Klyuchnikov on a breakaway down the right-hand side of the field for his team's first try.

Kushnarev added the extra points with a curving kick from the sideline and the game was locked at 10-10 with 20 minutes left in the half.

Russia scored their second soon after.

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Then with two minutes left in the half, Canada's persistence paid off when scrum half Sean White sent the ball wide from the ruck to Monro, who did the same to debutant Conor Trainor.

Trainor found himself in space and evaded four Russian defenders to cross over for Canada's second try. Pritchard missed the convert and the score was locked at 15-15.

Russian fly-half Kushnarev closed the half with a penalty goal and Canada entered the half with some work to do, down 18-15.

Canada's next chance to take the lead came in a familiar play when a cutout pass from Monro put Trainor into space and he charged 40 meters to cross the line, only to be denied his second try by a stellar ball-and-all tackle from Russia's Vasily Artemyev holding him up.

At the hour mark it was Evans who broke down the sideline before offloading to Pritchard. The Bedford fullback sent the ball to streaking substitute Phil Mackenzie who gifted Monro on a support run for a superb backline try.

Pritchard added the extras and Canada led for the first time in the second half 22-18.

Canada capitalized fully on two mistakes late in the game, earning two final tries and a bonus point to finish.

O'Toole scored his team's second-last try when he intercepted a pass and crossed the line with his best Chris Ashton impression and Evans picked up a Russian knock on to run from inside his own 22-metre line to score.

Canada will now face the first place finisher from Pool A in the Churchill Cup final at Sixways Stadium in Worcester on June 18 at 4:30 p.m. (local time)

Canada 34

Tries: Mensah-Coker, Trainor, Monro, O'Toole, Evans
Convs: Pritchard 3
Pens: Pritchard

Russia 18

Tries: Klyuchnikov, Other
Convs: Kushnarev
Pens: Kushnarev 2

Canadian squad

Name-Club (Hometown)

1. Tom Dolezel – Prairie Wolf Pack/CRC (London, ON)
2. Ryan Hamilton - B.C. Bears/CRC (West Vancouver, B.C.)
3. Scott Franklin – Prairie Wolf Pack/CRC (Regina, SASK)
4. Tyler Hotson - Plymouth Albion/PRO (Vancouver, B.C.)

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5. Jamie Cudmore – Clermont Ferrand/PRO (Squamish, B.C.)
6. Jebb Sinclair - The Rock/CRC (Fredericton, N.B.)
7. Chauncey O'Toole - The Rock/CRC (Belle Isle, N.B.)
8. Aaron Carpenter - Plymouth Albion/UK (Brantford, ON)
9. Sean White - B.C. Bears/CRC (Victoria, B.C.)
10. Ander Monro - Ontario Blues (Victoria, B.C.)
11. Justin Mensah-Coker – Unattached (Vancouver, B.C.)
12. Mike Scholz Ontario Blues/CRC (Oakville, ON)
13. Conor Trainor - B.C. Bears/CRC (Vancouver, B.C.)
14. Matt Evans - Unattached (Duncan, B.C.)
- Ciaran Hearn - The Rock/CRC (Conception Bay, NFLD)
15. James Pritchard - Bedford Blues/UK (Parkes, NSW, Australia)

Replacements

16. Pat Riordan (Captain) - B.C. Bears/CRC (Burnaby, B.C.)
17. Andrew Tiedemann - Prairie Wolf Pack/CRC (St. Albert, AB)
18. Hubert Buydens - Prairie Wolf Pack/CRC (Regina, SASK)
19. Mitch Gudgeon - B.C. Bears/CRC (Victoria, B.C.)
20. Nanyak Dala Prairie Wolf Pack/CRC (Saskatoon, SASK)
21. Ed Fairhurst - UBC Ravens (Victoria, BC)
22. Phillip Mackenzie – Esher RFC/PRO (Oakville, ON)

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