

New Zealand's wing Julian Savea (left), runs with the ball as Georgia's fly half Lasha Malaguradze (center) falls and Georgia's centre Tamaz Mchedlidze jumps (3rd right) during a Pool C match of the 2015 Rugby World Cup between New Zealand and Georgia at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff, south Wales, on Oct 2. (AFP)



Gatland slams World Cup 'group of hell'

Wales coach Warren Gatland on Sunday blasted World Cup chiefs for creating a "group of hell" that claimed England as the tournament's first big casualty.

The draw put Australia, England and Wales into Pool A which became known as the 'Pool of Death' because only two teams out of the heavyweights would reach the last eight.

As shockwaves from England's elimination spread, Gatland said it was "ridiculous" that the group phrase draw was made

three years ago.

"We knew how tough this group was going to be right from the start, and not just with England, Australia and ourselves, because Fiji are a tough proposition as well," Gatland said Sunday.

"I think if Fiji had been in a couple of other groups, they would have qualified for the quarter-finals as well. It has been not just the group of death, but the group of hell, basically, for all of us." (AFP)



ARAB TIMES, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2015

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Hooper cited over England incident

England coach says World Cup scar will never heal

LONDON, Oct 5, (AFP): Stuart Lancaster insisted he will be permanently marked by England's World Cup ignominy even though the head coach's bosses said no immediate move would be made to replace him.

Lancaster told of his personal pain as recriminations started over the 33-13 and 28-25 defeats by Australia and Wales that led to England becoming the first World Cup hosts to exit in the first round stage.

"I'm the head coach and we didn't get out of the pool. This is going to sit with us all forever — players, coaches, management," Lancaster said in the aftermath of the stunning defeat on Saturday by the Wallabies.

"I don't think I'll ever come to terms with it personally because it was such a big thing.

"I've had some great moments coaching England and I've had some disappointing ones, but this pales everything else into insignificance because of what the tournament means to everyone.

"We lost two games, but they were



crucial games and ultimately that let us down.

"It came down to the decision-making towards the end of the Wales game and some accuracy and execution at the

end of the Australia game. That's what we'll be judged on and I understand that."

Wales came back from behind to beat England while the World Cup hosts

were hardly ever in the Pool A game against Australia that sealed their fate.

Lancaster became coach after England went out of the 2011 World Cup in the quarter-finals. They have not won a Six Nations title since but Lancaster was given a contract extension until 2020 last year.

Former England captain Will Carling, who after the Wales defeat accused Lancaster, once a teacher, of treating the players as "schoolboys", said it was clear a shake-up was required.

"I look at England in the last four years — we haven't won a (Six Nations) championship and we've had a poor World Cup," Carling told BBC Radio on Sunday.

"Stuart Lancaster is a very likeable, admirable guy, but I sense we've hit a ceiling. We have some very talented players and, in order to move forward, we need to change the coaching set-up."

British newspapers said the writing is on the wall for Lancaster and maybe team captain Chris Robshaw — under fire for attempting to get a winning try

against Wales when his side could have had a penalty to tie the crucial match.

But Rugby Football Union chief executive Ian Ritchie said decisions could wait until after the World Cup.

"We need to be clear this is not a time for a knee-jerk reaction," he said.

Ritchie, however, there had to be change after such an embarrassing display on home territory.

Meanwhile, star Australian flanker Michael Hooper could miss the Pool A decider with Wales on Saturday after being cited over an incident during the bruising 33-13 defeat of England.

The incident concerning the 23-year-old — who along with fellow back row forward David Pocock were outstanding against England — took place in the 39th minute when he flung himself into a ruck leading with his shoulder which resulted in just a ticking off by French referee Romain Poite and a penalty being awarded to England when it was deep inside their own 22.

However, the independent Citing Commissioner Steve Hinds decided fur-

ther action should be taken.

In another report, World Rugby said Monday it is investigating reports that England coaching staff made an illegal approach to match officials at half time in their devastating loss by Australia.

According to media reports two England coaches made the approach as the two teams left the field at Twickenham on Saturday with England trailing 17-3. Head coach Stuart Lancaster was not among them however.

"World Rugby is investigating an alleged breach by the England coaching team of the match-day communications protocol between match officials and team members or union officials," said a World Rugby statement.

"The protocol prohibits certain conduct on match days including coaches approaching match officials during a match or at half-time during a match," the statement added.

England, now in crisis after being dumped out of the World Cup, made no immediate comment.

Fijians unluckiest

Two teams ought to earn win in Week 3

LONDON, Oct 5, (AP): On Day 19 of the Rugby World Cup, two teams ought to finally walk off a pitch smiling.

The matches on Tuesday just happen to pair up four winless teams: Canada vs. Romania in Leicester, followed by Fiji vs. Uruguay in Milton Keynes.

The Fijians are considered the unluckiest.

Stuck in Pool A with Australia, England, and Wales — two former champions and a two-time semifinalist — the Fijians lost to all three of the higher-ranked teams but acquitted themselves so well that Wales coach Warren Gatland, for one, believed they would have been a strong contender for the quarterfinals if they had been in another pool.

That's a little consolation for Fiji coach John McKee.

"Looking at the teams we came up against and looking at the other pools, hypothetically we may have had a pathway to the quarterfinals, or at least an easier pathway," he said. "Having said that, all of the pools are tricky, and it has been a credit to a number of the Tier Two nations the way they have played."

He said he couldn't fault his players' effort and performances.

"It is a credit to everyone involved, albeit frustrating that we haven't got a result in at least one of those matches," he said. "We came here with high ambitions and wanted to get one or two scalps in the first three games. But that doesn't take away from this last game against Uruguay.

"We will need to be at our best to beat them. The players are very motivated to finish the tournament on a high note."

Here's a look at Tuesday's matches:
Canada vs Romania (3-2 overall, 2-0 in RWC)

Canada will finish the tournament as it started, without captain and No. 8 Tyler Ardron. He was a late starter in the tournament because of a knee injury which sidelined him for nearly two months. Then last Thursday against France, he was forced off after 19 minutes.

Make Ardron another who has suffered from Canada's compact scheduling: Romania will be its fourth game in 17 days.

Canada wasn't in the running against Ireland or France, but had Italy on the ropes. Winger DTH Van Der Merwe has turned heads, and not just for scoring tries in all three pool games, and five tries in his last four tests.

Canada has made seven changes for the match, and squad injury replacement James Pritchard could appear in his fourth World Cup if he's summoned from the reserves.

This is Canada's last chance to keep alive its streak of leaving every World Cup with at least a draw.

Romania, last in the pool, still holds hope of finishing third and automatically qualifying for the 2019 Cup. To achieve that, the Romanians have to beat Canada, then Italy next weekend in its pool finale.

"The Canadian game is a semifinal for us. It's that important," coach Lynn Howells said. "The players have put in a lot of hard work and this is what they deserve."

Romania has also made seven changes, for the eighth time in its last nine matches, and prop Mihaita Lazar and lock Valentin Poparlan will play their 50th tests.

Fiji vs Uruguay (1-0 overall, 0-0 in RWC)

Uruguay has been looking forward to this match probably more than Fiji. Where Fiji had hoped to knock over one of the heavyweights in its pool, Uruguay had targeted Fiji.

"It is our best opportunity (to win) and, without disrespect to Fiji, it is the only Tier Two team we will play," Uruguay coach Pablo Lemoine said.

'Play with passion'

Ireland to scale French heights

LONDON, Oct 5, (AFP): Ireland must scale the 'mountain of a challenge' represented by France to top Pool D and avoid a likely World Cup quarter-final with champions New Zealand, said Irish captain Paul O'Connell.

The 35-year-old lock — who will end his Test career after the World Cup and move to France with three time European champions Toulon — said his overall record against the French was a poor one and the Irish will have to be at the top of their game to win in Cardiff on Sunday.

O'Connell warned his team after Ireland had eked out a gritty 16-9 victory over Italy.

The Irish held on despite being a man down for the final nine minutes with flanker Peter O'Mahony in the sin bin. Like the French they have three wins from three, with both on 14 points.

"To me they are an incredible side with incredible talent they have size and physicality and play with a lot of passion and enthusiasm," said O'Connell.

"In recent years we have done well but the games have been very tight and we have had to really raise ourselves to another level for them, and we have managed two draws and won the last two.

"It is a mountain of a challenge. "Still we were always hoping it was going to come down to this game to decide who tops the table and it has," added O'Connell.

O'Connell, who has made light of his age and the persistent injuries that blighted large parts of his career, said the Irish would suffer if they give up the ball as they much as they did against Italy.

"This is a timely reminder of where we need to be," said O'Connell referring to the obligation to return to the form that has seen them win the past two Six Nations titles since Joe Schmidt became coach.

"If you turn over the ball to France with their players you are in trouble. We have been very good at our discipline and keeping the ball of late but we were lacking in both departments today."

Schmidt said the French would bring a lot more artistry and invention to the encounter than the gutsy, rugged but limited Italians.

"The French have such high expectations both from their public and of themselves," said Schmidt, who was an assistant coach at Top 14 side Clermont under present Scotland handler Vern Cotter.

"I think its going to be incredibly hard to beat them next week.

"They have a little more weaponry than we saw from the Italians today, so that will be hard to counter and physically they have some very powerful players so that will be really difficult for us.

Fiji's second-string team — in May-June, and were beaten 30-22 and 42-22.

Those results don't suggest Uruguay will get a precious win on Tuesday, but then that would exceed even their expectations.

"The truth is that we don't think about winning here, but about showing our game, and if we win it will be as a consequence of doing things well," captain Santiago Vilaseca said. "We are working on our defense in general, and were doing so even before the tournament, as that was always a challenge. With Fiji we are looking to take things up a level."

Route opens for Australia and New Zealand World Cup final

Pool A table-topping decider next Saturday

LONDON, Oct 5, (AFP): Competition for places has made Australia more aggressive, according to Bernard Foley the hero of their World Cup win over England whose performance has made the Wallabies favourites to meet New Zealand in the final.

Foley and his teammates all insist they are concentrating only on playing Wales in the Pool A table-topping decider next Saturday.

But others are already looking forward to a Wallabies-All Blacks clash at Twickenham on October 31.

The Waratahs fly-half did not know he would be Australia's first choice number 10 before the tournament.

But his 28 point extravaganza that killed hosts England's World Cup dream on Saturday has propelled him to the forefront of the World Cup stage.

The battle for places "has definitely helped," said Foley.

It has been one of the features, along with the Wallabies reinvented scrum, brought in by coach Michael Cheika.

"The competition in every training session and the intensity the whole squad has applied on each other has put this team in a really good spot," added the 26-year-old who has the moody but inspirational Quade Cooper as a rival for the fly half position.

But Foley said Australia must not be complacent after resisting England's "extreme" pressure even though the victory has given them confidence.

"We have to worry about Wales next week and whoever after that we will focus on after that. For us it is week by week," said Foley.

But with England out and South Africa battered after their defeat by Japan, others are already looking to a first ever Australia-New Zealand final.

If both top their respective pools they will be in separate halves of the knockout stage draw.

British bookmakers have made the clash their favourite.

That makes the Twickenham match against Wales even more important.

The All Blacks — who were sensationally beaten by Australia in the Rugby Championship prior to the World Cup — have already taken careful note of the way the Wallabies' forwards dealt with England.

But both sides still have many obstacles. The All Blacks may have to play their World Cup nemesis France in the quarter-finals at the Millennium Stadium where their hopes of glory in 2007 were destroyed at the same stage of the tournament by the northern hemisphere giants.

The All Blacks also say they are taking the World Cup one game at a time — they next play Tonga in Newcastle on Friday — but they have noticed how the Wallabies overpowered England.

"Australia's scrum was probably the biggest thing," scrum-half Aaron Smith said. Australia's well-drilled eight won five penalties at the scrums.

"Seeing what they did to England was massive. They looked really clinical and they're looking really good," said Smith.

Flanker Victor Vito was impressed by Australia's tearaway backrow forwards David Pocock and Michael Hooper who are taking the fetching role — once ruled by All Blacks skipper Richie McCaw — to a new level.

"They're been setting the standard all year and last night was another game where they showed what they can do," said Vito.



Italy's number 8 and captain Sergio Parisse (left) catches the ball in a line out against Ireland's lock Iain Henderson (center), during a Pool D match of the 2015 Rugby World Cup between Ireland and Italy at the Olympic Stadium, east London, on Oct 4. (AFP)

Jones ready to listen to England approach

Record 25 mln audience for Japan

LOUCESTER, UK, Oct 5, (AFP): A record 25 million people in Japan watched their national team beat Samoa in the World Cup amidst mounting rugby fever, the global governing body said Monday.

Twenty percent of the entire Japanese population tuned in to Saturday's match which the Brave Blossoms won 26-5 to record their second victory at the tournament, World Rugby said.

The new record television audience for a rugby match beat the 20.7 million in France that saw England win an epic World Cup semi final in Paris against the home country 14-9.

"This is a significant result for the game in Japan," said World Rugby chief executive Brett Gosper.

"It shows that the general population there appreciate the sport and the amazing performances of their national

team over the past few weeks

Japan will stage the World Cup in 2019 as the world body seeks ways to boost the sport's global profile.

Japan play their final Pool B game against the United States in Gloucester

on Sunday and could still qualify for the quarter finals if leaders South Africa and Scotland slip up in their games.

Eddie Jones is open to an approach from the Rugby Football Union about coaching England but thinks incumbent Stuart Lancaster deserves a fair review first, the Japan coach said on Monday.

The former Australia coach, who

The All Blacks were disappointed with the high error rate in their 43-10 win over Georgia on Friday. Key areas will be worked on before the knockout stages.

"Execution will be one of those things," said hooker Keven Mealamu. "Being able to make sure we look after



Eddie Jones

engineered Japan's stunning upset of South Africa last month, has been touted in the media as a candidate to replace Lancaster after England failed to qualify for the Rugby World Cup quarter-finals.

Jones signed a deal to coach the Cape Town-based Stormers in Super Rugby less two weeks ago but said becoming England's first foreign coach was appealing.

"If England approached me, would I listen to them? Of course I would, but whether the RFU part ways with Stuart Lancaster is a big and difficult decision," he wrote in a column in the Daily Mail. "A proper review is needed to find out why they changed strategy halfway through the tournament."

"A lot of time has been invested in to Lancaster and his squad have enormous potential, so he needs to convince the board that he can take those youngsters forward to 2019."

the ball really well. There were a couple of times we turned over the ball and they were easy turnovers."

Despite dominating England up front, Wallaby prop James Slipper believed they still need to do more work on their scrum.