

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE RUGBY WORLD CUP



Who are the contenders?

AUSTRALIA

World No. 2
Coach: Michael Cheika
Star man: Israel Folau, full-back

- The last two times the World Cup was held in Britain, Australia were crowned champions. They arrive in England having beaten the All Blacks last month in a display of power and pace.
- Even though the Wallabies showed how inconsistent they can be when they were thrashed by New Zealand in the Bledisloe Cup a week after winning the Rugby Championship, they can beat any side on their day.
- It helps that they have arguably the best full-back in the world in Folau. The speedy, versatile player is a danger man no matter where he is on the field.

SOUTH AFRICA

World No. 3
Coach: Heyneke Meyer
Star man: Willie le Roux, full-back

- Their build-up has been a nightmare - finishing bottom of the Rugby Championship and Meyer facing accusations of racist team selections.
- His decision to rely on experience rather than form has also been questioned. But having nine from the squad that lifted the 2007 World Cup will ensure that they have the know-how to succeed on the greatest stage.
- That they are flying under the radar could also work to their advantage. The Springboks are known for their aggressive forward play but le Roux offers them a Plan B. His ability to attack with pace from deep will make South Africa dangerous on the counter too.

ENGLAND

World No. 4
Coach: Stuart Lancaster
Star man: George Ford, fly-half

- Home advantage has made England, runners-up in the last four Six Nations, second favourites in the eyes of the bookmakers.
- Lancaster, however, has been trying to lower expectations of his young and relatively inexperienced side by suggesting that he is building a team to win the 2019 edition.
- Topping Pool A - also known as the 'group of death' - will be key as this means they will likely avoid facing New Zealand until the final.
- Ford should stand out in the coming weeks although not literally. At 1.78m and 84kg, the 22-year-old uses his vision, pace and intelligence to hold his own alongside the giants of the game.

Who are the favourites?

NEW ZEALAND

World No. 1
Coach: Steve Hansen
Star man: Brodie Retallick, lock

- They can play wide or drive up the middle. They are at ease with or without the ball. And they have strength and depth.
- Such is their talent pool that they boast four world player of the year winners - captain Richie McCaw (3 times), Dan Carter (2), Kieran Read and Retallick.
- Retallick - big and athletic with great handling - is set to be one of the stars of the tournament on his debut. At 24, he already has 41 caps for his country.
- The All Blacks have never won this tournament in the Northern Hemisphere but they have lost just once in Europe in the past eight years.

Who are the dark horses?

FRANCE

World No. 7
Coach: Philippe Saint-Andre
Star man: Wesley Fofana, centre
Best result: Final (1987, 1999, 2011)

- They may have failed to finish in the top half of the Six Nations tournament for four years, but never count France out of any World Cup.
- Les Bleus seem to excel in this competition irrespective of form, and have reached six semi-finals and three finals in the seven Cup editions.
- All eyes will be on their star centre pairing of Mathieu Bastareaud and Wesley Fofana. While Bastareaud provides the sheer brute force, it is Fofana's wit and guile which could be the far more dangerous weapons.

IRELAND

World No. 6
Coach: Joe Schmidt
Star man: Jonathan Sexton, fly-half
Best result: Quarter-finals (1987, '91, '95, '03, '11)

- It could finally be Ireland's year. Not only will they have their strongest squad ever, the draw has been kind to them.
- The back-to-back Six Nations champions are expected to top Pool D, and will be favourites to win a prospective quarter-final clash against Argentina or Tonga.
- Ireland reached their highest-ever ranking of second just last month but they need to regain their form following a flat warm-up.
- They will be looking to Jonathan Sexton's reliable boot as their game is built around his kicking.

Asia's only hope

JAPAN

World No. 13
Coach: Eddie Jones
Star man: Michael Leitch, flanker
Best result: Group phase (1987-2011)

- They may have won just once in the World Cup, way back in 1991, but their Australian coach Eddie Jones is exhorting them to make the quarter-finals from Pool B.
- It is a tall order and many feel that the realistic target to aim for is a second win. Yet, they do have the weapons amid a vastly experienced team and could spring a surprise against either Scotland or Samoa.
- Much will depend on the leadership of captain Michael Leitch, an energetic flanker who is ever present at the breakdown and one of the side's most important ball carriers.

Past winners

Result of the final in Points

2011
New Zealand 8
 France 7

2007
South Africa 15
 England 6

2003
England 20
 Australia 17

1999
Australia 35
 France 12

1995
South Africa 15
 New Zealand 12

1991
Australia 12
 England 6

1987
New Zealand 29
 France 9



History in the making

- New Zealand can become the first side to retain the Webb Ellis trophy.
- A win for either the All Blacks, Australia, or South Africa will make them the first three-time winners.
- New Zealand captain Richie McCaw needs to win three more games at the World Cup to displace former greats George Gregan and Jason Leonard as the player with the most wins in this event. Gregan and Leonard won 16 matches with Australia and England respectively.
- All Blacks legend Jonah Lomu's 16-year-old record for most World Cup tries (15) is under threat. South African winger Bryan Habana (10) and Wallabies winger Drew Mitchell (9) could surpass his feat this time round.

What's new this year

- For the first time, Hawk-Eye will be used. The technology that has helped umpires in tennis and cricket will now aid rugby referees.
- Not only will Hawk-Eye help to decide if a try is scored, it will also be used to punish players for foul play.
- If officials have doubts over whether

a player received a punch or stamp, Hawk-eye will help in the decision-making.

- The technology works by recording all broadcast angles in real time. The footage is immediately available and will also help medical staff in diagnosing head injuries.

Pool A

England - Fiji Sept 18, Friday	Wales - Uruguay Sept 20, Sunday	Australia - Fiji Sept 23, Wednesday	England - Wales Sept 26, Saturday	Australia - Uruguay Sept 27, Sunday	Wales - Fiji Oct 1, Thursday	England - Australia Oct 3, Saturday	Fiji - Uruguay Oct 6, Tuesday	Australia - Wales Oct 10, Saturday	England - Uruguay Oct 10, Saturday
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Pool B

S. Africa - Japan Sept 19, Saturday	Samoa - United States Sept 20, Sunday	Scotland - Japan Sept 23, Wednesday	South Africa - Samoa Sept 26, Saturday	Scotland - United States Sept 27, Sunday	Samoa - Japan Oct 3, Saturday	South Africa - Scotland Oct 3, Saturday	S. Africa - United States Oct 7, Wednesday	Samoa - Scotland Oct 10, Saturday	United States - Japan Oct 11, Sunday
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Pool C

Tonga - Georgia Sept 19, Saturday	N. Zealand - Argentina Sept 20, Sunday	N. Zealand - Namibia Sept 24, Thursday	Argentina - Georgia Sept 25, Friday	Tonga - Namibia Sept 29, Tuesday	N. Zealand - Georgia Oct 2, Friday	Argentina - Tonga Oct 4, Sunday	Namibia - Georgia Oct 7, Wednesday	N. Zealand - Tonga Oct 9, Friday	Argentina - Namibia Oct 11, Sunday
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Pool D

Ireland - Canada Sept 19, Saturday	France - Italy Sept 19, Saturday	France - Romania Sept 23, Wednesday	Italy - Canada Sept 26, Saturday	Ireland - Romania Sept 27, Sunday	France - Canada Oct 1, Thursday	Ireland - Italy Oct 4, Sunday	Canada - Romania Oct 6, Tuesday	Italy - Romania Oct 11, Sunday	France - Ireland Oct 11, Sunday
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Quarter-finals

1st Pool B - 2nd Pool A Oct 17, Saturday	1st Pool C - 2nd Pool D Oct 17, Saturday	1st Pool D - 2nd Pool C Oct 18, Sunday	1st Pool A - 2nd Pool B Oct 18, Sunday
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Winner QF1 - Winner QF2
Oct 24, Saturday

Semi-finals

Winner QF3 - Winner QF4
Oct 25, Sunday

3rd place
Oct 30, Friday

Final
Oct 31, Saturday